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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	FOH	12

⁽¹²⁾ FRANK O'HARA ARCHIVE: Robert Motherwell Exhibition (ICE F-95-63) ✓

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Robert Motherwell:
Floor plan for exhibit
pieces at MOMA
Nov. 1964 show.

O'Hara Archive File (12)
Museum of Modern Art

THE FOLLOWING OVERSIZED FLOORPLAN: "EXISTING GARDEN WING FIRST FLOOR PLAN, NOVEMBER 1964, MOTHERWELL," WAS NOT IMAGED DUE TO SIZE LIMITATIONS.

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70
56
3



KISTING GARDEN WING FIRST FLOOR PLAN

"=1'-0"

NOVEMBER 1964

Motherwell



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LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90036 Telephone 937-4250

June 18, 1965

Mr. Frank O'Hara
Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street

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Robert Motherwell :
Correspondence
concerning exhibit
ICE F 95-63
(in chronological order)

O'Hara Archive File (12)
Museum of Modern Art

Bill

William Osmun
Senior Curator

WO:gh

O'Hara Archive File (12)
Museum of Modern Art

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LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90036 Telephone 937-4250

June 18, 1965

Mr. Frank O'Hara
Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York, New York

Dear Frank:

First, the only Motherwell here that you might not know is "Man in Grey," 1948, oil on canvas, 30"(h) x 24". This belongs to Harry Sherwood (920 North Foothill Road, Beverly Hills). I do not remember it but Maurice says it is an interesting painting rather like "The Best Toys Are Made Of Paper" but has a certain quality of mystery.

Second, our photographer will make slides of all the paintings in the New York School show.

Do let me know when you expect to arrive in Los Angeles and plan to stay with me.

Yours as ever,



William Osmin
Senior Curator

WO:gh

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Waldo - later RM said he would actually prefer Torino but this might be an idea if that didn't work out.

WR ICEF-95-63

173 EAST 94TH STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10028

27 June 1965

Dear Frank -

In East Hampton I saw Gene Bars, who wants to write a piece about me for "Arts." He had another interesting idea - he said that at the last Venice Biennale the most interesting + admired show was not at the Biennale at all, but at

W → the Palazzo Grassi (director, Sergio Marmetti) of Ambrosetti - enormous space, beautifully installed. The Biennale is this year - what about my show being at the Palazzo Grassi, when people from all over Europe are there? Could you discuss this with Waldo, + if you agree, cable Venice? - Also Rene d'Haramcourt at Tarrytown, + being high (me, I mean), I did something I wouldn't

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usually, + asked him to intervene on my behalf with Paris. He promised, but perhaps you could bring it up with him one of these days before everyone disappears for the summer.

I realize that from one point of view these things are none of my business, but from another point I am deeply involved, + I hope you won't resent these suggestions.

As ever yours

Bob M.

Awfully sorry to miss the party at Patry's - had awful, slow drive back - hope you did better.

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THE
LANNAN
FOUNDATION

O'Hara

ICE F 95-63
cat

141 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60604

July 15, 1965

Mr. Monroe Wheeler
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York City, New York 10019

Dear Mr. Wheeler:

Mr. Lannan has recommended to The Lannan Foundation that it make a contribution of \$500.00 to The Museum of Modern Art to cover the cost of making color plates of the painting "Wall Painting With Stripes" - 1944.

Will you please list in the catalogue that this painting is the property of The Lannan Foundation. . . Also, would appreciate your sending the Foundation two copies of the catalogue for its files.

Yours very sincerely,

Joey Dedwell
Secretary

Encl. (chk. \$500)

O'Hara Archive File 12
Museum of Modern Art

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
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THE LANNAN FOUNDATION

No. 461

JULY 15th 19 65.

$\frac{2-3}{710}$

PAY TO THE ORDER OF *** THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ***** \$500.00***

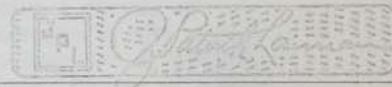
***** FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS EVEN ***** DOLLARS

TO

THE LANNAN FOUNDATION



CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



⑆0710⑆0003⑆ 75⑆00815⑆

O'Hara Archive File (12)
Museum of Modern Art

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
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cc: Mr. Frank O'Hara
Miss Sarah Rubenstein
Miss Françoise Boas

ICEF 95-63
cat

July 20, 1965

July 12, 1965. Monroe Wheeler
Director of Exhibitions and Publications
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street

J. Patrick Lannan, Esq., Y. 10019
760 Park Avenue
New York Dear Mr. Wheeler:
New York 10021

In reference to your letter of July 15th,
Dear Pat: it will be perfectly satisfactory to reproduce
the painting involved in black and white only.

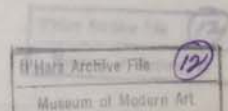
I am delighted to hear from my colleague, Mr. Frank O'Hara, that you have graciously agreed to lend your Robert Motherwell painting entitled Wall Painting with Stripes, 1944 to the major exhibition of his work which opens here in September. To coincide with the exhibition, we are publishing a survey of Motherwell's work by Mr. O'Hara, with statements by the artist and many reproductions. However, because they are so helpful to people throughout the world who depend upon Museum of Modern Art publications, we like to have as many color reproductions as possible, but because of the high cost of color plates -- and our strong desire to keep the price of our books within the reach of students -- we are obliged to depend upon the generosity of owners to make them possible. For these reasons, I am taking the liberty of enquiring whether The Lannan Foundation might wish to make a contribution to the Museum in the amount of \$500 toward the cost of making a color plate of your painting. If this should be possible, we shall be most appreciative, but if it is not convenient, please be assured that we shall in any case reproduce your painting in black and white, because we are very happy to have your collection represented in our homage to this great American artist.

Thanking you in advance for the courtesy of your consideration, I am,

Sincerely,

Monroe Wheeler

MW:fk



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01 June
ICEF 95-63
cat

BORIS LEAVITT
LAWYER
11 WEST 53 STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10019

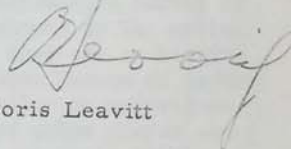
July 20, 1965

Mr. Monroe Wheeler
Director of Exhibitions and Publications
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street
New York, N. Y. 10019

Dear Mr. Wheeler:

In reference to your letter of July 15th,
it will be perfectly satisfactory to reproduce
the painting involved in black and white only.

Sincerely yours,



Boris Leavitt

BL/cb

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cc: Mr. Frank O'Hara
Miss Sarah Rubenstein
Miss Françoise Boas

100 F 95-63

APR 15 1965

THE WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY

Whitechapel 1472

High Street, London, E.1

Chairman of Trustees:

Mr. Vernon Boasted, D.L., T.D.

July 15, 1965

Director: Bryan Robertson, C.B.E.

Assistant: Tejus Englemuth

15th April 1965

Mr. Boris Leavitt
Lena Lobell Farms
RD 1, Hanover
Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Leavitt:

I am delighted to hear from my colleague, Mr. Frank O'Hara, that you have graciously agreed to lend your Robert Motherwell painting Two Figures with Cerulean Blue Stripe, 1960 to the major exhibition of his work which opens here in September.

To coincide with the exhibition, we are publishing a survey of Motherwell's work by Mr. O'Hara, with statements by the artist and many reproductions. However, because they are so helpful to people throughout the world who depend upon Museum of Modern Art publications, we like to have as many color reproductions as possible, but because of the high cost of color plates -- and our strong desire to keep the price of our books within the reach of students -- we are obliged to depend upon the generosity of owners to make them possible. For these reasons, I am taking the liberty of enquiring whether you might care to make a tax-deductible contribution to the Museum in the amount of \$500 toward the cost of making a color plate of your painting. If this should be possible, we shall be most appreciative, but if it is not convenient, please be assured that we shall in any case reproduce your painting in black and white, because we are very happy to have your collection represented in our homage to this great American artist.

Thanking you in advance for the courtesy of your consideration, I am,

Tejus Englemuth
Assistant

Sincerely,

Valde Rasmussen Esq.,
Executive Director,
Mr. Monroe Wheeler
The Museum of Modern Art,
11, West 53rd Street,
N.Y. 10019.

MW:fk

D'Haus Archive File 12

Museum of Modern Art

12

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cc: Mr. Frank O'Hara ✓
Miss Françoise Boas

ICE F 95-63

cat

cc: REP

APR 18 1966

THE WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY

Bishopsgate 1492

High Street, London, E.1

Chairman of Trustees:
The Viscount Bearsted, D.L., T.D.

Director: Bryan Robertson, O.B.E.
Assistant: Tejas Englesmith

14th April 1966

Dear Mr Rasmussen,

I have spoken today with Robert Giron in Brussels and have made arrangements with our transport firm to have the Metherwell exhibition removed and packed as quickly as possible after our closing. If all goes as planned, the paintings should be in Brussels in good time for their opening on 5th May.

The main point of this letter, however, is with regard to the insurance of the exhibition. I did not realize that the Museum of Modern Art had all the works insured for the entire period that they are on tour, and had them insured, wall to wall, with our own Insurance Company for the transit from Amsterdam to London. It was only after the works had arrived safely that I received your invoice for 1,500 dollars, and discovered that the shipment had been doubly insured. I have spoken to our Insurers and they have consented to halve the premium in view of the situation. Would it be possible for your Insurers to reduce the amount of our share of the premium by half also as, under the international insurance agreement, they too were liable to only half of the total value of the works had a claim been filed.

I am very sorry if this puts you to any trouble, but a saving of £225 would, at this time when the Gallery is fighting for its existence, be extremely helpful.

With many thanks,

Yours sincerely,
Tejas Englesmith
Tejas Englesmith
Assistant

Waldo Rasmussen Esq.,
Executive Director,
Circulating Exhibitions,
The Museum of Modern Art,
11, West 53rd Street,
New York, N.Y. 10019,
U.S.A.

O'Hara Archive File (12)
Museum of Modern Art

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cc: Mr. Frank O'Hara ✓
Miss Françoise Boas

ICE F 95-63
cat

Albright-Knox Art Gallery
Buffalo 22, New York

July 15, 1965

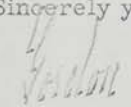
Mr. Monroe Wheeler
Director, Exhibitions and Publications
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53rd Street
New York, New York 10019

Dear Monroe:

There was a meeting of the Art Committee this week, and I presented your request for a contribution of \$500 to cover the cost of a color plate of our Motherwell painting for the catalogue of the forthcoming retrospective exhibition of this artist's work. It was the decision of the Committee that our budget would not permit such a contribution, but the Committee asked me to tell you that we are happy to give you permission to reproduce the painting in color if you wish to do so.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,


Gordon M. Smith
Director

GMS:eb

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Date July 6, 1961

To:

Re: São Paulo: MOTHERWELL'S LOANS

From: Renée Neu

We have received no answer to our request on the following works:

View from a Tower.

~~Mr. Paul Peters
12 East 10th Street
New York City~~

Tel. GR 3-5732

out
The Emperor of China.

~~Mr. Frederic Varady
5 West 86th Street
New York City~~

Tel. JU 2-0689 (home)
SC 4-8422 (office)

At Five in the Afternoon.

~~Mrs. Wright Morris
Pacific Palisades
California~~

Tel. GI 4-5773

Paul Kantor: CR 6-2673

out
204 Bradford Street
A Provincetown 927

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MOMA

MOTHERWELLS IN MOMA COLLECTIONS

ask for
all

- 132.61 Elegy to the Spanish Republic, No. 54 (1957-61) for NY only
o/c
70 x 90 1/4
- ~~77.44~~ Pancho Villa, etc. 1943 for Europe also
Gouache & Collage
28 x 35 7/8 (S. 5541)
- 15.57 Personage with Yellow Ochre & White. 1947 for NY only
o/c
72 x 54 (S. 14-248)
- 339.55 The Voyage. (1949) for NY only
oil & tempera on paper mounted on composition board
48 x 94
- ~~75.50~~ Western Air. (1946-47) for Europe also
o/c
72 x 54

not these

- 369.62 Capriccio. 1960
Pochoir
- 363.63 In Black with Yellow Ochre. 1963
Lithograph
Sheet: 30 x 21 1/4
- 370.62 Poet, Number 1. 1961
Lithograph
- 371.62 Poet, Number 2. 1961
Lithograph

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Newark. Museum. A museum in action;...American paintings & sculpture from the Museum's collections...

Oct.31, 1944 - Jan.31, 1945.

p.60, 166, 182. - 1 work. - Intro. by Holger Cahill.

New York. Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors. Seventh annual exhibition of paintings and sculpture by guests of members... Sept.9-27, 1947.

p.[4]. - 1 work. - Exhibition held at Wildenstein & Co. - Reviewed in Art digest, p.10, Sept.15,1947.

New York. Whitney Museum of American Art. Annual exhibition of contemporary American sculpture, watercolors and drawings. Apr.2 - May 8, 1949.

p.[9]. - 1 work.

New York. Museum of Modern Art. Recent sculpture, U.S.A. Sponsored by the Junior Council of The Museum. May 13- Aug.16, 1959.

p.[24,139] ill. - 2 works. - Catalog published as Bulletin v.26, no.3, Spring 1959. - A circulating exhibition.

Chicago. Art Institute. 64th American exhibition; paintings, sculpture. Jan.6-Feb.5, 1961.

p.[31]. - 1 work.

Great Jones gallery, New York. Heads by eight sculptors. Sept.19 - Oct.15, 1961.

p.[3]. - 1 work. - Reviewed by Sidney Tillim in Arts, p.36-38, Oct.1961.

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Mrs Nora Wainer, Signatures Dept, Vogue⁴ 20¹ Co Ave₁

ABOUT ROBERT MOTHERWELL

When a major artist has a major retrospective and he is an American and it is in an American museum, all sorts of harrowing excitements occur which involve all concerned. For the artist it is the temporary summation of his achievement thus far, an exposure which no sensible person should want and many artists don't want. ~~In the other arts you could never expect to have the best of the work by devoting one or two hours of steady attention.~~ Who would demand it of the other arts-- the moreorless full range of sensibility in two ~~hours~~ ^{of attention, @+15 say,} hours from a composer, a poet, a novelist, an actor or playwright, a great diva? Each has a relatively vast temporal area to prove and reprove, correct or re-assert, the grandeur of the vision. But painters and sculptors are expected to be able to affirm, by the simple method of collection and installation, the verity and importance of their preoccupations, instantaneously and simultaneously. ~~The question of effort, duration, and intensity is not a question of duration or intensity~~ ~~is directly inspired by the pictorial order~~ ^Q And this is right, ultimately, because their arts do not use time as duration, they use it as conception. We love the "long time" look of Rembrandt and Vermeer as we love the languorous ease of a cabaletta in Bellini or Verdi, and we love the quickness of the whiplashes and drastic lines of Pollock and Motherwell as we love the speed of transition of motive and musical thought in Stravinsky and Webern. But these are not identifications, they are correspondances. In painting and sculpture we perceive fast or slow time as a frontal onslaught, not a cumulative experience.

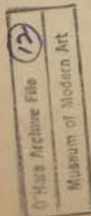
Motherwell's work is a frontal experience par excellence. His insistence has been on the painting as "wall"-- flat surface, two-dimensional, no illusionism. Whether measured five by ten inches or eight feet by twenty,

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ARM 2.

his work, like that of Franz Kline, is concerned with a frontal assault on the viewer of ~~important~~ significant two-dimensional forms. Where much 20th Century art naively assumes that to project another dimension is to do something extraordinary, here we find the clarification of means between painting and sculpture, the extreme decision on which properties belong to which. Beside this, Op Art becomes merely trompe l'oeil, the old fakir's trick, about as convincing as Dali's recent conception of the discovery of America. (What has come out of trompe l'oeil, for example, the early Dali in one way and Joseph Cornell's wonderful work in another, is of course something else.) But in every way the great truth must begin with the simple truth: that painting is made with painting ^{and} a canvas, that poetry is made with words. The irritating thing about Philistine criticism is that sometimes it's right: some Assemblageists cannot draw, and some Pop artists can only render what someone else has designed. There's nothing wrong with this as long as the result is a work of art, but it does not ensure a long career of delight, but rather one of repetition of what one can do. (This goes for certain expert realists as well-- how many melancholy ladies do you want to see having the eternal breakfast? And now that photography has zoomed in, how many repetitious forms of your least favorite actress, or even most favorite, do you want to contemplate?)

But to get back to the harrowing aspect of a retrospective in another sense, my own: nobody who hasn't done a selection has any idea of how anxiety-making it is. You make your preferences known to the artist, and in this case a very grand, generous, open-minded one. He says he is satisfied, or more so, with the works you are including. And immediately your mind is flooded with mentions by critics of other works which are superlatively important to the representation. And you think of the walls! You think of the walls here and in Europe and what they can show and what you must not put in for the sake of the other works,



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ARM 3.

And you spend many an hour of the ~~one~~ night thinking of what you are not including, and ~~assessing the praise by various critics~~ ^{and} of the exact painting you have decided to exclude because you think another is more important-- and then you have the appalling realization that the thought-word you used was "think"! Help! Are you sure? With a major artist it is very difficult to be sure between two important paintings, and suddenly you wish you were doing a show of the Pont-Aven school or the Barbizons or the Surrealists, because to no single artist would you be responsible if someone wouldn't lend a key work, or if your judgment went astray. But one-man shows are what you want to see, what you want to do, and this is the artist you want to present: so you jump, knowing full well that in Europe retrospectives of living artists abound, but here until very recently they were very rare, and that you have put your head in the noose of your admiration for this artist, and ~~the show~~ ^{say} if ~~it~~ doesn't ~~do~~ what you want it to say, it is nobody's fault but your own. ~~With the present show I think we are all in great shape.~~

continue: Motherwell is tough, sassy, and elegant, as a painter. etc.

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v l.

Notes on ROBERT MOTHERWELL

I saw my first Motherwell³ at the Kootz Gallery fifteen years ago, when I first came to New York. I was with a young painter who, to my own response to the show, said, "Yes, but if you take away the elegance what have you left?"

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with a M
David Sm

Robert Motherwell:
Miscellaneous Items

O'Hare Archive File (2)
Museum of Modern Art

Motherwell is tough, sassy and elegant, where a noble motif appears, as in the first Spanish Elegies, he will pursue it and nag it for fifteen years, proving that tragedy, disillusion and diffidence are our daily inevitable fare, and thus producing some of the great paintings in American culture. Similarly with the collages: his imitators get the glamour, but they miss the physical tearingness and destruction beyond technical need, the sparseness and ~~simplicity~~ ^{intensity} which is more meaningful than mere simplicity. He always seems to be wryly reflecting that to do less is more, and getting no satisfaction from the thought. What is difficult in Motherwell's work is not the rationale for its surface attraction, but the interconnection of the individual works.

O'Hare Archive File (2)
Museum of Modern Art

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v 1.

Notes on ROBERT MOTHERWELL

~~What he is missing, with all its variety is THE WORK, as Mallarmé intended,~~

~~I saw my first Motherwell³_A at the Koots Gallery fifteen years ago, when I first came to New York. I was with a young painter who, to my own response to the show, said, "Yes, but if you take away the elegance what have you left?"~~

~~This, it turned out, was a wonderfully illuminating question. Because after another visit or two and a couple of weeks had passed I finally realized that if you took any quality out of a painting in imagination (and I don't believe you can or conceive of how), you wouldn't have anything left there, whether it were Tintoretto, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Picasso, de Kooning or Motherwell. And what would happen with a Matisse or a Barnett Newman? Or a Rodin, a Giacometti, a David Smith?~~

~~So it was a most fortunate question for me.~~

as a painter
 Motherwell is tough, saucy and elegant, where a noble motif appears, as in the first Spanish elegies, he will pursue it and nag it for fifteen years, proving that tragedy, disillusion and diffidence are our daily inevitable fare, and thus producing some of the great paintings in American culture. Similarly with the collages: his imitators get the glamour, but they miss the physical tearingness and destruction beyond technical need, the sparseness and ~~simplicity~~ *simplicity* which is more meaningful than mere simplicity. He always seems to be wryly reflecting that to do less is more, and getting no satisfaction from the thought. What is difficult in Motherwell's work is not the rationale for its surface attraction, but the interconnection of the individual works.

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v 3. v 2

Motherwell

What he is making, with all its variety is THE WORK, as Mallarmé intended, however various the poems, to be writing THE BOOK. One thinks of D.H. Lawrence, too, and of Cézanne and Giacometti. Among the contemporary Americans he relates, oddly enough, most closely to ~~the late~~ *the late David Smith* in their ~~various~~ different personalities one finds a strong central impulse which cannot confine itself to one style or language, to any one mode of communication, so proud and anxious are their desires. They ~~are~~ *have* probably both flirting with the Absolute, and if they ~~are~~ *have* been ~~turning~~ *have* turning a different shoulder to them, or telling them to make a slight adjustment of the drawing of that shoulder they drew the day before last.

Stat

I first met Motherwell in East Hampton in, probably 1952. ~~was~~ ~~first~~ ~~party~~, lots of dancing, no conversation with him. When we did talk, later, it was almost always about poetry: Apollinaire, Baudelaire, Jacob, Reverdy, Rilke (no so much) and Lorca (lots), and we also got ~~to~~ ~~discuss~~ ~~the~~ ~~quality~~ ~~is~~ ~~something~~ ~~for~~ ~~if~~ ~~any~~ ~~professional~~ ~~critic~~ ~~has~~ ~~not~~ ~~acted~~ ~~as~~ ~~early~~ ~~as~~ ~~they~~ ~~have~~ ~~been~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~Pop~~ ~~Art~~ ~~by~~ ~~impressed~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~Documents~~ ~~of~~ ~~Modern~~ ~~Art~~ ~~Series~~ ~~which~~ ~~Motherwell~~ ~~had~~ ~~edited~~ ~~(indeed,~~ ~~it~~ ~~was~~ ~~The~~ ~~Gospels,~~ ~~for~~ ~~me~~ ~~and~~ ~~my~~ ~~poet~~ ~~friends).~~ ~~At~~ ~~that~~ ~~time~~ ~~we~~ ~~never~~ ~~discussed~~ ~~painting,~~ ~~so~~ ~~far~~ ~~as~~ ~~I~~ ~~remember.~~ ~~Motherwell~~ ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~diffident,~~ ~~he~~ ~~is~~ ~~preoccupied,~~ ~~but~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~time~~ ~~I~~ ~~thought~~ ~~he~~ ~~was~~ ~~the~~ ~~Prince~~ ~~of~~ ~~Diffidence.~~ ~~Some~~ ~~people~~ ~~still~~ ~~do.~~ ~~Actually~~ ~~his~~ ~~personality~~ ~~is~~ ~~quite~~ ~~a~~ ~~lot~~ ~~simpler~~ ~~than~~ ~~at~~ ~~first~~ ~~thought.~~ ~~He~~ ~~has~~ ~~a~~ ~~very~~ ~~acute~~ ~~mind,~~ ~~and~~ ~~a~~ ~~great~~ ~~many~~ ~~things~~ ~~on~~ ~~it.~~

one thinks

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Museum of Modern Art

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Motherwell

v 3.
60

He paints, makes collages, draws (this year he made ~~1,000~~ ⁶⁰⁰ small inks on Japan paper in six weeks), teaches, lectures, travels, and also serves on certain committees ^{by which} ~~where~~ he feels the contemporary artist should be involved, or at least acknowledged. Motherwell outside the studio is an engaging, wily conversationalist. He is not gregarious, but he is socially expansive and curious. He is very attentive to what you have to say, and will not hesitate to point out, subtly but definitely, where he finds your thinking going wrong. If he finds your thinking right, or if you have a really fresh idea, he acts as if you had just given him a present he'd been longing for. He is open-minded and sharply critical: he was the first Abstract Expressionist to say Pop Art was "okay", and the first to admit publicly that he didn't like it though he felt it had a youthful joy which would doubtless lead certain individual artists onward. This latter quality is something few if any professional art critics have noted, so eager have they been to tie Pop Art to a social millstone and dump it in the Hudson.

Motherwell is 50 this year, looks younger, and is definitely interested in Onward. Contrary to what some critics have said, particularly in the daily and weekly papers, Pop and Op Art have not at all "killed" other contemporary movements, least of all Abstract Expressionism, as evidenced by the two excellent exhibitions of the New York School given recently at the University of Pennsylvania and the Los Angeles County Museum. As a matter of fact, Pop and Op have tended to stimulate a way of looking, particularly at the Abstract

do certain aspects of the collages and his almost hedonistic delight

O'Hara Archive File 12
Museum of Modern Art

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v 4.

v 5.

Expressionists and Hard-Edge painters, which reveals new qualities in their works. Ellsworth Kelly, for example, is more interesting rather than less if you have just come from a show of Richard Anuskiewicz or Larry Poons, and you see more in a Motherwell rather than less if you have just been studying a James Rosenquist or a Jim Dine.

Variety is what, of course, Abstract Expressionism has insisted on all along and its originators have offered it to us consistently: there has been no "school" in the history of art that I know of which has included artists so totally different in style and subject matter as Pollock, de Kooning, Rothko, Newman, Kline, Gottlieb, Motherwell and others. (A variety, incidentally, which Pop and Op Art adherents have a hard time maintaining among their members.) Motherwell's own development from the early '40s has included a great many changes in style and confrontation. There is, to be sure, a characteristic Motherwell touch, placement and attack, but the uses to which they are put from period to period are enormously different.

Modern beauty is what interests him. Modern beauty excites you first and interests you afterward. The art of other periods interests you first and then gradually you become excited by its beauty.

Motherwell's work continually fluctuates between chance and deliberation. New motifs arise from visual and subconscious experiences (the Summertime in Italy and the Beside the Sea series, for example, were inspired visually, the Lyric Suite series and the Automatisms subconsciously), yet the Elegies to the Spanish Republic continue obsessively through every period since their inception in 1948, as do certain aspects of the collages and his almost hedonistic delight

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v 6.

as in Degas. Motherwell is every bit as enamoured of the rough triangle and the slightly irregular circle as Degas was of the backstage theatre and the race track. As Franz Kline once ^{said} remarked, "It's a ^{wonderful} terrific thing to be in love with the square." (C. 1951)

4 Only a truly intercontinental artist (Washington, California, New York, Massachusetts, Oregon, Mexico, Canada, East Hampton, Cape Cod) could dash into European culture with such zest and alacrity, while retaining his identity as an American, admiring, inspired, but not at all swamped by it all, as were most American artists in the past. Short of a national disaster, there could never be a question of Motherwell becoming an expatriate, perhaps because he believes that, after Picasso, Matisse and Miró, modernity in art lives here.

Motherwell is very conscious of distinctions and, for all the spontaneity in his work, of what must be done for and about art right now in an historical sense. Recently on Channel 13 TV, ^a director of The Whitechapel Gallery in London, Bryan Robertson, asked him if he "could make some absolutely final and ultimate and all-embracing statement" about his work as a whole. Motherwell replied:

X "I think I would most choose to talk about the ethical character of art which I think moves us even more than art's delight in sensuality, or its beauty of formal structure. I'm not talking about paintings with a moral like Aesop's fables, or course. Moralisms belong to the lowest forms of painting--genre painting, propaganda, popular religious art, advertising. What I mean by an artist's ethic is what he insists on having in a picture and what equally strongly he cannot allow in a

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v 7.

picture through conviction. In my case, I allow no nostalgia, no sentimentalism, no propaganda, no spelling out for the vulgar, no autobiography, no violation of the nature of the canvas as a flat surface, no clichés, no illusionism, no description, no seduction, no charm, no relaxation, no mere taste, no obviousness, no coldness. On the contrary, I insist on immediacy, passion or tenderness, sheer presence, beingness as such, objectivity and true invention and resolution, light, the unexpected, direct color (sky blue, grass green, English vermilion, the earth colors: ochre, sienna, umber), and black and white, and a certain broad masculinity and emotional weight that is hard to describe. These are my moral acceptances and rejections. Other painters have other values, but there is nothing mysterious about any artist's values if one's mind and heart are sympathetic, clear and unprejudiced, a condition less common than you might think."

When this interview was first shown half the audience said, "Oh yeah," and the other half said, "Wow!" I myself thought the tone of it quite unlike "the Motherwell I know." But a little later something about it reminded me of all those ^{the} battles fought by the Abstract Expressionists against provincialism and regionalism in American art, for recognition of a new, clear and passionate expression, the panels and forums, the journals, the letters to museums and newspapers demanding a change in ^{the} way of feeling a painting and an acknowledgement of the new vision. That battle was won and a younger generation, an Andy Warhol or a Larry Poons, has a quick, lively and responsive audience at hand because of these earlier victories. Motherwell

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8 v.

could certainly rest secure in his accomplishment.
~~himself could certainly rest secure in his accomplishment. But he~~
~~insists on pushing further, in his most recent works, towards a new~~
~~simplicity and candor, and I'm glad he's in there fighting.~~

Frank O'Hara.

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LAST PARAGRAPH FOR VOGUE ON MOTHERWELL

. 84

... secure in his accomplishment. But the modern artist has no recognizable laurels to crown him and no inclination to rest. Like the rest of us, but more as an ⁸exemplar than a companion, he has his arrogant insistence on joy and his fateful cognition of the deaths around us. In presenting his exhibition we are joining Motherwell's passionate affirmation of experience against despair. With each line, mass and torn edge he is, like Apelles, erecting for us the noble wall of his aspiration against the darkness without.

FRANK O'HARA

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LAST PARAGRAPH FOR VOGUE ON MOTHERWELL

. 8/

... secure in his accomplishment. But the modern artist has no recognizable laurels to crown him and no inclination to rest. Like the rest of us, but more as an ^{ex}emplar than a companion, he has his arrogant insistence on joy and his fateful cognition of the deaths around us. In presenting his exhibition we are joining Motherwell's passionate affirmation of experience against despair. With each line, mass and torn edge he is, like Apelles, erecting for us the noble wall of his aspiration against the darkness without.

FRANK O'HARA

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Notes onROBERT MOTHERWELL

V 1

I saw my first Motherwells at the Kootz Gallery fifteen years ago, when I first came to New York. I was with a young painter who, to my own response to the show, said, "Yes, but if you take away the elegance what have you left?"

This, it turned out, was a wonderfully illuminating question. Because after another visit or two and a couple of weeks had passed I finally realized that if you took any quality out of a painting in imagination (and I don't believe you can or conceive of how), you wouldn't have anything left there, whether it were Tintoretto, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Picasso, de Kooning or Motherwell. And what would happen with a Matisse or ^aBarnett Newman? Or a Rodin, a Giacometti, a David Smith?

So it was a most fortunate question for me.

It settled in my head, at least, an issue which has come up in American criticism of recent American painting, an issue which never plagued the French ~~critic~~ contemporary artist, or not until French critics began to study the more Puritan American of their counterparts. The issue is this: can you "abstract" what you don't like from a painting in the ancient sense of taking from, or do you have to put up with all of it? Well you do have to put up with all of it, just like life, and if you're lucky that unpleasant part of you that ^{take something away} wanted to/in the first place will disappear through passion, education or sheer enmi.

~~There are many unpleasant things in Motherwell's paintings. ^{Yes,} ~~It is~~ [^] tough, sassy and elegant. Where a noble ~~and apocalyptic~~ motif appears, as in the first Spanish Elegies, he will pursue it and nag it for fifteen years, proving that tragedy, disillusion and diffidence are our daily inevitable fare, and thus producing some of the great paintings in American culture. Similarly with the collages: his imitators get the~~



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v 2.

glamour, but they miss the physical tearingness and destruction beyond technical need, the sparseness and cynicism which is more meaningful than mere simplicity. ~~They are not really Cubist.~~ He always seems to be wryly reflecting that to do less is more, and getting no satisfaction from the thought. What is difficult in Motherwell's work is not the rationale for its surface attraction, but the interconnection of the individual works. What he is making ^{with all its varieties is} ~~a series~~ THE WORK, as Mallarmé intended, however various the poems, to be writing THE BOOK. One thinks of D.H. Lawrence, too, and of Cézanne and Giacometti. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Among the contemporary Americans he relates, oddly enough, most closely to de Kooning: in their utterly different personalities one finds a strong central impulse which cannot confine itself to ^{one} style or language, to any one mode of communication, so proud and anxious are their desires. They are probably both flirting with the Absolute, and if they are, she keeps turning a different shoulder to them, or telling them to make a slight adjustment of the drawing of that shoulder they drew the day before last. ^{Thus she keeps them}

~~from developing along a straight stylistic line.~~

see attached sheet + marked bottom of p. 2

I first met Motherwell in Easthampton in, I think, 1952. Great party, lots of dancing, no conversation with him. When we did talk, later, it was almost always about poetry: Apollinaire, Baudelaire, Jacob, Reverdy, Rilke (not so much) and Lorca (lots). I had been tremendously impressed by the Documents of Modern Art Series (indeed, it was ^{the Gospels} for me and my poet friends) which Motherwell had edited, ^{and also got} ~~we nevertheless did get to Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams.~~ At that time we never discussed painting, so far as I remember. ~~That was very good;~~ I thought my thoughts about his paintings, but ^{hesitated} never ~~hesitated~~ to express them to him, ~~which would have been unbearably inarticulate,~~ because I was ~~afraid~~. Motherwell is not diffident, he is preoccupied, and he also knows more about certain French poets than I do.



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~~Business~~

Bottom of page 2.

I first met Motherwell in East Hampston in, probably 1952. Great party, lots of dancing, no conversation with him. When we did talk, later, it was almost always about poetry: Apollinaire, Baudelaire, Jacob, Reverdy, Rilke (not so much) and Lorca (lots), and we also got to Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams. I had been tremendously impressed by the Documents of Modern Art Series ~~Motherwell~~ which Motherwell had edited (indeed, it was The Gospels, for me and my poet friends). At that time we never discussed painting, so far as I remember. I thought my thoughts about his paintings, but hesitated to express them. Motherwell is not diffident, he is preoccupied, but at the time I thought he was the Prince of Diffidence. Some people still do. Actually his personality is quite a lot simpler than I at first thought. He has a very acute mind, and a great many things on it.

Continue p. 3 "He paints etc."

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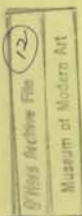
v 3.

~~But at the time I thought he was the Prince of Diffidence. Some people still do. ~~His personality~~ Actually his personality is quite a lot simpler than I at first thought. He has a very acute mind, and a great many things on it.~~

He paints, makes collages, draws (this year he made 1,000 small inks on paper in ~~six weeks!~~ ^{Japan} ~~months!~~), teaches, lectures, travels, and also serves on certain committees by ~~which~~ ^{where} he feels the contemporary artist should be ~~listened to~~ ^{involved}, or at least acknowledged. ^{msat 1} He is not gregarious, but he is socially expansive and curious, ~~especially about foreign artists and their opinions.~~ ^{Toward} He is open-minded and sharply critical: he was the first Abstract-Expressionist to say Pop Art was "okay", and the first to admit publicly that he didn't like it, ^{insert 2} though he felt it had a youthful joy which would doubtless lead certain individuals ~~artists~~ onward. This latter quality is something few if any professional art critics have noted, so eager have they been to tie Pop Art to ^{a Millstone} Social ~~Context~~ and dump it in the Hudson.

see p.6

Motherwell is 50 this year, ~~xxx~~ looks younger, and is definitely interested ~~xxxxxxxx~~ in Onward. Contrary to what ~~the~~ some critics have said, particularly in the daily and weekly papers, Pop and Op Art have not at all "killed" other contemporary movements, least of all Abstract Expressionism, as evidenced by the two excellent exhibitions of the New York School given recently at the University of Pennsylvania and the Los Angeles County Museum. As a matter of fact, Pop and Op have tended to stimulate a way of looking, ~~xx~~ particularly at the Abstract Expressionists and Hard-Edge painters, which reveals new qualities in their works. Ellsworth Kelly, for example, is more interesting rather than less if you have just come from a show of Richard Anuszkiewicz or Larry Poons, and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ you see more in a Motherwell rather than less if you have just been studying a James Rosenquist or a Jim Dine.



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V 14

~~Varieties of religious experience do not hurt religion, nor do varieties of aesthetic experience hurt art.~~

Variety^{is} what, of course, Abstract-Expressionism has insisted on all along and ~~has offered~~ its originators have offered it to us consistently: there has been no "school" in the history of art that I know of which has included artists so totally different in style and subject matter as Pollock, de Kooning, Rothko, Newman, Kline, Gottlieb, Motherwell and ~~the~~ others. (A variety, incidentally, which Pop and Op Art adherents have a hard time maintaining among their members.) Motherwell's own development from the early '40s has included a great ~~variety~~ many changes in style and confrontation. There is, to be sure, a characteristic Motherwell touch, placement and attack, but the uses to which they are put from period to period are enormously ~~variously~~ different.

add to p. 15 → bottom:

One should also add Wallace Stevens to this roster of enthusiasms, as the American poet probably most similar in sensibility to Motherwell/⁵ Stevens's Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird is almost a paradigm of Motherwell's conception of the "series", in which variations on a ~~variety~~ visual motif invite the artist and the viewer to see things with as much ingenuity and insight available to each without violating the essential identity of the ~~initial~~ initial image. In this way Motherwell brings the variation idea into the area of portraiture, in his case a series of portraits which reveals aspects of ^{a given} ~~the~~ image rather than a face or a torso, or a ballerina backstage as in Degas. Motherwell is every bit as enamoured ~~in~~ of the rough triangle and the slightly irregular circle as Degas was of the backstage theatre and the race track. As Franz Kline once remark@d, "It's a terrific thing to be in love with the square." (CHECK)

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v 5.

NOTES ON Robert MOTHERWELL

Modern beauty is what interests ~~sk~~ him. Modern beauty excites you first and ~~then~~ interests you afterward. The ^{art} beauty of other periods interests you ^{first} and then gradually you become excited by its beauty.

Modern beauty is ours right away, if we are responsive.

Motherwell's work ^X continually fluctuates between chance and deliberation. New motifs arise from visual and subconscious experiences (the Summertime in Italy ~~series~~ and the Beside the Sea series, for example, were inspired visually, the Lyric Suite series and the Automatisms subconsciously), yet the Elegies to the Spanish Republic continue obsessively through every period since their inception in 1948, as do certain aspects of the collages and his almost hedonistic delight in the textures, qualities and colors of Paper, which in Motherwell's oeuvre must have a capital P, whether one speaks of collage, watercolor and ink or lithographic media. A piece of paper can inspire him ~~spontaneously~~ to as ardent ^{an} engagement as a Civil War.

The other capital P in his work is Poetry. Without being literary in content, his work continually reflects the importance of poetry in his life and art. One of his great early collages is titled The Poet, as is one of his most recent lithographs (^{the} ~~which~~ latter is ~~almost~~ ^{the} ~~mirror~~ ^{image of the} shape of a P). The Elegy to the Spanish Republic motif was discovered while decorating a poem ~~text~~ by Harold Rosenberg, and its first major ~~text~~ development was titled At Five in the Afternoon (1949), the repeated refrain of Garcia Lorca's ~~great~~ ^{great} elegy for the bullfighter Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, a poem which undoubtedly suggested the title for the whole series. Such other titles as Mallarme's Swan and Throw of the Dice, The Voyage and The Joy of Living, Jour la Maison, Nuit la Rue and Automatisms indicate his homage to Mallarme, Baudelaire and the Surrealist poets of France, *respectively. One should also add... etc*

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V 6

Only a truly inter-continental artist (^{Washington} California-- New York, ^{Canada} ~~Massachusetts~~ Massachusetts-- Oregon, Mexico-- Greenwich Village, East Hampton-- Cape Cod) could dash into European culture with such zest and ~~ability~~ alacrity, while retaining his identity as an American, admiring, inspired, but not at all swamped by it all, as were most American ~~artists~~ artists in the past. Short of a national disaster, there could never be a question of Motherwell becoming an expatriate, perhaps because he believes that, after Picasso, Matisse and Miró, modernity in art lives here. (~~Mondrian, one of his early and continuing great admirations, came to New York after all and did his last masterpieces here.~~) *He and his colleagues believed this and their accomplishments have proved*

To p. 3
insert
insert

Motherwell outside the studio is an engaging, wily conversationalist. attentive to He is very ~~intelligent~~ what you have to say, and will not hesitate to point out, ~~subtly~~ subtly but definitely, where he finds your thinking going wrong. If he finds your thinking right, or if you have a really fresh idea, he acts as if you had just given him a present he'd been longing for.

^{Motherwell} He is very conscious of distinctions and, for all the spontaneity in his ~~his~~ work, of what must be done for and about art right now in an historical sense. Recently on TV, ~~interviewed~~ Channel 13 the ~~interview~~ director of The Whitechapel Gallery in London, Bryan Robertson, asked him if he "could make some absolutely final and ultimate and all-embracing statement" about his work as a whole. Motherwell replied:

"I think I would most choose to talk about the ethical character of art which I think moves us even more than art's delight in sensuality, or its beauty of formal structure. I'm not talking about paintings with a moral like Aesop's fables, of course. Moralisms belong to the lowest forms of painting-- genre painting, propaganda, popular religious art, advertising. What I mean by an artist's ethic is what he insists on

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V & 7

having in a picture and what equally strongly he cannot allow in a picture through conviction. In my case, I allow no nostalgia, no sentimentalism, no propaganda, no spelling out for the vulgar, no autobiography, no violation of the nature of the canvas as a flat surface, no clichés, no illusionism, no description, no seduction, no charm, no relaxation, no mere taste, no obviousness, no coldness. On the contrary, I insist on immediacy, passion or tenderness, sheer presence, beingness as such, objectivity and true invention and resolution, light, the unexpected, direct color (sky blue, grass green, English vermilion, the earth colors: ochre, sienna, umber), and black and white, and a certain broad masculinity and emotional weight that is hard to describe. These are my moral acceptances and rejections. Other painters have other values, but there is nothing mysterious about any artist's values if one's mind and heart are sympathetic, clear and unprejudiced, a condition less common than you might think."

✓ This statement reveals, in its almost Puritan tone, the rigor and austerity which is the backbone of much of the best Abstract Expressionist painting, for all its spontaneity, playfulness and passion. It also implies that struggle between starkness and hedonism which is the special drama of Motherwell's own work.

~~Frank O'Hara~~

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8.

When ~~it was first~~ this interview was first shown half the audience said, "Oh yeah," and the other half said, "Wow!" I myself thought the tone of it ~~was~~ quite unlike "the Motherwell I know." But a little later something about it ^{reminded me of} ~~brought to mind~~ all those "battles" fought by the Abstract Expressionists against provincialism and regionalism in American art, for recognition of a new, clear and passionate expression, the panels and forums, the journals, the letters to museums and newspapers demanding a change in our way of feeling a painting and an acknowledgement of the new vision. That battle was won and a younger generation, an Andy ~~Warhol~~ or a ~~Bridget~~ Larry Poons, has a quick, lively and responsive audience at hand because of these earlier victories. Motherwell himself could certainly rest secure in his accomplishment. But he insists on pushing further ~~at the Museum of Modern Art in such huge recent paintings as~~ ^{at} ~~Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 100, Dublin 1916 Easter Day and Africa),~~ and ~~therefore~~ I'm glad he's still in there fighting, ~~the good fight.~~ , in his most recent works, towards a new simplicity and candor, and I'm glad he's in there fighting.

Frank O'Hara

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O'Hara Archive File
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Robert-Motherwell,
(different editions of:)

Statement about him
by Frank O'Hara for
Exhibition Catalogue.
(1965)

Notes on ROBE

I saw my
when I first
own response
what have you

This, it

Because after another visit or two and a couple of weeks had passed I finally realized that if you took any quality out of a painting in imagination (and I don't believe you can or conceive of how), you wouldn't have anything left there, whether it were Tintoretto, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Picasso, de Kooning or Motherwell. And what would happen with a Matisse or a Barnett Newman? Or a Rodin, a Giacometti, a David Smith?

~~So it was a most fortunate question for me.~~

Motherwell is tough, sassy and, yes, elegant, ^{as a painter} where a noble motif appears, as in the first Spanish Elegies, he will pursue it and nag it for fifteen years, proving that tragedy, disillusion and diffidence are our daily inevitable fare, and thus producing some of the great paintings in American culture. Similarly with the collages: his imitators get the glamour, but they miss the physical tearingness and destruction beyond technical need, the sparseness and cynicism which is more meaningful than mere simplicity. He always seems to be wryly reflecting that to do less is more, and getting no satisfaction from the thought. What is difficult in Motherwell's work is not the rationale for its surface attraction, but the interconnection of the individual works.

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A.R.N.--2

index or eight by twenty feet, his work, like that of Franz Kline,
v 1.

is concerned with a frontal assault on the view of significant

Notes on ROBERT MOTHERWELL

Where such 20th Century art is not only accepted
but is also being taught in the schools, as I believe it is.

I saw my first Motherwell⁸ at the Kootz Gallery fifteen years ago,
when I first came to New York. I was with a young painter who, to my
own response to the show, said, "Yes, but if you take away the elegance
what have you left?"

This, it turned out, was a wonderfully illuminating question.
Because after another visit or two and a couple of weeks had passed
I finally realized that if you took any quality out of a painting in
imagination (and I don't believe you can or conceive of how), you
wouldn't have anything left there, whether it were Tintoretto, Rembrandt,
Velasquez, Picasso, de Kooning or Motherwell. And what would happen
with a Matisse or a Barnett Newman? Or a Rodin, a Giacometti, a
David Smith?

~~So it was a most fortunate question for me.~~ *as a painter*

Motherwell is tough, sassy and, yes, elegant, where a noble motif
appears, as in the first Spanish Elegies, he will pursue it and nag it
for fifteen years, proving that tragedy, disillusion and diffidence are
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ingful than mere simplicity. He always seems to be wryly reflecting
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What is difficult in Motherwell's work is not the rationale for its
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A.R.H.--2

inches or eight by twenty feet, his work, like that of Franz Kline, is concerned with a frontal assault on the view of significant two-dimensional forms. Where much 20th Century art naively assumes that he is making, with all its variety is THE WORK, as Mallarmé intended, that to project another dimension is something extraordinary, here however various the poems, to be writing THE BOOK. One thinks of D.J. we find the clarification of means between painting and sculpture, Lawrence, too, and of Chassans and Giacometti. Among the contemporary the extreme decision on which properties belong to which. Beside Americans he relates, only enough, most closely to its learning; in this, Op Art becomes merely trompe l'oeil, the old faldir's trick, their utterly different personalities and forms a strong central about as convincing as Dali's recent conception of the discovery of impulse which cannot confine itself to one style or language, to say one mode of communication, so proud and additional new their desires. They early Dali in one way and Joseph Cornell's wonderful work in another, are probably both flirting with the absolute, and if they are, she is of course something else.) But in every way the great truth keeps turning a different shoulder to them, or talking them to make a slight adjustment of the shoulder of what shoulder they draw the day and canvas, that poetry is made with words. The irritating thing before last.

about Philistine criticism is that sometimes it's right: some Assemblagists cannot draw; some pop artists can only render what party. lots of drinking, no conversation with him. When we did talk, later, it was almost always about poetry: Apollinaire, Mandelstam, as the result is a work of art, but it does not ensure a long career of delight, but rather one of repetition of what one can do. to Wallace towards William Carlos Williams. I had been tremendously impressed by the Memories of Wallace series which Rotherwell had edited (instead, it was the Memories, for me and my poet friends). At that time he never mentioned painting, as far as I remember. Rotherwell is not difficult, as he progresses, but at the time I thought he was the Prince of Memories. Some people still do. Actually his personality is quite a lot simpler than that.

But to get back to the harrowing aspect of a retrospective in another sense, my own: nobody who hasn't done a selection has any idea of how anxiety-making it is. You make your preferences known to the artist, and in this case a very grand, generous, open-minded one. He says he is satisfied, or more so, with the works you are including. And immediately your mind is flooded with mentions by

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v 34. v 2

What he is making, with all its variety is THE WORK, as Mallarmé intended,

He paints, makes collages, draws (this year he made 1,000 small however various the poems, to be writing THE BOOK. One thinks of D.H. Lawrence, too, and of Cézanne and Giacometti. Among the contemporary Americans he relates, oddly enough, most closely to de Kooning: in their utterly different personalities one finds a strong central impulse which cannot confine itself to one style or language, to any one mode of communication, so proud and anxious are their desires. They are probably both flirting with the Absolute, and if they are, she keeps turning a different shoulder to them, or telling them to make a slight adjustment of the drawing of that shoulder they drew the day before last.

I first met Motherwell in East Hampton in, probably 1952. Great party, lots of dancing, no conversation with him. When we did talk, later, it was almost always about poetry: Apollinaire, Baudelaire, Jacob, Reverdy, Rilke (no so much) and Lorca (lots), and we also got to Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams. I had been tremendously impressed by the Documents of Modern Art Series which Motherwell had edited (indeed, it was The Gospels, for me and my poet friends). At that time we never discussed painting, so far as I remember. Motherwell is not diffident, he is preoccupied, but at the time I thought he was the Prince of Diffidence. Some people still do. Actually his personality is quite a lot simpler than I at first thought. He has a very acute mind, and a great many things on it.

See York School given recently at the University of Pennsylvania and the Los Angeles County Museum. As a matter of fact, Pop and Op have tended to stimulate a way of looking, particularly at the Abstract

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He paints, makes collages, draws (this year he made 1,000 small inks on Japan paper in six weeks!), teaches, lectures, travels, and also serves on certain committees where he feels the contemporary artist should be involved, or at least acknowledged. Motherwell outside the studio is an engaging, wily conversationalist. He is not gregarious, but he is socially expansive and curious. He is very attentive to what you have to say, and will not hesitate to point out, subtly but definitely, where he finds your thinking going wrong. If he finds your thinking right, or if you have a really fresh idea, he acts as if you had just given him a present he'd been longing for. He is open-minded and sharply critical: he was the first Abstract Expressionist to say Pop Art was "okay", and the first to admit publicly that he didn't like it, though he felt it had a youthful joy which would doubtless lead certain individual artists onward. This latter quality is something few if any professional art critics have noted, so eager have they been to tie Pop Art to a social millstone and dump it in the Hudson.

Motherwell is 50 this year, looks younger, and is definitely interested in Onward. Contrary to what some critics have said, particularly in the daily and weekly papers, Pop and Op Art have not at all "killed" other contemporary movements, least of all Abstract Expressionism, as evidenced by the two excellent exhibitions of the New York School given recently at the University of Pennsylvania and the Los Angeles County Museum. As a matter of fact, Pop and Op have tended to stimulate a way of looking, particularly at the Abstract

do certain aspects of the collages and his almost hedonistic delight

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v 5.

Expressionists and Hard-Edge painters, which reveals new qualities in their works. Ellsworth Kelly, for example, is more interesting rather than less if you have just come from a show of Richard Anuskievicz or Larry Poons, and you see more in a Motherwell rather than less if you have just been studying a James Rosenquist or a Jim Dine.

Variety is what, of course, Abstract Expressionism has insisted on all along and its originators have offered it to us consistently: there has been no "school" in the history of art that I know of which has included artists so totally different in style and subject matter as Pollock, de Kooning, Rothko, Newman, Kline, Gottlieb, Motherwell and others. (A variety, incidentally, which Pop and Op Art adherents have a hard time maintaining among their members.) Motherwell's own development from the early '40s has included a great many changes in style and confrontation. There is, to be sure, a characteristic Motherwell touch, placement and attack, but the uses to which they are put from period to period are enormously different.

Modern beauty is what interests him. Modern beauty excites you first and interests you afterward. The art of other periods interests you first and then gradually you become excited by its beauty.

Motherwell's work continually fluctuates between chance and deliberation. New motifs arise from visual and subconscious experiences (the Summertime in Italy and the Beside the Sea series, for example, were inspired visually, the Lyric Suite series and the Automatism subconsciously), yet the Elegies to the Spanish Republic continue obsessively through every period since their inception in 1948, as do certain aspects of the collages and his almost hedonistic delight

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v 6.
v 5.

in the textures, qualities and colors of Paper, which in Motherwell's oeuvre must have a capital P, whether one speaks of collage, watercolor and ink or lithographic media. A piece of paper can inspire him to as ardent an engagement as a Civil War.

The other capital P in his work is Poetry. Without being literary in content, his work continually reflects the importance of poetry in his life and art. One of his great early collages is titled The Poet, as is one of his most recent lithographs (the latter is the mirror and image of the shape of a P). The Elegy to the Spanish Republic motif was discovered while decorating a poem by Harold Rosenberg, and its first major development was titled At Five in the Afternoon (1949), the repeated refrain of Garcia Lorca's great elegy for the bullfighter Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, a poem which undoubtedly suggested the title for the whole series. Such other titles as Mallarmé's Swan and Throw of the Dice, The Voyage and The Joy of Living, Jour la Maison, Nuit la Rue and Automatismes indicate his homage to Mallarmé, Baudelaire and the Surrealist poets of France, respectively. One should also add Wallace Stevens to this roster of enthusiasms, as the American poet probably most similar in sensibility to Motherwell. Stevens' Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird is almost a paradigm of Motherwell's conception of the "series", in which variations on a visual motif invite the artist and the viewer to see things with as much ingenuity and insight available to each without violating the essential identity of the initial image. In this way Motherwell brings the variation idea into the area of portraiture, in his case a series of portraits which reveals aspects of a given image rather than a face or a torso, or a ballerina backstage

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v 7.

as in Degas. Motherwell is every bit as enamored of the rough triangle and the slightly irregular circle as Degas was of the backstage theatre and the race track. As Franz Kline once remarked, "It's a ^{wonderful} ~~terrible~~ thing to be in love with the square." (C184X)

Only a truly intercontinental artist (Washington, California, New York, Massachusetts, Oregon, Mexico, Canada, East Hampton, Cape Cod) could dash into European culture with such zest and alacrity, while retaining his identity as an American, admiring, inspired, but not at all swamped by it all, as were most American artists⁶ in the past. Short of a national disaster, there could never be a question of Motherwell becoming an expatriate, perhaps because he believes that, after Picasso, Matisse and Miró, modernity in art lives here.

Motherwell is very conscious of distinctions and, for all the spontaneity in his work, of what must be done for and about art right now in an historical sense. Recently on Channel 13 TV, director of The Whitechapel Gallery in London, Bryan Robertson, asked him if he "could make some absolutely final and ultimate and all-embracing statement" about his work as a whole. Motherwell replied:

"I think I would most choose to talk about the ethical character of art which I think moves us even more than art's delight in sensuality, or its beauty of formal structure. I'm not talking about paintings with a moral like Aesop's fables, or course. Moralisms belong to the lowest forms of painting--genre painting, propaganda, popular religious art, advertising. What I mean by an artist's ethic is what he insists on having in a picture and what equally strongly he cannot allow in a

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v 7.

picture through conviction. In my case, I allow no nostalgia, no sentimentalism, no propaganda, no spelling out for the vulgar, no autobiography, no violation of the nature of the canvas as a flat surface, no clichés, no illusionism, no description, no seduction, no charm, no relaxation, no mere taste, no obviousness, no coldness. On the contrary, I insist on immediacy, passion or tenderness, sheer presence, beingness as such, objectivity and true invention and resolution, light, the unexpected, direct color (sky blue, grass green, English vermilion, the earth colors: ochre, sienna, umber), and black and white, and a certain broad masculinity and emotional weight that is hard to describe. These are my moral acceptances and rejections. Other painters have other values, but there is nothing mysterious about any artist's values if one's mind and heart are sympathetic, clear and unprejudiced, a condition less common than you might think."

When this interview was first shown half the audience said, "Oh yeah," and the other half said, "Wow!" I myself thought the tone of it quite unlike "the Matherwell I know." But a little later something about it reminded me of all those "battles" fought by the Abstract Expressionists against provincialism and regionalism in American art, for recognition of a new, clear and passionate expression, the panels and forums, the journals, the letters to museums and newspapers demanding a change in our way of feeling a painting and an acknowledgement of the new vision. That battle was won and a younger generation, an Andy Warhol or a Larry Poons, has a quick, lively and responsive audience at hand because of these earlier victories. Matherwell

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LEONARD BERNSTEIN

8 v.

When a major artist has a major retrospective and he is an American and it is in an American museum, all sorts of borrowing incidents occur which involve all concerned. For the artist it insists on pushing further, in his most recent works, towards a new simplicity and candor, and I'm glad he's in there fighting.

Frank O'Hara. One could demand it of the other. One could fall range of sensibility in two hours of attention, let's say, from a novelist, a poet, a novelist, an actor or playwright, a great director. Each has a relatively vast temporal area to prove and reprove, correct or re-correct, the gradings of the vision. But painters and sculptors are expected to be able to affirm, by the simple written or collected and facillitated, the verity and importance of their preoccupations, instantaneously and simultaneously.

And this is right, ultimately, because their art do not use time as a duration, they use it as exception. We love the "long time" look of Rembrandt and Vermeer as we love the lightningness of a cubist in Picasso or Fernand, and we love the quickness of the splashes and drastic lines of Pollock and Rothwell as we love the speed of transition of native and musical thought in Stravinsky and Webern. But these are not identifications, they are correspondences. In painting and sculpture we perceive that or slow-time as a fractal experience, not a cumulative experience.

Rothwell's work is a fractal experience par excellence. His insistence has been on the painting as "wall"-flat surface, two dimensional, as illustration. Whether measured time by the

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ABOUT ROBERT MOTHERWELL

When a major artist has a major retrospective and he is an American and it is in an American museum, all sorts of harrowing excitements occur which involve all concerned. For the artist it is the temporary summation of his achievement thus far, an exposure which no sensible person should want and many artists don't want. Who would demand it of the other arts--the more or less full range of sensibility in two hours of attention, let's say, from a composer, a poet, a novelist, an actor or playwright, a great diva? Each has a relatively vast temporal area to prove and reprove, correct or re-assert, the grandeur of the vision. But painters and sculptors are expected to be able to affirm, by the simple method of collection and installation, the verity and importance of their preoccupations, instantaneously and simultaneously.

And this is right, ultimately, because their arts do not use time as a duration, they use it as conception. We love the "long time" look of Rembrandt and Vermeer as we love the languorous ease of a cabaletta in Bellini or Verdi, and we love the quickness of the whiplashes and drastic lines of Pollock and Motherwell as we love the speed of transition of motive and musical thought in Stravinsky and Webern. But these are not identifications, they are correspondences. In painting and sculpture we perceive fast or slow time as a frontal onslaught, not a cumulative experience.

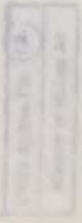
Motherwell's work is a frontal experience par excellence. His insistence has been on the painting as "wall"--flat surface, two dimensional, no illusionism. Whether measured five by ten

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A.R.M.--3

critics of other works which are superlatively important to the representation. And you think of the walls. You think of the walls here and in Europe and what they can show and what you must not put in for the sake of the other works, and of the exact painting you have decided to exclude because you think another is more important--and then you have the appalling realization that the thought-word you used was "think"! Help! Are you sure? With a major artist it is very difficult to be sure between two important paintings, and suddenly you wish you were doing a show of the Pont-Aven school or the Barbizons or the Surrealists, because to no single artist would you be responsible if someone wouldn't lend a key work, or if your judgment went astray. But one-man shows are what you want to see, what you want to do, and this is the artist you want to present: so you jump, knowing full well that in Europe retrospectives of living artists abound, but here until very recently they were very rare, and that you have put your head in the noose of your admiration for this artist, and if the show doesn't say what you want it to say, it is nobody's fault but your own.

Motherwell is tough, sassy and elegant, as a painter. Where a noble motif appears, as in the first Spanish Elegies, he will pursue it and nag it for fifteen years, proving that tragedy, disillusion and diffidence are our daily inevitable fare, and thus producing some of the great paintings in American culture. Similarly with the collages: his imitators get the glamour, but they miss the physical tearingness and destruction beyond technical need, the



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A.R.N.--5

A.R.N.--4

artist should be involved, or at least acknowledged. Motherwell
 outside the studio is an engaging, wily conversationalist. He is
 spareness which is more meaningful than mere simplicity. He always
 seems to be wryly reflecting that to do less is more, and getting no
 satisfaction from the thought. What is difficult in Motherwell's
 work is not the rationale for its surface attraction, but the inter-
 connection of the individual works. What he is making, with all its
 variety is THE WORK, as Mallarmé intended, however various the poems,
 to be writing THE BOOK. One thing of D.H. Lawrence, too, and of
 Cézanne and Giacometti. Among the contemporary Americans he
 relates, oddly enough, most closely to the late David Smith: in
 their different personalities one finds a strong central impulse
 which cannot confine itself to one style or language, to any one
 mode of communication, so proud and anxious are their desires. They
 have probably been both flirting with the Absolute, and if they
 have been, she kept turning a different shoulder to them, or telling
 them to make a slight adjustment of the drawing of that shoulder they
 drew the day before last.

I first met Motherwell in East Hampton in, probably 1952.
 When we did talk, later, it was almost always about poetry: Apollinaire,
 Baudelaire, Jacob, Reverdy, Rilke (not so much) and Lorca (lots),
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Motherwell paints, makes collages, draws (this year he made
 600 small inks on Japan paper in six weeks), teaches, lectures, travels,
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A.R.M.--5

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Motherwell is 50 this year, looks younger, and is definitely interested in Onward. Contrary to what some critics have said, particularly in the daily and weekly papers, Pop and Op Art have not at all "replaced" other contemporary movements, least of all Abstract Expressionism, as evidenced by the two excellent exhibitions of the New York School given recently at the University of Pennsylvania and the Los Angeles County Museum. As a matter of fact, Pop and Op have tended to stimulate a way of looking, particularly at the Abstract Expressionists and Hard Edge painters, which reveals new qualities in their works. Ellsworth Kelly, for example, is more interesting rather than less if you have just come from a show of Richard Anuszkiewicz or Larry Poons, and you see more in a Motherwell rather than less if you have just been study a James Rosenquist or a Jim Dine.

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A.R.M.--6

Variety is what, of course, Abstract Expressionism has insisted on all along and its originators have offer it to us consistently: there has been no "school" in the history of art that I know of which has included artists so totally different style and subject matter as Pollock, de Kooning, Rothko, Newman, Kline, Gottlieb, Motherwell and others. (A variety, incidentally, which Pop and Op Art adherents have a hard time maintaining among their members.) Motherwell's own development from the early '40's has included a great many changes in style and confrontation. There is, to be sure, a characteristic Motherwell touch, placement and attack, but the uses to which they are put from period to period are enormously different.

Modern beauty is what interests him. Modern beauty excites first and interests afterward. The art of other periods interests first and then gradually becomes exciting by its beauty.

Motherwell's work continually fluctuates between change and deliberation. New motifs arise from visual and subconscious experiences (the Summertime in Italy, and the Beside the Sea series, for example, were inspired visually; the Lyric Suite series and the Automatisms, subconsciously), yet the Elegies to the Spanish Republic continue obsessively through every period since their inception in 1948, as do certain aspects of the collages and his almost hedonistic delight in the textures, qualities and colors of paper, which in Motherwell's oeuvre must have a capital P, whether one speaks of collage, watercolor and ink or lithographic media.

A piece of paper can inspire him as much as a Civil War.



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A.R.M.--7

The other capital P in his work is Poetry. Without being literary in content, his work continually reflects the importance of poetry in his life and art. One of his great early collages is titled The Post, as is one of his most recent lithographs (the latter is the marfap image of the shape of a P.)

The Elegy to the Spanish Republic motif was discovered while making a drawing for a poem by Harold Rosenberg, and its first major development was titled At Five in the Afternoon (1949), the repeated refrain of Garcia Lorca's great elegy for the bullfighter Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, a poem which undoubtedly suggested the title for the whole series. Such other titles as Mallarmé's Swan and Throw of the Dice, The Voyage, and The Joy of Living, Jour la Maison, Nuit la Rue and Automatismes indicate his homage to Mallarmé, Baudelaire and the Surrealist poets of France, respectively.

One should also add Wallace Stevens to this roster of enthusiasms, as the American poet most probably similar in sensibility to Motherwell. Steven's Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird is almost a paradigm of Motherwell's conception of the "series", in which variations on a visual motif invite the artist and the viewer to see things with as much ingenuity and insight available to each without violating the essential identity of the initial image.

In this way Motherwell brings the variation idea into the area of portraiture, in his case a series of portraits which reveals aspects of a given image rather than a face or a torso, or a ballerina popular religious art, advertising. What I mean by an artist's ethic is what he isolates as having in a picture and what

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A.R.N.---3

he cannot allow in a picture through conviction. In my case, I
backstage as in Degas. Motherwell is every bit as enamoured of the
all the no nostalgia, no sentimentalism, no propaganda, no swelling out
rough triangle and the slightly irregular circle as Degas was of the
for the value, no eclecticism, no violation of the nature of the
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comes as a flat surface, no slick, no illusion, no description,
"It's a wonderful thing to be in love with the square."

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In the contrary, I insist on immediacy, freedom of technique,
God) could dash into European culture with such zest and alacrity,
stare precisely, beingness as such, definitively and free invention and
while retaining his identity as an American, admiring, inspired, but
revolution, light, the unexpected, direct color and form, from green,
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English vermillion, the earth colors: ochre, sienna, ochre, and
past.

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is what he insists on having in a picture and what equally strongly
because of those earlier victories, Motherwell himself could certainly



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A.R.N.--9

he cannot allow in a picture through conviction. In my case, I allow no nostalgia, no sentimentalism, no propaganda, no spelling out for the vulgar, no autobiography, no violation of the nature of the canvas as a flat surface, no clichés, no illusionism, no description, no seduction, no charm, no relaxation, no mere taste, no obviousness, no coldness. In presenting his exhibition we are joining

"On the contrary, I insist on immediacy, passion or tenderness, sheer presence, beingness as such, objectivity and true invention and resolution, light, the unexpected, direct color (sky blue, grass green, English vermilion, the earth colors: ochre, sienna, umber), and black and white, and a certain broad masculinity and emotional weight that is hard to describe. These are my moral acceptances and rejections. Other painters have other values, but there is nothing mysterious about my artist's values if one's mind and heart are sympathetic, clear and unprejudiced, a condition less common than you might think."

When this interview was first shown half of the audience said, "Oh, yeah," and the other half said, "Wow!" I myself thought the tone of it quite unlike "the Motherwell I know". But a little later something about it reminded me of all those battles fought by the Abstract Expressionists against provincialism and regionalism in American art, for recognition of a new, clear and passionate expression, the panels and forums, the journals, the letters to museums and newspapers demanding a change in the way of feeling a painting and an acknowledgement of the new vision.

That battle was won and a younger generation, an Andy Warhol or a Larry Poons, has a quick, lively and responsive audience at hand because of these earlier victories. Motherwell himself could certainly

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A.R.M.--10

rest secure in his accomplishment. But the modern artist has no recognisable laurels to crown him and no inclination to rest. Like the rest of us, but more as an exemplar than a companion, he has his arrogant insistence on joy and his fateful cognition of the deaths around us. In presenting his exhibition we are joining Motherwell's passionate affirmation of experience against despair. With each line, mass and torn edge he is, like Apelles, erecting for us the noble wall of his aspiration against the darkness without.

Frank O'Hara

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Robert Motherwell

incomplete article
on him in New
Statesman

1 April 1966

O'Hara Archive File 12
Museum of Modern Art

IL 1966

larger version and called it *Granada*. Since then he has used the motif over and over again and every painting in the series is now entitled *Elegy to the Spanish Republic*. The most recent example in his retrospective at Whitechapel Art Gallery is dated 1965 and numbered 104.

The series is one of the great contributions to Abstract Expressionism, and when several examples are hung together, as they were when the retrospective was held in New York, they make a staggering spectacle. But at Whitechapel they have been dispersed and put into corners, as if the repetitiveness were something to be minimised, and all the best positions in the gallery are given to paintings in which Motherwell has tried, in the intervals between the *Elegies*, to find effective alternatives. Unsuccessfully, in my view.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Black Devices

ROBERT MELVILLE

O'Hara Archive File
Museum of Modern Art

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After the early *Elegies*, the abstractions become much livelier. He sometimes obtains interesting chance effects from Arp's torn-paper collage technique and a number of his splash paintings convey a sense of violent activity - whipped-up waves, angry-looking knottings and that sort of thing. Two ragged black silhouettes in the large picture called *Two Figures with a Cerulean Blue Stripe* have a splotchy, gestural vitality and suggest a freakish and rather brutal get-together. It's evident that the vague relationship to human figures has come about by chance, because the

silhouette on the right wouldn't bring to mind a human figure at all if it weren't associated with the other, which roughly adumbrates a side view of a standing woman wearing a hat. O'Hara refers to the 'sexual atmosphere' of this picture, since the silhouette on the right establishes a sort of coital relationship with the hatted figure by means of two projections which appear to effect penetration just above where the navel would be, and I feel sure that Motherwell must have been itching to give it some such title as *Paolo and Francesca*, but in this case he could rely upon 'the direct diagrammatical relation' to make the point for him. It's perhaps because intimacy doesn't occur in the right place that O'Hara considers this coupling to have 'a specific tenderness and a poignancy which has nothing to do with "figure" painting or with handling.' At the same time, he claims that 'a Courbet-like health establishes a sense of both sexuality and repose.' This dragging-in of Courbet's name to bolster up a picture which is in fact a blown-up doodle and a desultory caricature of human behaviour seems to me to be as thoroughly improper as some of Motherwell's titles.

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The 104th variation at Whitechapel is pain-

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One small object is genuinely kinetic. It's a short metal rod clamped into a tiny power-driven turntable, and when it whizzes round it resembles a fan of fine spray. It's been placed near the honeycomb heads and looks a paltry little thing beside them, but *Vertical Construction No 2*, which doesn't actually move, is the most beautiful example of kinetic sculpture I have seen. The overlapping of the wires produces an effect of watered silk,

Motherwell

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Robert Motherwell :

Introduction to
Exhibition Catalog

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The measure of the success of Abstract Expressionism may be gauged by our response to this ethic today--it seems a foregone conclusion, common sense, it is surrounded by an atmosphere of "of course." But in the late thirties and early forties there were many enemies of this "passionate allegiance." We forget, in the complexity of our present worldwide artistic and political engagements, that period's artistic and political isolationism (how controversial then were Gertrude Stein and Wendell Wilkie!), the mania for the Impressionist masters, the conviction where there was any interest at all that avant-garde was not only a French word but an Ecole de Paris monopoly.

Without transition the struggle against Depression conditions became the struggle against War. War on such a scale that "conditions" became an obsolete word, faced down by the appalling actual and philosophical monolith of historical event. But the artists were not faced down by vocabulary. With the advent of war a heterogeneous number of American artists whose only common passion was the necessity of contem-

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ROBERT MOTHERWELL INTRODUCTION

Recently, in a TV interview, Robert Motherwell remembered the aims of the early period of Abstract Expressionism as being, "Really quite simple in a way, almost too simple, considering what has happened in the last twenty years. But really I suppose most of us felt that our passionate allegiance was not to American art or in that sense to any national art, but that there was such a thing as modern art: that it was essentially international in character, that it was the greatest painting adventure of our time, that we wished to participate in it, that we wished to plant it here, that it would blossom in its own way here as it had elsewhere because beyond national differences there are human similarities that are more consequential..." (bibl.)

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porary art being Modern began to emerge as a movement which, in Boris Pasternak's famous description of a far different emergency, ... "turned with the same side towards the times, stepping forward with its first declaration about its learning, its philosophy and its art." (1)

Underlying, and indeed burgeoning within, every great work of the Abstract Expressionists, whether subjectively lyrical as in Gorky, publicly explosive as in de Kooning or hieratical as in Newman, exists the traumatic consciousness of emergency and crisis experienced as personal event, the artist assuming responsibility for being, however accidentally, alive here and now. Their right was to a somber and joyful art: somber because it sees, and joyful because it exists. But they were frequently the first violators of their own right, to which we often owe the marvelously demonic, sullen or mysterious quality of their work, as they moved from the pictorial image to the hidden subject.

Motherwell's special contribution to the American struggle for modernity was a strong aversion to provincialism, both political and esthetic, a profound immersion in modern French culture (especially School of Paris art and the poetry and theories of the Symbolist and Surrealist poets-- conquest by absorption, like the Chinese), and a particular affinity for what he has sometimes called "Mediterranean light", which in his paintings seems to mean a mingling of the light of his native California with that of Mexico and the South of France. This latter may explain somewhat the ambiguity between the relatively soft painted edges of many of his forms and the hard, clear contour they convey, especially in the series of Elegies to the Spanish Republic. He can employ a rough, spontaneous stroke while evoking from the picture plane a precise personal light with great economy. There is no atmospheric light in his paintings; if he uses grey it is never twilight or dawn. One of his important early

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painting is called Western Air (cat. no.) and the light in it persists in many later works.

Motherwell was born in Aberdeen, Washington in 1915, but his childhood and adolescence were spent in California, mainly in San Francisco, with short periods in Los Angeles. He also attended a school in the dry climate of Atascadero, California because of chronic asthma. Although he was not to make the decision to devote himself to painting until 1940, in 1926 when he was eleven years old, and again at seventeen, he attended art schools for brief periods, thus indicating a surprisingly early talent for art, considering that at eleven he was awarded a fellowship to the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles (where Philip Guston also studied briefly). But the intervening years were spent largely with the study of the liberal arts and philosophy, first at Stanford and later at Harvard. Meanwhile, his travels had begun, with summer trips to Canada, Mexico and Europe. At the end of the '30s he spent a year in France studying modern French art and literature. Then in 1940 he moved to New York where he has lived since.

Motherwell discussed his first days in New York in a recent talk at Yale University: (bibl.) "One of the great good fortunes I have had in my life, and there have been several, was that at a certain crucial moment in my life when I was in my mid-twenties and still hadn't really decided what I wanted to do, though in another way I'd always wanted to be a painter but through the circumstances of fate had never known one... for better or worse, I don't know-- at a certain moment through a contact with a friend who is now professor of music at Brandeis University I decided to go to New York... and study with Meyer Schapiro. In those days there was nothing like there is here, that if you were interested in contemporary art there was a place where you could go and be oriented.the closest

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approach to it, though he is essentially a classical scholar, essentially devoted to the premises of art history and so on, in those days was Meyer Schapiro. And I went to New York and studied with Schapiro. Also by chance took a room near him and new nobody in New York-- nearly died of loneliness, at how hard and cold and overwhelming it seemed to me as a person from the far west, which is with all its defects a somewhat more casual and open place.

"And sometimes at eleven o'clock in the night I would drag the latest picture I had been making on the side in the most amateurish way around to Schapiro. And one day in exasperation really, because I had then no conception of how busy people are in New York, he said, 'It takes me two hours to tell you as best I can what any painter colleague could tell you in ten minutes. You really should know some artists.' And I said, 'Well, I agree... but I don't know any.'"

As a child, Motherwell was obsessed by the fear of death, perhaps partially because of his asthmatic attacks. He grew up during the Great Depression and, though his family was not impoverished, his sensibility, even while pursuing philosophical studies, could not be immune to the then inexplicable economic misery which was general. That was not a time of false optimism or phlegmatic pragmatism, even for a growing boy. And the first political event to draw his passionate consideration was the Spanish Civil War, that perfect mirror of all that was confused, venal and wrong in national international politics, and which has remained so but is no longer such a shock because we have devoted twenty-five years to making it a habit. World War II followed this "rehearsal" as inevitably as World War I followed Sarajevo. For a slightly younger generation that Motherwell, and by slightly I mean only by ten years or so, World War II was simply part of one's life. One went to war at seventeen or eighteen and that was what

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one did, perfectly simple, and one thought about it while one was about it, or you might say, in it. But Motherwell's ethical and moral considerations were already well formed, and for him the problems of that war were quite different and far more shattering psychologically.

It is no wonder then, that when Meyer Schapiro introduced him to the European refugee artists who had fled here from the Fall of France he was strongly drawn to them, both as emblems of art and also as emblems of experience, an experience which no American suffered as the French themselves did, save Gertrude Stein. Their insouciant survival in the face of disaster, partly through character, partly through belief in art, is one of the great legends and it did not escape him. The list of artists was indeed staggering (see fig.) and Motherwell's affinity for French Symbolist and Surrealist poetry made him a quick liaison between the refugees and certain New York artists whom he scarcely knew at the time. But he believed in the seriousness of the Parisian endeavor, which then unlike now was beleaguered by the bourgeoisie as well as the Nazis, just as American art was beleaguered by the bourgeoisie and, far more distantly, by the war. It cannot have been too difficult to establish some identification, and of course these artists were already heroes of the modern artistic revolution; if some of them hadn't invented it, they had certainly aided, abetted and extended it. In the artistic imagination, these refugees became esthetic maquis, guerillas, a Foreign Legion, as some critics pointed out, but a Foreign Legion which ultimately had the positive effect of encouraging the North American artists to be modern artists, as surely as the military Foreign Legion negatively encouraged the North Africans to become independent. It is impossible for a society to be at war without each responsible element joining the endeavor, whether military, philosophical or artistic, and whether con-

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sciously or not. Their aims may be different, but the tempo of the time is inexorable and demanding for all concerned. I think that it is the pressure of this tempo and this time which forced from Abstract Expressionism its statement of values, which is, and probably shall remain, unique in the history of culture.

Extremes, like parallels, meet only at infinity; along the way they create other extremes which pursue their other courses, not always parallel. This was the great anguish of the American artists. They had a theoretical, but not a practical, knowledge of the great suffering involved in being extreme. So they shot off in every direction, risking everything. (It should be noted here that in the context of historical time, van Gogh's suicide was evidence of insanity, Artaud to the contrary, and Arshile Gorky's was not.) They were never afraid of having an Important Thought, and the Important Thought was never self-referential. There was a struggle as abstract as their painting. A struggle which, in the poet Edwin Denby's description was against the cliché about downtown painting in the depression-- the accepted idea that everybody had doubts and imitated Picasso and talked politics. None of these features seemed to me remarkable at the time, and they don't now. Downtown everybody loved Picasso then, and why not. But what they painted made no sense as an imitation of him. For myself, something in his steady wide light reminded me then of the light in the streets and lofts we lived in. At that time Tchelitchew was the uptown master, and he had a flickering light." (2) It was this "downtown" struggle Motherwell joined when he moved to New York in 1940 and shortly settled in Greenwich Village.

During this period we find Motherwell veering between the opposite poles of the marvelous and the sombre, if not morbid. From Mallarme's Swan, imaged forever in exquisitely glacial beauty, to Pancho Villa's

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Corpse, hanging bullet-riddled beside his live image, in which pink stains take on the aspect of not-yet-dried blood. Two years earlier, in 1941, he had in beginning his painting career done three totally divergent pictures, La belle mexicaine (of his first wife, a Mexican actress), a highly "automatic" Imaginary Landscape, and the more purely conceptualized The Little Spanish Prison. The first (fig.) owes a great deal to Picasso, the second (fig.) to the Surrealist theory of automatism and especially to Masson, and the third (fig.) is connected in my mind to the House of Orange, a modern version of Dutch clarity of tone allied with Spanish reserve and elegance. As a self-taught painter, Motherwell had many avenues open to him and in beginning he did not close any of them off as possibilities.

Certain of the Abstract Expressionists seem to have burst into paint with an already emergent personal style from the very first works we know--one thinks particularly of Motherwell and of Barnett Newman. The variety from period to period in each of these artists encompasses a broadening of technical resources, as it does in Rothko also, and moves in a steadily rising power of emotional conviction. Each has had a conviction, if not a style, from the beginning, more ethical than visual, which has left them free to include anything useful and has guided them away from the peripheral. Along with Clyfford Still, each has chosen on several occasions to make ethical statements in relation to their art, rather than aesthetic ones.

This is, of course, a matter of temperament. The passions of others of their colleagues have led to far more abrupt and dramatic changes. Motherwell once remarked that an artist is known as much by what he will

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not permit as by what he includes in the painting. One would be hard put to aver whether Newman or Pollock, de Kooning or Rothko, were more drastic in their decision between the Dionysian and Apollonian modes of feeling, between seething impasto excitation and somber, subtly evoked grandeur, between the coloratura and the basso profundo aspects of abstract painting.

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Robert Motherwell:

Excerpts from his
writings,

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appear. From their perspective, it is the social world that tends to appear irrational and absurd. It is sometimes forgotten how much wit there is in certain works of abstract art. There is a certain point on the curve of anguish where one encounters the comic - I think of Miró, of the late Paul Klee, of Charlie Chaplin, of what healthy and human values their wit displays.

I like the way that many Parisian painters have taken over the word "poetry" in speaking of what they value in painting. But in the English-speaking world there is usually an implication of "literary content", if one speaks of a painting as having "real poetry". Yet the word "aesthetic" does not satisfy me. Maybe because it calls up in my mind those dull classrooms and books when I was a student of philosophy and the nature of the aesthetic was a course given in the philosophy department of every university. I think now that there is no such thing as "the aesthetic", no more than there is any such thing as "art", that each period and place has its own art and its aesthetic - which are specific applications of a more general set of human values, with emphases and rejections corresponding to the basic needs and desires of a particular place and time.

I think that abstract art is uniquely modern - not in the sense that word is sometimes used, that our art has "progressed" over the art of the past, though abstract art may indeed represent an emergent level of evolution-

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B+

WHAT ABSTRACT ART MEANS TO ME
("Final Copy" in Library Typescripts)

but in the sense that abstract art represents the particular acceptances
and rejections of a particular culture.

The emergence of abstract art is a sign that there are still
men of feeling in the world. Men who know how to respect and follow
their inner feelings, no matter how irrational or absurd they may first
appear. From their perspective, it is the social world that tends to appear
irrational and absurd. It is sometimes forgotten how much wit there is
in certain works of abstract art. There is a certain point on the curve
of anguish where one encounters the comic - I think of Miró, of the late
Paul Klee, of Charlie Chaplin, of what healthy and human values their wit
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has its own art and its aesthetic - which are specific applications of
a more general set of human values, with emphases and rejections corres-
ponding to the basic needs and desires of a particular place and time.

I think that abstract art is uniquely modern - not in the sense that word
is sometimes used, that our art has "progressed" over the art of the past,
though abstract art may indeed represent an emergent level of evolution-

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Critics Archive File
Museum of Modern Art

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I suppose that the art of far more ancient and "simple" artists expressed but in the sense that abstract art represents the particular acceptances and rejections of men living under the conditions of modern times. If I were asked to generalize about this condition, as it has been manifest in poets, painters and composers during the last century and a half, I should say that it is a fundamentally romantic response to modern life - rebellious, individualistic, unconventional, sensitive, irritable. I should say that these attitudes arose from a feeling of being ill at ease in the universe, so to speak - the collapse of religion, of the old close knit community and family may have something to do with the origins of the feeling. I do not know.

But whatever the source of this sense of being unweeded to the universe, I think that one's art is one's effort to wed oneself to the universe, to unify oneself through union. Sometimes I have an imaginary picture in mind of the poet Mallarme in his study late at night - changing, blotting, transferring, transforming each word and its relations with such care - and I think that the sustained energy for the travail must have come from the secret knowledge that each word was a link in the chain that he was forging to bind himself to the universe; and so with other poets, composers and painters. If this suggestion is true, then modern art has a different face from the art of the past because it has a somewhat different function for the artist in our time.

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I suppose that the art of far more ancient and "simple" artists expressed something quite different, a feeling of already being at one with the world.....sincere, warm, vivid, rhythmic.

One of the most striking aspects of abstract art's appearance is her nakedness, an art stripped bare. How many rejections on the part of her artists! Whole worlds - the world of objects, the world of power and propaganda, the world of anecdotes, the world of fetishes and ancestor worship. One might almost legitimately receive the impression that abstract artists don't like anything but the act of painting.....
man feel. Its abstraction is its emphasis.

What new kind of mystique is this, one might ask. For make no mistake, abstract art is a form of mysticism.

Well, this is not to think of the situation very subtly. To leave out consideration of what is being put into the painting, I mean. One might truthfully say that abstract art is stripped bare of other things in order to intensify it, its rhythms, spatial intervals, and color structure. Abstraction is a process of emphasis, and emphasis vivifies life, as A.N. Whitehead said.

Nothing as drastic an innovation as abstract art could have come into existence, save as the consequence of a most profound, relentless, unquenchable need.

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The need is for felt experience - intense, immediate, direct
subtle, unified, warm, vivid, rhythmic.

Everything that might delute the experience is stripped away.
This is the origin of abstraction in art, as in any mode of thought. Abstract
art is a true mysticism - I dislike the word - or rather a series of
mysticisms that grew up in the historical circumstance that all mysticisms
do, from the primary sense of gulf, an abyss, a void between one's lonely
self and the world. Modern art is an effort to close the void that modern
men feel. Its abstraction is its emphasis.

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BLACK OR WHITE
(Library file folder)

A
add Hs 1+2

Paragraph 3

The chemistry of the pigments is interesting: ivory black, like bone black, is made from charred bones or horns, carbon black is the result of burnt gas, and the most common whites - apart from cold, slimy zinc oxide and recent bright titanium dioxide - are made from lead and are extremely poisonous on contact with the body. Being soot, black is light and fluffy, weighing a twelfth of the average pigment: it needs much oil to become a painter's paste, and dries slowly. Sometimes I wonder, laying in a great black stripe on a canvas, what animal's bones (or horns) are making the furrows of my picture. A captain on the Yukon River painted the snow black in the path of his ships for 29 miles; the black strip melted three weeks in advance of spring, and he was able to reach clear water. Black does not reflect, but absorbs all light, that is its essential nature; while that of white is to reflect all light: dictionaries define it as snow's color, and one thinks of the black slit glasses used when skiing. For the rest, there is a chapter in Moby Dick that evokes white's qualities as no painter could, except in his medium.

Paragraph 6

But look for yourselves. I want to get back to my white-washed studio. If the amounts of black or white are right, they will have condensed into quality, into feeling.

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BLACK OR WHITE in Heavy Disk that evokes
(Library file folder)
white's qualities as no painter could, except in his medium.

Paragraph 1

There is so much to be seen in a work of art, so much to say if one is concrete and accurate, that it is a relief to deal on occasion with a simple relation.

Paragraph 2

Yet not even it, no more than any other relation in art, is so simple.

Paragraph 3

The chemistry of the pigments is interesting: ivory black, like bone black, is made from charred bones or horns, carbon black is the result of burnt gas, and the most common whites - apart from cold, slimy zinc oxide and recent bright titanium dioxide - are made from lead and are extremely poisonous on contact with the body. Being soot, black is light and fluffy, weighing a twelfth of the average pigment: it needs much oil to become a painter's paste, and dries slowly. Sometimes I wonder, laying in a great black stripe on a canvas, what animal's bones (or horns) are making the furrows of my picture. A captain on the Yukon River painted the snow black in the path of his ships for 29 miles; the black strip melted three weeks in advance of spring, and he was able to reach clear water. Black does not reflect, but absorbs all light, that is its essential nature; while that of white is to reflect all light: dictionaries define it as snow's color, and one thinks of the black slit glasses used when

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Paragraph 6

But look for yourselves. I want to get back to my white-washed studio. If the amounts of black or white are right, they will have condensed into quality, into feeling.

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WRITINGS AND STATEMENTS BY ROBERT MOTHERWELL

TO BE TYPED FOR MR. O'HARA FROM LIBRARY MATERIAL.

"What Abstract Art Means to Me." (See "Final Copy" in library book of typescripts.) Entire, except last paragraph.

Catalogue of Retrospective at Smith Collage.

"R.M.: Conversation at Lunch":

3rd paragraph, from line 6 ("A picture is...") to end of paragraph.

4th Paragraph, from line 9 ("An artist is...") to end of paragraph.

7th Paragraph, entire.

Picture caption #16 ("I take an elegy") entire.

"Beyond the Aesthetic." (In library file folder.) Entire.

"Black or White". (In library file folder.) Paragraphs 3, 6.

Partisan Review. "Painters' Objects." Paragraph beginning at bottom of p.95 and ending at top of p.96.

Catalogue of The New American Painting. Statement by R.M. Paragraph 2.

Perspectives USA. "The Painter & The Audience."

P. 109, paragraph 2 to close of section in middle of p.110.

Jean Arp. On My Way. Preface by R.M. Last paragraph, p.6.

The New Decade. Statement by R.M. P. 59, 2nd paragraph.

The Rise of Cubism (Kahnweiler). Preface by R.M.

P. vii, lines 4 ("Sometime in 1909 . . .") to 16.

Modern Artists in America. Panel. Exchange between R.M. and Ad Reinhardt. Page 20, column 1, middle.

Marcel Raymond. From Baudelaire to Surrealism. Preface by R.M. P. viii, last paragraph.

"The School of New York." Perls Catalogue. Paragraph 1.

IN CUDDY'S SCRAPBOOK:

A Statement. Philadelphia Panel (It is.) P. 2, paragraphs 2, 3, 4.

"A Tour of the Sublime." (from Tiger's Eye, Dec. 1948.) Entire.

14 Americans. 1946. Statement by R.M. for Catalogue. Paragraph 2.

"What a Museum Should Be." (from Art in America.) Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5.

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Letter from Robert
Morrison to Frank

Original dated August 3, 1965

173 East 94th Street
New York, New York 10028
18 Aug 1965

Handwritten mark resembling a stylized 'R' or 'B'.

Dear Frank:

While I think of it, would you amend (wherever it appears) the account of the school and The Club as follows:

"The Friday Nights at the school led to the Friday Nights at The Club, the celebrated avant-garde artists club of the '50's, but other aspects of The Club grew out of another set of friendships at the old Waldorf cafeteria in the Village."

"I told a group of philosophers to their faces: Philosophy is simply a question of form!" Valery, Idée Fixe, p. 107 (1932).

Everyone agrees that intelligence manifests itself in an excellent use of language. But laymen do not recognize that painting is also a language. Indeed, what makes a layman is insensitivity to a given language. In the case of painting, this includes many people--certain painters, curators, critics, scholars, dealers--who are "professionals". No wonder the art scene becomes a commedia dell'arte.

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But if intelligence is essential in order to organize relations, i.e., to arrive at structural form, the subject-matter is feeling: that is why art is not a science.

Painting that does not radiate feeling is not worth looking at. The deepest--and rarest--of grown-up pleasures is true feeling.

When one is asked what painters one admires, one realizes one likes all the great ones. What is more significant are those who invariably excite one to paint oneself: in my ^{Case} ~~case~~, Rembrandt's drawings, Goya, Matisse and Picasso. On the other hand, the great van Eyck or Titian never incite me. Another test is those of one's contemporaries whose shows one looks forward to. These are few, but crucial. For me that has meant Miró and a dozen Americans--and the possibility of anyone else anywhere.

It is a considerable achievement to have made one masterpiece in a lifetime.

An exhibition can never realize all one's desires from the world, even the most select and complete shows. Indeed, one feels how coarse and uncomprehending the world in general is. But the real trauma is one's own reaction to one's ~~own~~ work. As a great contemporary painter says: "If, after long contemplation, one feels one's life wasn't wasted, one has come out rather well."

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Only painters and sculptors among artists can be exposed
in toto in a few minutes--or seem to be.

The content has always to be expressed in modern terms:
 that is the basic premise. Joyce understood it perfectly.

The greater the precision of feeling, the more personal
 the work will be.

The more anonymous a work, the less universal. Camp
 followers are always provincial.

The dangers of the recognition that everyone wants are
 greater than those of its lack.

The problems of inventing a new language are staggering.
 But what else can one do if one needs to express one's
 feeling precisely?

It is ~~the~~ ^{the} effort to respect one's feelings, integrity
 that leads to radical notions. No real revolutionary was ever
 one for the hell of it: it is too painful a condition. But
 the pain is eased by its inevitability, given the problem.

"One can never be as radical as reality itself." LENIN

What paintings can stand up against the physical presence
 of nature? Few, and most often, least of all those who have
 nature as the subject.

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Confusion always has the same cause: lack of feeling.

Every picture one paints involves not painting others:
What a choice! What anguish...

Caution is the ~~quality~~ ^{enemy} of art, and everyone is more
cautious than he thinks he is.

The drama of creativity is that one's resources,
no matter how great, are inadequate.

The ultimate act is faith, the ultimate resource
the preconscious: if either is suspended, the artist is
impotent. This is possible any hour any day, and it
is the artist's nightmare throughout life.

Many artists are fascinated by sports figures,
who must perform at a given place and time.

But what better way to spend one's life than to
have, as one's primary task, the protection of the
integrity of feeling? No wonder other professional
men are fascinated by artists.

We rush towards death.

Joy makes existence bearable. Who ignores joy
is immoral.

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One longs to be treated by the grown-up world as
one is by small children: with total trust.

One never really gets used to reality. The ultimate
joke is a life of anxiety. God's small compensation is
a sense of wonder.

But a sense of wonder in some artists becomes a
mannerism: No one is naive about everything, especially
geniuses.

The material things of life are mere decorations.

Enough space, light, and white walls make any environ-
ment workable. For that matter floods pictures with

feeling. Enough space and light, but not necessarily white.

The world cannot endure that artists' money comes
from so much pleasure. Artists cannot endure that the
world's money comes from so much work, and usually give
extravagant tips and presents, as though our money is
less "real".

The whole question of art and money is vexing.

I much prefer trading to selling, but not everyone
who has something I need is an art-lover.

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The Surrealist group used to demand a picture each year from its painters: the proceeds were used to support their poets. They recognized the social injustice in the fact that a great painting has more commodity value than a great poem and equalized the situation. No one objected.

Contemporary paintings would not have to sell for so much if living artists received royalties from exhibitions and reproductions.

When artists are blamed for the financial madness of the art-scene, the psychology of the collectors is left out of account.

Any picture is fairly priced, if its subsequent value is greater.

Recognition from The Establishment is only valuable in dealing with one's relatives, and one feels a parallel ambivalence: it is at once real and empty.

When I see a newsreel from 1915, the year I was born, or a movie, that takes place then, like Jeanne Moreau's "Mata Hari", I cannot believe that my life span has been from that moment until the present: I had the same feelings throughout, while the appearance of the world ~~was~~ changed: when I was born is another universe, and I am 50. As though one were born in a museum.

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Whenever I hear talk about homosexuals, I remember that Proust's book is the greatest epic poem of ~~the~~^{the} century.

I am not a political theorist, but I do believe the present vitality of American art is connected with the unparalleled depth of our democracy: it certainly did not come from cultural tradition, but from an existential ~~thing~~ content.

Besides New York City, which is a Constantinople, the capitals of Europe are provincial. But London is inexhaustible.

The present conflict between American and European art is between the reality and the pleasure principles: everybody but Paris and South America senses it.

Parisian art was great when it was the most democratic and international city in Europe.

Whenever I hear talk about art and foreign policy, I remember that Ezra Pound is the greatest living American poet.

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It is impossible to modify one's art without modifying one's character. Any artist whose work develops represents character growth, either slow and steady, like a garden, or in leaps, like Columbus' discovery of America.

The problem is to seize the glimpse.

The nerve lies in not making the glimpse presentable.

I could strangle those conservators who put glossy varnish on my pictures.

Artists should be born without mothers.

If one paints on a certain scale, one gets involved in all the problems of running a lumber-yard. I gave some prints to neighbor glazier to frame: the next week he had the adjoining cabin on the "SS France". It makes one smile to think of it.

Irony, the greatest necessity of everyday life, does not work in pictures. Neither does pathos.

If one has capital, and no respect for it per se, one can accomplish miraculous projects.

Little pictures are for midgets or for tourists--souvenirs.

What secrets are hidden in Venice!

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How everybody in the Aegean slaughtered everybody!

No wonder all is ruins!

Chi ama, crede: who loves, trusts.

Study Paul Valéry's word "implex."

The miracle of a good marriage is that one's qualities are enhanced and strengthened into a life continuity that no one can sustain alone.

I am astonished at all the young artists now who do not seem to reflect--as my generation did--on how expensive children are. But we were poorer.

As David Smith used to say, "To be an artist is a luxury."

Alex Liberman says, "Nothing is too good for artists."

There is something princely about even the most democratic artists.

Art is much less important than life, but what a poor life without it!

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One can't think clearly without thinking invariably of alternatives.

It's a good thing that there is not an after-life. What would one do with it through eternity? There's not that much capacity in the human substance.

If life were longer, one could express more. Since it isn't, stick to essentials.

Every artist needs a model. Not to paint, but as a beautiful living presence. Art that has no element of the erotic is like a life without the erotic, shrivelled.

Science and technology are not our enemies, but our instruments to be used wisely or not.

Modern European culture castrated itself when it killed the Jews.

The power in saying no.

It's not the art in Greece that ravishes everyone: other civilizations have greater arts--it's the ^{pervasive} ~~pervasive~~ nakedness!

What has the world got to tempt an artist? Not much really: what is more desirable than feeling?

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To feel like a man. What is better for a man?

A man of feeling has a right to be furious.

I would fight more if I had more time.

We will shortly be saved from the word: there will
simply be more than one can read.

The beauty of another being's presence.

It's better to be brutal than indifferent.

An artist cares. That ^{is} what can be trusted.

Some children quit painting if they haven't the proper
color. Picasso says, you just use another color.

Drawing is dividing a plane surface.

Color is a question of quantity, i.e., extension.

But it is light that counts above everything. Not
colored light, but color that gives of light--radiance!

The supreme gift, after light, is scale.

The technique of painting is the simplest of all
the arts: For that reason it demands the greatest
sensibility.

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I love poetry and music, but I would rather see.

Somebody ought to invent an inflatable studio.

Then painters would be as free as writers to travel. The predicament of sculptors is hopeless.

The beauty of Europe is that sculpture is everywhere. It doesn't have to be great to function perfectly ^{in the} ~~as~~ landscape.

The greatest American criminal is the man who invented rearing our infants on baby-foods. Americans have no right to tongues or teeth.

I wonder how deeply wine-drinking versus liquor-drinking effects a civilization's sexual life?

In a little more than a year, more than a half of Americans will be under 25. The effects are ~~incalculable~~ ^{incalculable} in many directions.

America is what the poor people of Europe invented, given means enough and time.

What luck for modern man that we inherited the English language. The greatest vocabulary and the simplest grammar.

And English common law, that miracle of sturdy independence.

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The miracle of a place that one likes to go home to, prefers to any other.

Homer, Shakespeare, Mozart and l'art Moderne fill my pantheon: the rest is extra.

The only thing that I bought in Greece (1965) was a scale-model of a Homeric ship.

The adequate application of psycho-analysis to an artist is George Painter's two-volume "Marcel Proust."

True, the subject is ideal, but the application is a marvel of precision and completeness.

The world is more indebted than it seems to know to Françoise Gilot's "Picasso". It, perhaps more than any other book, should be required reading for every aspiring modern artist.

David Smith saw Ernst Kris twice--who was already dying, and who apparently told David to endure it all, to live with it. But in the end he couldn't. Oh, David!

Every painter au fond is a voyager: the question is whether he has a vision.

Painting is ^a ~~totally~~ active ^{act,} ~~art~~

But the audience is usually passive.

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THE NEW DECADE
(Statement by R.M. Pg 59 2nd Paragraph)

Motherwell had his first one-man exhibition at Art of This Century 1944. Since then he has divided his time between painting, teaching and editing the Documents of Modern Art series. He was instructor at Black Mountain College in the summer of 1945 and again in 1951. With Baziotes, Hare and Rothko, later joined by Barnett Newman, he started an art school on 8th Street in 1947 out of which grew the "Friday Evenings" in the Village - a meeting of avant-garde artists, which still continues under other auspices. Since 1952 he has been Assistant Professor at Hunter College. In the summer of 1954 he taught at Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and spent the fall in Germany, with a group representing various arts, as a guest of the West German government.

2nd paragraph of
artists' statement.
Sorry not clear

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see instructions

Cuddihy scrapbook

THE NEW DECADE
(Statement by R.M. Pg. 59 2nd Paragraph)

Stat of Philadelphia

Panel from It is

R.M. Statement. P. 2.

lines P's

2, 3, 4.

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various arts, as a guest of the West German government. next few months,
or years.

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see instructions

Cudding scrapbook

IT IS
(Statement by Robert Motherwell)

Stat of Philadelphia
Panel from It is
R.M. Statement. P. 2.

There is a serious difficulty about formulating a brief statement. I remember that 12 years ago Harold Rosenberg and I got Bazziotes, Pollock, and Rothko to make short statements for our magazine - all admirable statements, but they in turn must have got fed up over the years with the constant republication of their few paragraphs by the museum-machine and the art-book factory. No one wants to be imprisoned in a few sentences, even his own.

~~his~~ P's
2, 3, 4.

I think my situation at the moment is that I am absorbed by intimations of the painting I am going to do these next few months, or years.

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THE NEW SURFACE

May 11-August 7, 1955 IT IS THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
(Statement by Robert Motherwell)

"If a painting does not make a human contact, it is nothing. But the audience is also responsible. Through pictures there is a serious difficulty about formulating a brief statement. I remember that 12 years ago Harold Rosenberg and I got Bazziotes, Pollock, and Rothko to make short statements for our magazine - all admirable statements, but they in turn must have got fed up over the years with the constant republication of their few paragraphs by the museum-machine and the art-book factory. No one wants to be imprisoned in a few sentences, even his own. It was too tragic in feeling for her to be able to look at it every day. But somewhere there is a man with a tragic sense of life who loves that. I think my situation at the moment is that I am absorbed by intimations of the painting I am going to do these next few months, or years. It can be a vehicle for human intercourse. In this solitary and apathetic society, the rituals are so often obsolete and corrupt, out of accord with what we really know and feel... True painting is a lot more than "picture-making." A man is neither a decoration nor an associate."

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THE NEW DECADE

May 11-August 7, 1955 WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

"If a painting does not make a human contact, it is nothing. But the audience is also responsible. Through pictures, our passions touch. Pictures are vehicles of passion, of all kinds and orders, not pretty luxuries like sports cars. In our society, the capacity to give and to receive passion is limited. For this reason, the act of painting is a deep human necessity, not the production of a hand-made commodity. I respect a collector who returned one of my 'abstract' pictures to the gallery, saying it was too tragic in feeling for her to be able to look at it every day. But somewhere there is a man with a tragic sense of life who loves that same picture, and I think he will find one day a way to have it. These are real human contacts, and I love painting that it can be a vehicle for human intercourse. In this solitary and apathetic society, the rituals are so often obsolete and corrupt, out of accord with what we really know and feel... True painting is a lot more than 'picture-making.' A man is neither a decoration nor an anecdote."

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Preliminary Notice: from baudelaire to surrealism

Still, the fundamental relation between modernist painting and French poetry is indirect, pervasive, and not wholly recoverable now; but it is extraordinary how, in countries that speak other tongues, the implications of the fact that French is the language of the School of Paris are so often passed over. And do not tell me that Parisian painters have not read or conversed with poets.

True painters disdain 'literature' in painting. It is an error to disdain literature itself. Plainly, painting's structure is sufficiently expressive of feelings, of feelings far more subtle and 'true' to our being than those representing or reinforcing anecdotes; but true poetry is no more anecdotal than painting. Both have sought in modern times to recover the primitive, magical and bold force of their mediums and to bring it into relation to the complexities of modern felt attitudes and knowledge; no modernist painter can read in this marvelous book of some of the ideals of French poets without a sharp sense of recognition.

Perhaps, the 'plasticity' that we painters so admire is no less than the poetry of visual relations.

The miners' graveyard. Beyond, the town's ruins, burnt sienna, pink, yellow ochre—arid and clear in the distance, as the hill towns of Italy. Here silent monuments of the past rest, in white October sun, wind sweeping from the Sierra Nevada mountains. Crystal light! Vertical personages gaping, a broken grave. Here, too, in the midst of gold and silver, there were yearnings for the word, but what confusions! Jenny Lind, the Great Patti, Mark Twain, General Tom Thumb, Uncle Tom's Cabin companies. As with French poets, desire for the sensuous 'new'. Dragged up the mountains from California in

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eight-span wagons, wood, to construct French baroque mansions. Glass chandeliers from Vienna. But the desert air is white, Mallarme's swan.

Robert Motherwell, Virginia City, Nevada, October, 1949.

[Faint, mostly illegible typed text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

[Handwritten notes in pencil, including the phrase "to end of" and the number "612".]

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A

THE NEW AMERICAN PAINTING
(Statement by RM Paragraph 2)

(Statement by RM paragraph 2, 3, 4, 5)

Paragraph 2

I believe that painters judgments of painting are first ethical, then aesthetic, the aesthetic judgments flowing from an ethical context... Soren Kierkegaard, who did not value painting, was nevertheless very much aware of this distinction in his general analysis of existence. In quite another context, he wrote, 'If anything in the world can teach man to venture it is the ethical, which teaches to venture everything for nothing, to risk everything, and also therefore to renounce the flattery of the world-historical....the ethical is the absolute, and in all eternity the highest value....Venturesomeness is only one of the ethical values respected by modern painters. There are many others, integrity, sensuality, sensitivity, knowingness, passion, dedication, sincerity, and so on which taken altogether represent the ethical background of judgment in relation to any given work of modern art.

Paragraph 3

...One has to have an intimate acquaintance with the language of contemporary painting to be able to see the real beauties of it; to see the ethical background is even more difficult. It is a condition of consciousness...

Paragraph 4

Without ethical consciousness, a painter is only a decorator.

Paragraph 5

Without ethical consciousness, the audience is only sensual, one of aesthetes.

With ethical

consciousness? - - -

to end of
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NEW AMERICAN PAINTING
THE NEW AMERICAN PAINTING
(Part of the series on the life of Reinhardt)
(Statement by RM paragraph 2, 3, 4, 5)

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B-

MODERN ARTISTS IN AMERICA

(Panel exchange between RM and Ad Reinhardt)
Pg 20 column 1

An existing subject... it to begin with - variations gives me moments of joy.....The other mode is a veering into the night, one knows not where, on an unknown vessel, as

Reinhardt (to Hoffmann: Do you consider the inter-relationships of the elements in a work of art to be self-contained?

Reinhardt: let's talk about that struggle.

Hoffmann: It is related to all of this world - to what you want to express. You want to express something very definitely and you do it with your means. When you understand you means you can.

uniqueness and firmness without having to re-invent painting altogether.

But I think that painters like Mondrian tend to move as rapidly as they

Moderator Motherwell: I find that I ask of the painting process one of two separate experiences. I call one the "mode of discovery and invention", the other the "mode of joy and variation". The former represents my deepest painting problem, the bitterest struggle I have undertaken: to reject everything I do not feel and believe. The other experience is when I want to paint for the sheer joy of painting. These moments are few. The strain of dealing with the unknown, the absolute, if gone. When I need joy, I find it only in making free variations on what I have already discovered, what I know to be mine. We modern artists have no generally accepted subject matter, no inherited iconography. But to re-invent painting, its subject matter and its means, is a task so difficult that one must reduce it to a very simple concept in order to paint for the sheer joy of painting, as simple as the Madonna was to many generations of painters in the past.

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B

THE PAINTER AND THE AUDIENCE
(Perspectives p 109 to close of
section on p 110)

what its subjects are to be, and how they are to be treated. Art like
love. Sometimes when I walk down Park Avenue and regard the handsome and
clean-cut Lever Brothers building, which I suppose belongs to the same
"family" as the tall UN skyscraper, I think to myself how the interior
walls need the sensuality and moral integrity of modern painting; but then
one cannot help reflecting that what lies behind this building is not the
possibility of collaboration between men on "ultimate concerns," but instead
big business, that is, a popular soap, whose needs in the end will
determine everything, including how its makers think about reality. It
is strange when a commodity is more powerful than the men who make it.
1935 begins, "Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try to under-
stand the song of a bird? One loves the night flowers, everything around
one. My emphasis is the absence of direct social relations between the
modern painter and his audience. One can understand though it is curious
to think this way, that a Picasso is regarded by speculators as a sound
investment that French Government bonds; but what a peculiar responsibility
or circumstance for a solitary artist. Indeed, our society, which has
seemed so freedom-giving and passive in its attitudes toward the artist
really makes extraordinary demands upon him: on the one side, to be free
in some vague spiritual sense, free to act only as an artist, and yet on
the other side to be rigorously tested as to whether the freedom he has
achieved is great enough to be more solidly dependable than a government's
financial structure - as though the painter's realistic audience, as
opposed to an audience with sentiment, were rare stamp collectors. No
wonder that modern painters, in view of these curious relations to society,
have taken art matters into their own hands, decided for themselves what

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A

what its subjects are to be, and how they are to be treated. Art like
 love is an active process of growth and development, not a God-given
 talent; and since in modern society the audience rarely sees the actual
 process of art, the audience's remoteness from the act of
 painting has become so great that practically all writing about modern *art*
~~has become so great that practically all writing about modern art~~
 has become explaining to the audience what the art is that the audience
 has got so far away from. And those whose profession is to do the
 explaining are more often than not mistaken. It is in this context
 that one has to understand the fury of Picasso's famous statement of
 1935 beginning, "Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try to under-
 stand the song of a bird? One loves the night flowers, everything around
 one, without trying to understand them. While the painting everyone
 must understand. If only they would realize that an artist works above
 all of necessity... What angers Picasso is not the desire to understand,
 but that understanding should pose a problem, that his audience is unprepared
 for him. More exactly, prepared for something else.

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A

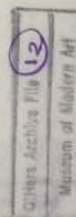
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"A TOUR OF THE SUBLIME"

does not justify the (From Tiger's Eye Dec. 1948) being written under the category of the direct. I do not see how the works of a Mondrian or The Sublime I take to be the emphasis of a possible felt quality in aesthetic experience, the exalted, the noble, the lofty, "the echo of a great mind", as the treatist formerly ascribed to Longinus phrases it.

The history of modern art can be conceived of as a military campaign, as a civil war that has lasted more than a hundred years - if movements of the spirit can be dated - since Baudelaire first requested a painting that was to be specifically modern in subject and style. Perhaps the first dent in the lines of traditional conceptions was made by the English landscapists and by Courbet, but the major engagement begins, earlier means being now obsolete, with Manet and the Impressionists who, whatever their subjective radiance and rhythms, represent objectively the rise of modern realism (in the sense of everyday subjects), that is, the decisive attack on the Sublime.....The story is interesting if the essence of their goal is taken to be a passionate desire to get rid of what is dead in human experience, to get rid of concepts, whether aesthetic or metaphysical or ethical or social, that, being garbed in the costumes of the past, get in the way of their enjoyment. As though they had the sensation, while enjoying nudes in the open air, that someone was likely to move a dark Baroque decor into the background, altering the felt quality of their experience. No wonder they wanted to bury the past permanently. I pass over how remarkable it seems to some of us that small groups of men should have had, for a century or more, as one of their ideals getting rid of what is dead in human experience.

A true history of modern art will take account of its innumerable concrete rejections. True, it is more difficult to think under the aspect of negations, or to contend with what is not stated. But this



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does not justify the history of an indirect process being written under the category of the direct. I do not see how the works of a Mondrian or Duchamp can be described apart from the description of what they refused to do. Indeed, a painter's most difficult and far-reaching decisions revolve around his rejections.

Suppose that we assume that, despite defaults and confusions, modern art succeeded in ridding us of the costumes of the past, of kings and queens and the glory of conquerors and politicians and mountains, rhetoric and the grand, that is became, though "understood" only by a minority, a people's art, a peculiarly modern humanism, that its tactics in relation to the general human situation were those of gentle, strong and humane men defending their values with intelligence and ingenuity against the property-loving world. One ought not over-simplify: if humane men would doubtless agree with the character in Dostoevski who holds that no gain, social or military, can be equated against the life of a single child, nevertheless I take a murderer by profession like "Monsieur Verdoux" to fall under the heading of a gentle, strong and humane, that is to say, it does not astonish me that the effort to be gentle and humane involves one in murder. Indeed, without trying to present a paradox, but simply in an effort to be phenomenologically exact, and speaking apart from times of war, one might say that it is only the most inhuman professions in modern society that permit the agent to behave nicely in everyday life and to regard the world with a merry and well glassed eye.

When living Ulysses meets in Hades the shade of Ajax, from whom he had won the armor and set on the course that led to Ajax's death, Ulysses expresses his regret; but Ajax "did not answer, but went his way on into

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BEYOND THE SUBLIME
(Library File Folder)

Erebus with the other wraiths of those dead and gone." One has not the right from one's anguish to bring to the surface another's anguish. This must be the meaning of the first century A.D. treatise on the Sublime when it says: "The silence of Ajax in The Wraiths is inexpressibly great." Otherwise it can only mean how terrible is being dead.

Perhaps - I say perhaps because I do not know how to reflect, except by opening my mind like a glass-bottomed boat so that I can watch what is swimming below - painting becomes Sublime when the artist transcends his personal anguish, when he projects in the midst of a shrieking would an expression of living and its end that is silent and ordered. That is opposed to expressionism. So is the beauty and perfection of the school of Paris. Like the latter, all of us must reject the Sublime in the social sense, in its association with institutional authority regardless of one's relation to beauty as an ideal. In the metaphysical sense, it cannot be a question of intent, one experiences the Sublime or not, according to one's fate and character.

In order to condense it into an object of perception. We feel through the senses, and everyone knows that the content of art is feeling; it is the creation of an object for sensing that is the artist's task; and it is the qualities of this object that constitute its felt content. Feelings are just how things feel to us; in the old-fashioned sense of these words, feelings are neither "objective" nor "subjective", but both, since all "objects" or "things" are the result of an interaction between the body-mind and the external world. "Body-mind" and "external world" are themselves sharp concepts only for the purposes of critical discourse, and even the standards of a poem are perhaps valid but certainly unimportant distinctions. It is natural to overcome or ignore in order to bring about states of feeling that we like, just as a new talent establishes a house.

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Museum of Modern Art

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A

BEYOND THE AESTHETIC
(Library File Folder)

The passions are a kind of thirst, insatiable and intense, for certain. For the goal which lies beyond the strictly aesthetic the French artists say the "unknown" or the "new", after Baudelaire and Rimbaud; Mondrian used to say "true reality". Structure or "gestalt" may be more accurate: reality has no degrees nor is there a "super" one (surrealisme). Still, terminology is unimportant. Structures are found in the interaction of the body-mind and the external world; and the body-mind is active and aggressive in finding them. As Picasso says, there is no use looking at random: to find is the thing.

The activity of the artist makes his love socially conditioned and more human. It is then that he is disposed to revolution. Society stands against anarchy; the artist stands for the human against society; society strictly aesthetic - which is the sensuous aspect of the world - ceases to therefore treat him as an anarchist. Society's love is feeling, but the feeling of an enemy is not. Still, the social conflict with society is that of a medium, a means for getting at the infinite background of feeling in order to condense it into an object of perception. We feel through the senses, and everyone knows that the content of art is feeling; it is the creation of an object for sensing that is the artist's task; and it is the qualities of this object that constitute its felt content. Feelings are just how things feel to us; in the old-fashioned sense of these words, feelings are neither "objective" nor "subjective", but both, since all "objects" or "things" are the result of an interaction between the body-mind and the external world. "Body-mind" and "external world" are themselves sharp concepts only for the purposes of critical discourse, and from the standpoint of a stone are perhaps valid but certainly unimportant distinctions. It is natural to rearrange or invent in order to bring about states of feeling that we like, just as a new tenant refurbishes a house.

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sometimes tears off and begins again. In any case, shaping and arranging such a relation. The passions are a kind of thirst, inexorable and intense, for certain feelings or felt states. To find or invent "objects" (which are, more strictly speaking, relational structures) whose felt quality satisfies the passions - that for me is the activity of the artist, an activity which does not cease even in sleep. No wonder the artist is constantly placing and displacing, relating and rupturing relations; his task is to find a complex of qualities whose feeling is just right - veering toward the unknown and chaos, yet ordered and related in order to be apprehended. into being, just as do responses to the objects of the external world. Apart from the struggle to endure - as Spinoza says, substance is no stronger than its existence - the change. The activity of the artist makes him less socially conditioned and more human. It is then that he is disposed to revolution. Society stands against anarchy; the artist stands for the human, against society; society therefore treats him as an anarchist. Society's logic is faulty, but its intimation of an enemy is not. Still, the social conflict with society is an incidental obstacle in the artist's path.

Drama moves us; conflict is an inherent pattern in reality. Harmony moves us too: faced as we are with ever imminent disorder, it is a powerful ideal. Van It is Cezanne's feeling that determined the form of his pictorial structure. It is his pictorial structure that gives off his feeling. If all his pictorial structures were to disappear from the world, so would a certain feeling. come so desocialized as to take on the aspect of the unknown yet what seems more familiar when we confront it?

The sensation of physically operating on the world is very strong in the medium of the papier colle or collage, in which various kinds of paper are posted to the canvas. One cuts and chooses and shifts and pastes, and

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sometimes tears off and begins again. In any case, shaping and arranging such a relational structure obliterates the need, and often the awareness of representation. Without reference to likenesses, it possesses feeling because all the decisions in regard to it are ultimately made on the grounds of feelings.

Feelings must have a medium in order to function at all; in the same way, thought must have symbols. It is the medium, or the specific configuration of the medium that we call a work of art that brings feeling into being, just as do responses to the objects of the external world. Apart from the struggle to endure - as Spinoza says, substance is no stronger than its existence - the changes that we desire in the world, public or private are in the interest of feeling. The medium of painting is such changing and ordering on an ideal plane, ideal in that the medium is more tractable, subtle, and capable of emphasis (abstraction is a kind of emphasis) than everyday life.

Drama moves us: conflict is an inherent pattern in reality. Harmony moves us too: faced as we are with ever imminent disorder. it is a powerful ideal. Van Gogh's drama and Seurat's silent harmony were born in the same country and epoch; but they do not contradict one another; they refer to different patterns among those which constitute reality. In them, the projection of the human has become so desocialized as to take on the aspect of the unknown. Yet what seems more familiar when we confront it?

The "pure" red of which certain abstractionists speak does not exist no matter how one shifts its physical contexts. Any red is rooted in blood,

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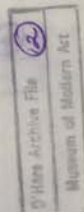
glass, wine, hunter's caps, and a thousand other concrete phenomena. Otherwise we should have no feeling toward red or its relations, and it would be useless living in a process of conforming to an established order which is inherent in its drives and consequences. There heired sustained them through all the humiliating situations in which the modern artist finds himself, and led them to perceptio

But the most common error among the whole-hearted abstractionists nowadays is to mistake the medium for an end in itself, instead of a means. of children and the insane - if not the creatures themselves.

On the other hand, the surrealists erred in supposing that one can do without a medium, that is attacking the medium one does not destroy just one means for getting into the unknown. Color and space relations constitute such a means because from them can be made structures which exhibit the various patterns of reality.

Like the cubists before them, the abstractionists felt a beautiful thing in perceiving how the medium can, of its own accord, carry one into the unknown, that is to the discovery of new structures. What an inspiration the medium is. Colors on the palette or mixed in jars on the floor, assorted papers, or a canvas of a certain concrete space - no matter what, the painting mind is put into motion, probing, finding completing. The internal relations of the medium lead to so many possibilities that it is hard to see how anyone intelligent and persistent enough can fail to find his own style.

Like Rimbaud before them, the surrealists abandoned the aesthetic



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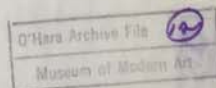
altogether; it takes a certain courage to leave poetry for Africa. They revealed their insight as essentially moral in never forgetting for a moment that most living is a process of conforming to an established order which is inhuman in its drives and consequences. Their hatred sustained them through all the humiliating situations in which the modern artist finds himself, and led them to perceptions beyond the reach of more passive souls. For them true "poetry" was freedom from mechanical social responses. No wonder they loved the work of children and the insane - if not the creatures themselves.

In the end one must agree with Rilke when he says that with "nothing can one touch a work of art so little as with critical words: they always come down to more or less happy misunderstandings" It was Marcel Duchamp who was critical, when he drew a moustache on the Mona Lisa. And so was Mondrian when he dreamt of the dissolution of painting, sculpture, and architecture into a transcendent ensemble.

they seem appropriate. There is no such thing as an "accident" really; it is a kind of casualness: it happened as let it be, so to speak. One doesn't want a picture to look "made" like an automobile or a loaf of bread in wood paper. Precision belongs to the world of machinery - which has its own forms of the beautiful. One admires leger, but machinery created with brush and paint is ridiculous, all the same... I agree with Renoir, who loved everything hand-made.

Picture Caption #36

"I take an allegory to be a funeral lamentation or funeral song for something one cared about. The "Spanish Elegies" are not "political"



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CATALOGUE OF RETROSPECTIVE AT SMITH COLLEGE
R.M. : Conversation at Lunch

but my private insistence that a terrible death happened that should

not be forgot. They are as eloquent as I could make them. But the
Paragraph 3

B-

pictures are also general metaphors of the contrast between life and
A picture is a collaboration between artist and canvas. "Bad" painting
death, and their interrelation.
is when an artist enforces his will without regard for the sensibilities
of the canvas.....

Paragraph 4

B+

An artist is someone who has an abnormal sensitivity to a medium.
The main thing is not to be dead. And nearly everyone is dead, painter or
not. Only an alive person can make an alive expression. The problem
of inspiration is simply to be fully alive at a given moment when working.

Paragraph 7

B+

I don't exploit so-called "accidents" in painting. I accept them if
they seem appropriate. There is no such thing as an "accident" really;
it is a kind of casualness: it happened so let it be, so to speak. One
doesn't want a picture to look "made" like an automobile or a loaf of
bread in waxed paper. Precision belongs to the world of machinery -
which has its own forms of the beautiful. One admires Leger. But
machinery created with brush and paint is ridiculous, all the same...
I agree with Renoir, who loved everything hand-made.

Picture Caption #16

A

"I take an elegy to be a funeral lamentation or funeral song for
something one cared about. The "Spanish Elegies" are not "political"

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B

In a previous 1948 statement by M. for
the NY WAF page 2
but my private insistence that a terrible death happened that should
not be forgot. They are as eloquent as I could make them. But the
pictures are also general metaphors of the contrast between life and
death, and their interrelation.

Green skins dangle from the wild cherry
trees. Its hair scorched, the ground drowns. If an Arp sculpture
were present, it too would sleep in the sun ("I work until enough of
my life has flowed into its body").

In the past, as that in the process of working in wood or metal
they need not be necessarily straight. The is to give the art a
natural, that to be surely an expression of a human desire to be
getting in that to give some one's initial impression to look in
read the book. Well, we cannot become international by giving it,
of the following a foreign people. This state of mind writes itself
from following the nature of this reality, by letting it show the what they
are, whether native or foreign. It is part of what films need to
water, that is, exhibiting one's own the ability to of insight
into the structure of reality. With such insight, satisfaction becomes
profoundly appropriate and no wonder of the importance of reality can
any of like a revelation of its structure. Thus when to say that one
of the kinds of reality not has been individualized, it is not meant
is the sense of a chosen, of a super-individual, but as a natural
sequence of dealing with reality on a certain level.

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B

13 Americans 1916 Statement by RM for
Catalogue ON MY WAY page 2

Preface by R. M. Last Paragraph, p6

In the art schools they say that one ought to learn anatomy, and then
The sky is August Blue. Green skins dangle from the wild cherry
"forget" it, in the sense no doubt that for Mozart the concha fura became
trees. Its hair scorched, the ground drowns. If an Arp sculpture
as much a part of the functioning of his body-mind as his personal
were present, it too would sleep in the sun ("I work until enough of
talent. Medical anatomy is irrelevant to the ends of modern art;
my life has flowed into its body").
but there are some things that must be known as well as anatomy has been
in the past, so that in the process of working in terms of feeling
they need not be consciously thought. One is to know that art is not
national, that to be merely an American or a French artist is to be
nothing; to fail to overcome one's initial environment is never to
reach the human. Still, we cannot become international by willing it,
or by following a foreign pattern. This state of mind arises instead
from following the nature of true reality, by taking things for what they
are, whether native or foreign. It is part of what Plato meant by
techné, that is, mobilizing one's means in relation to an insight
into the structure of reality. With such insight, nationalities become
accidental appearances; and no rendering of the appearance of reality can
move us like a revelation of its structure. Thus when we say that one
of the ideals of modern art has been internationalism, it is not meant
in the sense of a slogan, of a super-charivari, but as a natural con-
sequence of dealing with reality on a certain level.

Robert Motherwell

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B*

14 Americans 1916 Statement by RM for
 Catalogue. Paragraph 2
 (Paris Catalogue. Paragraph 1)

In the art schools they say that one ought to learn anatomy, and then "forget" it, in the sense no doubt that for Mozart the sonata form became as much a part of the functioning of his body-mind as his personal talent. Medical anatomy is irrelevant to the ends of modern art; but there are some things that must be known as well as anatomy has been in the past, so that in the process of working in terms of feeling they need not be consciously thought. One is to know that art is not national, that to be merely an American or a French artist is to be nothing; to fail to overcome one's initial environment is never to reach the human. Still, we cannot become international by willing it, or by following a foreign pattern. This state of mind arises instead from following the nature of true reality, by taking things for what they are, whether native or foreign. It is part of what Plato meant by *techne*, that is, mobilizing one's means in relation to an insight into the structure of reality. With such insight, nationalities become accidental appearances; and no rendering of the appearance of reality can move us like a revelation of its structure. Thus when we say that one of the ideals of modern art has been internationalism, it is not meant in the sense of a slogan, of a super-chauvinism, but as a natural consequence of dealing with reality on a certain level.

Robert Motherwell

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THE SCHOOL OF NEW YORK
(Perls Catalogue, Paragraph 1)

The recent "School of New York" a term not geographical but denoting a direction - is an aspect of the culture of modern painting. The works of its artists are "abstract," but not necessarily "non-objective." They are always lyrical, often anguished, brutal, austere, and "unfinished," in comparison with our young contemporaries of Paris; spontaneity and a lack of self-consciousness is emphasized; the pictures stare back as one stares at them; the process of painting them is conceived of as an adventure, without preconceived ideas on the part of persons of intelligence, sensibility, and passion. Fidelity to what occurs between oneself and the canvas, no matter how unexpected, becomes central. The specific appearance of these canvases depends not only on what the painters do, but on what they refuse to do. The major decisions in the process of painting are on the grounds of truth, not taste.

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Motherwell
CUDDIHY SCRAPBOOK

Cuddihy Scrapbook

Robert Motherwell in panel discussion with Jack Tworkov, Philip Guston and Ad Reinhardt; Rosenberg is moderator.

around on your back forever.

The point of freshness! I wish to emphasize that aspect of the new that is new.

MOTHERWELL: There is no such thing as art in general, but only the specific art of a specific place and time. I am concerned with the question of the new in relation to modern art alone. (The word "new" in early English refers to nature or to fashions, such as clothes, or to something green, such as new wine or a freshman in college.) Its use in art (in the sense that we now have to use it) is modern, and perhaps first appears in a poem by Charles Baudelaire. He invites us to journey with him, not to a country, but to an ultimate concern, the new. Earlier, it never happened that an artist's ultimate concern was just "the new." Before Baudelaire, newness is something to be apologized for, something that an artist may be driven to for one reason or another, but that does not represent something to be valued deeply in itself. With Baudelaire, the new becomes the object of his essential desire. It inspires him, and is that with which alone modern art can be creative. Though the creative is always experienced as new, only in modern times is it the new itself that sometimes is experienced as new.

If you want to insure being dead, imitate in your life, or in your art, or in both, a style that already exists, a past style, and avoid like the plague the new, which forces you to move. It is interesting that the great citadels of past personal styles in the United States--Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, New Orleans, and so on--have not been able to add much to the body of modern art, no more than Bordeaux or Brussels or Dublin or Rome. As Apollinaire

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Motherwell

2

Cuddihy Scrapbook

wrote in "The Cubist Painters," you can't carry the corpse of your father that I respected, without a sense of freshness emanating from either. A moral around on your back forever.

beauty of modern art, which has led it inevitably and dialectically to the new.

The point of freshness! I wish to emphasize that aspect of the new that is involved in the fresh. My favorite dictionary is Skeat's. He gives as two essential meanings of new, "recent" and "fresh"; "New means 'that which is now', 'recent', 'fresh'." The relation of the word "new" to "now" and to "novel" is obvious. We must remember that in America the new has at once been

helped and damaged by our culture being made "new-happy." One of the in-

teresting things about the word "new" is that it is so strongly defined in terms of its opposites--for example, in early times it meant fresh meat, not pickled

or salted meat or, as we would say nowadays canned meat; it meant fresh water, not brackish or salty. Hence its deepest meanings (apart from meaning

new in the sense of novel) revolve around "untainted," "pure," "not sullied" or "tarnished" (or as one might say, "varnished"), not "stale or musty," but

refreshing and invigorating. In short, the opposite of fresh is that which is artificially preserved.

One might say that the specific enemies of modern art are those values that are artificially preserved, especially established institutions, which are the chief instruments for artificially preserving values. There is not a great deal of difference between the Louisiana State Legislature, the Libby Cannery, the Philadelphia Museum, the Eastman Kodak Laboratories, Cardinal Spellman's diocese, the Venetian ghetto and the Russian Writers' Congress--all are involved in preserving what is dead.

For my part, I have never met a man or experienced a work of art

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
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Motherwell

3

Cuddihy Scrapbook

that I respected, without a sense of freshness emanating from either. A moral
 beauty of modern art, ^{WHAT A MUSEUM SHOULD BE} which has led it inevitably and dialectically to the new,
 (from Art in America Paragraphs 2,3,4,5)
 is its inability to stand that which is musty and stale. No wonder Marcel Du-
 champ says he is so grateful to anyone who can show him something new! No
 wonder those who have a stake in the old and stale hate the new! What an ulti-
 mate confrontation!
 To put the tendency of my thought in another way, I think that it is im-
 possible to be deeply in touch with one's feelings and, looking at the world
 often angry disappointment at the Whitney Museum of American Art,
 squarely, not to be come revolutionary, not to want to change—in relation to
 whose whole name is taken seriously. As one Museum director from the
 imagined new possibilities—the areas of which one is aware. To create is not
 Continent said, "You go straight from your hotel to the Whitney, but in
 to repeat, but to discover, critically and radically and freshly.
 order to see the American art, you have to go to Ben Heller's apartment,
 or to the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo; even in the Museum of
 (Guston, Tworkoy, Rosenberg and Reinhardt make further comment.)
 Guggenheim, no one seems to know what it is - its identity, I wese.

This particular failure of the Whitney is not especially hard
 on New Yorkers who can see everything in private galleries; but to a
 visitor who does not know his way around and who is limited in time,
 the failure hurts. The Whitney's rationale seems to be democratic, to
 give a fair sampling from hundreds of artists of what is going on in
 America at any given moment, like the Daily News; but the truth is that
 what all the artists in any country at any given moment (even in cross-
 sections) are certainly humanitarian, learned, and filled with good will;
 but unless all that is coupled with insight - i.e., perception of what
 is creative enough to bring about changes - the selections remain
 empty as an ensemble, meaningless to the individuals participating,

3
 The Museum of Modern Art Archives

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WHAT A MUSEUM SHOULD BE

(from Art in America Paragraphs 2,3,4,5)

Foreigners often focus on what we blur from habit. The trickle of Europeans and Japanese through my New York studio (mainly persons interested in what Clement Greenberg called "American style" painting) consistently express two judgments: profound admiration for the completeness and quality of the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in general; shocked and often angry dissatisfaction at the Whitney Museum of American Art, whose whole name is taken seriously. As one museum director from the Continent said, "You go straight from your hotel to the Whitney, but in order to see the American art, you have to go to Ben Heller's apartment, or to the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo; even in the Museum of Modern Art you can't see the new American art Whole." As for the Guggenheim, no one seems to know what it is - its identity, I mean.

This particular failure of the Whitney is not especially hard on New Yorkers who can see everything in private galleries; but to a visitor who does not know his way around and who is limited in time, the failure hurts. The Whitney's rationale seems to be democratic, to give a fair sampling from hundreds of artists of what is going on in America at any given moment, like the Daily News; but the truth is that what all the artists in any country at any given moment (even in cross-sections) are certainly humanitarian, learned, and filled with good will; but unless all that is coupled with insight - i.e., perception of what is creative enough to bring about changes - the selections remain empty as an ensemble, meaningless to the individuals participating, and



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and ultimately irresponsible to the public. My point is, should the subject matter of an art museum be history or that which moves the eye? The effort to do both (which everyone more or less tries) invariably end on the side of history. No one but an art-historian could endure those large paintings in the Louvre by Ingres, which misunderstand everything, painting and history both.

American artists are in a unique position among artists to see the workings of a museum, because American museums are the most committed to showing living artists. Whether this is a desirable situation I am inclined to doubt, though I myself have benefited - unless the museum is devoted only to contemporary art, in which case the sanctification of history is not implied, but gambled on. The Museum of Modern Art is a great museum and the exception to the dangers that I see - because of the insight, wisdom and magnitude of character of Alfred H. Barr Jr. I would think that such a man in such a position would appear once in a century, and I could almost wish that his museum remain unchanged (as the Frick should have) when Barr retires. I believe in specific men, not institutions, and I do not believe (nor do foreign visitors) that there is his like anywhere. Still, it only takes the appearance of another man of such qualities to negate what I say.....

Perhaps, the most remarkable experience that I have had of a museum was in the new Leger Museum in the south of France at Biot, not because it was devoted to Leger, but because its hundred of works by him show

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the whole working life of an artist of stature. There one can have the sense, the real sense, of just what Leger was, just by looking, just by looking in one place. What a joy! And a relief from the anthology museum. Most museums are conceived like a vaudeville show, a series of acts, sampling everything, but only a sample.....And so one's joy with the Picasso Museum at Antibes. But less so, because there are many fewer works than those of Leger at Biot, and only from one period in Picasso's life, even though he interests me more personally than Leger.

If I had absolute control of American museums - God forbid! my first, emergency, act would be to install Charles Egan or Clement Greenberg to choose all the works to be shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art; second, longrange act would be to redistribute all the great artists, so that each museum, according to its importance, place and scale would have preponderance - preferably all - of the works in American public collections of specific artists. I would love to go to San Francisco, say, to see all the Matisse's, to Cambridge for the Sassetts (if there are that many), to Chicago for the Goyas, to New York for the Rembrandts, to Merion for Renoirs, to Washington for Titians, to Philadelphia for Cubism, to Boston for Greek pots; or to any small town to see all of a minor artist say, Boudin or Marin or Guardi or Constantin Guys. And how incredibly less dull would travel be in America if say, in Falmouth one could see all the Homer watercolors; in Cicero, Sullivan's architectural renderings; in Gettysburg, all the Matthew Bradys (instead of Charlie Weavers and Dwight Eisenhowers); in Oxford, Audubon; in Fargo, Frederic

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Remington; in New Orleans, Degas pastels - as one can, for example, in Colorado Springs see all the Santos statues. Just the other day, for the first time in my life I had a desire to visit Wilmington, because I learned that there is a pre-Raphaelite collection. But as a general situation is everywhere in America one sees the same Main Street, same Woolworth's same Coca-Cola, same chain drugstore, same movie, same motel, same fried shrimps, and the same local museum reflecting the same lesser way the same big museum. O sameness! Bolton Landing, N.Y. is to me one of the great places in America because of David Smith's metal sculpture strewn across his acres, and in his house and studios; otherwise it is a banal resort on Lake George, where I suppose the main place to eat is at Howard Johnson's.....

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RM

Painting 1960

S9-NE wall

O'Hara Archive File
Museum of Modern Art

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Now
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been transformed. The former severe black bands are fractured into segments of color so intense in contrast that they jump, so short in segment that they become a staccato rhythm against the larger rhythms of the main structure; there are heavier, and by virtue of size (since all the colors are pure) even more intense rests; and all the while the large white background, the eternal World, reinforces the concrete and fugitive drama. For the first time a subject is present, not by virtue of its absence, but actually present, though its appearance is torn away, and only the structure bared. The Modern City! Precise, rectangular, squared, whether seen from above, below, or on the side; bright lights and sterilized life; Broadway, whites and blacks; and boogie-woogie, the underground music of the at once resigned and rebellious, the betrayed... Mondrian has left his white paradise, and entered the world.

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MA
Elegy for SR35 1954-58
(Newman)

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Kassel Picture
Untitled 1959
(H 2s, color)



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RM: in USIA show
The Wedding
Alegy SR 59
Dig before Blackness
July 12 40

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Museum of Modern Art

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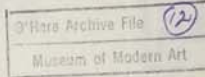
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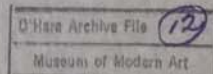
Mallarmé Swan 1944

Robert Elkon

July #240



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RAM
The Little Spanish Prison 1941
(about 24x16")
or The Spanish Prison 1943

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O'Hara Archive File
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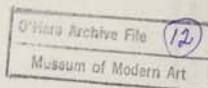
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Pancho Villa Dead + Alive 1943

collage

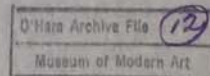


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La Résistance 1945
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O'Hara Archive File 12
Museum of Modern Art

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pos for collage show
View from a Tower
~~Collage~~ 1945
(Paul Peters)
take with military map

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Museum of Modern Art

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The Emperor of China 1947

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Museum of Modern Art

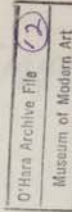
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	FOH	12

RM

poet

The Red Skirt 1947



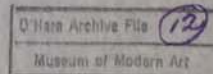
Calder
tions

Now
all his
Boogie

~~Whitney~~ rep Tigers Eye 3, 95

sembled
ay
have

been transformed. The former severe black bands are replaced by
segments of color so intense in contrast that they jump, so short in
segment that they become a staccato rhythm against the larger rhythms
of the main structure; there are heavier, and by virtue of size (since
all the colors are pure) even more intense rests; and all the while the
large white background, the eternal World, reinforces the concrete and
fugitive drama. For the first time a subject is present, not by virtue
of its absence, but actually present, though its appearance is torn away,
and only the structure bared. The Modern City! Precise, rectangular,
squared, whether seen from above, below, or on the side; bright lights
and sterilized life; Broadway, whites and blacks; and boogie-woogie, the
underground music of the at once resigned and rebellious, the betrayed...
Mondrian has left his white paradise, and entered the world.



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RM

The Homely Protestant 1948

Calder
tions

Now
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Boogie

collage Boogie
with this Boogie/Dance

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The Elegy 1948

collage (Boogie)

is this elegy ("American 20th century")

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RM
Iberia CR 5-1958
(the big one?) (#1, #2?)

O'Hara Archive File
Museum of Modern Art
12

Calder
tions

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RM

+58

Elegy for SR 57 1957-60

Calder
tions

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B- or + add Calder
+ Pollock sections

PAINTERS' OBJECTS,
Partisan Review bottom of pg 95 and
closing at top of pg 96

Now in his old age, and in a foreign country, Mondrian has assembled all his remarkable resources for purely expressive ends. In Broadway Boogie - Woogie the simple elements of his hitherto analytical art have been transformed. The former severe black bands are fractured into segments of color so intense in contrast that they jump, so short in segment that they become a staccato rhythm against the larger rhythms of the main structure; there are heavier, and by virtue of size (since all the colors are pure) even more intense rests; and all the while the large white background, the eternal World, reinforces the concrete and fugitive drama. For the first time a subject is present, not by virtue of its absence, but actually present, though its appearance is torn away, and only the structure bared. The Modern City! Precise, rectangular, squared, whether seen from above, below, or on the side; bright lights and sterilized life; Broadway, whites and blacks; and boogie-woogie, the underground music of the at oncesigned and rebellious, the betrayed... Mondrian has left his white paradise, and entered the world.

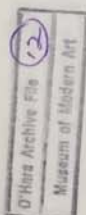
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* *

As a result of the poverty of modern life, we are confronted with the circumstance that art is more interesting than life. "Experience is bound to utility," as André Breton says, "and guarded by common-sense." The pleasurable "things" of other times for the most part no longer exist, and those which do longer suffice. With what our epoch meant to replace the wonderful things of the past—the late afternoon encounters, the leisurely repasts, the discriminations of taste, the graces of manners, and the gratuitous cultivation



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of minds—what we might have invented, perhaps we shall never know. We have been made too busy with tasks.

At what other time could the juxtaposition of a bright square on a white ground have seemed so portentous!

The Surrealists alone among modern artists refused to shift the problem to the plane of art. Ideally speaking, superrealism became a system for enhancing everyday life. True, the Surrealists were always saying that "poetry should be made by all"; but they did not mean precisely what we have always meant by poetry. If they had been successful, we might not have needed "poetry" at all. Still, their various devices for finding pleasure—spiritual games, private explorations, public provocations, sensory objects, and all the rest—were artificial enough abroad before the war. In the hard and conventional English-speaking world the devices simply could not work. Here it was the Surrealists who were transformed. And it might be that their pioneer, and therefore often naïve effort to enhance the life of the modern mind will be forgotten.

But in any case, it is not unimportant, this thing Alexander Calder has done, in making objects of pleasure worthy of adults (Museum of Modern Art, Calder Retrospective). Granted, most of us must see them in museums of galleries, and that destroys half the fun. Still, there they are! The playthings of a prince for us all. . . .

It was Mondrian's influence which first led Calder from his earlier pleasantries, and toys for children, to these marvelous objects for the adult mind: "I was very much moved by Mondrian's studio, large beautiful, and irregular as it was, with the walls painted white, and divided by black lines and rectangles of bright color, like his paint-

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ings...and I thought at the time how fine it would be if everything there MOVED; though Mondrina himself did not approve of this idea at all." Later it came to be Miro's shapes among those of abstract artists which Calder liked best. But the essential conditions of his art remained the same; a fruitful union,—his native American ingenuity (a preference for tools, rather than the brush), leading in turn to a fresh discovery (an art of motion), coupled with the advances of European art (abstract forms) and European thought (the Surrealist understanding of the desirability of the object of pleasure). The consequence of this union is that Calder's native American gifts become interesting to general culture.

There is something splendid about the form of motion, or, more exactly, motion formed; and it is with this that Calder has enchanted us.

* *

Certain individuals represent a young generation's artistic changes. There are never many such individuals in a single field, such as painting—perhaps a hundred to begin with. The hazards inherent in man's many relations with reality are so great—there is disease and premature death; hunger and alcoholism and frustration; the historical moment may turn wrong for painters: it most often does; the young artist may betray himself, consciously or not, or may be betrayed—the hazards are so great that not more than five out of a whole young generation are able to develop to the end. And for the most part it is the painting of mature men which is best.

The importance of the one-man show of young Jackson Pollack (Art of This Century) lies just in this, that he represents one of the younger generation's chances. There are not these other young Amer-

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icans of whom this could be said. In his exhibit Pollock reveals extraordinary gifts: his color sense is remarkably fine, never exploited beyond its proper role; and his sense of surface is equally good. His principal problem is to discover what his true subject is. And since painting is his thought's medium, the resolution must grow out of the process of his painting itself.