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Kline quot – Sandler new p. 33

(Hofmann 1966)

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See also

Log, p. 14–16 (Cedar; ab-ex; erased de K; Schwitters
RK quotes in "The Artist Speaks" (Art in America, May-June 1966)

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(9) Fulton Street - Stable Mans - dirt Mgr - living or 115 a day - erased de Kooning - 15 Americans Mans at MOMA - Blue Poles - Pat's "Women" (1933)

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Eleanor Ward - 5/30/78

Says she decided to have a gallery because of being taken to Knoedler and places like that as a child -- hushed atmosphere, feelings of intimidation -- and thinking how nice it would be to be able to walk in off the street and just look at paintings. When space became vacant on 7th Avenue, between 58th and 59th, she took it and called gallery the Stable -- not because the house had once been a stable (which it had) but in the sense of a "stable" of artists and a play on the word stability.

First real show was Stable Annual, which came out of 9th Street Show. A committee of artists -- deKooning, Kline, Nick Carone, Conrad Marca-Relli -- chose the rest. Second year, all those who had shown were invited to show again and to suggest others. By third year it had become too big, too crowded -- the annuals fell of their own weight. But she feels they were enormously successful.

She also started showing some Europeans -- Burri, Tapies -- in association with Iolas. Then decided to be on her own. Went down to Fulton Street to see Bob's work, and offered him a double show with Cy. Story about Bob and Cy cleaning out basement to show sculpture. Cy's work seemed to affront people as much as Bob's then -- the same scribbled image.

Bob and Cy

A very different kind of friendship from Bob and Jasper. Cy was very shy, diffident, but elegant and entrancing at the same time. There was not the same sexual unity between them. Cy would often say, "There he goes again," when Bob embarked on some wild verbal flight.

After that double show, Cy was drafted into the army. He was away ten months, had a dreadful time. Came back to find Bob with Jasper. He was shattered. No advance warning -- Bob doesn't write. Eleanor says she made him go to Italy to be with a girl he had loved for years, also from Virginia; Eleanor had had an affair with her, too, but now she was married to a marvelous Italian and living there. Eleanor gave Cy money for passage on the boat, plus a couple of hundred dollars; Cy left, and never came back. It was through the Virginia girl that he met Tatia. He brought her back to the US the next year -- they were not living together then -- and took her to see his family in Virginia. She decided then that she wanted to marry him, mainly because she wanted his child. They slept together for the first time in a Virginia motel room.

She blames Leo for alienating her from Cy -- Leo told Cy she would not lend one of his pictures for a museum show.

She closed her gallery in 1970 -- the party really was over, she felt.

Eleanor Ward (from R.R.)

Eleanor didn't tell him that Barr and Dorothy Miller had come by the gallery, and when he found out that they had, she said they wouldn't have been interested in his work. Later, the artist who was having a show there then told him that Barr and Miller had looked at his work and expressed interest. The artist quoted Eleanor as saying, after they left, "Wouldn't you know they'd be interested in the work of a clown?"

Bob went to her after that to withdraw from the gallery, hoping that by doing so he could keep his job as janitor there. But she fired him as janitor.

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Stable Show

Eleanor Ward came down that summer (1953), and offered R. and Twombly a show. They went up to look at her gallery, and discovered the cellar. It smelled like horses -- had actually been a stable -- but the space delighted them and they spent the rest of the summer cleaning it out, laying concrete, etc. (see Ward invu). The show was the scandal of the season. ~~Everyone called it the worst~~. And it provoked enormous hostility among other painters. (Note: Poster used only R's last name, as Tho'be were well known).

R's work had always done that. He once learned that Barnett Newman, on first seeing his white paintings, said to Bill deKooning "What's the matter with him? Does he think it's easy?" (Irony here was that this is almost certainly what deKooning felt about Newman). R. had left Parsons because he felt she just wasn't really interested in his work. The attitude of most painters then was, "If he really hates painting all that much, why doesn't he quit painting?" Many others took it simply as a joke, and R. is quite sensitive about this -- as it comes up fairly often in conversation with him, i.e., after the Jewish Museum show, "Now at least it's harder for people to say it's a joke, because a joke just doesn't go on for ten years" etc.

Cage, Cunningham et.

One reason R. took to living downtown, in fact, was that he felt so far removed anyway from what other painters were doing. About this time, he was finding that the only people who really did like his work and were sympathetic to what he was doing, were the musicians, dancers etc like John Cage, Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, Merce Cunningham, etc. The reason for this is crucial: They, too, were drawn to an art that did not depend on the personal self-expression of the artist. They were anti-expressionist, not anti-art. As R. put it, ~~painting~~ "I don't want a painting to be just an expression of my personality -- I feel it ought to be much better than that!" The irony here, of course, is that so much abstract expressionist painting looks alike; if the artist were successfully expressing his unique self, shouldn't each artist paint differently? Anyway, R. and the Cage group were definitely against the trend, and it was then a very powerful trend, running at its height. R. started working with Cunningham, See Cage invu.

The erased deKooning incident

1953

The Stable show forced R. into a role: the enfant terrible. He didn't much like it, and never really played it. The Cage group gave him his only encouragement, and even bought a few works. But he got almost no sympathy at all from other painters, except maybe Guston + Tworkov.

Note on the black paintings: "I wanted to show that a painting could have the dignity of not calling attention to itself. That it could only be seen if you really looked at it." (see also over page)

Zen: Not really applicable to R. He is not a reader, has no interest in philosophical systems of any kind, except the sort of unfinished one that every man evolves constantly for himself (existential). There is a certain parallel to the Zen attitude in R.'s attitude toward paint, toward canvas, objects and every other material having its own identity and value to be respected and not controlled conceptually. But the mystique never interested him at all.

He's been destroying his own work, and maybe he felt the need to destroy the work of someone he felt was great. He worshipped deKooning, and also Joseph Cornell, whom he used to go and see."

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Notes on Blacks, Whites, Reds:

After Betty Parsons show, R.'s pictures started going black. "Night plants," with forms emerging from black. Palette limited to matte and enamel black, white, and dirt rubbed into white to make inconsistent greys that couldn't possibly be duplicated -- also interesting texture, like concrete. Also used some red lead, which takes on different color than it has in the can. All this was a kind of reaction to Albers, and also "because I really didn't trust my own taste, didn't want to do something that I knew would be just a preference or ~~a~~ a prejudice of mine -- I didn't want color to serve me."

All these early black paintings have since been painted over.

R. used newspapers on canvas to give a lively "ground," so that "whatever I did would be in addition to something that was already there." Later, in the red paintings, funny papers served the same purpose.

The black and white paintings were intended to be non-aggressive, in the sense that most painting is aggressive. You wouldn't see them unless you really looked. They made no visual demands. But after so much hostility among other painters, and so many charges of anti-art, withdrawal, etc., R. thought he'd better see if they were right. If he really were just withdrawing, then that would be a cheap trick, a personality thing, too. So he turned to red, as the most aggressive color, the most difficult to handle.

He's been destroying his own work, and maybe he felt the need to destroy the work of someone he felt was great. He worshipped deKooning, and also Joseph Cornell, whom he used to go and see."

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Eleanor Ward (Stable)

Gave show to Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly in Sept 1953. Twombly was doing black and whites, R. doing all black and all white canvasses, and sculpture. She went down to see their work the preceding spring. Afterwards, they came up to the gallery, which was then at 7th Ave and 58th Street, and discovered the basement. A big room about half way below street level, full of debris, with cracked cement floor.

"Those two boys worked like galley slaves. I've never seen anyone work as hard as they did. They cleaned that whole basement room, and it took them weeks and weeks. Literally dozens of loads of junk had to be carted away, and debris that was two or three feet thick on the floor. They whitewashed the floor and the walls and the ceiling, and then used it to show Bob's sculpture. I remember there was a sort of grating at one end, through which a little daylight filtered in, and it gave the whole room an eerie sort of underwater feeling. It was just fabulous. They had the basement, and then the ground floor above for their paintings."

"I remember Stuard Preston, in the Times, wrote a review saying that the first bombshell of the season had already hit (((look up review))). Emily Genauer write a bitter, bitter diatribe against it, and then, in her year end review, devoted a great deal more space to our "unforgiveable" exhibition. Everyone was hostile, with the exception of a few artists. One well known critic was so horrified he came out on the street literally clutching his forehead, and then fled down the block -- I happened to be coming in at the time and I saw him (he didn't see me). People said to me, You're not serious! I lost friends over that show -- a great many people really thought it was immoral. Ten years ago it was still possible to shock people -- today it isn't any longer, but it was then."

(She had opened the gallery the previous January with [illegible] Dugmore, Maldarelli, Joan Mitchell, and Biala). Opened second season with Rauschenberg-Twombly. Not a single picture sold. The only sale, in fact, was a Rauschenberg stone sculpture, to a wealthy woman to whom R. had written a letter explaining just what a patron should do for art. She bought it from him direct, going to his studio to do so. Price $300. "Bob couldn't wait to come to me with the gallery commission, he felt delighted at being able to do something for the gallery." (Nobody was buying art then. At the first Stable Annual, Pollock's "Blue Poles" was on exhibition, no takers).

The show established R., she feels. It at least made him the "enfant terrible" of the art world, and got him talked about. He was in group shows at the Stable afterwards, but not second show.

On Rauschenberg: "I've never known anyone to change so little over the years. He was just as determined then, just as sure. He had an inner certainty about what he was doing, whihh his meeting with Cage reaffirmed. He's never been a compulsive creator, or a n erratic one."

Tells story about the evening Bob came into the gallery, white an trembling, really ashen (they used to sit around the gallery and talk after hours). She asked what had happened, and he said "I've just destroyed a deKooning drawing." He's been destroying his own work, and maybe he felt the need to destroy the work of someone he felt was great. He worshipped deKooning, and also Joseph Cornell, whom he used to go and see."

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Eleanor Ward (cont)

"Bob is not at all theoretical, although sometimes when he's talking he gets so far out that nobody can follow him."

"The hostility to his work among certain other artists is deep and bitter and solid. I had to remove the guest book during his show in 1953, because of the obscenities being written in it."

On white paintings: "You just had to empty yourself and pull a Zen. And you know, we found that if you took away one panel, it didn't work, it wasn't the same. And then of course the shadows did move across then, and all that."

Ward says R. was aware of Duchamp back in 1953. Not so much the painterly Duchamp of the "Nudes," but the later Duchamp of the readymades.

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Emily Genaurer "Art and Artists: Musings on Miscellany"

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE Sunday, December 27, 1953

Section 4, page 5

Digging into my departmental catch-all I find first an item that inherently concerns - guess what? Space and time. Back in September there was presented at the Stable Gallery an exhibition of paintings by an artist named Rauschenberg. A lot of people wrote me then that they were confused by the show - it was not one of those on my schedule - because several "paintings" in it seemed to consist of framed but untouched pieces of canvas. Upon examining them carefully they said, they were able to detect a slight suggestion of shadow. Otherwise - nothing.

Inquiry at the gallery revealed that a ready explanation had been provided for these framed segments of empty space, in case anybody asked. It was made by the most logical person around to essay the job, the eminent composer John Cage, who is not only a friend of the artist but a great exponent of the musical equivalent of blank pictures - lengthy silence-filled intervals in instrumental composition. Since, up to now, I have not seen that explanation Of Rauschenberg's much-discussed works published, here it is:

"To whom,
No subject
No image
No taste
No object
No beauty
No message
No talent
No technique (no why)
No idea
No intention
No art
No object
No feeling
No black
No white (no *and*)

"After careful consideration, I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing in these paintings that could not be changed, that they can be seen in every light and are not destroyed by the action of shadows.

JOHN CAGE

"Hallelujah! The blind can see again; the water's fine."

If everything is now clear, even to the blind, we can go on to the next item.

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Fulton Street (1953 -

R. found a loft on Fulton Street, near the fish market. He didn't want to live in the village, with all the other painters, and he liked the idea of New York's being a port, which you quickly forget uptown. The loft had no plumbing, no heat; he improvised a hose and bucket outside as a basin, bathed mostly at friends' places (often surreptitiously, going into bathroom and getting a quick shower in midst of an evening's conversation). Cy Twombly lived there too off and on, when he was in New York instead of Virginia. R. rented from a local operator who ran several sandwich shops in the neighborhood, and who once told R., when R. gave him a $5 for rent, "That's my first million." He liked living there, especially on weekends when the neighborhood was deserted. In the cold weather he froze, and in the hot summer he took to getting up at 5 a.m., working until about 10, then taking the ferry to Staten Island and spending the rest of the day on the beach; he'd come back after dark, and work until late at night. He slept on fish boxes (crates) from the market, lived on 15¢ a day - picked up green bananas on wharf, dropped from unloading, plus one "meal" at Nedicks.

R. was experimenting with all sorts of things at this point. Among them: Rocks dug up by ConEdison excavation crew on his block, ConEdison lumber ("Con Edison uses the worst lumber, full of knotholes and warped and splintery"), dirt, grass, and hardy mosses like lichens -- he found lichen excellent, because it helped to keep the dirt in place. The use of growing things in painting was not an idea -- it occurred to him when a dirt painting began to sprout, from bird seed that had dropped into it accidentally.

"I've always been very curious about what is a picture and what isn't," says R. "Curiosity may even be the main thing with me. Of course, it's true I've never found anything that doesn't make a picture..."

(cover) →

that name on it.

Black and white paintings - see insert over page →

Cage was there too -- see Cage invu on this summer. Also Kline, Tworkov.

R. breaking up with Sue at this point. Intimates it was more a need to break away from her family, who were well off and oppressively interested in art, etc. He came back to New York with Sue, briefly, but then made the final break and went to Rome with Cy Twombly.

Europe and North Africa - 1952-3 (6 months)

Twombly had received a sizeable grant from a Virginia Museum, insisted R. come with him. R. did so because he had to get away. But soon realized that the money, which had seemed like so much, was not really enough for two, and felt awkward about living off Cy. He had brought about $300 with him, of which he had about $50 left. He had heard about people making a lot of money working on U.S. airbases in North Africa -- coming to Paris with bulging bankrolls, etc. So he used his last $50 to fly to Casablanca, and presented himself at the employment office of the Atlas Construction Company.

R. quickly found that it wasn't enough to say you wanted to work and were willing to do anything. You had to apply for a specific grade of job, and have papers and references to prove your ability. He was sitting outside the employment office on a bench, wondering what to do next after being turned down, when a girl who worked in personnel came out, said she had heard he was from New York, and struck up a conversation (Note: R. always being salvaged by sympathetic girls?).

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[Note: R. was in Stable Annuals of '54, '55, '56.]

~~After Stable show and hostile reaction, R. went into Asia~~

(cover)

that name on it.

Black and white paintings — see insert over page →

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them in shallow water somewhere, where people could have seen them and fished them out -- I wanted them to really disappear') he consigned them to the Arno. This was not, he says, a Dadaist gesture in any way. Much simpler really. But he did think that "it would make the critic feel badly," and accordingly he wrote him a note saying "I took your advice." Upsetting to a critic to be taken that seriously, perhaps.

Coming through customs on his return to New York, R. had the remaining ropes and boxes in a wicker trunk. The customs official opened it, and said "What are these?" R. hadn't planned anything. Without thinking, he explained that they were ceremonial objects made by American Indians, and said he had been touring Europe lecturing on the culture of the American Indian. The official thought he seemed much too young to be lecturing, but passed him through.

R. landed in New York in Summer of 1953 with $5 left. Took one of the boxes to Betty Parsons, who told him that Philip Johnson was coming in that same afternoon to look at something, and might be interested. R. waited around, downstairs, rather than spend the extra dime on subway fare. When he went up again, Betty P. said "You're very lucky -- I talked him into buying it." This bothered R. a good deal, the idea of someone having to be talked into taking something, but he had no choice but to accept the $25. Later, he borrowed the box back for a show, and kept it for two years, deliberately. He didn't want Johnson to have it if he didn't want it. Johnson never asked for it back, so R. gave it away to someone else.

(cover) →

[illegible] that name on it.

Black and white paintings — see insert over page →

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RR elected to The Club at end of 1951

Bob began going to Cedar after Europe -North Africa trip. "I came back from Europe with three dollars to establish myself anda coupls of wicker baskets full of stuff. I was much too naive to be miserable then."

(Cy had gone over to Rome with a scholarship from a Virginia museum. "I was resisting my dependency on his scholarship. I guess he was resisting it too").

R. didn't come uptown very often. When he came he usually had to walk, to save money, besides which he was continually put in the position of having to defend his work, which he doesn't like. Other artists saw it as anti-art, as gesture, as a joke. "I knew the difference between gesture and art, ~~xxxx~~ so it bothered me. I've always been bothered that John Cage speaks of his music as experimental, for that matter. To me, experimental has the wrong association. In the first place, an experiment usually presupposes a certain result. And then it sounds like you're just fooling around. I feel if you're writing music you should be playing for keeps."

At The Club, R. used to argue the point occasionally, saying that it would be more insulting to paint like deKooning or Pollock than to do what he was doing, try to find some other way to do things, but he never felt he got through to anyone

[illegible] to recall the image. "Charlene" had a child's drawing [illegible] that name on it.

Black and White Paintings — See insert over page →

Cage was there too -- see Cage invu on this summer. Also Kline, Goorkov.

R. breaking up with Sue at this point. Intimates it was more a need to break away from her family, who were well off and oppressively interested in art, etc. He came back to New York with Sue, briefly, but then made the final break and went to Rome with Cy Twombly.

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Betty Parsons

RR says he was thrown out of the gallery because Barney Newman didn't like his white paintings and Ad Reinhardt didn'd like the blacks. "Betty just asked me to move my things out because they needed the storage space, but I noticed she didn't ask anyone else to do it."

picture, thinking it would please Cage; it didn't. This, R. says, was typical of his attitude then -- he thought if Cage liked that picture,

Fulton Street - ~~Working with Denoo~~

Lived there mostly alone. Cy would come by now and then (he was in the army), but Cy hadn't adjusted to the crudeness of Bob's life style. The loft was a beautiful space, an attic with high ceilings and lots of room. But cold in winter and unbearably hot in summer. Bob would take the Staten Island ferry early in the morning and spend the day on the beach out there, then paint all night. Bus drivers got to know him because of the objects he'd pick up on beach to bring back. The loft had 20' ceilings, and a rent that started out $15 a month but Bob had it reduced to $10. ~~It~~ He was still doing black paintings when he moved there. Went into red paintings and then the pedestrian color ones in Fulton loft - a lot of important work.

"Charlene" - trying to figure out a way of naming paintings that would not pin them down visually. Pollock's titles seemed too objective -- it was hard to recall the image. "Charlene" had a child's drawing with that name on it.

R. hurt). R. completely involved in painting -- "I doubt if you could have found anyone more involved than I was, to the point of being stupid about it. Looking back on the people who were there then, and what's happened to them, you could also say that the ones who showed the most promise were Cy and myself."

Black and White Paintings - See insert over page →

Cage was there too -- see Cage invu on this summer. Also Kline, Tooker, ov.

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R. met John Cage as a result of the Betty Parsons show. Cage introduced himself at the gallery during the show. R. knew vaguely who he was; as R. says, Cage "makes quite an impression." Cage said he wanted a picture, and R. gave him one. (Later, when ~~Cage~~ R. was staying in Cage's studio one summer while Cage was in Europe, R. painted over the picture, thinking it would please Cage; it didn't. This, R. says, was typical of his attitude then -- he thought if Cage liked that picture, he'd really like the one R. would paint on top of it. R. remembers the studio as vividly. It overlooked the East River on Monroe Street, and was furnished with a large marble slab on bricks, two or three cushions on the floor, and a grand piano. R's Fulton St. loft had had a good year for bugs and needed fumigating, so Cage had offered the use of his place while he was away). (see Cage inum)

Spring 1951 to Summer 1952 -- ~~to be filled in~~. [Summer 1951 Outer Island. Winter '51-'52 in N.Y., painting on his own; occasional periods in "ASL."]

R. was picture in historic Ninth Street show, one of first to be organized by artist. See Castelli. May 1951.

Black Mountain #2

Summer 1952 returned to Black Mountain, which seemed like a kind of home. No invitation, just went. Motherwell was there then - a painter whom R. had idolized, and whom he came to detest. Motherwell had two large parties, and the only two people not invited were R. and Cy Twombly (Motherwell explained that he wanted to avoid painters, but R. hurt). R. completely involved in painting -- "I doubt if you could have found anyone more involved than I was, to the point of being stupid about it. Looking back on the people who were there then, and what's happened to them, you could also say that the ones who showed the most promise were Cy and myself."

Black and White Paintings — See insert over page →

Cage was there too -- see Cage inum on this summer. Also Kline, Stoorkov.

R. breaking up with Sue at this point. Intimates it was more a need to break away from her family, who were well off and oppressively interested in art, etc. He came back to New York with Sue, briefly, but then made the final break and went to Rome with Cy Twombly.

Europe and North Africa - 1952-3 (6 months)

Twombly had received a sizeable grant from a Virginia Museum, insisted R. come with him. R. did so because he had to get away. But soon realized that the money, which had seemed like so much, was not really enough for two, and felt awkward about living off Cy. He had brought about $300 with him, of which he had about $50 left. He had heard about people making a lot of money working on U.S. airbases in North Africa -- coming to Paris with bulging bankrolls, etc. So he used his last $50 to fly to Casablanca, and presented himself at the employment office of the Atlas Construction Company.

R. quickly found that it wasn't enough to say you wanted to work and were willing to do anything. You had to apply for a specific grade of job, and have papers and references to prove your ability. He was sitting outside the employment office on a bench, wondering what to do next after being turned down, when a girl who worked in personnel came out, said she had heard he was from New York, and struck up a conversation (Note: R. always being salvaged by sympathetic girls?).

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The White Paintings and the Black Paintings [See also R. statement on Kluver record, first section.]

After the Betty Parsons show, R.'s pictures started going black -- "night plants" he calls them, with forms emerging from black. His palette limited to matte and enamel black, white, and white with dirt rubbed into it to make greys that could not be duplicated, plus interesting texture like concrete. Also used some red lead, which takes on color different from that in can. All this was a reaction to Albers' "being such a good teacher. Albers believed that it was important to know everything there was to know about color, but he said that if you thought one color was better than another you were just expressing a personal preference. I really didn't trust my own taste, and I didn't want to do something that I knew would be just a preference or a prejudice of mine -- I didn't want color to serve me, in other words." (e.g., didn't want to use green to intensify red, because that would mean subordinating green).

The white paintings arose from the same attitude that later led Cage to write his silent piece. The possibility of not doing anything. The idea, as R. was to express it, that "A canvas is never empty." The white paintings allow room for shadows, reflections from outside painting, etc. to enter in. Cage called them "airports for lights..." and hung them above the audience during the 1952 'concerted event' at Black Mtn. (Solomon says they were definitive statement of "the impossibility of creating a void.")*

Black paintings done at the same time, at Black Mtn. Torn newspapers pasted down to give the form, "to activate a ground so that even the first stroke in a painting had its own unique position in a grey map of words. As the paintings changed the printed material became as much a subject as the paint" (R. in Print, Jan-Feb 1959) (see below) Says R. (to CT): "I wanted to show that a painting could have the dignity of not calling attention to itself, that it could be seen only if you really looked at it."

Neither the blacks nor the whites were to be considered an end in themselves, "although the pictures tended to look like complete statements." They were, rather, a means of getting at the same subject. They were intended to be non-aggressive, in the sense that most painting of the time was aggressive. "They made no visual demands." And of course, they are clearly related to R's major motive: curiosity as to what makes a picture.

Although they were intended to be non-aggressive, the whites and blacks evoked so much hostility from other painters, so many accusations of being "anti-art," of "Well, if he hates it that much, why does he paint?" -- that R. thought he'd better find out whether there was any truth in the charges. "If I really were just withdrawing, then that would be a cheap trick, a personality thing." Accordingly, he turned to red -- the most aggressive, the most difficult, the least austere color (for him). Used funny papers to make a lively ground, in same way as newsprint in blacks -- "so that whatever I did would be in addition to something that was already there."

* Tworkov says the whites are "Mondrianesque painting carried to its final extremity, Albers too - it was really killing them in a way."

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Erased De Kooning (1963 notes)

R. had been working for some time with erasing his own work - to create a work of art by erasing. Not just deleting certain lines, but the technique of erasing. The act of erasing to make the work. It was unsatisfactory to erase his own work, tho, because of the overtones: he might not do something good enough if he knew he was going to erase it. Decided he had to erase the work of someone who was known to be great. It had to be an American, and de Kooning was the obvious choice.

R. had a deKooning drawing ("which I'd stolen once") but that wouldn't do. The act required participation of the artist. R. went to deK's studio, and "explained to him just what I wanted to do. The idea of destruction kept coming into it, and I kept trying to show that it wouldn't be destruction, although there was always the possibility that if I did it, and it didn't work, there would have been a terrible waste. He understood what I wanted to do. At first he didn't like it much, but he understood, and he agreed. He went to a portfolio and began thumbing through it, and he said, 'No, I'm not going to make it easy for you. It has to be something I'd miss.' He took out another portfolio, and looked through that. He finally found one, and gave it to me. It wasn't easy by any means. It was done with a hard line, and it was greasy, too. I had to work very hard to erase it, using every sort of eraser. It was a very upsetting thing to do, because I didn't know that it would work. But it did work. I liked the result. I felt it was a work of art. So the problem was solved - I'd proved it to myself. And of course it wasn't necessary to do it again."

(Note: Ordinarily when R. destroys or erases something in a picture, he does so for negative reasons -- because it looks like something he's seen before, in the work of other artists or in his own work. He will never destroy something because it doesn't look like what he wanted it to look like -- he never did want it to look like something).

DeKooning ~~Duchamp~~ - on RR (question relayed by Fourcade, 5/78)

DeKooning says he gave Bob the drawing but doesn't remember if Bob told him what he wanted to do with it (!). Also said it was "sort of a corny idea."

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Tom Hess - 5/23/78 lunch

Tom grew up largely in Europe, but returned to go to Deerfield and then to Yale, where he majored in art history. A good dept then, with a lot of lively people -- Focillon, for one. He was Class of 1942. Served with the Air Force until late 1945, teaching French pilots in ~~France~~ Europe. Went to Art News in 1946, and became managing editor in 1949 when ~~Aline~~ Saarinen left. Alfred Frankfurter was very much opposed to the New York School painters then, couldn't see anything in them. Tom changed the magazine mainly by stopping things --attacks on ab-ex, etc.

Rauschenberg

Bob looked like the all-American kid. He wasn't drinking much in the early days, and was very likeable. What the older people said about him was that they liked his spirit, and his generosity, and the richness of his work, but they worried that it might be too much like decoration -- that he laid out a painting like an art director laid out a magazine page, But it was complicated - nobody wanted to reject an artist, because they remembered too clearly the rejections of ~~the~~ generation before theirs. Some felt bad about Bob and Jap getting so much attention, but they didn't really want to say so. There was also some feeling of surprise about the homosexuality, although that was nothing to bother artists. There have always been homosexual groups -the Lincoln Kirstein people, and then all American composers.

Bob also made trouble for himself by being so witty. He would say things that sounded too irreverant or ironic, and in that atmosphere they didn't go over well. When Eleanor Ward said she wouldn't show his "Garden", and Tom went to her and said there must be no censorship etc., Bob made things worse by telling her to think of it as sculpture -- only his moss grew a little faster than stone.

country upon the same all too familiar course, and lately there have been signs that the drive for secession in South India, which the Indian democracy had managed to contain for many years, is again gathering strength, with South Indians portraying her rule as domination by the North. The South India movement is only the strongest of a number of secessionist movements that are afoot from east to west. It may be, as Mrs. Gandhi and her apologists claim, that to see the political form of government in India only in terms of human rights and civil liberties is to see India through Western eyes. But surely no Indian who within the last quarter of a century or so has lived through a bloody religious civil war and has fought three wars with Pakistan can be blind to the dangers of sweeping dictatorships and further partitions, despite the superficial tranquillity Mrs. Gandhi has provided. —VED MEHTA

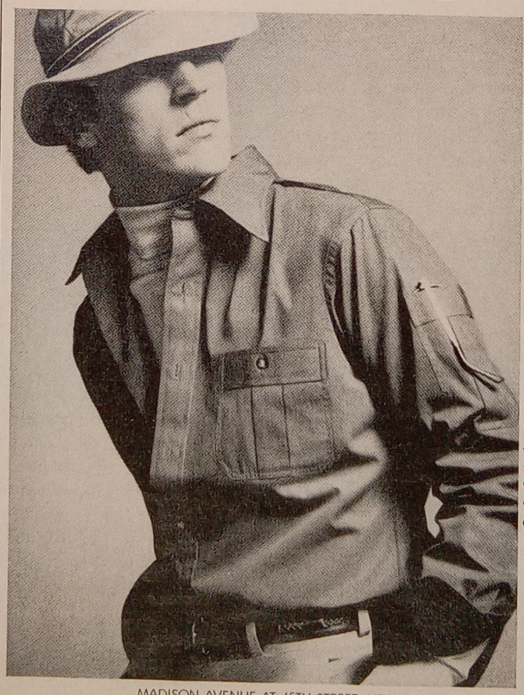
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After devouring their main courses, a waiter approached the table.

The waiter was a pretty good ball player in his own right.—*Boston Globe.*

Just as well for him, too.

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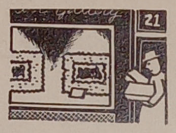
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THE ART WORLD

American Drawing and the Academy of the Erased de Kooning

TAKEN together, "Twentieth-Century American Drawing: Three Avant-Garde Generations" at the Guggenheim Museum and the recent "Drawing Now" show at the Museum of Modern Art provide a concise overview of developments in advanced American art since the early years of this century. (About a fourth of the artists in "Drawing Now" were Europeans, but their work is stylistically so close to that of the Americans that the difference in nationality does not affect the survey.) That art since the 1913 Armory Show was presented in terms of drawings rather than of paintings and sculptures sharpened the intellectual definition of each phase. The first principle in drawing is concentration on essentials: the artist states his ideas with maximum directness; he resorts automatically to the basic elements of his art; and he exposes his sensibility without the decorative disguises that may be part of his finished creations. Drawings are often a species of visual notetaking, intended only for the artist's own use. In recording observations of nature, illustrating abstract concepts, suggesting the outlines of a work to be executed in a different medium, their natural vehicle is the sketch pad. At the "Drawing Now" exhibition, I found myself appreciating geometrical patterns, instructional charts, diagrammatic layouts, columns of words and signs by artist-theoreticians whose typical paintings and constructions I had considered intellectually pretentious and tiresome. Perhaps Bernice Rose, who organized the show, had a related response in mind when she described drawing as "the major two-dimensional work of the late sixties;" that is, as a genre preferred to painting.



Most drawings are small, and are produced with implements of writing and marking—pen, pencil, charcoal, crayon—but drawings as art are not defined by size or the means used. The biggest work by Arshile Gorky that I recall is a drawing, in charcoal or pencil; at "Drawing Now" there were four or five giants more than twenty feet in width. Watercolors, gouaches, pastels, collages, modified silk-screen prints, airbrushed pigments, and lines incised or scratched on stone, metal, bark, earth with any tool, including plows and motorcycles, are today all acceptable as drawings. In the Guggenheim show, Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, and Franz Kline are generously represented by oil paintings. In practice, "drawings" has become synonymous with "works on paper"—except that, as noted, drawings don't have to be on paper.

The encroachment of the methods, qualities, and aims of drawing on what had been considered more important mediums was furthered by Abstract Expressionism, which related painting to handwriting (calligraphy) and sign-making as a means of reaching into areas of the psyche previously untouched by the visual arts. In the flaunts of the paint-loaded brushes of Hofmann, Kline, de Kooning and the dripped or thrown pigment of Jackson Pollock, any effective distinction between painting and drawing is eliminated. The notetaking of drawing is carried over into painting and is maintained until the artist "works his way out of the picture"—declaring it to be completed by the cessation of his activity. At the Guggenheim, the energy clusters of the Action painters appear in unmistakable formal contrast to the structured drawings of the first generation of American vanguardists: Joseph Stella, Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, Man Ray, Stuart Davis. Their contemporaries Arthur Dove and Georgia O'Keeffe are closer to the animation of the later style, in their echoings of Futurism and Expressionism—for example, the riptides of black diagonals in Dove's "Field of Grain Seen from Train" (a typical Futurist motif) and "Nature Symbolized" anticipate Kline, while the wafting forms of O'Keeffe's "Evening Star" resemble Helen Frankenthaler's, though O'Keeffe is somewhat closer to nature.

The transition from the drawings of the first generation to those of the second is dramatically realized in Gorky's ink, wash, and crayon "Composition": the freely wandering line seems to change of its own volition into figurative images with organic and erotic references, then ambles on to mark off the spatial divisions of the drawing. Flowing linear improvisation, executed with a sign painter's liner brush that enabled Gorky to paint as if he were drawing with a flexible pen, provided the innovative element in the canvases of this artist's final period.

The founding of painting on drawing as a discipline of search and self-release is even more intrinsic to the creations of de Kooning: a first-rate small retrospective at the Guggenheim consists of fourteen works on paper, eight of them in oil and in pastel—they range from such early, tightly concentrated pencil drawings as "Working Man" (1938) and "Elaine de Kooning" (1940) to the extraordinarily inventive charcoal-and-pastel 1974 figure-in-the-landscape that is as unrestrained as rain. Techniques for loosening his drawing have been the basis of de Kooning's progression from the tremendously impacted, Renaissance-inspired draftsmanship of the thirties and forties (the "Elaine" drawing) to the protracted spontaneous composing of his mature period which responds to the complex vibrations of his temperament. In his work, an epoch of American art subservient to the forms of the past is seen being transformed by experiments in self-liberation.

Perhaps the final translation of painting into drawing takes place in the drip paintings of Pollock, exemplified at the Guggenheim by "Number 34," in which painting has been synthesized into screen upon screen of inscribed and sprayed pigment accumulated in varying densities, topped by a string of paint dropped at random on the picture plane. Pollock's drawing by dribble and splash is followed up in Robert Motherwell's tasteful "Beside the Sea." By scribbling in several mediums on different grounds, Cy Twombly explores the visual possibilities of undirected marking. The paintings in drips, blots, splashes, and runnels of color which Hans Hofmann conceived several years before Pollock's drip compositions are excellently represented at the Guggenheim by "Untitled" and "Ambush," both done in 1944; that these and several Hofmann oils are exhibited as drawings indicates the extent to which Action painting brought painting and drawing together. Similarly, almost all of Kline's Guggenheim entries are paintings "drawn" with massive sweeps of the brush.

In the third-generation portion of the show, the Abstract Expressionists give way to their outstanding parodists, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. (Other early deviators, such as Larry Rivers, would also have been pertinent.) Once past them, "Twentieth-Century American Drawing" relapses into the conventional representational draftsmanship of the Pop painters and the flat pattern-making of the Minimalists, such as Ellsworth Kelly and

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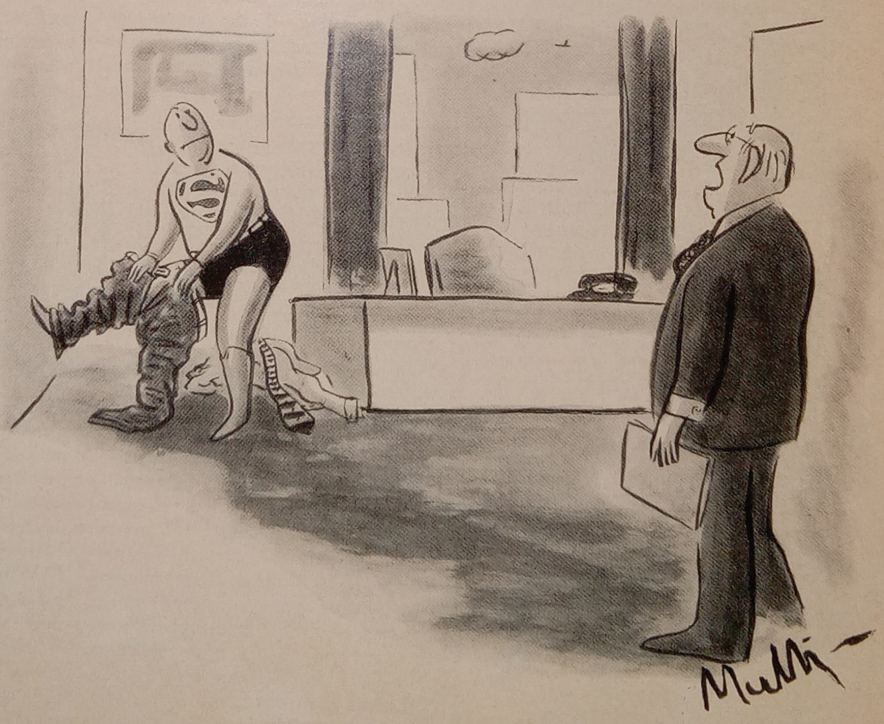
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Frank Stella. Among the Pop artists shown, Claes Oldenburg is by far the most gifted as a draftsman, Andy Warhol at diverting attention from his childish drawing with provocative subject matter—dollar bills, Chairman Mao.

Survey exhibitions inevitably remind spectators of artists who have been omitted. That Saul Steinberg, whose drawings undoubtedly rank with the best of this century, is not represented either at the Guggenheim or at the Museum of Modern Art reflects the narrow-minded indoctrination that has become standard among curators of contemporary art. Mentioning artists who should have been included in "Twentieth-Century American Drawing" is no doubt futile, but since the high quality as well as the chief historical interest of the exhibition lies in the sections devoted to the Abstract Expressionists, one might perhaps complain that extra attention ought to have been given to this mode. Philip Guston, for example, in his Action-painting period, produced countless drawings that parallel and converge with his paintings. Esteban Vicente worked in torn-paper collages as consistently as Motherwell and with as careful attention to the edges that act as contours of the forms. A phase of the career of Jack Tworkov consisted of a kind of vigorously painted "penmanship" that is a richer and more energetic and fulfilled complement to Twombly's slanted scrawls. The omission of Joan Mitchell and Norman Bluhm, with both of whom painting begins and ends in drawing, seems as arbitrary as (to move over to Pop) that of George Segal, whose plaster-cast figures evolved out of his drawings. In a show of "three generations" that finds room for six of Warhol's feeble sketches, the exclusion of Reginald Marsh, Edward Hopper, John Marin, Arthur Carles, and Rube Goldberg, to pluck names out of the air, must be attributed to trained prejudice, ignorance, or accommodation to current fashion.

THE post-Abstract Expressionist segment of "Twentieth-Century American Drawing" overlaps the opening portion of the "Drawing Now" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, which closed March 9th. It is plain that the curators of the two shows share the belief that Rauschenberg and Johns are the bridge between the older vanguardists and the art of today. "It is noteworthy," writes Diane Waldman, organizer of the Guggenheim exhibition, "that this investigation of the medium [of drawing], which actually began with Johns and Rauschenberg, became the basis for the conceptualization of the 1960's and early 1970's." Rauschenberg and Johns reappeared in "Drawing Now" as heralds of the new era of "investigation," along with Minimalists such as Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella, Donald Judd, and Sol LeWitt and Conceptualists such as Lawrence Weiner and Carl Andre. Pollock, de Kooning, and Hofmann were not included, since by museum logic they personify the nineteen-fifties and therefore have no bearing on the present. Nevertheless, "Drawing Now" kept harking back to Action painting, and to de Kooning in particular, repeating his ideas and attitudes, positively or negatively, though not always crediting the source. For Joseph Beuys, one of the non-Americans in "Now," drawing is an aspect of action, which he conceives as fulfilled in politics and magic, while the art object, the drawing, counts for little; Mrs. Rose speaks of "his compulsive scrawling" and notes that with Beuys drawing is "transformed into action," is "an act that insures freedom." Since Beuys thus represents a belated version of Action painting, the only legitimate reason for introducing his inconsequential markings would have been to compare his interpretation of "action" with that of Pollock or de Kooning, but apparently this was not in accord with Mrs. Rose's "now." A thirty-three-foot drawing by Robert Morris consisted of three parallel strips done by staining the floor and the wall with his feet, knees, and hands dipped in pigment. Here drawing is the act of imprinting the artist's limbs on a surface, and repeating this act without significant variation. In short, Morris's drawing is a derivation from Action painting that resembles the creations that Yves Klein produced some fifteen years ago by dipping nude girls in blue paint and imprinting their bodies on canvas.

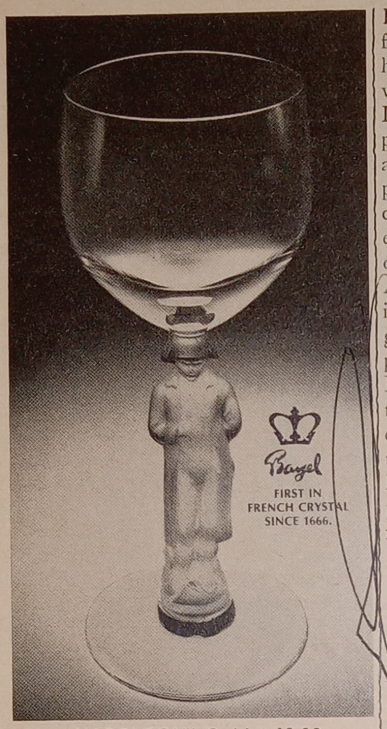
The period covered by "Drawing Now" began with parodies of Action painting by Rauschenberg and Johns and the revival by these artists of Duchamp's questions regarding the nature of the art object in the contemporary world. Near the entrance to the exhibition was Rauschenberg's "Erased de Kooning," which served as the keynote of the show. Erasing the de



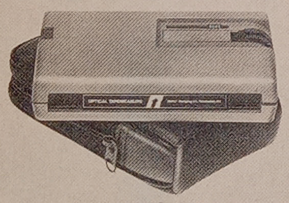
"Why, Hennings, I had no idea."

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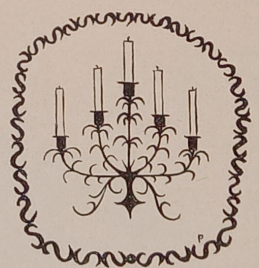


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Kooning (in part only—outlines of the forms are still faintly visible) and exhibiting it as Rauschenberg's own work was a comical gesture, a revival of Dada, especially since it was accompanied by the story that Rauschenberg and de Kooning had discussed the importance of choosing a drawing of high quality to erase. Art-historically, the erasing could be seen as a symbolic act of liberation from the pervasive force of Abstract Expressionism, while exhibiting the drawing signified that the negating art still clung to Abstract Expressionism for support with the public. In thus explicitly dramatizing the transition from one mode of art to another, "Erased de Kooning" (1953) is the first work with an exclusively art-historical content and produced expressly for art historians; it is this that insured its prominence in museum shows of the next two decades. "Erased de Kooning" became the cornerstone of a new academy, dedicated to replacing the arbitrary self of the artist with predefined processes and objectives—that is to say, Minimalism and Conceptualism.

The hero of the elimination of Abstract Expressionism by asserting its principles in reverse is Jasper Johns. Mrs. Rose gives accounts of one repudiation after another. Johns, she writes "functioned with reference to the preceding generation. Johns' facture was a reorganization of the expressionist strokes of Abstract Expressionism in relation to subject." This means that Johns painted *as if* he were expressing an emotion or seeking an image, but his Expressionist handling was meaningless, since his subjects—targets, flags, the alphabet—were already familiar and left nothing to be discovered. Johns' parody of Expressionist drawing with the brush was duplicated on a more patently amusing level in Lichtenstein's drawing "Brushstrokes" (at the Guggenheim), which meticulously copies a liquid swirl in pencil. By the evidence of "Drawing Now," the development of art from the fifties to the present consists largely of further counter-statements to Abstract Expressionism. Barnett Newman's call for "subject matter that is tragic and timeless" was answered with a hail of hamburgers, Coca-Cola bottles, and comic strips. "Abstract Expressionism," writes Mrs. Rose, "was concerned with one kind of risk-taking; the artist staked all on the drama of self-expression, on revelation as a moral issue." To the post-Action painters, strenuousness of this sort was an impediment to the good life of professionals, and Warhol "rejected the personal in terms of the handmade."



After Pop artists, "Drawing Now" showed draftsmen, mainly Minimalists and Conceptualists, who elaborated further on what Mrs. Rose calls Johns' "questions about essences." The academy of the erased de Kooning set itself such problems as: What is a painting? A sculpture? A drawing? When is an object real? When illusory? The answers, whatever they turn out to be, have one feature in common: they approach art through argument, and generate works that illustrate abstract conclusions. The following statement by Mrs. Rose is as good a summary as any of the outstanding tendency in the art of the sixties: "The rationalization of art which had been initiated with Johns continued, but under a more literal series of conditions." (She probably means in more literal terms.) Frank Stella dealt with Johns' discovery that a canvas is an object (a conclusion easier to reach when the image on the canvas has been erased). Stella arrived logically at the anti-de Kooning program that, in Mrs. Rose's words, aimed "to get the sentiment out of painting" and "against drawing in painting"—he found, she says, "drawing unnecessary to painting." Judd went further; he achieved a vision of what was "wrong with painting"—a problem familiar enough, but this time related not to the discovery of the camera, or the mass production of images, or the popularity of motion pictures, but to the nature of painting as such. "The main thing wrong with painting," wrote Judd, "is that it is a rectangular plane placed flat against the wall"—which, like the fact that people speak prose, had apparently gone unnoticed for centuries. In any event, the problem of painting had been transferred from the studio to the philosophy department.

The next step was taken by Sol LeWitt, who, recognizing that a painting is a thing that hangs on a wall, and thus a three-dimensional object, put ruled straight lines in hard pencil directly on the wall, in order to capture the two-dimensionality that is the "essence" of painting—and who eliminated the possibility of de Kooningesque

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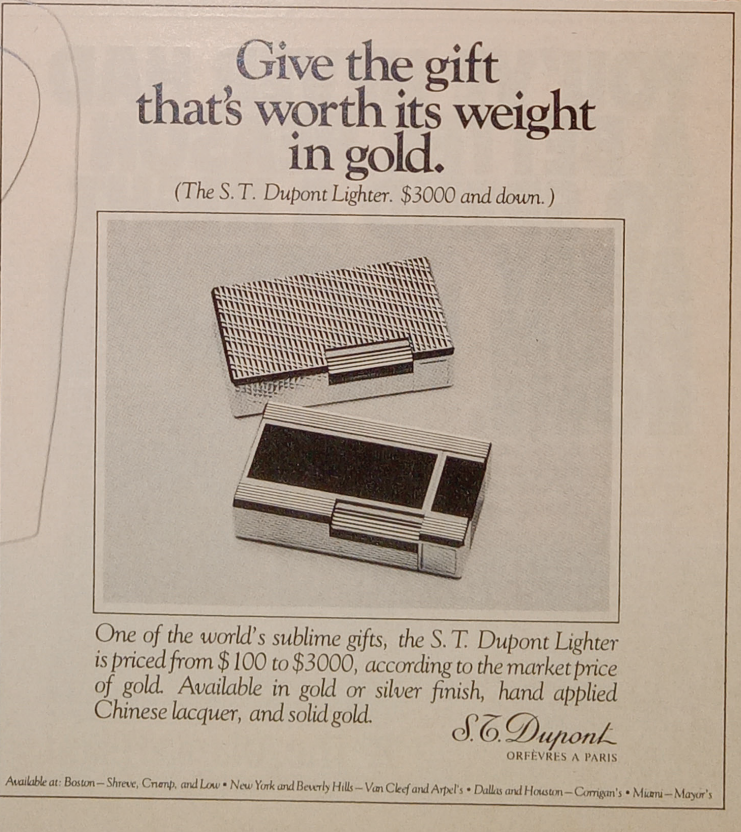
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expressiveness by having the lines drawn by other people. His "Straight Lines in Four Directions Superimposed," owned by the Museum of Modern Art, is twelve feet high and almost twenty-seven feet long; given the fact that LeWitt's drawings are what one critic called "non-visual structures" (equivalent to an erased drawing?), it could just as well have been executed in inches.

A description of the "systems" philosophers of the seventeenth century quoted in Mrs. Rose's catalogue provides an apt characterization of the outlook of the artists in the "Drawing Now" exhibition. The systems thinkers "constructed elaborate systems, long chains of deductive reasoning where every link depended upon all those which preceded it and upon which all further links depended." "Drawing Now" was, in effect, a visual seminar initiated by Rauschenberg and Johns and conducted throughout the sixties, until it culminated in the Conceptualists' elimination of drawing (and of painting and sculpture) and its replacement by verbal propositions affixed to the walls of art galleries. Mrs. Rose speaks of the "generalized areas of agreement" among the artists of the period. It is necessary to add that this agreement was grounded in the changed intellectual situation of art. The shift of art training in the fifties from the art school and studio to the university art department, which was stimulated by the G.I. Bill, had the effect of imprinting on painting and sculpture classroom modes of inquiry, concerned not with emulating great works but with elaborating problems and solutions. In this period, the pressure of the university on the understanding and practice of art, and its role in providing careers for artists, became comparable in degree to the influence of the government projects on the art of the thirties. Not only were the minds of artists formed by the university; in the same mold were formed those of the art historians, the critics, the curators, and the collectors by whom their work was evaluated. With the rise of Conceptual art, the classroom announced its final triumph over the studio.

In the sixties, each new crop of art graduates could advance the debate on the nature of a painted surface along a broad front of art galleries, museums, private collections, publications, and lecture halls. The coming of the economic recession, however, dampened the market for these pedagogical exercises and their diagrams on

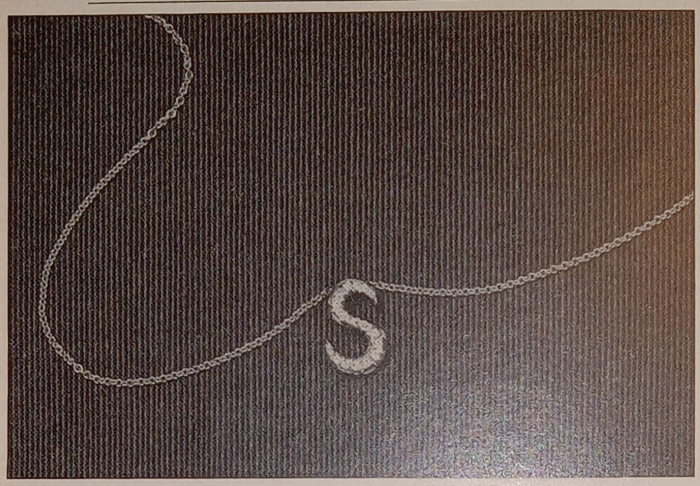




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IN NEIMAN-MARCUS STYLE...
the diamond alphabet.



From A to Z, her initial as a personal and impressive pendant of diamonds set in 18-kt. gold on a 14-kt. gold chain. The "S" here 525.00 . . . and "I" will be less than "W" but [illegible] would parents have known that when they named her. Famous Jewels Salon

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paper and canvas. With thousands of diploma-bearing job seekers turning up at each annual meeting of the College Art Association, there was a widening time gap between the classroom and the career. Former art students found themselves stranded, like artists of the past, in bohemias such as So-Ho. The change in the situation of the artist has made inevitable a return to the practice of art for reasons of individual feeling and insight rather than to demonstrate theories of "objectness."

Aware that the chain of problems has culminated in the linguistic void of Conceptualism, Mrs. Rose closes her catalogue analysis by invoking a revival of interest in "the interior space of the self." She believes that art has "come full circle" from Rauschenberg, as if the figure in the erased drawing had risen to the surface again. In the diagrams of LeWitt and Dorothea Rockburne she sees the restoration of drawing "as a private and intimate art." Inner space is not, however, an organization of verticals, horizontals, and diagonals; as de Kooning said long ago of Renaissance drawing, it "trembles." The Museum of Modern Art exhibition was misnamed. It represented not "drawing now" but drawing of a recently concluded phase in the history of American culture, in which, responding to a sudden vast expansion of popular interest, art attempted to rationalize its premises in order to achieve professional status and stability. With its uncertain position restored, art may be compelled to return to larger ambitions.

—Harold Rosenberg

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SITTING BY A SWAMP

Minutes ago, it was dead:
This swamp when I first came
Fell still as if poisoned,
The air expiring, cattails
Bent and brought to nothing
By the motionless water.

Now first the sunfish rising
To touch the underface
Of the pool, a muttered frog-call,
And out of the willow roots
From crushed stems and stubble
The *chap* of a marsh wren,

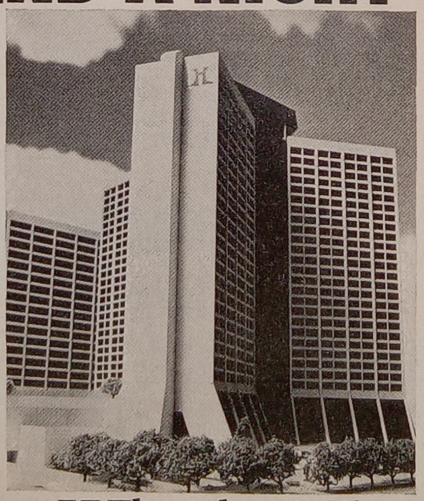
From a thicket a fox sparrow
Taking me in, one eye
At a wary time, where I wait
To be what they want me to be—
Less human. A dragonfly
Burns green at my elbow.

—David Wagoner

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