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ART INTERNATIONAL - JAN 25, 1963

Dada Then and Now

BARBARA ROSE

" Therefore it is not difficult to predict a great future for Dada. Dada will experience a golden age, but in another form than the one imagined by the Paris Dadaists."

Richard Hülsenbeck, Dada Lives!, *1936*

*** We will be speaking here only of the American art that has been called neo-Dada. The difficulty in finding an appropriate name for this group of artists is illustrated by the title given by the Pasadena Art Museum to its recent exhibition of Dine, Dowd, Goode, Hefferton, Lichtenstein, Roscher, Thiebaud and Warhol. The show was finally called "New Paintings of the Common Object", a conservative but more accurate title than the misleading "neo-Dada", a term invented by an unsympathetic critic to derogate the works in question.*

«Dada est mort, vive Dada», wrote Max Ernst in 1921. No one today will claim that Dada, as it captured the imagination of Europe's most daring young men after the first World War, is still a vital art style. Yet the term has been resurrected to describe the work of some younger American artists. In addition to Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, such disparate talents as Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg, Allan Kaprow, Tom Wesselmann and Robert Whitman, among others, have been tagged "neo-Dada". So have the artists known as the sign painters, the pop artists or, more recently, the new realists, who include Robert Indiana, James Rosenquist, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol and Wayne Thiebaud.

Neo-Dada may be a misleading label, but by now it is obvious there exists a group of artists who have chosen the middle way out of Abstract Expressionism (the path between a kind of simplified abstract image and new figure painting). This season enough of their efforts have been exhibited in galleries and museums for us to begin to consider who they are, where they come from, what they have in common and how and if they are indeed "neo-Dada".

Almost half a century, a depression, a world war and the subsequent polarization of East and West, separates the madcap Dadaists of Paris and Berlin from their American descendants. What once seemed vanguard invention is now merely over-reproduced cliché. Anti-art, anti-war, anti-materialism, Dada, the art of the politically and socially engaged, apparently has little in common with the cool detached art it is supposed to have spawned. We shall see in fact the new Dada owes little to European Dada, save an interest in the *collage* technique of Schwitters and in the ready-mades of Duchamp. The term "neo-Dada" unfortunately is charged with associations, often causing us to misunderstand the objectives of the new art through the reading-in of what we know about past

George Segal. *The Dinner Table.* 1962. Courtesy The Green Gallery, New York.



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View of the New Realists Exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, November 1962. From left to right, Enrico Baj, Wesselmann, Hains, Baruchello, Oldenburg, Thiebaud.

Dada: One popular misconception is that new Dada is an art of protest; another is that it is anti-art.

Although it is certainly debatable whether the Dadaists succeeded in creating anti-art, they at least pretended to want to. Zealously and quasi-religiously they set about to destroy old art, whose traditional forms they thought must be rendered impotent before new ones could be created. They felt bound and impaired by convention and taboo in a way that today's artist, liberated by the total victory of the Surrealists over subject matter and of the "action painters" over technique, can hardly understand.

Not only is neo-Dada *not* anti-art, it is very seriously pro-art. The only reason for saying, as one art historian did, that Rauschenberg's work is never "pretty", is that pretty is pejorative when we mean beautiful. Today's artist, in his attempt to elevate and transform the ordinary and the banal into art, is constantly composing and arranging, often in the most self-conscious fashion. What is characteristic of all new Dada works, from Johns' exquisitely brushed targets to Whitman's rubbish heaps, is a preoccupation with formal relationships. Neo-Dadaists, far from being anarchic, are the first to acknowledge that the artist's task is to order.

In matters of technique, the neo-Dada artists are—as is anyone painting today—the inheritors of Abstract Expressionism. The way Johns, Rauschenberg, Dine apply paint, the way Oldenburg's drips run, even the way the sign painters fill in broad areas, depends on the technical innovations of Abstract Expressionism. To Abstract Expressionism they owe also the size of their pictures, and the sometimes vast spaces of emptiness. Dadaists of the 'twenties were essentially cabinet painters; most were happy to work on a scale that to artists living in the country of the Rockies and the New Jersey turnpike seems insignificant.

With the treble freedoms of means of expression, media and subject matter, the post-Abstract Expressionist artist no longer fears the tyranny of the masterpiece. The *Mona Lisa* is no more enemy than Rembrandt, whose paintings Duchamp once suggested be used as ironing boards.

If the masterpiece is no longer enemy, neither is the machine (nor is it god or hero, but closer to brother, as we see it taking on more and more human characteristics, thus reversing Ortega's prophecy). Conventional morality, which the Dadaists sought to undermine, is tacitly understood, despite the daily protestations of Mary Worth and daytime TV, to have ceased to exist. The *bourgeoisie,* that formerly worthy adversary, is the shock-proof patron of the new art.

In Ezra Pound's time, the experimenters hated "Kulchur"; today's artist, like the American intellectual in general, views with mixed horror and fascination the popular culture which surrounds him. The enemy may once have been the Classics, now the threat is classic comics. In the face of the vulgarization and mass diffusion of what was once the highest level of culture, artists have resorted to the lowest for inspiration. Since Jasper Johns first transformed Alley Oop into a work of art, comic strips have enjoyed the place as models formerly held by Michelangelo's cartoons. The success of Roy Lichtenstein, creator of the billboardsize cartoon, has prompted otherts to work in the same direction. And which of us, able to recite the myths of Captain Marvel and Wonder Woman as unfalteringly as Homer sang of the gods, can fail to experience the shock of recognition upon seeing Mel Ramos' lurid, grinning Joker, or Oyvind Fahlstrom's Bat-Man (as viewed through the eyes of Gorky and Matta)?

As the line between art and advertising becomes obscured, so the two tend to invade each other's domain for inspiration. The result is what the detractors of abstract painting have clamored for: the image has returned to painting, but in a form they never imagined. It has come back via the TV, magazines, highway billboards, super-

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markets and comic books, and not by way of Salon painting or socialist realism. This has proved a disappointment for some and a *cause célèbre* for others.

Thus, when we look for the common denominator which unites the new Dada artists, we find it is a dedication to the image, the recognizable object as we encounter it in everyday experience. By this definition, painters like Stephen Durkee and Dick Smith, who alter or do not refer to the image at all, are not neo-Dada, and to describe them as such is to misunderstand their work, as it is to misconstrue the sculpture of Chamberlain and Stankiewicz, who use the *material* but not the images of the real world.

Objective and factual in their means, though their ends may be poetic or evocative, the neo-Dadaists expropriate from the world around them commonplace items—forks, hangers, umbrellas, furniture, old clothes and rubbish. Sometimes instead of borrowing, they completely recreate these objects, as when Andy Warhol paints a soup can or Claes Oldenburg makes a plaster cupcake. What is important is that no matter how they combine, remake or transform the objects of the real world, these objects retain that property which relates them to life and everyday experience.

Neo-Dada art, for the most part, is being produced by the generation, now aged 25 to 40, that achieved maturity in affuent post-War America. Variously this generation has been called "beat", "silent" and "uncommitted". Its attitudes are very unlike those of the generation that created Abstract Expressionism: These latter were literally men of "action" who fought in the War and lived through the Depression. They had a sense of personal freedom and of the efficacy of the individual will. Many were immigrants or sons of immigrants, who still felt more part of than at odds with Europe.

In contrast, the generation of the neo-Dadaists is native born. The young artist's problem is coming to terms with America; in Fitzgerald's words, he is "face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder." Sidney Tillim (in a review of Oldenburg's store; *ARTS,* Feb., 1962) was the first to correctly identify the subject matter of new Dada as the American Dream. Rosenquist's billboard fantasies, Lichtenstein's cartoons, Robert Indiana's pinball machines, Wesselman's nostalgic collages, Rauschenberg's coke bottles and Johns's American flags and maps illustrate a longing for and recognize the betrayal of that unobtainable dream.

This generation is in love with the American Dream they see commercialized, exploited and fading before their very eyes ("the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us"). Their formative years were spent in a very different fashion from those of the generation that invented Abstract Expressionism. The action painters, growing up in the heady atmosphere of Henry Miller's Paris, the idealistic togetherness of the W. P. A., and the early days of the Art Student's League, developed the active, dynamic way of looking at life reflected in their paintings; but younger artists, experiencing the war years as children and adolescents, learned to accept in a dispassionate manner what would outrage and inflame a generation that had known something else. Playing a passive role from the start in the events that shaped our world, they are passive, acquiescing and accepting still. Every generation to some extent feels itself the inheritor of a world not of its making, but this feeling usually engenders protest. In this case, however, the futility of protest and the early acceptance of the horrible, the atrocious and the insane as objective facts of life led rather to detachment and non-participation. Thus it is ludicrous to think of a new Dada artist painting Ban the Bomb posters, as Grosz once illustrated the anti-war pamphlet, *Nie Wieder Krieg*. Artists are no longer political, nor is art a vehicle for propaganda. The neo-Dadaist, though he uses the content of life, stands apart from it—amused, detached. Through his attitude toward what we take for granted, he puts an even greater distance between us and it.

If the artist is no longer actor or participator, but detached spectator who reports, in an uneditorialized fashion, on what he sees, then his desire to express his individual will, to assert himself in some way, even if capricious or arbitrary, is so much the greater. To the question "Why is this— —this goat's head, this rubber tire— —Art?" the artist answers, "Because I tell you it is". (When Robert Rauschenberg was asked to do a portrait of Iris Clert, the Parisian art dealer, he complied by sending a telegram which read, "This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so".

Sometimes an artist exercises his will by choosing not to be understood; then, using his own private vocabulary of images, he creates works described as "personal", a word often used by critics when they do not or cannot understand what the artist has in mind.

Artists exercise their will as well by isolating an object from its context, as Duchamp did with his ready-mades, thus forcing the viewer to see it new and to re-evaluate its meaning in the new context. By relentlessly focussing the attention of the spectator, the new Dada artist requires him to think again about what he is seeing. While we paper our dining alcoves with Toulouse-Lautrec wallpaper, this is not bad training.

Unlike Duchamp, who merely selected an object from the outside world and set his stamp on it, today's artist seeks more often to recreate the object from scratch in his own terms, making appearance resemble reality only to that degree which causes us to reflect on just what the reality is. Thus Johns's cast and painted beer cans duplicate the real ones, but in a more perfect form, and Oldenburg's inedible pastries lead us back to a redefinition of what real pastries are like.

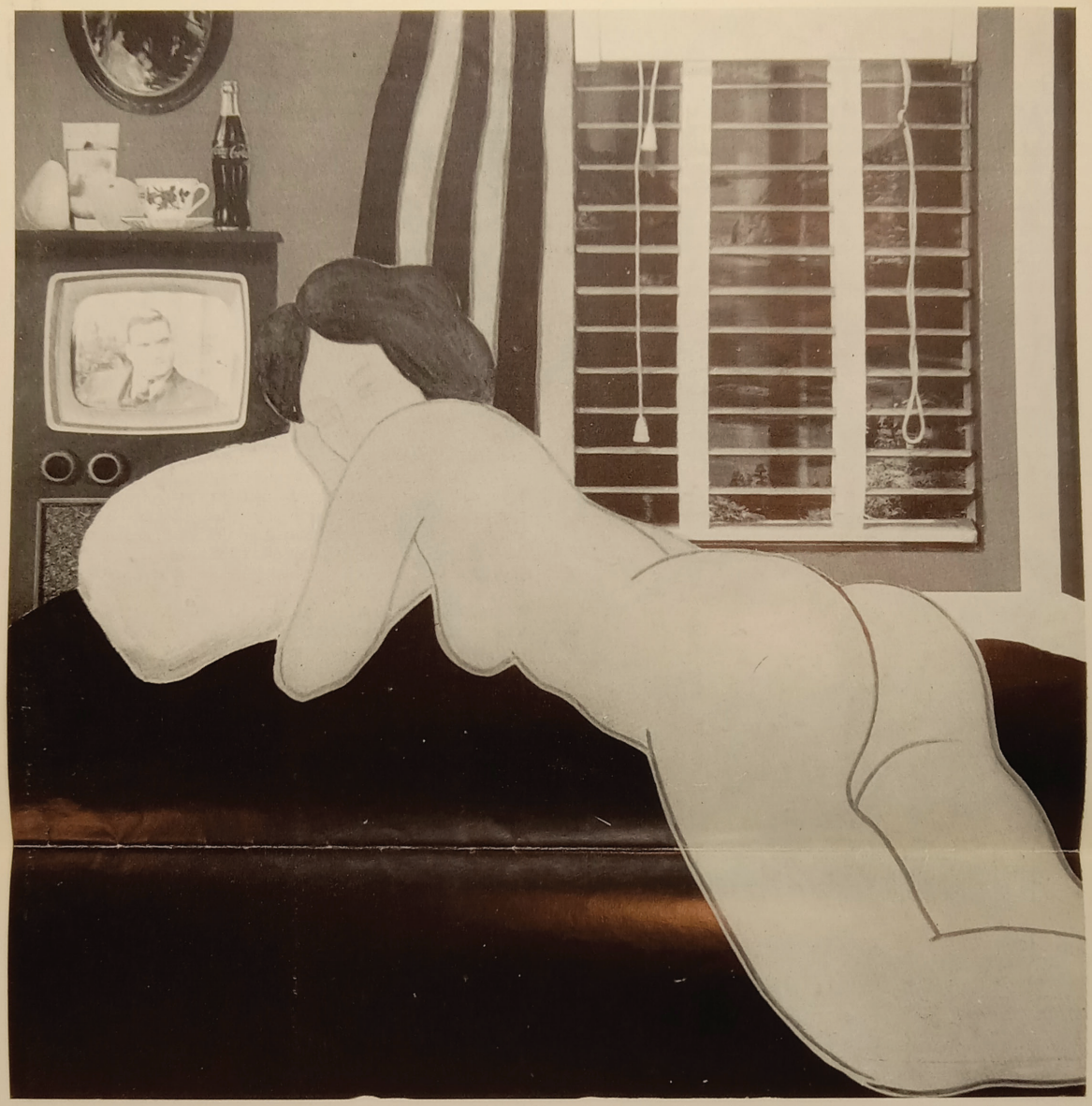
Sometimes the artist feels he must *tell* us what we are seeing (so blind and witless have we become that we need help), even though it is often something so familiar as to be contemptible. Jim Dine labels his ties and apples and rainbows and Jasper Johns solemnly stencils in the words "red", "yellow" and "blue" over those colors, so that we may know what they are. They are asking: Do you know what you are seeing, do you *really* know? Oldenburg, when he changes the scale of familiar objects, making a foam rubber ice cream cone

Roy Lichtenstein. *Woman Cleaning*. Leo Castelli, New York.



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Tom Wesselmann. *Great American Nude, No. 39.* 1962. Oil on canvas with collage. 48×48 inches. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine. Courtesy The Green Gallery, New York.

the size of a car, adds an additional dimension of ambiguity. Feeling a little like Alice after she has swallowed the contents of the bottle marked "drink me", we begin to wonder *where* we are.

Although the new Dada artist does not protest his environment, he is as acutely aware of it as writers once were He is constantly reporting on and referring to it. Thus he reflects the temporariness of our wildly fluctuating surroundings by making things which look as if they will not last. Flimsiness and perishability are inherent qualities of Whitman's constructions and Kaprow's environments. The Happenings are assembled, transpire and then are gone (unless they are recorded, as some have been, on film). Objects made of materials like chicken wire, plaster and cardboard are, unlike the tombs of the Pharaohs, not intended for the ages; they must be enjoyed on the spot for they may not last much longer. Impermanence is a fact of our existence; a building we see today may not be there tomorrow.

Time is approached again from the angle of the frozen moment, the allusion (analogous to John O'Hara's fictional use of the hit tune to fix the year) is to something that smacks unmistakeably of today: a newspaper clipping of a public figure, a headline, a postmark. The obsession with the "contemporary" (any object wrenched from, and unmistakeably marked by today) may represent the artist's desire to take hold of a reliability which moves too fast to be apprehended by ordinary means. It is as if the artist senses the present so quickly becoming the past that he already feels a nostalgia for it. When Rauschenberg snatches from today's paper (already yesterday's) the grinning head of Ike, his intention is not caricature or satire, but the effect of the "time capsule" buried at the 1939 World's Fair for posterity to unearth, which contained bits and pieces of everyday life as it was lived then and as it is, incidentally, no longer lived now.

For Rauschenberg, speed and change are especially important. More successfully than the Futurists perhaps he has indicated velocity, the speed of change. In his transfer rubbings, where the rapidity of the gesture is recorded, what is expressed is not so much movement (which is what the Futurists tried to capture by a series of simultaneous images), as velocity, in images that remain static behind a blur. Larry Rivers, too, gives us this blur in series of images that emulate the action of the movie camera as it pans from scene to scene.

New Dada, like the Dada of Max Ernst and Picabia, is interested in the irrational, the seemingly unrelated which, when juxtaposed, takes on new meaning. In the 'twenties the discoveries of Freud and Jung were uppermost in the minds of the Dadaists as they sought to involve the subconscious of the viewer, sometimes in spite of himself. The source of the irrational element in new Dada, however, is

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rather the existential concept of the "absurd" than the workings of the subconscious. Thus they equate the trivial with the essential, elevating the ridiculous to the level of the sublime. (Thiebaud paints a slice of cake with much the same care and craftsmanship that once went into a Crucifixion or a Madonna.) The sign painters are in reality icon painters, if we consider the figures in our pantheon to be empty coke bottles and soup cans.

There are references in new Dada as well to problems of "existence". A used quality is characteristic of many of the objects the artist now chooses to work with; they have the air of a previous existence and the effluvia of life still clings to them. The nausea Sartre's hero feels when he suddenly becomes physically aware of the mortality of the flesh, his consequent disgust toward his own flesh and its processes accounts for our revulsion at Lucas Samara's gift-boxed fingernails and "breakfasts" of rusty steel wool and bent, grimy silverware. Oldenburg's bedside still-life of the contents of a trouser pocket dumped on a chair has the truth of the voyeur's vision. George Segal's life-size plaster mummies sitting at their dressing tables painting their plaster fingernails are a page from our own Book of the Dead.

In Oldenburg's most recent work (the "store" and the last show at the Green Gallery) there is another implicit theme, understood although never referred to directly: The *leitmotif* is money. The stuffed and painted sailcloth jockey-shorts, the plaster shirts, the overgrown hamburger are all for sale in a dual sense, which is part of their ironic effect.

Money, the real goal of the American Dream, as Fitzgerald so accurately defined it in *The Great Gatsby,* is a great problem for the young artists because, for the first time in America, they are making it. (A number of painters, including Larry Rivers, Andy Warhol and the Detroit artists Dowd and Hefferton are making it in a more specific sense by painting soft pastel French franc and crisp American two dollar bills.) The status of the American artist has radically changed and the artist, once scorned and starved in this country, is now the darling of the White House and the fashion magazines.

A certain amount of guilt is attached to the money the artist receives because it is both the symbol and product of what he simultaneously loves and hates—American materialism. It would be attractive to simplify the situation by saying the artist no longer protests in the old ways, but that he is protesting something else. The case unfortunately is more complicated than simple, unequivocal protest against the materialism of America. Often the nature of the aggressive, hostile content of new Dada has more to do with the artist's personal relationship with the patron, who today is as frequently collecting artists as art. Thus the ironic edge to works made of rags, scraps, dirty odds and ends—the discards of any poor neighborhood—which the artist forces the collector to take home and install in his immaculate white living room. It is as if, having so totally sanitized and sterilized our lives, we need to bring a little dirt back into it, to convince ourselves we are still alive.

Today the artist knows exactly whom he is painting for; he is as sure of his audience as he is sure that he does not share its values. This is where new Dada most closely resembles old Dada, in its antagonism toward the bourgeoisie. However, the artist can no longer hope to shock or alienate the very group who purchase his work as rapidly as he can turn it out. So he embraces what he probably hates the most, exalting into icons the consumer products (what Rilke called the "life-decoys from America"). The soup cans, the money, the movies stars, the Good Humors (in your choice of six delicious artificial flavors), the beer cans, are the altarpieces of our religion. The artist, after a century of abstaining from painting the saints, once again turns to religious subjects. The store, as Oldenburg knows, is the temple of money.

The attitude of worship is as common to new Dada as the attitude of negation was to the Dada of the past. Thus new Dada does not protest the contemporary reality in the old sense, but embraces it with the irony of determination. Unlike Moses, who destroyed the Golden Calf, the artist today, sensing the inadequacy of protest, multiplies the idols and joins in the ceremony.

To view a moment historically is to kill it. As soon as Abstract Expressionism was taught as a seminar in the graduate schools, the end was in sight. However, let us, now that we have seen what new Dada is and what it means, look (without homocidal intent) to its development in America. That European Dada did not bear root in America, and that the American experience was not describable in Dada terms is illustrated by the fate of the Dadaists who came to settle in this country: Duchamp, still the revered pontiff of the avant-garde, paints no more; Grosz, the fervent "Propagandada" experienced a breakdown in America and returned to Germany to spend his last days; Hülsenbeck, credited with bringing Dada from Zürich to Berlin, is a psychiatrist in New York. That brief Dada flowering which took place after the Armory Show was essentially a transplant, and everything related to it could as easily have taken place in Paris or Berlin.

We must therefore try to find an American and not a European source for new Dada. Strangely enough, the two leading American Dadaists of the older generation, Joseph Cornell and George Ortman, had little effect on the development of Dada in this country. The fact is, American new Dada has its source outside the visual arts.

Although we may perceive two distinct trends: the elegant, painterly achievement of Rauschenberg, Rivers, Johns and Dine, and the rag-and-bone-shop art of the Environments and Happenings, they have a common origin. It is in the ideas and experiments of the avant-garde composer, John Cage.

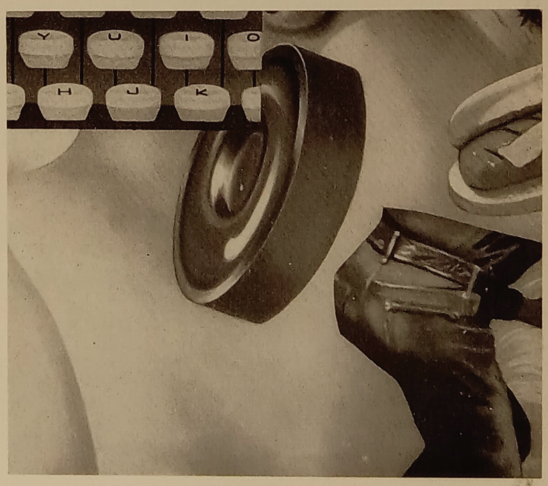
Cage, although familiar with the work of the European Dadaists, evolved theories about music that were very original, very American and very adaptable to the visual arts. Younger artists came into contact with these revolutionary ideas through articles he published and lectures he delivered at Black Mountain College and at the New School in New York. Although it is doubtful if the artists here mentioned would agree, it is Cage, the musician, who has come closest to stating in so many words the common aesthetic of new Dada. In *Silence,* his recently published lectures and papers, we find the seeds of many, if not all, new Dada concepts — the use of the ordinary and the commonplace, the familiar and the banal in art, the consecration of the unique, unrepeatable moment, the juxtaposition of anomalies. Part of his text for *45' for a Speaker* could serve as the motto for new Dada:

"... Our poetry now
is the realization
that we possess nothing.
Anything therefore
is a delight
(since we do not possess it)..."

Tracing new Dada's genesis to Cage, we point to his organization in 1952 at Black Mountain College of an "event" involving works by Rauschenberg, the dancing of Merce Cunningham and films and slides. (Since then Rauschenberg has at various times collaborated with Merce Cunningham, Jasper Johns, Niki de Saint-Phalle and Jean Tinguely in producing such "events".)

Although Cage's ideas were germane, their application to the visual arts was the invention of Rauschenberg, Johns and Kaprow. The three, though their works vary enormously, have in common that they introduce into art the stuff of life. Rauschenberg shares with Cage an interest in chance and co-incidence—chance in that he uses what he happens to find (there is no fixed or preconceived idea to begin with, as Cage points out in a most useful essay on Rauschenberg) and co-incidence in the duplication of images (the two Eisenhower combines, duplicated to the last detail are a good example).

James Rosenquist. *The lines were etched deeply in her face.* 1962. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull. Courtesy The Green Gallery, New York.



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Johns, whose effects are more calculated and clearly conceptualized before they are executed, shares with Cage a debt to Zen. Much of his imagery which critics have found obscure or unintelligible—the doors which open to nowhere, the sinister hands and heads, especially the targets (a crucial Zen motif)—has the absurd logic and suspended irony of the Zen *koan,* the riddle without an answer. Kaprow's debt to Cage is clearest of all. His environments, which incorporate, without distinction or precedence, objects from the outside world, are parallel to Cage's use of noise as a factor in musical composition. (At one point Cage asks if the sound of a truck in the street is less musical than the sound of a truck in a music school. Kaprow, in a sense, is continually asking this question.) In Cage's remarks about the theater are the first hints of what the Happenings will be.

John Cage was one of the first to understand the deadness of Europe, and to try to find some way out of it. New Dada, which relies heavily on his ideas, is a peculiarly and often chauvinistically American solution to the problem of where we go from here. We can probably pinpoint its beginnings in the 1951 publication of what is now the most thumbed book in art school libraries, Robert Motherwell's anthology, *Dada Painters and Poets,* which first gave wide circulation in this country to the words and works of the Dadaists. It is interesting to remark that American artists are now ready to adapt Dada to their own ends, as they were not in 1936, when the Museum of Modern Art held a large exhibition of Dada and Surrealist art. It was in the 'fifties, then, that new Dada got its start.

Duchamp, who exhibited in 1952, '53, '56, and '59 at the Sidney Janis Gallery, has been a constant source of interest for younger artists, who view him as something like the patron saint of the movement. (It is fitting that Janis, who showed Dada art in New York throughout the 'fifties, should now exhibit new Dada works.) Allan Kaprow's environments were first seen at the Hansa Gallery in 1957 and were an important step in the development of the Happenings, although Red Grooms is usually credited with organizing the first theatrical performance resembling a Happening. (Kaprow has set the record straight for future historians in a detailed history of the Happenings.)

In 1958 Rauschenberg and Johns held their first one-man shows at the Leo Castelli Gallery; included were such now historic pieces as Rauschenberg's bed and Johns' colored targets. Since then new Dada works have turned up in galleries, museum and private collections all over America and Europe.

We have seen that American new Dada is not European Dada. It borrows certain techniques from the latter, but its attitudes and content are vastly different. Unlike European Dada, it seeks neither to criticize, to satirize nor to scandalize. It does not affirm, like socialist realism, or protest, like Expressionism; it suspends judgment in a passive, detached fashion. Having none of the cult-religion aspect of Dada, it is against nothing and for art. Perhaps its goals are most clearly articulated by Cage, in the introduction to a performance given in 1956 by Merce Cunningham:

"The novelty of our work derives therefore from our having moved away from simply private human concerns towards the world of nature and society of which all of us are a part. Our intention is... simply to wake up to the very life we're living..."

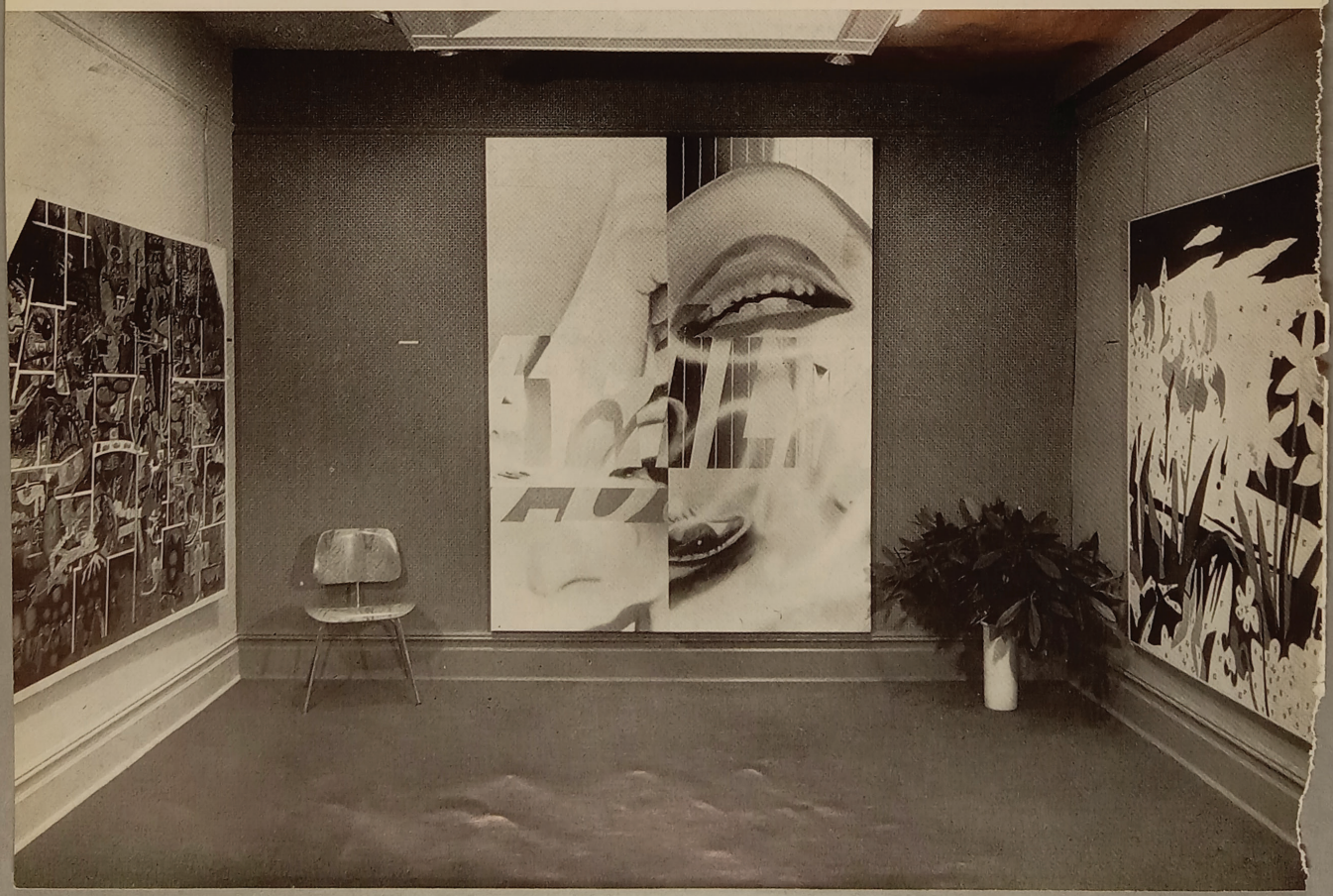
Here he speaks only for himself and Merce Cunningham, but he could speak as well for the generation of new Dadaists, who, turning from the inner world of Abstract Expressionism, look outside, and make art of what they see.

What they see in America, its glitter, its vulgarity, its carnival-like excitement and constantly changing face. By transforming the commonplace and the ordinary into the poetic or the arresting, they force us to look freshly, to correct our corrupted vision.

But is this art serious? Yes, insofar as it is at all possible to be serious now. By investing the trivial with importance, it mirrors our dislocated sense of values. Apolitical and unprogrammatic, new Dada is not without humor, but its humor is what Duchamp called the "irony of despair".

Do we inflate its meaning, as Oldenburg himself blows up a hamburger to Brobdingnagian proportion? No, not when we realize, no matter how attached we are to the old ways, Munch's *Scream* is no longer the valid expression of anguish in our time. It is as outmoded as the clichés the new Dadaists serve up to us; and perhaps these artists, giving us back in the form of art the sights and sounds of everyday experience, are creating an iconography as serious, as profoundly disturbing as the infernal tortures of Bosch's *Millenium.*

View of The New Realists Exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery, November 1962. From left to right: Oyvind Fahlstrom, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol.



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Look! All Over! It's Esthetic... It's Business... It's Supersuccess!

Comic-Strip Heroes Offer Fantasies to the 'Respectable'

By HILTON KRAMER

With the mounting of "It's a Bird . . . It's a Plane . . . It's Superman" as a musical comedy —it opens tonight at the Alvin —a new phase in the amazing phenomenon of pop is upon us. Wherever one turns on the cultural, subcultural and pseudo-cultural scene at the moment, something answering to the name "pop" is visible, if not actually dominant. Just now the principal pop locus is on the comic strip, which, in more forms than one can keep track of, is turning into the biggest bonanza of all.

From billboards to book jackets, from the most prestigious galleries and museums to the most garish souvenir shops, the public is faced with a bewildering variety of comic-strip advertisements, paintings, pinups, posters and all sorts of visual ephemera.

Movie houses are reviving old serials based on comic-strip adventures, and television producers, responding with alacrity to a universe of discourse they can at last understand, are giving top priority to — and reaping top rewards from — this vogue for pop adventure tales.

Working at All Levels

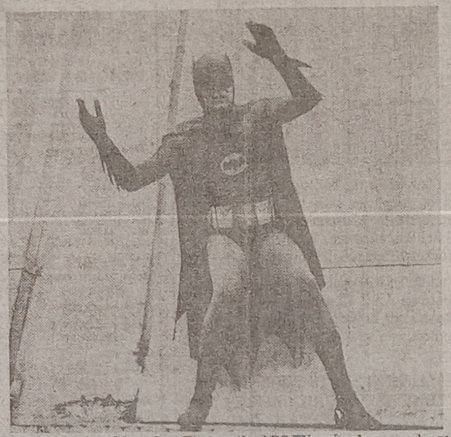
Thus, the current twice-weekly "Batman" series running—to maximum publicity—on the American Broadcasting Company's television network will be followed in the fall by an animated cartoon version of "Superman" over the Columbia Broadcasting System. And still more TV serials on the Green Hornet and on Tarzan, are in the offing.

What makes this vogue for comic strips so phenomenal is that it cuts across widely disparate levels of commercial, intellectual and esthetic activity. In one form or another, there is —or is about to be—a comic-strip idea, style or object to suit every taste. The visitor to next summer's Venice Biennale, the most important of the big international art exhibitions, will be treated to the comic-strip paintings of Roy Lichtenstein, one of the four artists who will represent the United States there.

Meanwhile, smart boutiques are showing fashions inspired by the more celebrated strips. The latest is the Batman dress, of chrome-coated clear plastic, that will make its debut next month at Paraphernalia, a Manhattan shop that caters to the whimseys of the fashionably youthful.

Profits Go Vro-o-om!

And that is just the beginning. Whole industries are preparing to saturate the consumer





Batman, played by Adam West on the ABC-TV series, has scored a resounding success. Among the products inspired by the comic strip hero is Batman dress, designed by Betsy Johnson, which sells for $50 at Paraphernalia.



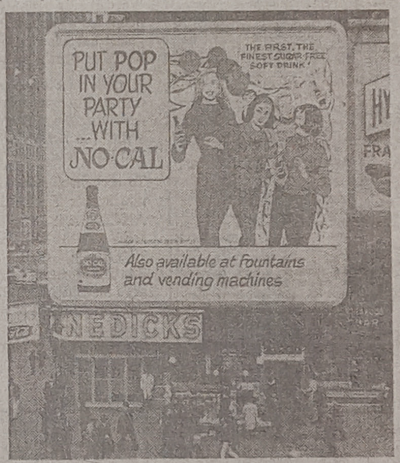
Friedman-Abeles

Above: Bob Holliday, who plays Superman in a new musical, takes off. The Columbia Broadcasting System plans TV series on Superman.



Painting courtesy Ileana Sonnabend Gallery, Paris

"Eddie" (1962) is a diptych painting by Roy Lichtenstein, who will be among four painters to represent the United States at the Venice Biennale, one of the most important international art exhibitions.



The New York Times

Left: Pop art prompted this billboard advertisement on 42d Street and Seventh Avenue. Advertisement employs a comic-strip style.

folk artists of modern civilization.

The dialectical crossfire of the intellectuals' love-hate affair with popular culture occupied a good deal of space in journals such as Commentary, Partisan Review and the literary quarterlies in the years following World War II.

During the nineteen-fifties, the more obvious intellectual temporary style that it could not quite understand without instruction but that, in a sense, it already possessed in the common commercial environment of modern life. Thus, while art critics provided pop with the cachet of high-flown interpretation — stuff indispensable for the commercial success of an art movement—the work itself was as easy to take as the ham-

critic Sidney Tillim in a recent essay in the magazine Artforum (published in Los Angeles): "The pop audience," he observed, "is tired of being educated."

What we are experiencing now, Mr. Tillim continued, "has gone far beyond the esthetic ramifications of pop. We are witnessing a parody of innocence that expresses itself as a release from the conventions, values and consciousness of a culture that failed to anticipate the frustrations it was creating. . . . As a result, grown men and women have thrown off the trappings of 'respectability.'" Certainly a revolt of some sort—but a perfectly safe revolt—seems to be reflected in the craze, especially in its current apotheosis of comic-strip fantasy in every conceivable medium.

From its origins as lowbrow entertainment to its elevation as highbrow fine art to its latest evolution into middlebrow musical comedy, pop provides its various audiences with a delightful release from the pressures of real life into the day dreams of childhood.

No matter that all manner o irony, "camp" and sophisticate explanation attempt to lend thi release the appearance of high esthetic purpose. The elemen of escape—of adult minds re venging themselves on the com plexities of modern life—re mains paramount.

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ning. Whole industries are preparing to saturate the consumer market with everything from picture-puzzles to bubble-bath tagged to one or another of the reigning comic strip heroes. The Licensing Corporation of America reports that 90 companies have already been licensed to use the Batman name on products expected to yield $75-million in sales this year alone, and the Superman label is expected to exceed, by Superman-dimensions, this rosy prospect.

Even committees protesting American policy in Vietnam resort to the vocabulary and typography of the strips to fasten attention on their appeals. And with the publication this week of "The Great Society Comic Book," featuring such characters as SUPERLBJ, Wonderbird, Bobman and Teddy, Gaullefinger and others, this aspect of the pop craze enters the arena of political satire.

The proliferation of the use and abuse of the comic strip is, however, only the latest of the many indications of a fundamental change in the cultural status of pop.

In the decade following World War II, a good deal of serious criticism was directed at what analysts — mainly sociologists, politically minded literary critics, and psychiatrists—regarded as the evils of mass culture. Not only comic books, but also Hollywood movies, popular music, murder mysteries and other widely consumed forms of entertainment were adduced as evidence of the corruption of taste and standards in modern capitalist democracy.

A distinct political animus often lay behind this criticism. Much of it was written by Marxist-oriented critics who, prevented from realizing their ideals directly in the political realm, turned to the vicissitudes of mass culture as a subject more susceptible to polemical attack.

But, at the same time that this somber sociological inquiry was belaboring the debilitating effects of comic strips and popular films, another line of criticism was developing that treated these same popular materials as objects of high esthetic and intellectual accomplishment. Gaudy Hollywood extravaganzas were analyzed as if they were surrealist poems; second-rate gangster movies were lavishly praised, their directors singled out as the true

following World War II.

During the nineteen-fifties, the more abrasive intellectual attitudes toward popular culture softened somewhat, and an egregious sentimentality toward the most common and banal examples — a sentimentality that often took the form of deadpan intellectual history or the solemnities of the higher criticism — gained the ascendancy.

It was left for the painters to crystallize this sentimentality into a selfconscious artistic program in the early nineteen-sixties. It was the painters who prepared the ground from which the current pop harvest has sprung.

At a time when the New York School of abstract expressionism had won American art worldwide fame for the first time in this century and had gathered around it a new, rich, enthusiastic, but not always very serious or committed audience, pop art burst upon the scene.

Virtually overnight, paintings of the American flag and Marilyn Monroe, of comic strips and canned soup, were greeted with acclaim. Here, suddenly, was an art that could be fun, an art that reached across the generations and allowed parents to "swing" as enthusiastically as their Beatle-bemused children.

Here, too, was an art that seemed at one stroke to heal the breach—always a source of anguish to collectors more generously endowed with cash than with esthetic sensibility or knowledge — between advanced art and the layman's capacity to appreciate it.

For pop was distinctly a collector's art, with as much publicity and acclaim accruing to the people who bought it as to those who created it. Historically, it was noteworthy as the first art movement of modern times to encounter no significant resistance from entrenched taste. The art establishment embraced it without ado and found to its delight that the audience for pop was far greater than anyone had expected.

Serious art, which had in the past been regarded as difficult, mysterious and private, was found, with the proliferation of pop, to be amusing and easy, a matter of laughter rather than tears. The growing public for art was finally given a con-

art movement—the work itself was as easy to take as the hamburgers and hot dogs that often figured as its motifs.

Gossip columnists, fashion writers and even political commentators were quick to seize on pop as a subject to be exploited. The mass media lavished its far-flung resources on documenting pop, ostensibly as a scandal against serious art, but actually because pop had shown itself to a form of art instantly assimilable by the mass audience.

Instant Esthetics

Without question, it was this ready acceptance of pop art and the dizzying publicity attending its every development that led to its current spread into the larger cultural marketplace. Not for the first time, the art world proved to be the testing ground for a vein of taste that could be profitably taken up by big business.

A valuable push in spreading the pop message and in establishing comic-strip material as the most negotiable of its many resources was the publication last year of Jules Feiffer's book on "The Great Comic Book Heroes."

Here an eminent young cartoonist of enlightened intellectual interests, a contributor to Commentary as well as to Playboy (a perfect combination for any successful assault on the new cultural marketplace), extolled the virtues of Superman, Batman *et. al.*, with all the sobriety of a learned critic explicating a metaphor in the poetry of John Donne.

Pop art had made a pictorial style derived from the comic strips both respectable and fashionable. Mr. Feiffer made the strips themselves—not just their imitation in so-called fine art—not only respectable, but virtually a cornerstone of American culture. The distance between his nostalgic evocation of his boyhood pleasures in the fantasy world of old comic books and the multi-million-dollar business and entertainment projects now inundating the public has proved to be very short and very profitable.

How can we account for the success of this pop phenomenon, now no longer confined to art circles but reaching out into every corner of the commercial and cultural scene?

Perhaps the best explanation has been offered by the art

ramifications of pop. We are sort—but a perfectly witnessing a parody of inno- —seems to be reflec

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Proposed monument for Central Park North: *Teddy Bear,* 1965; watercolor, 24 inches high, at Janis (March 9-April 2).

Climbing Mt. Oldenburg

AN - Feb '66

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Climbing Mt. Oldenburg

What nefarious plots and luminous ideas lie behind Oldenburg's new constructions? A master of Pop, he shows next month at Janis

By Harris Rosenstein



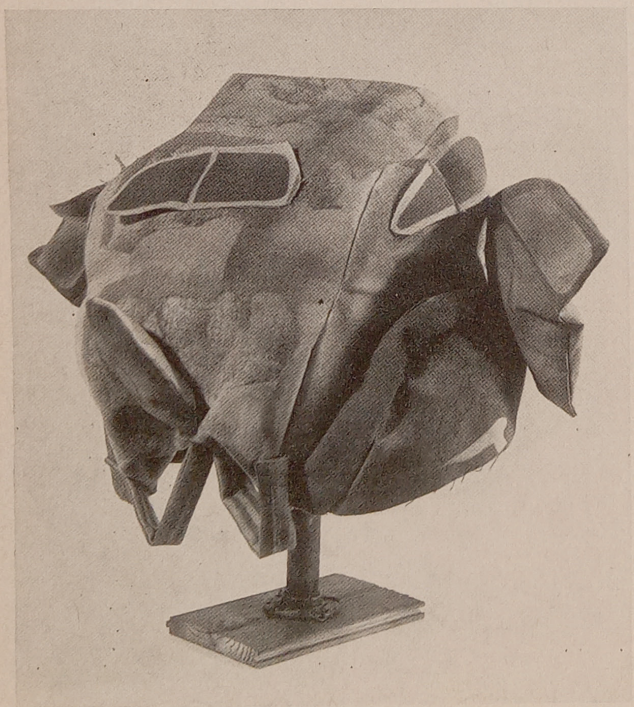
Proposed giant monument for the Lower East Side: *Ironing Board,* 1965, crayon and ink, at Janis.

Claes Oldenburg is a true amateur of man's composition, which for him is both art and magic. He loves it so truly and well that he is completely unblinded by fashion. It is this love that gives his "subjective relationships" unfathomable depth and power and permits him to rekindle the life of a forgotten car of the '30s. He starts at a position dictated by time and society, but he ends where an intent worthy of his consciousness can bring him.

Studies in human morphology have shown the value of quantifying everyone on a relative scale in the three primary components: endomorphy (or predominance of assimilative-digestive bodily structures); mesomorphy (or predominance of the supportive and motor-organ systems—bone and muscle); ectomorphy (skimping of both other types in favor of skin area and nervous system). Their supposed behavioral correlates, respectively, are visceratonia (relaxation, love of food and sociability, extraversion of affect and conservation of energy); somatonia (the need for assertive muscular activity and expenditure of energy); cerebrotonia (suppression of both other tendencies in favor of hyperattentive consciousness).

It is possible for all three components to appear in equal strength and produce a person who is at the

Soft Chrysler Airflow, 2, 1965, rear segment, stenciled muslin stuffed with kapok, 23 inches long.



Soft Chrysler Airflow, 1, 1965, first sketch, stenciled muslin stuffed with kapok, 22 inches long; at Janis.



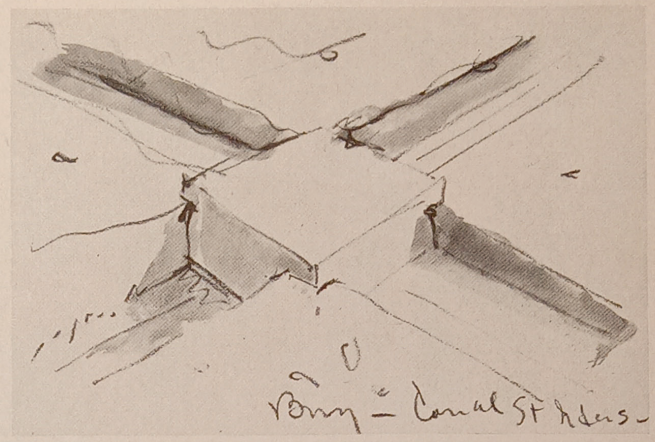
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"Dynamic" version of Central Park North monument [see page 21], 1965; crayon and wash, 23 inches high, at Janis.



Proposed solid concrete *War Memorial* totally blocks Canal Street at Broadway, 1965; crayon and wash, 12 inches high.

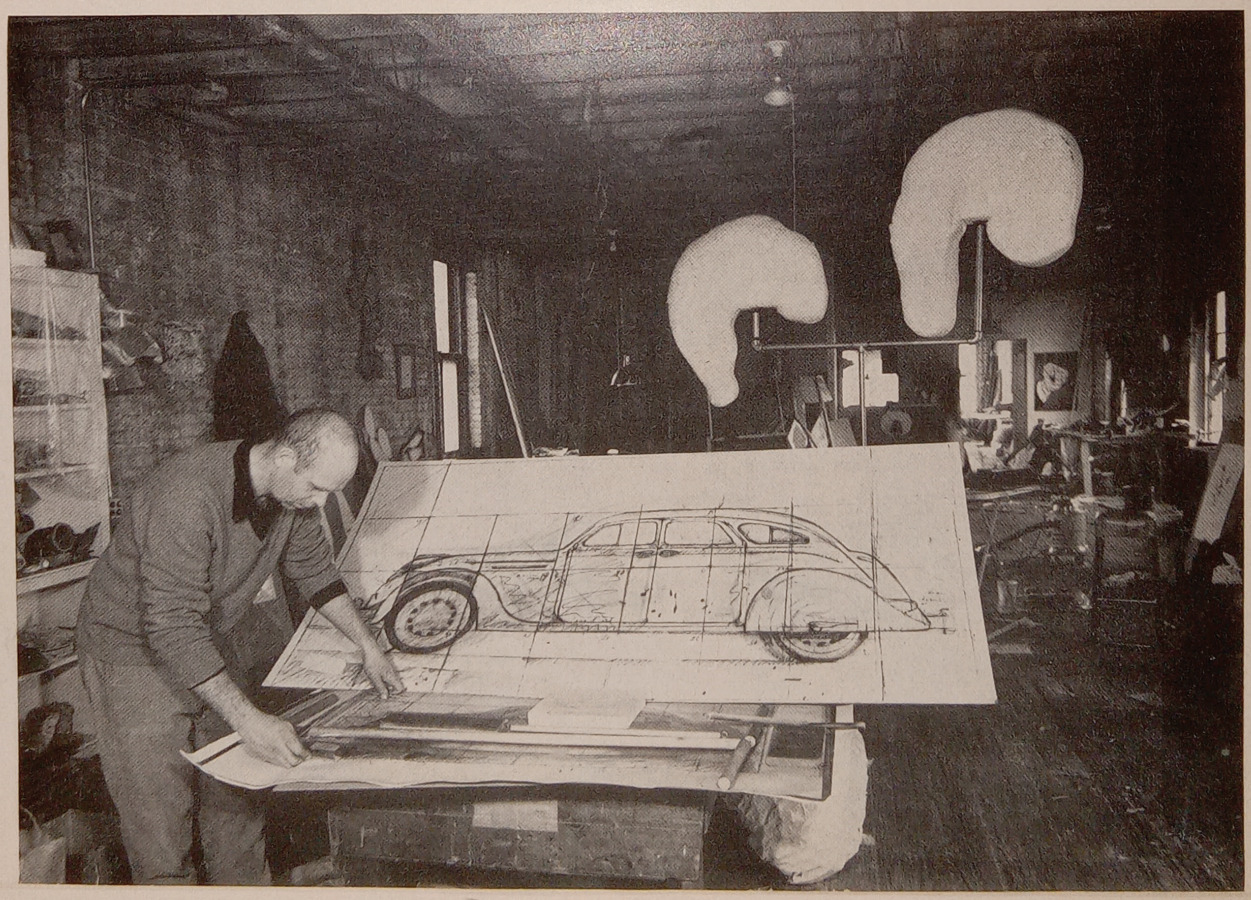
equilibrium point where behavioral forces are equal in three orthogonal directions. When this occurs in a person who is able to handle the stress, a very unusual consciousness obtains, which, being at the pinnacle of human tendencies, looks down over all the slopes of human behavior.

From the elevation he seems to have; from his restless complexity; from the size, far-sightedness and time-binding quality of his intentions, it seems to me that Claes Oldenburg proceeds from the vantage point of this kind of consciousness. It can make his existence seem a kind of overflight across human terrain. It would be against nature for a petty intention to develop.

Oldenburg is the son of a Swedish diplomat and was born in Stockholm in 1929. He lived three years in Norway and then went to Chicago where his father was consul. This is a paraphase of a 1964 interview:

"I lived first in one place and then another, came to a school and then left again before making any friends . . . I never felt any place was really my home." And:

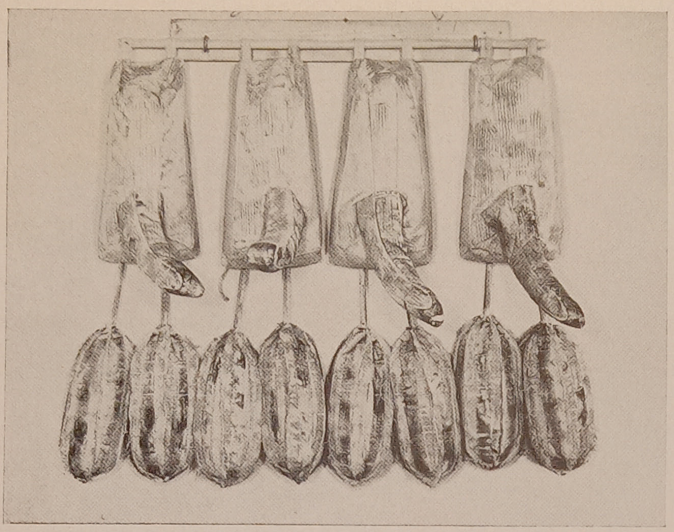
Oldenburg working on *Soft Chrysler Airflow, 3.* Giant polyurethane foam shrimps loom in the background.



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Quadruple Dormeyer Mixer, 1965; stuffed muslin, 39 inches high, at Sidney Janis.



Dormeyer Mixer, 1965; vinyl, 32 inches high.

Oldenburg continued

"The world frightened me. I didn't feel safe with people. It would be great to control the world by creating all the objects in it. Or by inventing magic objects which would control the universe . . .

"It's a hopeless dream of course, an infantile desire which is out of date in an industrial society . . .

"Being concerned with the imaginary, I'm unnecessary in an industrial society. So, I give the appearance of having a role: in playing the baker or the carpenter, I play at being a worker . . .

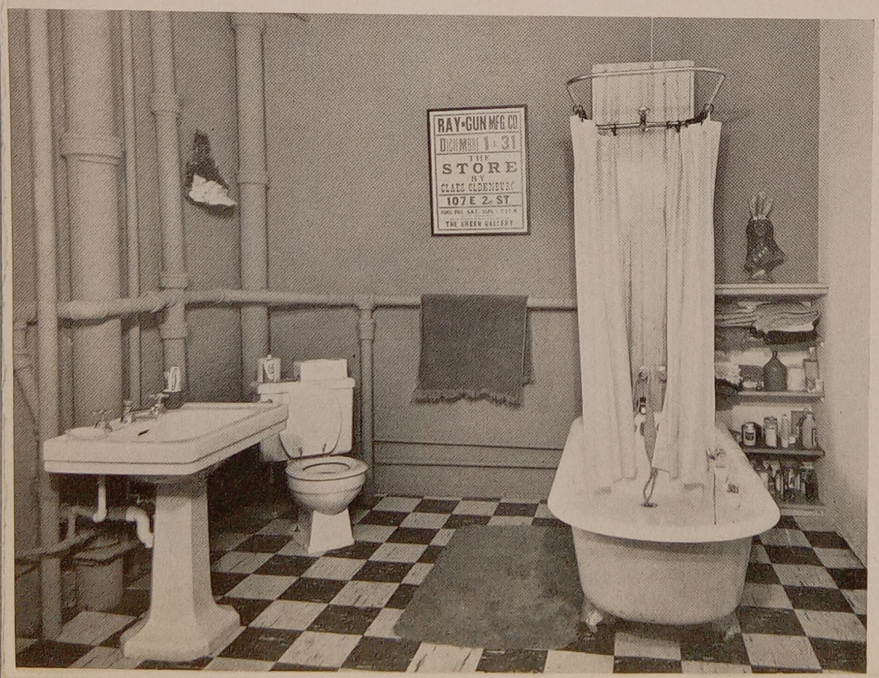
"My life isn't controlled by any necessity . . ."

Oldenburg believes what he says, but he is being ironic as well. Moreover, by leaving an impression of passivity and a need for wish fulfillment, he may be being devious to keep his deeper position from view.

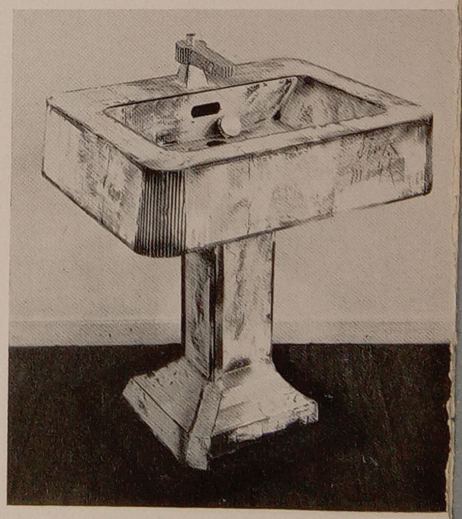
If Oldenburg is generally devious (which he confesses), it is not only because an artist must protect his inner life, but also because the intention which forms in his consciousness cannot be uttered acceptably. It remains concealed except for where it must show, in the work.

Oldenburg's decisive moves reveal the scope of his intention. He created a "store" in a run-down lower East Side neighborhood, where he sold his facsimile food, clothes and toys. Unavoidably, if not deliberately, it symbolized the political leader-hero's willingness to put his charisma to a test, and thus gave unconscious expression to an atrophied interest in politics as politics. Moreover, it revealed the displacement of political intent

"American Trinity": interior of Oldenburg's bathroom in his New York studio.



Study for Bathroom Washstand, 1965; painted cardboard, 48 inches high, at Janis.



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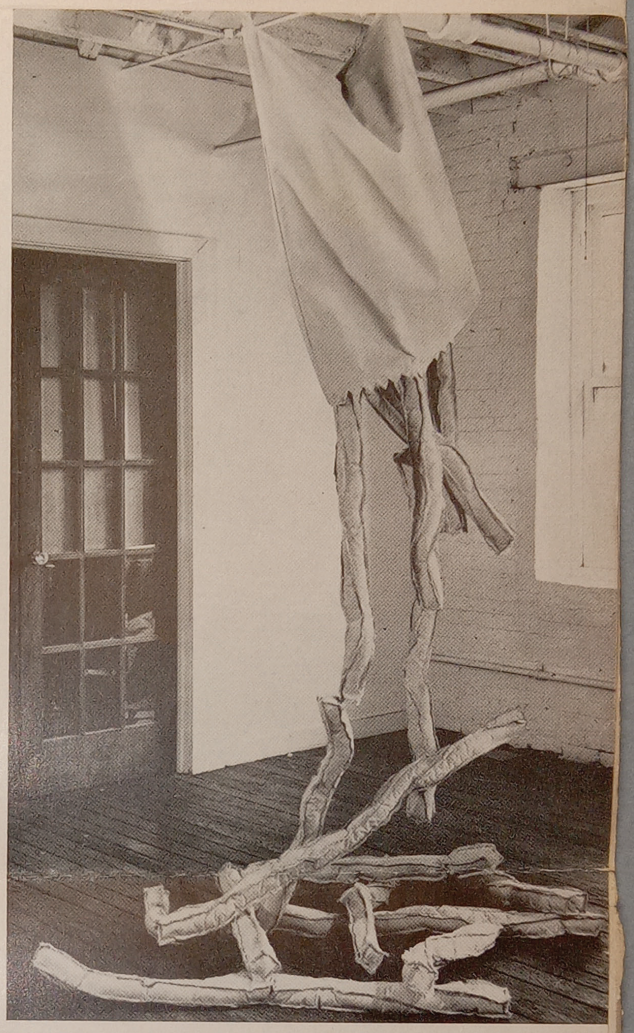
to that of intervening in what he conceives as the magical relation between man and his object world, with a fragmented magic object (the contents of the Store as a whole) which was subjected to the test of its magic unity by selling the parts (could he will them back together again?).

He also organized Happenings, he says, because "theater is the dominant art in New York." Such a consideration is characteristic of him: the desire to communicate as widely and strongly as possible as well as to respond to the dominant characteristic of the city he is in. This is a paraphrased excerpt on the subject of his Happenings from the 1964 interview:

"I can only live in contact with reality. In making it, I am obliged to touch it, to contain it. That allows me to recreate my own reality. Then I feel happy, secure.

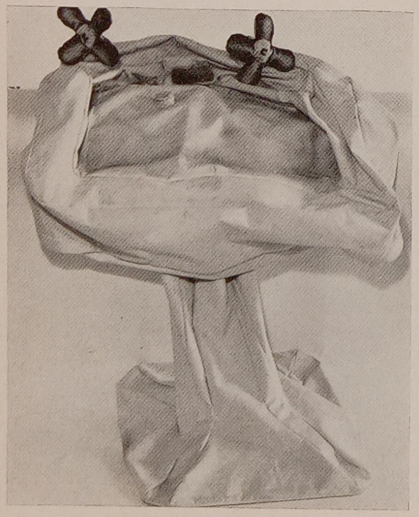
"In the Happenings, I control space and time, just as I control the people. Before I get to people, I ask myself what things they would like to handle: the things they are used to or the things that are strange to them, in order to see how they will react. My method uses people and things."

Here again he conceals the deeper levels of his intent. Consider, for example, his recent Happening, on the subject of the Movies, performed in December 1965 in New York in a program with two other Happenings, one by Robert Rauschenberg and the other by Robert Whitman. Of the three Happenings, Oldenburg's was the least well received. Both of the other Happenings were on the stage with the spectators in their seats, and had little or no direct audience involvement. In Oldenburg's Happening, the audience is forbidden its seats and made to stand along the side walls of the theater, much against its wishes. The theater was [Continued on page 56]

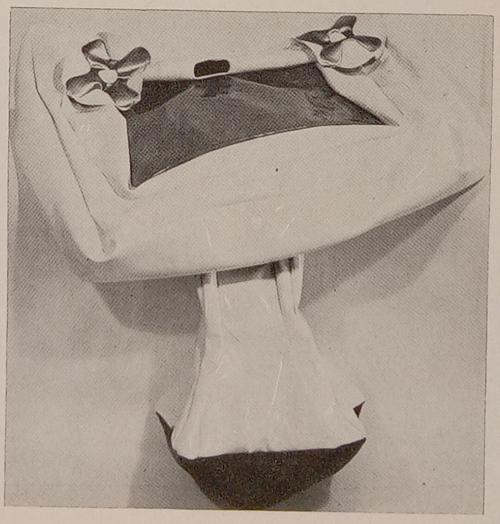


Spilling Bag of Shoestring Potatoes, 1965; muslin, glue, Liquitex, about 10 feet high, at Janis (March 9-April 2).

Soft Washstand Study, 1965, stuffed muslin, 48 inches high.



Soft Bathroom Washstand, 1965, vinyl stuffed with foam rubber, 48 inches high.





Notebook drawing: dripping ketchup bottles from T.V. ad suggest red tights.

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Lester Johnson

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Tues. thru Sat. 10-5:30

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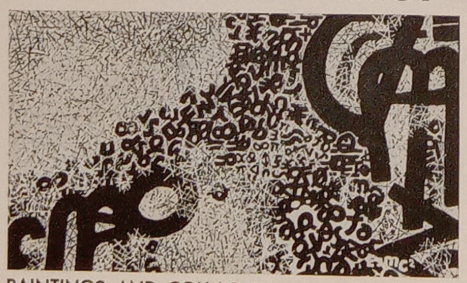
COLOR HERB AACH

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PAINTINGS JO BAER

February 15 through March 5

"ON MASS AND ENERGY"



FEBRUARY 8 to MARCH 13

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PAINTINGS AND COLLAGES

BETTINA BRENDEL

SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF ART

woodcuts will take place at Sotheby's March 15—Pieter Brueghel the Elder's *Landscape with Rabbit Hunters* is the highlight of the group. A tiny, very rare panel, *St. George and the Dragon*, attributed to Hubert van Eyck, will be among the old master works offered March 16. Also of interest is a group of drawings by Melchior Lorch (1527-1594), one of the earliest known Danish artists.

At Christie's, it has been announced, there will be various sales of furnishings, coins, books, carpets, glass and silverware during February; and further items from the famous Spencer-Churchill collection [see A.N., Feb. '65] will be auctioned Feb. 11, 24 and 25.

Chicago continued from page 46

Somewhat unexpectedly, the decrepitude of Albright emanated from this work, but without his melancholy.

News, news, news

Still other offerings at the turn of the year saw a show of Marisol at the Arts Club, with several pieces from the local collections of Robert Mayer and Edwin Bergman. The artist's strong formal interests were clearly presented in the 1961-62 *Self-Portrait* which was purchased from the show by Joseph Schapiro. Draftsmanly techniques quite other than Marisol's were seen both in the drawings of Virgil Burnett at the Center for Continuing Education, and in Domenico Gnoli's show at the Kovler Gallery. Both men are highly accomplished, witty traditionalists. Skilled draftsmanship also figured in Eleanor Coen's loose-edged paintings at Fairweather-Hardin; while at Gray's, Mary McCarthy's drawings displayed the current tendency to cover up lack of articulation with erasures and swipes.

Oldenburg continued from page 25

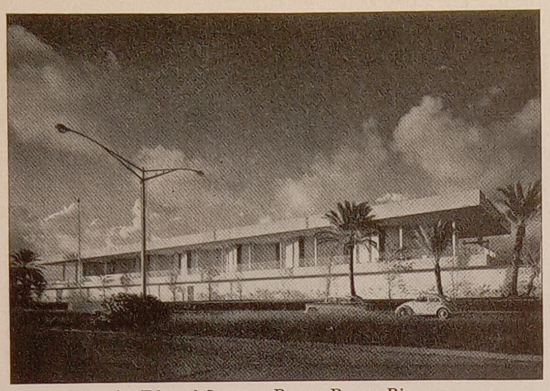
dark and a half dozen or so players in the Happening were sitting here and there in the seats from which the audience had been dispossessed. There was a projector at the rear aimed at the screen on the stage, and two more on the stage aimed at the seats, each with a whirring table fan in the path of the beam. Leaning up against the stage was a "doctor" in whites with a mirror strapped to his forehead. One of the players had a muslin hat with Mickey Mouse ears, made by Oldenburg, and sat just ahead of the rear projector so that the hat cast a shadow on the screen. The players continually changed seats, and, after a while, identities. Some carried large paper bags into which they peered at intervals with flashlights. One well-dressed young man reduced an entire newspaper to clippings. Ushers paraded up and down the rows of seats continually checking. After a while, the "doctor" began to look down throats. The theater was dark, the activity simultaneous, without apparent pattern. You simply did not know where to look next and missed the onset of much that happened. Many in the audience were bored and annoyed and sat down in the end seats where they got in the way of the ushers. The Happening ended almost as unemphatically as it began.

What is this Happening? For Oldenburg, primarily and consciously it is art; but there is an undeniable intent. Oldenburg's subject matter, the movie house, is an experience we repeat habitually at every point in the cultural trajectory of its history. Mickey Mouse is a morphological relative of the projector that puts him on the screen, and we bear both in our consciousness (on our heads) as part of movies. The near-darkness and the flickering beam of light are as much a part of it as the films themselves.

What of the player "audience"? On one level they are the adherents of perfect reasonableness and perfect control, with the lid off: dehumanized, disassociated, paranoid, obsessive. In another association, that of the hospital ward or the clinic waiting room, we have a parody of belonging, since in these places the afflicted can actually be said to belong. In both associations, they participate in a mockery of "attendance," i.e. involuntary presence. The continually roving ushers and the "doctor" provide the continual checking-on and checking-up that is their job, a parody of social concern. The projectors on the stage are also searchlights turned on them, behind which the real audience was originally intended to stand. In the

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New museum by Edward Stone at Ponce, Puerto Rico.

tion to a group of late medieval Italian primitives donated by the Kress Foundation, are (among many more): an almost perversely sensitive Bronzino portrait; a monumental Luca Giordano *Death of Seneca;* Guido Reni's theatrical *St. Sebastian;* an amorous Terbrugghen; a large Prud'hon male nude; an extensive Pre-Raphaelite collection; and a representation of Puerto Rico comtemporaries. At present, there are a total of about 300 works, the presence of which should be of incalculable value to the cultural life of the entire island.

Auctions continued from page 39

Dubuffet, Poliakoff, Vasarely, Fautrier, Manessier Burri, Tápies, Appel, Capogrossi, Hartung, Lanskoy and Davie. Two Jackson Pollocks, from 1941 and 1949, are to be auctioned too (but not the numerous other U.S. Abstract-Expressionist works which Thompson bought).

Other activities: Parke-Bernet

During February, Oriental porcelains, jade and other semi-precious mineral carvings from the estate of the late Mrs. Wendel P. Colton and other sources will be offered on the 11th, after being shown from Feb. 5, to be followed by antique jewelry, predominantly from the late Ella Jacques Seligmann's estate (Paris), on Feb. 17 (visible from the 11th). Georgian furniture on Feb. 19, from the collection of Jacqueline Cochran and other sources, includes a Queen Anne carved walnut and needle-point wing chair; a rare George III circular library table of mahogany, ca. 1765; and a small Sheraton cylinder bureau. A group of Fabergé *objets de vertu* are part of the same sale, coming from the estate of the late Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna of Russia. Both can be seen from the 12th on. Oriental art will reappear on Feb. 25 and 26, with Persian ceramics and miniatures, Chinese scroll paintings and Indian and Siamese sculpture from the Kevorkian Foundation. They can be seen after Feb. 19.

The London scene

Among forthcoming sales at Sotheby's are, on Feb. 1, Chinese ceramics and other works from various sources, including two T'ang figures of horses, an important large Pai-Ting basin, Imperial yellow wares, plus a number of archaic bronzes and jades; silhouettes, portrait miniatures and *objets de vertu* on Feb. 7, including portraits of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington and other silhouettes by Miers; English furniture, rugs and antique musical instruments on Feb.11 (including a 1723 Gagliani violin and a Robert Adam-designed tambour-covered marquetry writing table). Portrait miniatures, scientific instruments, watches and clocks are on the block Feb. 12, including a miniature of a young lady by J.A.M. Lemoine, one of Rubens by Christian Richter, and one of a lady attributed to Nicholas Hilliard; and Continental porcelain, including a collection of Meissen ware and a large, white figure of a lion by J.C. Kirchner on Feb. 22. On Feb. 23, old master paintings from various owners will be auctioned, and on Feb. 28, Greek and Russian icons and *objets de vertu.*

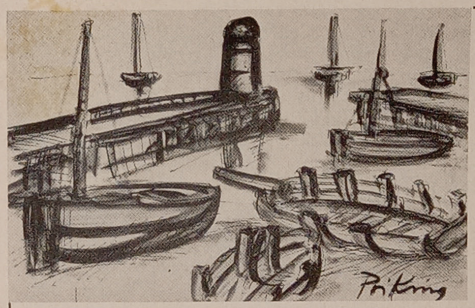
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phenomenon rather than an intrinsic property of the thing we so describe. From this ridiculously small-seeming beginning, he then procedes to a hair-raising demonstration that such a determination would inevitably lead to the downfall of our civilization—and all in dead seriousness. What he says in essence is that if we can't believe that so vast and wondrous a thing as the ocean is indeed itself possessed of that quality which produces emotion in us and are therefore going to assign that quality to our subjectivity, then it must inevitably be that we will do the same to the great "givens" which are the basic ethical principles common to all the religions and morals which underlie our civilization. These great "givens" cannot be put up for justification; they are in fact the means of justification. If we appropriate them to our subjectivity, then they can no longer be used that way and all is lost. However logical Lewis was in deriving the greater calamity from the lesser, he could offer no means of preventing the lesser calamity except the deterrent of knowing the greater one would follow. The perfidious English grammar was, after all, only registering unthinkingly the change-over from a theological to a secular vocabulary.

The formative period of many of the previous generation of abstract artists was the depression of the '30s, when the business-technological sectors of society were demonstrating weakness and an inability to lead, and consequently political "conviction" waxed strong. The tendency was to individualism, overt independence and "self-expression." In the formative years of the Pop artists, the opposite was true and they became "close readers" of the business-technological sector as the dominating complex in society. The Pop artists come out of the same nest as the Organization Men.

That Oldenburg has a virtual nostalgia for those years of "conviction" is shown in the genesis of the *Soft Chrysler Airflow* series. The model for these sculptures is a series of Chryslers produced from 1934 to 1937 which were designed under the direction of Chrysler executive engineer Carl Breer, father of avant-garde film-maker Robert Breer. They are the first American, mass-produced cars designed aerodynamically for minimum wind resistance, in the light of studies Breer initiated around 1927. The name "Airflow" is Oldenburg's, who in a characteristic manner appropriated the letters A-I-R, which is the abbreviation stenciled on the outside door in New York where there is an "Artist-in-Residence," and combined it with the car's design idea. Oldenburg has five models, starting with *Soft Chrysler Airflow, 1*, 1965, that can sit comfortably on a millinery display stand, and *Soft Chrysler Airflow, 2*, 1965, which is several times larger and more detailed. The series proceeds through successively larger and more detailed models and ends with model 5, which is the final, full-size version. The cars are all made in individual segments which are then put together. For all the models, Oldenburg makes a set of orthographic drawings. For the ARTNEWS cover of this issue, he made a special set, charmingly finished with a sunset '30s atmosphere, and arranged on an unfolded box, which if cut out and folded becomes a personal Oldenburg souvenir.

If through artists we are to learn the motives of our culture, we are fortunate to have them at various stations and foolish to ask them all to be at one or the other. Some of them will be at the heart of the dominating complex in the culture, some will be in the area where human compensatory action takes place, some of them are able to represent counter-motives and some valuably to preserve and continue what appears to be anachronistic.

The size of the intent that developed in Oldenburg's consciousness and the time intercepted by his formative years in the big cities, and as a notably gifted if unorthodox member of the cosmopolitan upper class, have stationed him at the dominating business-technological complex. To live there, he shares the consciousness of the co-habitants. Nature is real estate, and real estate is outside the window (if there is a window) or something on both sides of the highway you drive on, behind and less significant than the signs and the billboards. Oceans and continents are things you fly over conscious mainly of the aircraft. The urban in our consciousness has entirely swallowed up the rural; the pastoral is gone.

For Oldenburg the billboard itself is inspiration wherein he finds the "realistic justification for the artificiality of form and color" rather than just real objects copied. A Los Angeles billboard provided the basis for the giant shrimps carved out of polyurethane foam that are visible above the drawing board in the studio photograph on page 23.

Here too, the drift of theological conviction shows acutely. Lewis's syllogism is evident in its actuality without its necessarily being realized as such. Deciding that what we find in nature is subjective triggers consciousness of the greater calamity that follows it. As a result, our consciousness is reflexively conditioned to stay away from nature, which is now abhorrent. If nature is abhorrent, then not only is naturalism of no interest but abstraction as well, since abstraction is arrived at through nature which remains its underpinning.

The way out is the artificial, into which I would also incorporate the idea of the purposely false. The artificial is the result of man's composition, but man's composition is an extension of man, of his libidinal force that concretes itself in the artifact. To objectify your subjective relations to an artifact, which is to say that you are creating art, is the open path.

Oldenburg, as an artist at this station, must not only determine the motives that are there, but show us where they lead. The motives or tendencies lead somewhere, which is their result, and which subjectively we construe as their intent. It is this intent which is also objectified in the art.

By Oldenburg's determination, the intent is magic, and his art is the creation of the magic object, which is the objectification of his subjective relationships to man's artifacts. The way the intent shows itself lies in the nature of the subjective relationships. For him they are in discovering the morphological translations, the myriad ways the forms that man composes (and that are his magic) are translated repeatedly in artifacts.

The sexual is everywhere in Oldenburg's work, carried purely and insistently through form, by which I mean the repeated physical characteristics of his work. Because his form is already this, he can accept any amount of overt sexuality in the subject of the sculpture literally without a tremor. In case a successful campaign should ever be waged for appropriateness, I strongly suggest that *Quadruple Sketch of a Dormeyer Mixer*, 1965, be set aside as a grand trophy for the winner of the Miss Subways contest.

If it is argued that it is only Oldenburg's subjectivity that is objectified in his art, I would allow that this must be inevitably true to some degree. But in essence it would be wrong. These are not individualistic works in the democratic tradition, they are not "self-expression." Oldenburg is dealing in the phylogenetic rather than in the ontogenetic. Oldenburg has spoken of this intent in a characteristic way, by which I mean that he substitutes the term "poetic" as a euphemism for magical:

"In the end I have a poetic object. It is nothing unless someone brings his poetic sensibility to it and shapes it and turns it. But I don't do that . . . I try to remove all spontaneity from my creation. . ."

Oldenburg's gift for seeing morphological translations seems to me highly extraordinary. Just as a striking example, I have selected from his notebook a sketch showing his perception of "red tights" as an equivalent in form to the up-ended pair of dripping ketchup bottles in a familiar advertisement.

Oldenburg's art describes a primitive society, but it is not a society which he rejects. However, it would be a sad mistake not to perceive how profoundly ironical he finds the situation and the crucial role that is played in it by the artificial. In his "colossal" monument drawings, he fuses this irony with his unique understanding of the artificial. He is very much worth hearing on the subject of monuments, and the following is an excerpt from his notes on the subject:

"Monuments usually involve common understanding. They are for everybody. This makes them false from their first premise. Monuments are interesting because being false is part of their creation, when in other work the opposite is supposed to be the case. One must not criticize a monument for being false; that would be to misunderstand it. One must understand in what way the artist has chosen to be false.

"The possibilities of monuments must not be under-estimated. We walk about in a condition which is both outside and inside ourselves. . . . What we see we frequently assume to be inside us. . . . A monument placed cleverly outside of people . . . becomes a part of their minds, as concrete as a nodule on their brain or a thought about their experience. . . . A monument is a matter of peopling or externalizing the mass consciousness. Think of bridges, of the Empire State building, of the Statue of Liberty, of the Trylon and Perisphere. It is manufactured, obsessive landscapes, and therefore close to nature herself. . . .

"Unless one throws oneself completely into being false, there is not much chance of success . . . I say, as vulgar as poss[ible] it's for the people, isn't it?

[An example of a natural monument would be] a reef placed in the center of [New York] bay, on which wreck after wreck would occur until there was a huge pile of rusty and broken [ship] hulls. A monument to immigration."

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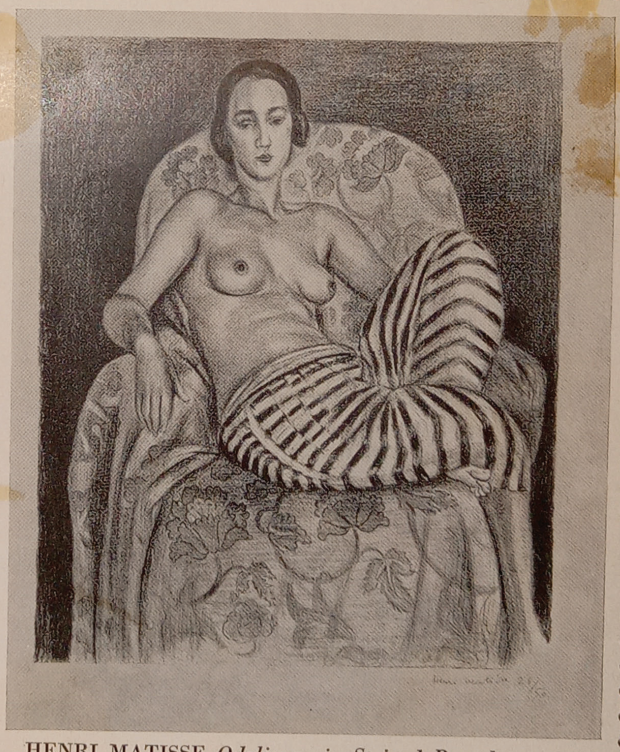
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It's Not Pop, It's Not Op— It's Marisol

By GRACE GLUECK

"MARISOL? A Latin Garbo!" exclaimed an admirer recently.

"Marisol? She's that beautiful witch in a Charles Addams cartoon," said another.

"Marisol! The first girl artist with *glamour*," Pop art star Andy Warhol has proclaimed.

The object of this flourishing *mystique* is Marisol, an enigmatic young Venezuelan-American artist whose poetic name is now internationally known (in Spanish, it means "sea and sun"). Not only are her witty, inventive sculptures admired by critics and acquired by big-league museums but, in this new American era of artist-as-star, she is asked to lecture by ladies' groups, gets letters from yearning teen-agers and is recognized by businessmen in night clubs.

On the New York art scene, the Marisol legend is nourished by her chic, bones-and-hollows face (elegantly Spanish with a dash of gypsy) framed by glossy black hair, her mysterious reserve and faraway, whispery voice, toneless as a sleepwalker's, but appealingly paced by a rich Spanish accent. "She can look," marvels an observer who sees her often at parties, "like the stunning Marquesa of a Fellini movie—or a beatnik kid on her way to a pot party."

Though these attributes are not to be sneezed at, Marisol's real fame rests on a dazzling ability to distill art from the clichés of American life. Her subjects are simple—a summer beach scene (with bare bottoms), a pistol-packing movie cowboy on a horse, a group of joyriders out in a Ford. She portrays them by a complex method of assemblage—a single Marisol figure may have a head of wood, a plaster face, a barrel body and a pair of real shoes.

ANY resemblance between Marisol and her art is far from coincidental. In creating her characters, she is apt to incorporate her own anatomy—replicas of her face, hands, feet, ears, fingers and *derrière*. Standing recently in a thicket of just-completed works at her studio, a group of 15 life-size figures called "The Party," she looked like a dreamer, surrounded by faintly sinister self-images she had summoned during sleep. The figures, mostly women, are festively gowned and coiffed, some with real clothes. They stand trance-like, their faces congealed in social masks. In the forehead of one is a small, working TV set. The midriff of another is adorned with a big, light-up slide of a diamond necklace ("Wasn't that nice? The Harry Winston people let me have it," murmurs Marisol). A butler and maid bear trays of real glasses. And not untypically, the faces, male and female are all Marisol's: pencilled Marisols, plaster Marisols, painted, photographed and carved Marisols.

This obsession-with-self-image has led critics to knowing pronouncements about narcissism, a search for identity and the like—interpretations which Marisol once accepted but now rejects with a bored smile. "It's like that movie, 'Last Year in Marienbad.' I used to love it," she says. "But people bring it up to me so often that I'm beginning to despise it. I once went along with those ideas because I had a boy friend who always talked about finding out who you were. Of course, every artist puts himself into his work. But the truth is, I use my own face because it's easier. When I want to make a face or hands for one of my figures, I'm usually the only person around to use as a model."

Her everyday subject matter and use of real objects sometimes causes critics to pigeonhole Marisol's work as Pop. But while Pop art takes its images straight from the current environment, hers reflects other influences: pre-Columbian sculpture; early American art; surrealist and dream imagery; even traces of the religious pictures she had to copy at the Catholic school she attended as a child. "Her work is a very individual, sophisticated expression in a folk art idiom," says Dorothy Miller, curator of museum collections at the Museum of Modern Art, who showed a roomful of Marisols in the museum's "Americans, 1963" exhibit.

Marisol herself acknowledges the influence of earlier art, as well as Pop, and of several individual artists (among them Robert Rauschenberg and the sculptor, William King). But she refuses to label her work. "I don't like the idea of all those groups. An artist is an artist. I have no social intention. I think about the forms, not the meaning. People think too much about subject matter in art. But whatever they want to call me is okay—Pop or anything."

She is by no means uncandid about her success. "It has happened because I have made it happen. I got tired of being nobody and going to that bar in *(Continued on page 45)*

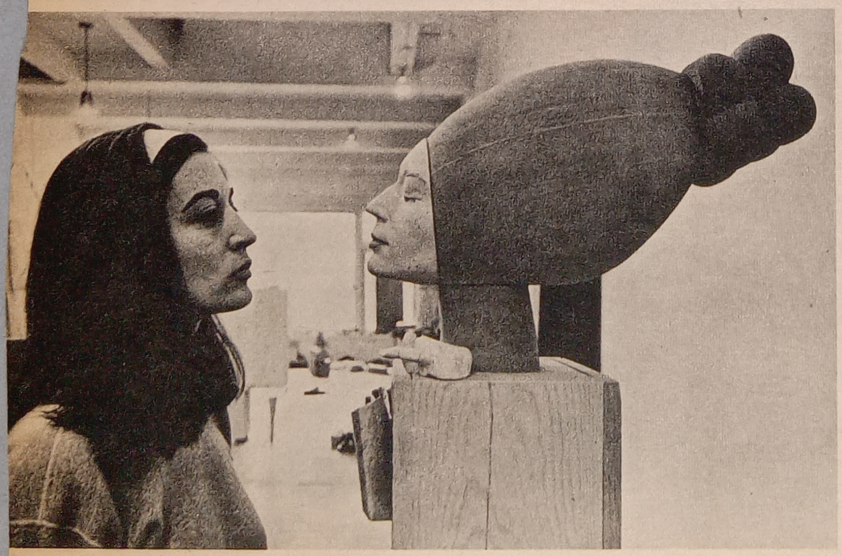


GRACE GLUECK reports art news for The New York Times.

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A Venezuelan-American girl named Marisol (she appears below left, facing one of her creations) is as well-known on the New York art scene for her exotic good looks as for her witty assemblages, which are admired by critics and purchased by museums. Shown above is "Jazz Musicians" (with Marisol, foreground), and at far left, one of 15 life-size figures in "The Party."

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It's Not Pop—It's Marisol

(Continued from Page 34)

the Village [the Cedar Tavern, an artist's hang-out]. So I began to work very hard."

"Hard" is by way of an understatement. Marisol's relentless work drive is the envy and despair of her friends. "Her discipline is iron," says the painter Ruth Kligman. "Sometimes I've passed her studio at 2 A.M. and seen her there still plugging away. She doesn't get hung up on the feminine bit—the beauty parlor, the shopping, the telephone and so forth. Clothes? She wears what amounts to a uniform—a sweater, jeans and boots."

MARISOL'S day begins about noon, when she wakes in her small, surreally cluttered Murray Hill apartment and puts away a standard brunch of ham and eggs (her working dinner is invariably a hamburger). On the way to her studio, a huge loft over a men's shop on lower Broadway, she stops to buy materials—nails, glue, chair legs, barrel staves, pine planks from a lumber yard. But her particular delight is tracking down her far-out "props."

"It started as a kind of rebellion," says Marisol. 'Everything was so serious.' "

They have ranged from a stuffed dog's head, bought at a taxidermist's, that became part of "Women With Dog" to some tiny parasols for a friend's portrait, "Mr. Alemany." "I do my research in the Yellow Pages," she explains gleefully. "You could call them a new palette for me."

By contrast to the clutter at home, Marisol's studio, a space of some 90 by 25 feet, is stark and workmanlike. At present it is enlivened by her "Party" group and a large panel, "Jazz Musicians," studded with real trumpets and a saxophone, which leans against one wall. It once stood in one of her favorite *discothèques*, L'Interdit at the Gotham Hotel, but she reclaimed it because "everybody was bumping into it and breaking it." Above a workbench is tacked a photo clipped from a magazine of a fat, complacent-looking couple at a Goldwater rally—who may eventually be grist for Marisol's mallet.

An expert carpenter ("I just picked it up") and carver, she works from cryptic numbered diagrams with the aid of a few power tools, briskly sawing and hammering the barrel or boxlike bodies of her figures, ruthlessly shaping their heads with an axe, a chisel, sandpaper and rasps. She can even make her own electrical installations. "But I'd never dream of tackling, say, a piece of furniture. That's too complicated."

This regimen is not without tonic interruptions. In fact, considering her work habits, the frequency with which Marisol appears at uptown art openings and parties is nothing short of astonishing. Though she is sometimes alone, a frequent escort is Andy Warhol. Other recent favorites have been Sam Green, the young, square-bearded director of Philadelphia's Institute of Contemporary Art, and Heinz Mack, a German sculptor and member of the widely exhibited Group Zero.

AT such festivities Marisol is celebrated for her marathon silences. A museum man was present at a brunch last year to which she had been invited. "She arrived at 11," he recalls, "and didn't say a word until she left at 3. Then she apologized for not talking because she felt sleepy." An art editor remembers seeing her seated alone at a nonswinging cocktail party. He invited her to leave with his group "for some place more fun." She declined. "But I'm *having* fun — just watching."

"She uses her silence like a shield," says an old friend, artist Conrad Marca-Relli. "But she seems comfortable behind it." "I don't really mind any more," says art dealer Leo Castelli, a very articulate man who has learned to sit pleasantly with Marisol in bouts of silence lasting for an hour. "It's relaxing."

Speculating about Marisol's taciturnity recently, a friend defended it on practical grounds. "A, she's genuinely shy. B, she realizes that most people have nothing much to say. So why should she put out more energy than she has to? She saves it for work. When she does say something, it's direct and to the point. She puts things in their place."

In the last few years Marisol's hermetic silences have become less frequent. Eleanor Ward, director of the Stable Gallery and, until recently, Marisol's dealer, remembers that in 1962, shortly before the one-man show that brought her fame, Marisol came to see her and, apparently prompted by a feeling of release and accomplishment, proclaimed gravely, "I am talking now."

Marisol does not attempt to

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explain her reticence, though she remembers that as a child she was never able to communicate with anyone in her age group. "I was always a little bit strange. In school they treated me like an oddball. I never used to talk at all. It was only when I came to New York that I at last found people like myself. Now I think I'm getting more normal."

THOUGH Marisol's reserve about her early life tends toward the monumental, she will, if pressed, sketch in a few details. She was born with two names—Marisol Escobar—in Paris, 34 years ago. Her parents were well-to-do Venezuelans, always on the move. She recalls constant traveling to hotels and resorts, and "having a lot of fun. I never had any economic hardships." The family left Paris when she was 5, and shuttled between Caracas and the U. S. Her mother died when Marisol was 11, and then the war broke out. With her father and brother (now an economist), she returned to Caracas. At 16 she came back to Los Angeles with her father and attended the decorous Westlake School for Girls. (Shirley Temple is another alumna.) Nights, she studied art at the Jepson School with Howard Warshaw.

"I can never remember a time when I wasn't drawing," Marisol says. "I won art prizes at every school I went to." In a taped conversation with artist Red Grooms and dealer John Bernard Myers of the Tibor de Nagy Gallery she has mentioned some early influences on her work: fairy stories, the funny papers ("there weren't too many words t[o] read") and pictures of [s]aints that she had to copy [i]n school. "You spent months doing one drawing. They had to be exactly like the original. They were very realistic. I also got very involved with embroidery. I spent about four years doing one corner of a tablecloth. I liked that so much I used to go to school on Sunday."

In 1950, after a year in Paris at the Beaux-Arts Academy ("It was like nothing. They wanted you to paint like Bonnard"), Marisol came to New York. She took a fling at the Art Students League, where she studied with (and painted like) Kuniyoshi, then went on to the New York and Provincetown school conducted by the noted abstract-expressionist painter-teacher Hans Hofmann. For three years she sedulously aped the ultra-painterly Hofmann style. "I was never very good at it," she says wryly, "but Hofmann was the only teacher I ever learned anything from."

Then, in 1953, impressed by a show of pre-Columbian art she had seen at a gallery and some Mexican boxes with tiny carved figures, she quit painting altogether and began turning out small, erotically embellished pottery people.

"It started as a kind of rebellion. Everything was so serious," she says. "I was very sad myself and the people I met were so depressing. I started doing something funny so that I would become happier—and it worked. I was also convinced that everyone would like my work because I had so much fun doing it. They did."

MARISOL began exhibiting her small sculptures in group shows at the Tanager and other 10th Street galleries when that thoroughfare was still a center of influence in the art world. (It was at one of these shows that she adopted the practice of using only her first name—"to stand out from the crowd").

The Tanager specialized in new young talent, for which it assiduously beat the bushes as far out as Jackson Heights, but occasionally some of the

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ND FRIEND—The Venezuelan artist
tar Andy Warhol at a recent opening.

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older 10th Street idols—Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Larry Rivers, et al.—participated in shows to lend moral support. At the time Abstract Expressionism, the first real "American" art, was in its heyday and its downtown practitioners were full of clan *esprit*. "There was a Great Consciousness about being an artist," one participant recalls. "The activity colored your whole life. It was almost a morality."

Comparing those days with the current art scene, in which artists are hotly pursued by the public, the press, uptown society, new tycoons and even the White House, she is fondly reminiscent. "It was quite exciting then. We were just an art group—the rest of the world seemed very far away. I didn't mind. But [characteristically] I like the way things are now, too."

A mischievous "put-on" that Marisol once staged has become a downtown legend. She was invited to take part in a panel discussion at a meeting of The Club, a kind of loose-knit artists' group that flourished for a decade in the Village, beginning in 1949.

"The four male panelists," recalls artist Al Hansen, who was there, "were dressed like kids looking for a job in a bank. But Marisol showed up wearing a stark white mask, decorated in Japanese style, tied on with strings. The club members were apt to bully young unknowns unmercifully. The panel no sooner got under way than people began to stamp and holler, 'Take off that goddam mask! Let's see your face!'

"When the noise got deafening, Marisol undid the strings. The mask slipped off to reveal her face, made up exactly like it. What a stunt! It's something only she would think of, and it brought down the house."

In the fall of 1957 Marisol had her first uptown show, at the Leo Castelli Gallery. Her carved wooden creatures and small-scale family groups were prototypes of the things she was later to do with far more daring and invention. The show brought a small flurry of attention from the press, and Marisol shortly thereafter took off for a lengthy sojourn in Rome. Her reasons were complex. "For one, I got scared," she says. "I thought, when you start getting publicity, you lose everything you have." (She has since found this not to be true.) She also says that she wanted to find "a better way of life—a more relaxed and happier one."

More relaxed and happier, she returned early in 1960 with some small bronzes that

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Castelli exhibited in a group show. Then her art took a giant step forward. At the Marca-Rellis' East Hampton home she was beguiled by some hat forms that she found in a sack. Their scale suggested life-size sculpture, and with them she made some highly successful experimental figures. That led to her working in large-scale forms.

Though by this time Marisol had acquired a reputation among New York art professionals, she was unknown to a wider public. In 1962 her first exhibition of the new work took place at the Stable Gallery. There were a number of show-stoppers: among them, a partitioned glass-fronted box holding a hundred Marisol faces, a masterpiece of a portrait group called "The Kennedys," a gnarled and grainy wooden beam adorned with a slyly painted Mona Lisa, a barrel-shanked horse bearing two 18th-century generals, and "The Family," a tableau of a dustbowl farm family. "The wit and imagination were fantastic," remembers critic Tom Hess, executive editor of Art News. The show—and Marisol—became the season's smash hits.

"Word spread like wildfire," Eleanor Ward recalls. "After a couple of days you could hardly walk through the gallery. People showed up who weren't even art lovers—just curiosity seekers. They'd punch each other and say, 'There's Marisol!' when she appeared." Museums began to move in. The Museum of Modern Art bought "The Family" almost immediately. "The Generals" was snapped up by Buffalo's savvy Albright-Knox Art Gallery. And big-time collectors appeared on the scene.

The next year she rated a room to herself at the Museum of Modern Art exhibit "Americans, 1963." When her 1964 show was unveiled at the Stable last March, no one needed to be told who Marisol was. Viewers streamed into the gallery by the hundreds daily to see work that was even more powerful and inventive: "Church Wedding," in which Marisol figured as the bride, and bridegroom; a penetrating, four-sided portrait of Andy Warhol, and "The Babies," a pair of hateful giant infants, each seven feet high and holding a miniature Marisol doll.

Preparing for a show next fall at the Sidney Janis Gallery (where her work sells for up to $7,500), Marisol is rumored to be working on a portrait tableau called "Four Dealers." She finds time to make the rounds of galleries and keep very much in touch with the current art scene, though she is not particularly interested in trends.

"I don't think it's necessary to keep up all the time. It makes me nervous to think that critics and museum people always expect artists to be doing something new. Why must one style go out at the expense of another? Abstract expressionism is still fresh—de Kooning is producing beautiful paintings right now. I don't feel you have to belong to a little group and then say everything not part of it is bad."

Her chief recreation, Marisol admits, is party-going. "I'm really a city person. I don't do anything else." She has found time, though, to appear in a couple of Andy Warhol Pop movies: "The Kiss," in which she holds a three-minute osculatory pose with Pop artist Harold Stevenson, and the more recent "13 Beautiful Girls," sharing the limelight with such social types as Baby Jane Holzer and Isabel Eberstadt, art collector Ethel Scull, model Ivy Nicholson and actress Sally Kirkland Jr.

Marisol says she enjoys watching Warhol's relentlessly drawn-out movies for "about a half hour." She no longer goes to big-screen cinema. "It bores me," she complains. "I find real people more interesting than sitting in a dark room with imaginary ones. Besides, there's too much distortion—those huge faces on the screen frighten me. But I saw 'Tiny Alice' and think I'm getting interested in the theater again."

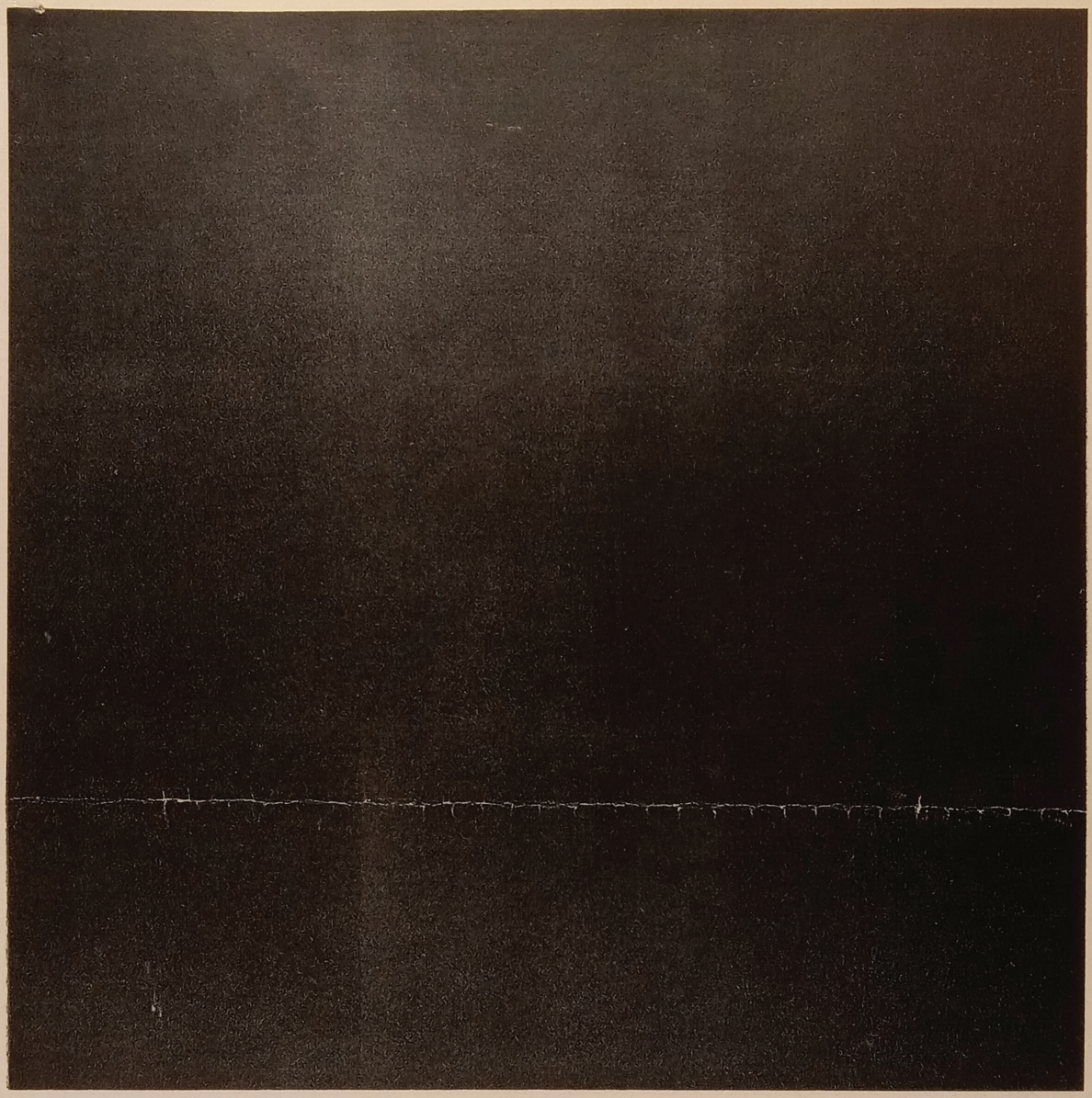
ONE imperative current project is the obtaining of her United States citizenship, lack of which barred her from exhibiting with the American contingent at Brazil's prestigious 1963 São Paulo Bienal. "I used to think it wasn't important what country you belonged to," she says. To avoid any future such hindrance she has put in her citizenship application, and has been known to beard influential people at parties who might be able to help speed the process.

A bit wistfully, Marisol says that success has not really changed her life. She has not yet married, but, like most career girls, would consider it "if the right man came along" ("I can't quite see myself washing diapers, but I'm at the stage where I could hire someone to do that"). She is not, however, worried about the future. "It doesn't make any real difference whether I continue to be successful. If one artist that you respect says he likes your work, that's the important thing. I could go on working even unrecognized." She probably won't ever have to. Though fashions in art change rapidly these days, Marisol's work has high survival value.

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AN – Summer '63



Ad Reinhardt: *Abstract Painting*, 1961, 60 inches square.
Museum of Modern Art, New York

Thomas B. Hess

The phony crisis in American art

Two New York exhibitions, more or less vanguard,
at the Jewish and the Modern museums,
raise the issue of the New as against the Novel

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Modern American painting and sculpture are arts in, and of, the crisis of the West.

The crisis is not a simple artists' dilemma but a highly complex interconnection of threats, enigmas, fears, necessities, temptations, stupidities, manias, delusions, indignations, confusions, absurdities and chaos.

In the past, the artist's condition was comparatively plain. He faced every man's death, for example, and continued to look at his work through the sockets of his skull.

For the American artist at mid-century, however, the crisis has spread to everything he sees and knows, to his whole life and environment. His politics, ethics, manner of living, esthetics are all compromised by the situation. One painter said: "You have to work with the basic assumption that it is impossible to paint."

The familiarity of the crisis, its omnipresence, the dulling of its edges by the exhaustion of language, increases the sense of urgency. The fact that we are habituated to such phrases as "six million Jews" or "Freedom Ride" or "legal murder," adds to the nightmare quality.

Faced with the impossibility of continuing any prewar style, the issue that New York artists tore from the situation was that of the crisis itself: its revelation became the content of their art. Crisis is the hero, and in its aspects, artists find their unique self-portraits.

This is why modern American art, despite its global influence, remains unexportable. In Paris, Rome or Tokyo, the concept of crisis dissolves into mere extrapolations of history. The inevitable result of adapting New York painting to other locales has been international estheticism.

The most extraordinary thing about American artists is that they were able to make the leap into the furnace and emerge with an enormous variety of works that take their place in the continuity of Western art. The second most extraordinary thing is their vitality and depth of resources; they have created their own tradition and constantly renew its energy and daring.

The audience for American art, until a few years ago, was restricted to the artists themselves and a few writers, musicians, poets and friends. But lately a new public has become interested—collectors, critics, curators, entrepreneurs. They bring with them three things: 1) Money, for which everyone is grateful or envious; 2) Their own cultural naïveté, a gap of about ten to fifty years between what has been produced and what they think it means; 3) Appetite for novelties, for art as an object of conversation, a rung in the social ladder, a cheap investment.

In a very brief time, the new public accepted all the styles of New York art and formulated its own consensus about what is box-office and what is a flop.

Because the members of this flourishing cosmopolitan vanguard audience support the established politico-economic order of society, they have to ignore the crisis content of modern art; they filter out threat by looking at everything through thick layers of smug optimism. The vanguard audience receives art in conventional formalist or literary categories, and they make up for the lost dimension of meaning by inviting the artist himself to dinner. The voids they sense in the paintings and sculptures quickly are filled with anecdotes about the artist's life. His modesty, taciturnity or charm —in short, manners—act as the buffer between the subversive content of his art and the conservative allegiances of the patrons.

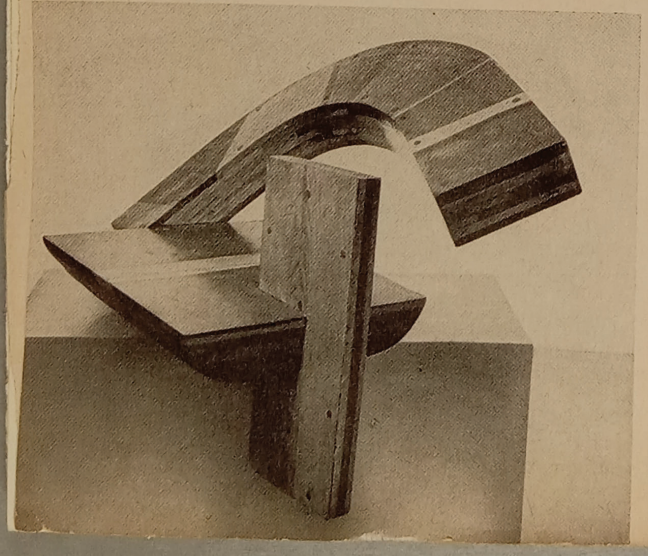
The avant-garde audience obeys the laws of conspicuous consumption. There always has to be something new. And this demand has created the phony crisis.

The phony crisis is completely outside of art and the art world. Like a mirror in a fun-fair, it distorts as it mimics the artists' values and anxieties. It deals in screaming irrelevancies—how much did something sell for, how fast was it resold, how crazy did it look, who got drunk, who made out? The phony crisis is complex, but not hard to analyze.

It includes three main elements, two of which have been around from the beginning—the ingratiating reactionaries and the hard-sell radicals.

The former, purporting to stand for the old values, always have claimed that Abstract-Expressionism never existed at all and thus (sic) is now deader than ever. Speaking in columns as influential as those of *The Sunday New York Times*, they add a little juice to their vapid news items with shameless distortions of fact and character assassination. Characteristically, the preoccupation of this sort of journalese

Gabriel Kohn: *Dunkirk*, 1960, laminated wood, 22½ inches high.
Lent to Museum of Modern Art by William Rubin

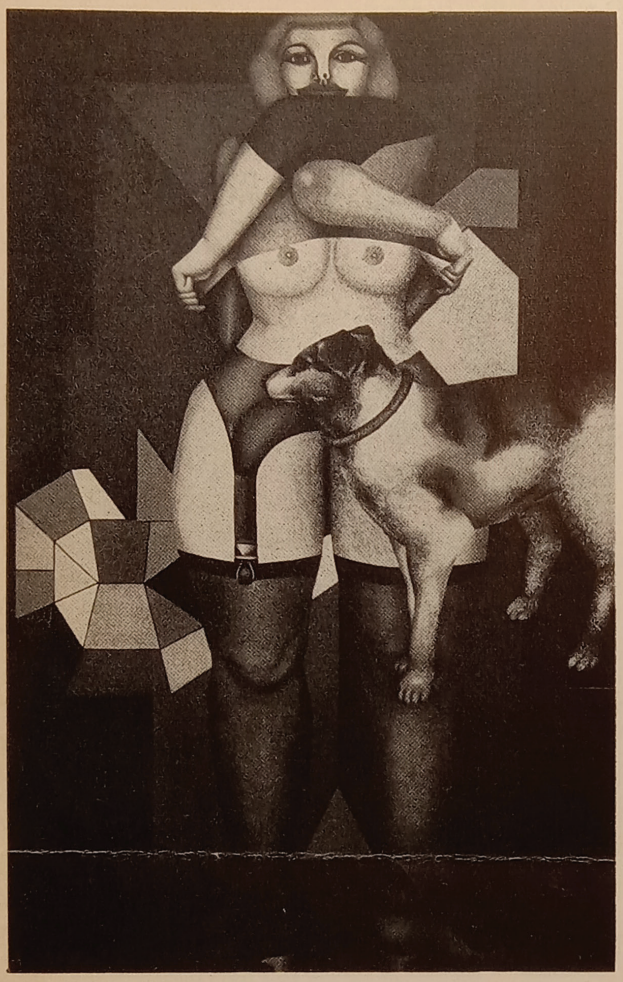


Marisol: *The Bathers*, 1962, wood and plaster, life size.
Private collection, New York



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Richard Lindner: *Untitled, 1*, 1962, 79 inches high.
Lent to Museum of Modern Art by Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery



Indiana: *Black Diamond*, 1962, 85 inches square.
Collection William A. M. Burden

Phony crisis continued

is with sensationalistic questions about where a clique is, or who's got a scandal? The issues of art are lost in political maneuvers to gain power by catching an audience—any audience that will feed on mock controversy.

The hard-sell radicals are more chic. Some politely regret the death of Abstract-Expressionism and scurry around to jump on what's next. Others, with the literal historicism of an Albanian teacher of grade-school Marxism, laboriously plot out the lines of Necessity along which all painters must advance to the future. Artists are expected to change their fields like cows going from a chewed-up acre to the next part of the pasture where more grass is waiting. (In fact, these critics and curators are apt to sound a little like cow dogs, yapping at the artists to keep moving.)

In between these happy extremists are dealers and clients, although it is getting a bit hard to tell which is which, and the profit prophets of the phony crisis. They work with tip-sheets and inventories. There always has to be a $398.75 picture. The out-of-town buyers insist on new lines. The unknown-of-the-month must be advertised.

When history repeats itself, Marx pointed out, the results are farcical, and there is much that is hilarious about the phony crisis. One thinks of a lecturer getting up in front of an audience to announce that "Drawing is *out*!" One smiles with a certain affection at the arriviste collectors cowering among the latest junk in their trim apartments with specially low ceilings. And one cannot help being awed to see how the benefactions of big businessmen in the support of experimental artists always seem to end up as a considerable profit in the big-business books. But there is a darker side.

The phony crisis, with its jabber and its politics, not only attacks serious artists, it supports the novel in terms of neophytes.

A nostalgic eclecticism, nicknamed Pop Art, has been launched among its cocktails.

Pop Art, which developed inevitably from combinations of New York School painting (Pollock plus de Kooning plus Newman via Rauschenberg and Johns, yields . . .), deals in

Michael Lekakis: *Choani*, 1956-59, wood, 30 inches high with base.
Wise Gallery



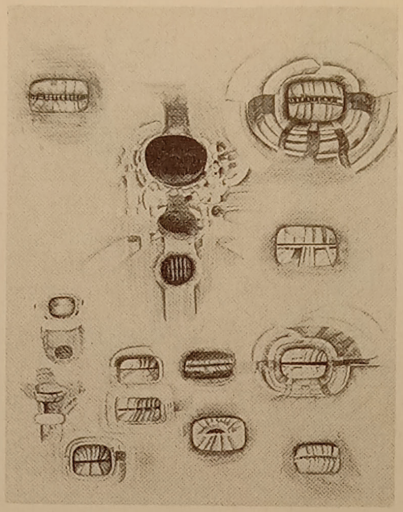
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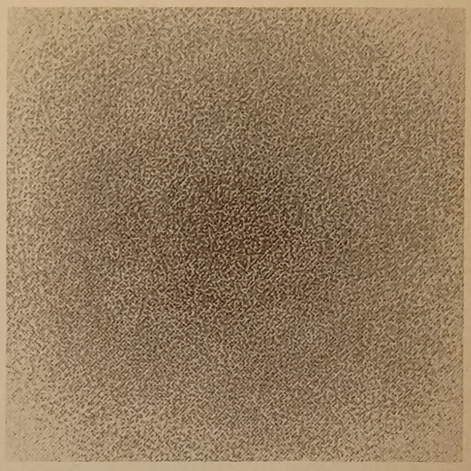
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James Rosenquist: *Marilyn Monroe, I*, 1962, 93 inches high.
Collection Sidney Janis

Lee Bontecou: Drawing for sculpture, 1961, 28 inches high.
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull





Sally Hazelet Drummond: *Hummingbird*, 1961, 12 inches high.
Museum of Modern Art

backward-glancing ideas; it avoids the real crisis by painting it over with a trademark or a sentimentality. (When the New Haven Railroad was having trouble, management had the notion of leaving the old rolling-stock on the tracks and hiring a first-rate designer to make it look efficient. So Herbert Matter drew a beautiful "N.H." and the line went rattling on —into receivership. Pop Art uses a similar strategy.)

Certainly much of Pop Art has cutie-pie wit, an engaging decorativeness and sometimes achieves a true billboard grandeur.

The phony crisis hurts its own cause, however, in making exaggerated claims for Pop Art. Dealers and curators announce it is a watershed in history and the beginning of a new renascence. The old schools are all dead, they argue, and museums from Washington, D. C., to Kansas City, Mo., accept the obituary. The damage this publicity already has done to Pop artists is sadly evident. The victims of a fad, they see their nostalgic attempts to revive the 1940s and 1930s accepted without question as premonitions of the 1970s. The phony crisis becomes, in a sense, their real crisis insofar as it hinders them from finding their own subject matter and restricts them to a more and more artificial neo-flapperism. The Pop artists have publicly maintained their own autonomies, even while they underwrite international group exhibitions. But how long will even the most talented be able to resist the equivalents of cloche hats, beaded skirts and the shimmy—Hollywood's brilliant symbols of nostalgic Pop?

One of the most important tenets of New York painting is that you can make art out of *anything*. But no one said that a trivial issue (how to fight a fad?) is material for profound contemplation.

If the phony crisis does a certain amount of harm to the art it promotes, it is a real nuisance to the arts it wants to replace. It distracts serious artists from their work. It adds one more doubt to the questions of identity. It wastes time (for an artist, as Camus has pointed out, this is an unforgivable crime). And, most important, it helps in the general blurring of the achievements of the brilliant second generation of the New York School.

One of the scandals of the art world is that such artists as Nell Blaine or Milton Resnick (to name two out of a possible thirty) are passed over by the taste bureaucracy just because they emerged at about the same time as, and are connected with, such established artists as Philip Guston or the late Franz Kline. There is a real loss of values here, for which the museums must take most of the responsibility. But behind the failure of the museums is the phony crisis: the trustees with their longings for kicks, the dealers who are too timid to bank on their own loyalties, the curators on the prowl for fresh catalogue material.

The implications of Abstract-Expressionism, and the New York styles related to it, are of a deadly moral seriousness. And what has this to do with a philistine ennui which has evolved to the point where it wants to *épater* itself?

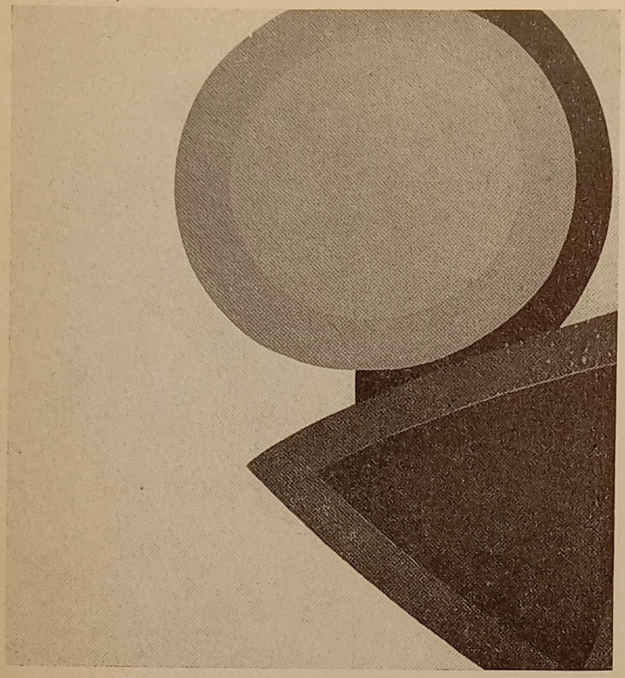
The distinction between the real crisis (which can kill or forge a man's identity) and the phony crisis which kills (mostly with kindness) is a standard that should be applied to all demonstrations of modern American art; for example to the Museum of Modern Art's "Americans 1963" exhibition and the "Toward a New Abstraction" show at the Jewish Museum, both in New York [the former, to Aug. 18; the latter, to Sept. 15]. The first is the latest of Dorothy Miller's anthologies and fulfills a policy of the Museum, recently enunciated by curator Peter Selz, to be a "selective mirror"—a gentle, old-fashioned mixed metaphor which may understate Miss Miller's commitments to what, in her opinion, is the most vital work being done. The Jewish Museum attempts more rigid classifications "to illustrate a consistently emerging position" (although the Museum's director, Alan R. Solomon, adds that this consistency embraces "painters of diverse styles").

The fifteen Americans at the Museum of Modern Art range from Ad Reinhardt, Richard Lindner, Gabriel Kohn and Michael Lekakis—all major artists with highly individual manners—to Robert Indiana, Claes Oldenburg and James Rosenquist—three of the best-known Pop artists. Also included are David Simpson and Richard Anuszkiewicz (specialists in high-pressure optics and hypnotic lines); Lee Bontecou and Chryssa (two Romantic younger sculptresses of, respectively, soft voids and hard signs); Edward Higgins and Jason Seley (formalist sculptors, the former in filled contours, the latter in fenders); Sally Hazelet Drummond (a dedicated purist who works with one kind of color at a

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Poindexter Gallery



Al Held: Untitled, 1962, 78 inches high.
All six pictures in "Toward a New Abstraction," Jewish Museum.

time and one kind of brush mark most of the time); and Marisol (an inspired folk-artist with big-city ambitions, international sophistication and deft, formal irony).

It is high time that Ad Reinhardt was given a room at the Museum of Modern Art. He still paints black pictures with just a murmur of a central cross: symmetrical, pure, bitten by logic, dreaming of Vishnu—Universe Square. All his pictures are the same size, exactly about 60 inches across—in Willem de Kooning's phrase, just the reach of a man's grasp—if the man happens to be about 5 foot 9 inches. All the images are the same. When one of his works was damaged, and the museum asked him to repair it, he offered to substitute another version. "But you don't understand, Mr. Reinhardt," he was told. "Our Committee especially chose *this* one." "Listen," the painter answered, "I've got a picture here that's more like the one you've got than the one you've got."

Irreconcilable and irreducible, Reinhardt's pictures are great because they make no demands and offer nothing beyond their presence.

He has bet everything upon the correctness of his position, and masks the enormity of his gamble with the logic of

Phony crisis continued

banter. Reinhardt sticks to his guns and insists that there is no other artillery around. (All that shot in the air is just friction.) But his series of black "invisible" pictures becomes something more than all his claims to simplicity—if something less than all his regulations for a Beaux-Arts Utopia. His persistence has transformed them. They are grand fragments of human aspiration to perfection flung into the face of the most imperfect of all possible worlds. Their solemnity is a gentle revenge on the artist's ebullient misanthropy.

Sally Hazelet Drummond works toward similar unitary goals except she brings in light where Reinhardt subtracts it, and she has a lyrical response while he broods. Her pictures are smaller and, in a sense, more naturalistic, referring to a sky or to light flickering over the sea.

Richard Lindner is a period painter. He combines Léger with Balthus, John Held, Jr., a touch of Mondrian and a taint of genius. But he is a pure artist and, given his assumptions (which might be from Wedekind or Rilke), he builds on them with concentrated, intellectual skill. He is much more than a professional, and deeper. Rosenquist could learn something from the edges in a Lindner and how shapes fit together. And Lindner can hint at a recent past with its unmentionable menaces in a fraction of the time it takes Oldenburg to evoke the Son of Dr. Caligari.

Lekakis and Kohn are sculptors in wood. Lekakis carves from odd branches and trunks. Kohn laminates boards into serviceable volumes. Both achieve a radiant quality. Lekakis' pieces are contorted and terminate in odd lumps and knuckles. The planes in a Kohn sculpture soar or dive cleanly, like the fin of a porpoise. Both work on the round. A Lekakis seems to gather in your glance, like a cult object which conceals a magic function. Kohn's sculptures project themselves into the space around them, creating vista and order.

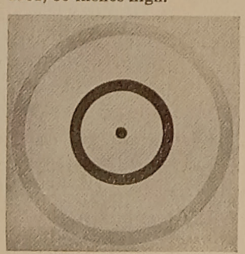
Marisol's sculpture is like folk-art in that it goes through an existing style to get at something else and, in the process, becomes so preoccupied with [Continued on page 59]

Raymond Parker: Untitled, 1959, 79 inches high.



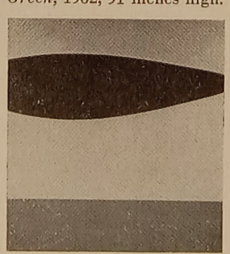
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Kenneth Noland: *Toward Yellow,* 1961, 60 inches high.



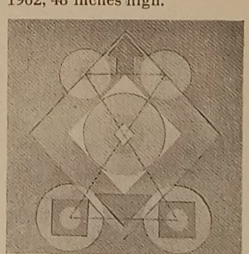
Emmerich Gallery

Ellsworth Kelly: *Blue Red Green,* 1962, 91 inches high.



Parsons Gallery

George Ortman: *Eve, 2,* 1962, 48 inches high.



Collection Arthur A. Cohen

Morris Louis: *No End,* 1962, 72 inches high.



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rich variety of possibilities for him. The majority of his other works are smaller and more jewel-like. In the manner of the medieval alchemists, he transmutes base materials into something precious. I.H.S.

Di Suvero continued from page 37

poles, a ladder and a chain—all moving with dynamic thrust and tension as the parts connect or overlap on upward and downward sloping diagonals over a zig-zagging ground base. The parts activate each other and the space they cut through with tensile articulation. J.J.

Phony crisis continued from page 28

method that a new style is achieved. The details in a Marisol are as nicely cut and fitted as they are in a classical sculpture. But she aims at a different effect—to get a devastating likeness or to make a point about life. It is a pity that the Museum did not include her portrait of the President of the U. S. with his family—it is a document of 1962. Marisol can be wry about beauty and give it its due. She likes what she satirizes. But she is in love only with how it all fits together.

The Museum of Modern Art has chosen some excellent artists for its group show, and all of them are relevant to the art world, but several of them are less relevant than others who have yet to be picked by the Museum for this kind of formal presentation. It seems strange to have Robert Indiana in a series of exhibitions that has yet to honor Adolph Gottlieb or Esteban Vicente or Jack Tworkov—to say nothing of twenty or more superior artists of the overlooked second generation. But when Miss Miller's exhibitions are seen in the context of the Museum's program (Rodin looked like a modern next to an old-fashioned painter like Nolde), one is grateful for her acumen and initiative.

Initiative is what the Jewish Museum has in superabundance. It is one thing to balance taste with fair-play according to the mysterious ground-rules of the Museum of Modern Art; it is quite another to nail things down into compartments.

The nine artists at the Jewish Museum have certain superficialities in common. They paint cool, purist shapes; they are interested in color effects, in big images; they are all in the 30 to 40-year-old generation.

Three of them, I believe, are of the first importance—Ray Parker, Ellsworth Kelly and Al Held. Seen separately, I can think of no three artists who are more different. It takes a certain perverse desire for historical neatness to force them into a category.

Al Held's paintings are heavy, thick, crashing images—best when they are biggest. They have something of the brutality of Léger in a cold New York light. They push the impact of the painting so hard that the wall of a room seems to quiver and fold behind it. And in their super-positiveness, of course, they hint at a thousand doubts. The palpable layers of paint suggest, in their very immediacy, other possibilities and lost chances. Held's dialectic is between the massive, final statement and the swarm of qualifications each finality implies.

Ray Parker, on the other hand, gets a blunt, final statement through floating, hesitating, nuanced areas of color. His forms seem to gather together from the bare canvas like steam gathering over fields. His is a painting of delicate judgments. And its rightness is intuitive, chanced—not an historical question with a pat ideological answer. Parker's edges are like Rothko's in their sensitivity, or Hopper's. But Parker lets them develop immanently. He throws away the look of anguish or indecision. He achieves a unity without veils.

Both Held and Parker work straight out of Abstract-Expressionism, and they are part of its second generation (which makes particularly suspect the Jewish Museum's press-release comment that these paintings have "been overshadowed by . . . the public delay in following the painters *beyond* Abstract-Expressionism" [my italics]. Parker's and Held's best work is implicit in New York painting ca. 1950 (Newman and Still, for example, as well as Rothko and Gottlieb). "Beyond," in such a statement, is the language of the phony crisis.

With Kelly and Ortman, we are not so much "beyond" as behind the main stream of modern American art. Both paint apparent geometries which are secret codes or signs of sensations experienced in front of nature—the figure in Ortman, the still-life of plants or twigs in Kelly. The abandonment of the reference to subject matter is a mystical decision. Form is engaged by private meanings. The pictures gain an obsessional look and a tension is set up between public and private, signs and symbol. One is reminded of certain medieval cabalists who invented abstract letters with which to name the unwriteable. But Ortman and Kelly are also very sophisticated moderns, and they

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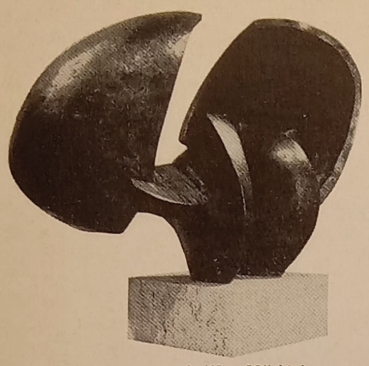
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stretch out their glyphs inside the thin vibrating planes of contemporary painting.

Of all the clean-edge painters, Kelly has brought his image out most successfully, and he is the one who is most admired by the dirty-handed abstractionists.

Kenneth Noland and the late Morris Louis are talented artists who derive from Abstract-Expressionism and the big color statements of Rothko, Newman and Pollock. I have yet to see a painting by Louis that goes beyond the decorative, but he has his ardent admirers, and an extended article on his work will appear in a forthcoming issue of ARTNEWS at the time of Louis' retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum. Noland's recent work finally seems to have escaped the trap of placid banality. He used to paint concentric circles in colors as bright and canny as any Bauhaus minor master's. (Jasper Johns' targets, by contrast, with their minute attention to surfaces, transformed the banal into a quirky universal.) Noland's 1962-63 oils are more complicated pictorially; perhaps the equation would be: there is less dream and more brains in them. The intuition looks more realized. The paintings seem not only gifted, but promising.

(Some of the more voluble champions of Noland and Louis claim that theirs is "post-Cubist" painting. Actually it is pre-Cubist, going back to Matisse—probably through the intervention of Hans Hofmann or his disciples—and picking up some ideas of pure color where he dropped them in 1912-13. It is characteristic of the phony crisis to hail pet retardataire artists as having, at long last, made The Break-Through. Revivalism is, after all, the forte of advertising. It is almost as effective as rewriting history.)

Paul Brach and Miriam Schapiro are also gifted and promising artists whose recently evolved abstract styles seem attached to Surrealist overtones—the subconscious, the archetype, dreams. Theirs is work-in-progress and one awaits its development with optimism.

Frank Stella is the cleverest artist of the group; his stripes and odd-shaped canvases have become internationally known.

The Jewish Museum exhibition presents serious artists. At least five of them already have accomplished a great deal, which is a good average for any group show. But the idea of the exhibition should be attacked, I believe, for its attempt to cramp ideas, to freeze the words in the middle of a conversation.

The function of a museum is not to tidy up the landscape, but to contemplate it. If contemplation can bring some insight, it might be appropriate to show this to the public. But it might be remembered that in art, insight and showmanship are at completely opposite poles.

Somebody once said that gimmicks travel through the art world with the speed of light. A great many people misunderstood him, and they thought he said that new ideas are communicated as fast as headline news.

Art does not change quickly; it remains as slow as a lifetime—slower, in fact, because artists are always going back into history to find open places where they can work. Perhaps Dada will never die. Certainly Cézanne remains inexhaustible. How many young artists are about to fall in love with Rubens?

On the far side of the cultural gap, fashions change to fit markets. For the artist, novelty is what he throws away every day.

Reviews and previews continued from page 53

off a surface to which they were previously glued. This adduces a faded, transparent quality which the artist emphasizes by staining and mottling the surface. The effect is one of aging and weathering, and each work seems to be a palimpsest of time and random human imprint. S.C.F.

Kurt Graf [Prince; to June 30], formerly a musician, shows virtuosity in "Neo Modern Impressionist" paintings on a reflective plastic base which, along with strange luminosity and flesh colored skies, gives an eerie modernistic touch to what would otherwise be conventional landscapes and fantasies. K.L.

Phyllis Agne [Fulton; to June 30] shows twenty delicate line sketches of figures which are sparser than her earlier drawings. Her latest work tends toward lyrical nature abstraction. A group of ten oils, the best of which is a portrait of Peter Agostini, are more broadly handled. [Prices: $125-$900] I.H.S.

Milton Resnick [Feiner] has a delightful show of casual, small oils. In each, pressed-in, jam-packed sensations of small strokes leap out as a single experience. At least ten of these are experiences of green:

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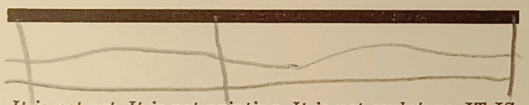
HARD CENTER

by

NICOLAS CALAS

&

ELENA CALAS



It is not art, It is not painting, It is not sculpture. IT IS. It is an object, yet not a product of the imagination, nor the outcome of an act of grace. Man no more can create than can serpents and beasts, he can only appraise objects in their context. Let us assume, however, that we neither know the nature of things nor understand the order in which they are set, "I know one thing only that I know nothing." In a painting of Barnett Newman or a sculpture of Giacommetti, we are confronted with an image of man which prompts us to ask ourselves: who am I? where am I? But a new generation of artists is shifting the emphasis from the subject to the object: what is it? We do not escape from reality when facing the new object for it is neither fantastic or symbolic, nor intended as an expression of individual or collective unconscious, nor is it the sign of a secret code. With this object, we are far removed from the lower depths of man and society and stay firmly in the center of the *now*.

In a metropolis we cannot afford to fall out of context: we are continually on the alert lest we be killed when crossing the street; we must coordinate time and distance lest we miss our appointments; we cannot miscalculate or misinterpret facts or events lest we lose our job or love. In the intricate web of the city, the performance of each movement and the expression of every feeling demands full attention. Yet our attention is distracted, our advance delayed, our course modified, our mood disturbed, our ideas challenged. In the age of the machine, the principle of negation—in the middle ages poetically identified with the devil—manifests itself in accident. In an age when man was in the image of God, it could be believed that a statue was in the image of man. But we have forsaken archetypes for operational evaluations.

Jasper Johns' dead-as-lead flashlight is as incongruous as the medieval owl seen either as an emblem of folly and darkness or that of ancient wisdom. Ambiguity today is more challenging than heresy. Overcome by doubt, we can surrender to the darkness of ignorance or, in ignorance, surrender to the brightness of illumination. Where am I? and What is it? in our time is answered in 'it is not' terms. "I is another" (Rimbaud): it is not the Montagne Sainte Victoire, victory is not a target.

Bob Watts' hand-made metal chocolates are subtracted through sheer weight from the superficial world of imitation to occupy a place in a reality from which identity has been excluded. Watts' monochrome sheets of stamps upset the sense of security engendered by sheets of regular postal stamps: in his version consecutive stamps are non-identical. Discontinuity is substituted for continuity experienced through repetition; fittingly, interruption's equivocal character is suggested by a touch of erotica.

Add minimal changes to repetition and the motion picture comes into being. In the experimental movies of **Robert Breer,** repetition series are replaced by series of interruptions. His cinematic principle governs his constructions, his mutascopes, both rotary and stationary. When we rotate the flexible cards by the knob of the drum or flip them with the finger tip, the abstract pattern which we are led to expect does not form for the development of the theme is continuously interrupted and breaks down into a series of happenings. The now famous study of locomotion in a succession of still photographs taken by Muybridge some hundred years ago, is no longer apt to be seen by the younger generation as a forerunner of Duchamp's Nude clothed in the fabric of motion, but evokes an experience in which repetition is blocked by interruption.

Diagrams of electronic instruments designed to be read by technicians are transfigured by **Allan D'Arcangelo** into compositions to be seen and delighted in. This metamorphosis is the outcome of careful transpositions: isolation of a fragment, enlargement, introduction of a field of color, elimination of certain details, reorientation of indicators. A white arrow against a dark blue background may point into empty space beyond the schema. D'Arcangelo's eye is always sensitive to tension, the non-objective component of intellectual endeavor.

What is the measure of ambiguity? **Robert Morris** implicitly provides an answer with his three twelve-inch flat grey yardsticks one of which slightly differs in length from its neighbors. It is our inability to distinguish the correct measure from the false that stirs our sensibility. Deprived of his measuring rods, man would be obliged to return to a pre-Euclidian concept of life, unable to oppose the order of reason to chance's disorder. The pattern formed by a given order of figures or objects is subject to an aesthetic appraisal. In his recent "Document," Morris includes a notarized statement in which he declares that he withdraws all aesthetic quality and content from a certain earlier work of his. Morris thus establishes a difference between an artist's repudiation of a work and a disavowal of its aesthetic qualities. Since this disavowal is presented as an oeuvre in its own right, we are confronted with a more intricate version of the problem posed by the "Three Yardsticks."

Work-in-progress and the end-in-view have become one. Unpainted sections of the canvas, raw colors, incomplete designs, have found acceptance in the final product. It is fitting that the workman's tools—viewed as implementing action—should be included in a work, although now dissociated from labor. **Jim Dine's** saws, hammers, clamps, vises, and more recently, his paint-spattered palettes, form an integral part of his compositions. In the case of the all-black construction in which a shovel is hung by a rope from a board while posed over a heap of charcoal, it would be easy enough to remove the tool from its noose in order to shovel the coal. Yet this would evolve a most frustrating experience since for the sake of utility we would have disrupted a composition produced by action free of labor. We are made acutely aware by Dine that there still exist realms of interrelations for exploration by an artist who ignores aesthetic frontiers and academic categories.

Unlike Picabia, who discovered in the structure of modern apparatuses a missing link between image and abstraction, **Aaron Kuriloff** explores the twilight zone between function and uselessness. Having admired the sculptural elegance and intricacy of Kuriloff's brightly displayed fuse-boxes and conduit wire, of his flip-boxes and wall pipes, we feel a strange satisfaction on becoming aware that they are not intended to function. How inappropriate if the statues of Dedalus were to walk! Non-function can be as much a part of aesthetic pleasure as the lifelessness of stone.

Dance transforms the body's gestures into art; gestures of the body in action-painting created a new pictorial art. Action without style or purpose can yet be art. On one of **Walter De Maria's** objects we read: "If you come upon the box and the block is in, pull it out. If you come upon the box and the block is out, push it in." It is not the block and its box which hold the center of attention, but our action within the prescribed area of movement allotted to the block. When we do not strike a match to light a cigarette or to see in the dark, but strike it "just so"—without rhyme or reason—reflection on the phenomenon may be enlightening.

Let us chose our non-sequiturs (or happenings) as others select shells on the beach or pick flowers. We shall find ourselves in the domain of the still life which the tormented soul of van Gogh extended to include Gauguin's chair. And if we are able to throw some garments upon a chair which an attunement to the *now* presupposes, we shall, as does **George Brecht,** bridge the gap between life and art.

Some twenty years ago, to an exhibition of chess by contemporaries at the Julien Levy gallery, **Nicolas Calas** contributed a set, wherein the board's squares were replaced by mirrors and the chessmen by glasses filled with liquors on which the winner might get drunk with success. His set included in the present show—white chessmen against white chessmen—illustrates the change of outlook brought about in two decades.

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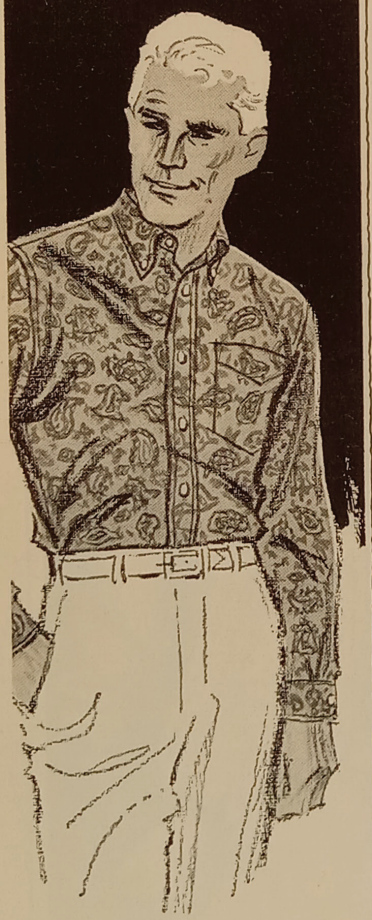
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THE ART GALLERIES

The New as Value

THE rise to prominence of a new style or of work by an unknown artist used to be preceded by much critical discussion and evaluation. Today, the process often operates in reverse; first comes the popular attention, then the discussion and assessment. Novelties in painting and sculpture receive notice in the press as new *facts* long before they have qualified as new *art*. The public presence of images that demand elucidation exerts pressure upon art institutions and educators to exhibit and comment upon them. If the work continues to hold the spotlight, this comment takes place within a heavy drift toward approval. Dealers, curators, collectors become committed to the new art; critics eager to keep up with and even ahead of the flux of innovation discover features that link it to admired precedents. To deny the significance of the new product begins to seem futile, since whatever is much seen and talked about is already on its way to becoming a *fait accompli* of taste. By the mere quantity of interest aroused by its novelty, the painting is nudged into art history. Once there, its goodness or badness may still be debated, but unless the whole culture is under attack, its status as art is secure. Having a place in art history is *the* value; through attaining this place, the work's qualities become part of the standards by which the work is judged.



Basic critical issues that relate to new art must therefore be decided in the interlude between its first appearance as an innovation and its firm engrafting upon the historical trunk. One might call this the critical interval. To prolong the period of reflection and judgment-making is nothing less than to keep alive freedom of choice against the inertia of sheer fact. In our society, the responsibility for maintaining the power of aesthetic choice rests primarily on institutions of contemporary art—museums, university art departments, professional publications. It is up to them, on behalf of artistic creation, to dam the flow of journalistic human interest in art. Just how effectively they have been fulfilling this responsibility is indicated by the fact that in the past few years the critical interval has been shrinking at a rapidly increasing rate; reputations are now being made in art as fast as they are on Broadway and in Hollywood. The 1962-63 season provided the spectacle of museum personnel, critics, and professors of current art history being swept up in a race to identify themselves with half-emerged personalities and trends: curators touring the country as advance agents for exhibitions of neo-this or that; public and private buyers acquiring collections that amounted to kits made up of the latest names; university instructors playing the part of sideshow barkers in front of the slides flipped through their projection machines. Last fall, critical sights were adjusted to "After Abstract Expressionism;" by winter, the theme had shot ahead to "Pop Art and After" (I am quoting titles of articles in the October and February issues of *Art International*, principal organ of the Prophets Club).

The speedup in history-making has now reached the point at which the interval of critical evaluation appears to have become superfluous. It is increasingly held by professionals that all standards have gone down before the onslaught of the new and that the attempt to establish values in art may as well be abandoned. A month ago, in the *Times*, Brian O'Doherty reported that many people now think that it is more important for art to be avant-garde than for it to be good. Mr. O'Doherty himself went further; it had become, he claimed, more important for work to be advanced than for it to be art. "On the evidence of the past season," he declared, "asking 'Is it art?' is simply out of date;" since we are living in "a period of transition," both values and definitions had better be left to the future. A similar position had been taken a few months earlier by Thomas M. Messer, director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. In a foreword to the catalogue of an exhibition presented by his institution, he abdicated judgment of current art in favor of the processes of time. "The relationship between the *good* and the *new* in contemporary art," he wrote, "is intriguing and baffling. The realization that art and invention are akin is balanced by

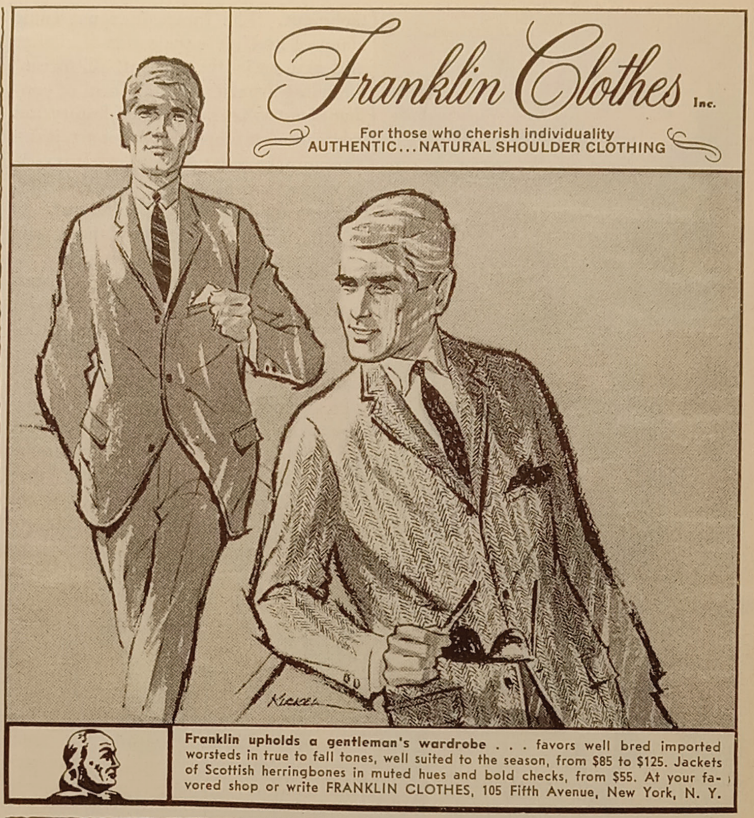
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the suspicion of eccentricity. Out of this conflict arises the question: *Is it art?* And the answer: Yes and no. Yes, *it could be*, since the expansion of artistic boundaries is inherent in the creative process. *No, it need not be*, for no mode in itself assures us of artistic validity." (His italics.) In this remarkably compressed dissertation on possibility and necessity, Mr. Messer advised the visitors to his museum that the new work they saw there may not be art now but that it might turn into art by the time their grandchildren came to see it—that is, if it was still preserved by grace of the broadening of the art concept. On the other hand, it might not ever be art if, through being bypassed in "the expansion of artistic boundaries," it failed to be ingested into art history.

That art, in Mr. O'Doherty's words, is "currently without standards and criteria" causes one standard to prevail among modern-art officials—the practical one of exhibiting as promptly and as conspicuously as possible whatever is most publicized as the new. The vacuum of values is filled by the activity of opening doors into the future. A museum of contemporary painting and sculpture has become, it seems, a hotel for candidates on their way to permanent quarters in the annals of art. The law under which it operates requires that nominees from any source be provided with accommodations. Mr. Messer, one felt, was reluctant to extend the Guggenheim hospitality to this particular exhibition (of "pop" art), but, confronted by its credentials, he was compelled to yield. (Where and how these credentials were obtained is a problem for both sociology and art criticism.)

To leave the question of values for history to decide may appear sensible in a time when novelty has become the ruling principle. The present gives the impression of being too slippery to stand on; perhaps the future will provide more solid footing. Unfortunately, the "period of transition" in art, as in other fields, did not begin yesterday. We have lived our entire lives in transition; Mr. O'Doherty no doubt recalls the art-literary magazine of the twenties that took its name from that situation. The rising tempo of change during the past forty years gives us no reason to expect that there will ever be a period that is *not* a period of transition. If values are to exist, it will not be through their being handed to us by a more stabilized era; they must be formed within the transition itself and partake of its character. Mr. Messer's "could be" and "need not be" demand too much de-





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tachment. The future does not come about of itself; it is the result of choices and actions in the present. Criticism, including art criticism, is a form of conflict about what shall be. If history can make into art what is now not art, it can also unmake what now is art. It is conceivable that Michelangelo, Vermeer, Goya, Cézanne will someday cease to be art; it is only necessary that, as in the past, an extreme ideology shall seize power and cast out existing masterpieces as creatures of darkness. But for history to unmake our art it must unmake us, too, since we are also part of history and have some say about which of its possibilities are to be realized. Today's values enter into the art to come as well as into forming the judgment that will be made of it. The future may act as umpire for the contests of the present but cannot play its game for it. Those who ask for a delayed verdict on the art of today do so not because they are compelled to by objective fact but because the values they have accepted until now have ceased to convince them.

Mr. O'Doherty has put the matter most succinctly. Speaking for American art criticism generally, he notes that its "measuring rod" for the past half century has been formal analysis but that today "the formal approach is no longer the philosopher's stone that it at one time appeared to be." Until recently, new paintings could be "placed" and their value indicated by examining them in terms of line, color, spatial relations. Thus, to explain the greatness of Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," Alfred Barr described it in "What Is Modern Painting?" (even to ask the question now seems overoptimistic) as "one of the most important pioneering canvases of modern art and one of the most stirring after you understand what Picasso was about." Pioneering has, naturally, to do with new territory, and in being a "first" the "Demoiselles" has, or had, the virtue of being new. But to make it a good painting, it needed something more. So Mr. Barr went on to point out that in "Demoiselles" Picasso carried forward Gauguin's "ideas of expression through color and form" and Cézanne's "construction by line and plane," while his drawing of the ladies' features was influenced by "certain prehistoric Spanish sculptures" and by African masks. By means of these formal associations, Mr. Barr demonstrated that "Demoiselles" not only was new but deserved to survive on its merits as a painting.

But according to Messrs. O'Doherty and Messer, it will not do to summon

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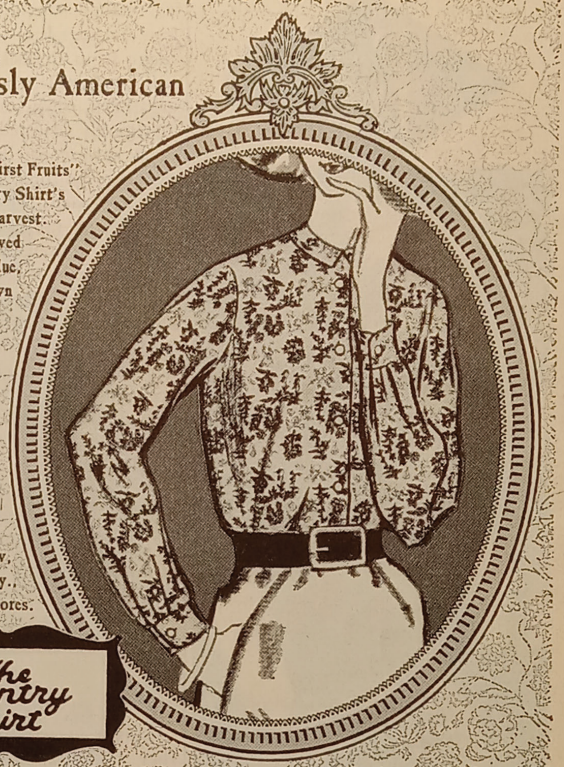
tradition as a character witness for the new art of today. The reason seems to be that paintings of the past few years have increasingly incorporated objects found on the street or in an empty lot without subjecting them to formal transformation or function, as had been the rule in Cubist collages. With "nature" thus mixed into art, the critic must choose between ruling out the new art and discarding his formal values. Who's going to stand against the New? Yet if the formal values go, there are evidently no others, except the backward-looking ones by which originality has been condemned at first sight for the past hundred years. Between the values and the art, O'Doherty and Messer opted for the art. But in doing so they felt obliged to declare that the apparent inapplicability of the formal yardstick to the newest art had suddenly made the question Is It Art? unanswerable. By thus forcing the issue of the formal approach, they have, to my mind, made an important contribution to critical consciousness, especially in view of the continual clacking of "vanguardist" critics about the formal beauties of soup cans and Coca-Cola bottles.

It is ironic that the inadequacy of the formalist method for dealing with new art should have become visible only when beyond-formal elements were *physically* introduced into paintings and sculptures. Should not the Abstract Expressionist's emotional or intellectual struggles *within* the canvas have offered as large an obstacle to formalism as a pair of rubber boots or a stuffed goat stuck to the outside of it? The fact is that formal criticism has consistently buried the emotional, moral, social, and metaphysical content of modern art under blueprints of "achievements" in handling line, color, and form. Perhaps advancing Gauguin's ideas of color or Cézanne's means of construction was what Picasso was "about" in painting "Demoiselles." I doubt, though, that anyone but an art historian would find it "stirring" on that account. "What forces our interest," Picasso has said, "is Cézanne's anxiety—that's Cézanne's lesson; the torments of van Gogh—that is the actual drama of the man. The rest is sham."

For everyone but art historians, the formal approach to value has been functioning very poorly for several decades. Derived primarily from the Cubist strain in twentieth-century aesthetic theory (as opposed to the poetry of the Cubist moment in Paris before the First World War), it has been responsible for overstressing Cubist objectives in abstract painting and sculpture. When this crit-

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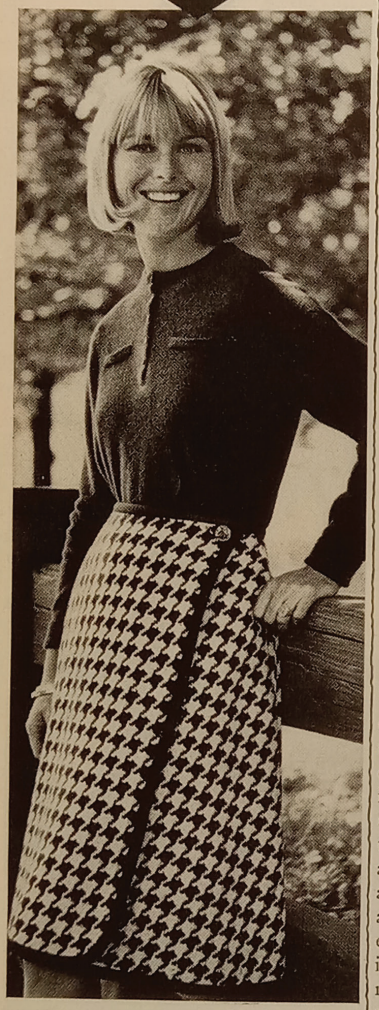
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ical method was confronted with American Abstract Expressionism in its broad range from Pollock to Newman, it at first condemned the new works as disorganized, shapeless, or empty, then grudgingly adjusted itself to translating them into constellations of technical minutiae. Splitting form from substance, this approach has prevailed largely through its usefulness in providing a coherent account of the development of modern art out of the art of the past. The effect has been to normalize the new and thus to reduce antagonism to it—a matter of trading a quantity of novelty for a stamp of value. Formal criticism has been of the first importance in the public relations of vanguard art. Mr. Barr's pamphlet, intellectually typical of this sort of art appreciation and scholarship, educates its readers to be amateur art historians and to admire paintings and sculptures as contributions to the evolution of forms. In its perspective, present-day creation consists, as Saul Steinberg has remarked, of art-historian artists painting art history for art historians.

THERE are values by which the new in art may be measured, but they are not aesthetic values. Form predominates in a work after it has become familiar to us; when the surprise, or shock, of novelty has passed, we prize it for its beauty. It is, however, in their disquieting phase—when their strangeness causes them to seem outside of art—that innovating paintings work to expand our consciousness and sensibilities. Aesthetic values are then in a state of being violated or disarranged (not of being furthered, as it appears to hindsight). Thus, to appreciate the new *as the new* involves considerations beyond the aesthetic. The key is content, especially in an era when multitudes of art-school graduates and professionals of the mass media have learned to manipulate an immense repertory of art forms for every conceivable end. New art is valued for the novel state it induces in the spectator and for what it reveals to him about himself, the physical world, or simply his way of reacting to paintings. But to accept as a principle of value the sheer excitement of seeing something come into the world that wasn't there before is not intellectually restful, and to weigh novelties for their comparative worth is even more arduous. For one thing, newness is a temporary quality and must be seized while it is still present; how long it lasts depends—in part, at least—on the spectator. More im-

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portant, to value the new is to invite confusion, and what confusion is good for is not yet sufficiently appreciated among mass educators. Extreme manifestations of the new induce a species of terror, of the sort not unknown to research scientists, explorers, mystics, revolutionists. One who values innovations may have to weigh the possibility that even those of a Marquis de Sade constitute a contribution to man's consciousness of himself. The new that violates the good on the moral plane becomes itself a good in the neutral atmosphere of scientific and imaginative curiosity. In the traditions devoted to exploring and transforming the human self and the human condition, the value of the new is measured not by preestablished standards but by the genuineness of the novelty and the scope of its relevance.

Art in our time, characterized by continuous experiment, belongs to the alarming realm of thought and action that since the Renaissance has elevated novelty as a value inseparable from our deepest aims. Pivotal terms in modern art are "experiment," "pioneer," "transformation," "avant-garde"—terms that formal criticism cannot do without but that originate not in the vocabularies of form but in those of the New World of science and exploration, the New Man of psychic rebirth, the New Order of revolutionary politics (the *Novus Ordo Seclorum* celebrated on the dollar bill). In all these, values identified with the new are implicit—the value of daring, of removal from the routine and trivial, of purging and purification. In the interchangeable lexicon of novelties, valuing the new in works of art is not at all the same as valuing new works because they are art. The question Is It Art? has no meaning apart from the particular effects produced by individual works. This supremacy of concrete qualities over the art idea is affirmed in the paradoxical concept of anti-art that keeps recurring as a slogan among twentieth-century artists.

New art can therefore be judged now, provided it is judged in relation to the whole complex of the tradition of the new, including its discoveries, revolutions, and hopes lost and abandoned, as well as the incessant testing by artists of the expressive potentialities of forms and materials. In his Commencement address at Yale last year, President Kennedy quoted Thomas Jefferson as saying that our "new circumstances" demanded "new words, new phrases, and the transfer of old words to new objects." In art criticism there is no sub-

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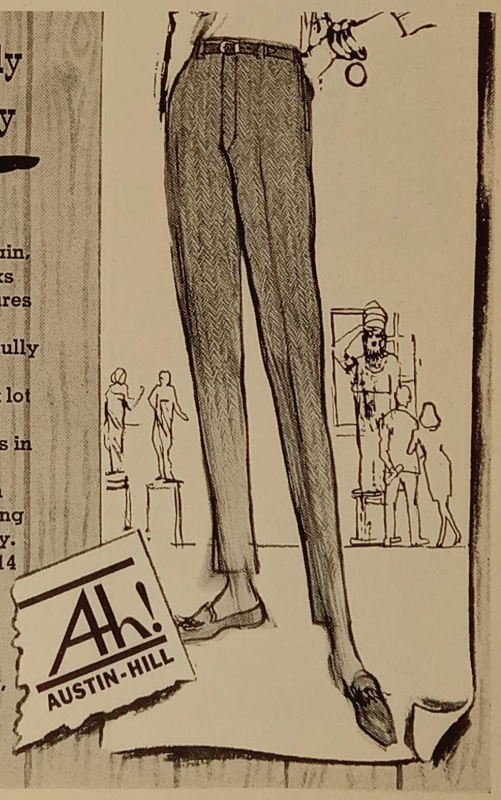
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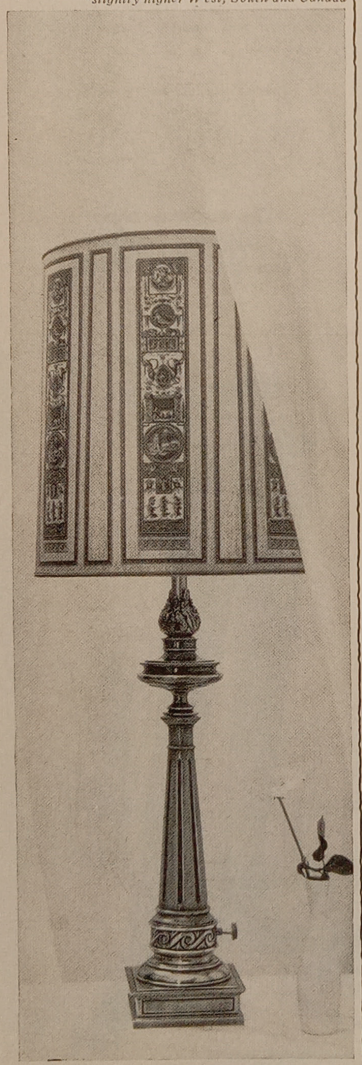
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stitute for an apprehension of what is psychologically, socially, and intellectually modern in modern art. Nor can the appreciator of modern art be far removed from the exploring temperament of those who create it. By the measure of the twentieth-century context, to establish the value of the art that disturbed critics during the past season offers no extraordinary difficulties. In fact, judging the new should henceforth be easier than it has been, if the formalist schemata are indeed being abandoned. Which new works are art and which are good, bad, or mediocre can be stated with adequate precision and in terms that relate them to the *novelty* in the art that preceded them. The problem is whether the statement will have time to take hold before the next wave breaks. —HAROLD ROSENBERG

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LA DOLCE VITA ON THE IRON HORSE

[*From Italy, a periodical published by the Italian Tourist Office and the Italian State Railways to promote rail travel*]

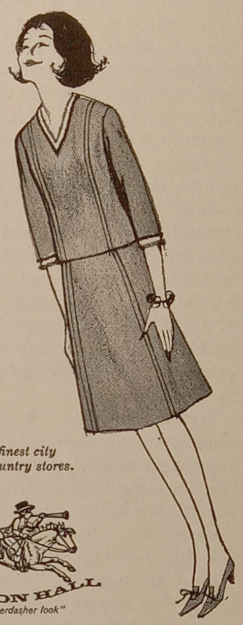
. . . there's no doubt that the most complete way to defeat boredom on the train is by finding good company between a lady and gentleman. Now listen to me carefully. Naturally I'm talking about those travelling idylls that either end in matrimony or else one of those honest friendships that end at one's arrival station with a handshake and two sighs. It's improbable that a friendship formed like this on the railway train ends in adultery. On the other what is very common is for those few first words spoken when you first settle into your seat to develop into several hours contact which end in an exchange of glances and smiles. Love travelling on rails at seventy miles an hour is nearly always quite inoffensive. That doesn't mean at all that it's not very pleasant indeed, even when it starts in an irregular manner and ends unsatisfied. At the last stop before the end of the journey there is then that feeling of tartness in a situation of having done one's duty . . . of a « love that might have been and was not », there is the taste of wholesome pain that is excellent for the spirit and in no way harms the body. There is hardly ever any hurry about love that is born on the train. In its enforced delaying tactics, in its delicacy, in the acceptance of its brevity and futility there lies all its almost indefinable charm.

•

Lord Ogmore, the President-elect of the Liberal Party, wrote in a letter published on Tuesday: "We believe that a materialistic, selfish, godless, pleasure-loving outlook has been encouraged and that this has sown a crop of bitter weeds whose harvest the country now reaps." We regret that the words "bitter weeds" erroneously appeared as "better seeds."—*Manchester Guardian.*

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POP ART SYMPOSIUM

at The Museum of Modern Art

December 13, 1962

reprinted from Arts Magazine, April, 1963

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

A Symposium on Pop Art

As interest in pop art has spread quickly not only from 77th Street to 57th Street but indeed from coast to coast, the Department of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art thought it might be enlightening to organize a panel discussion on the subject. I therefore invited five distinguished critics to participate in a symposium on December 13, 1962. These participants were selected for their different points of view as well as for their past contributions to American art criticism.

We chose the term "pop art" because it seems to describe the phenomenon better than a name like New Realism, which has also been applied to such divergent forms as Germany's Neue Sachlichkeit of the twenties and France's Réalités Nouvelles of the forties. The term neo-Dada was rejected because it was originally coined in the pejorative and because the work in question bears only superficial resemblance to Dada, which, it will be remembered, was a revolutionary movement primarily intended to change life itself.

The panel was not expected to come up with a definition of pop art at this stage, but rather to present prepared papers and to engage in a lively discussion. I introduced the evening by presenting a number of slides, including photographs of window displays and billboards taken by Russell Lee for the Farm Security Administration in the thirties; these, although they were documentary in purpose, are similar to some of the new work when presented in this context. Limiting myself only to American practitioners of this art, I showed slides of relevant work by Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, by the so-called sign painters Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Indiana, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol and Wayne Thibaut, by those as diverse as Claes Oldenburg, Peter Saul, James Dine and Tom Wesselman, as well as by artists whose sculptures and assemblages are only iconographically related to pop art: H. C. Westermann, Edward Kienholz, Niki de St. Phalle and Marisol.

The papers and the ensuing discussion among the panel members are presented in the following pages. The discussion from the floor concluding the evening could not be taped and has therefore been omitted.

Peter Selz



The panel invited by the Museum of Modern Art for its discussion of pop art. From left to right: Henry Geldzahler, Assistant Curator of American Painting and Sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, whose publications include articles in *La Gazette des Beaux-Arts* and *Art News*; Stanley Kunitz, critic and editor as well as the author of three volumes of poetry, whose honors include his recent election to the National Institute of Arts and Letters; Hilton Kramer, art critic of *The Nation* and frequent contributor to ARTS, who is currently teaching at Bennington College; Leo Steinberg, Associate Professor of Art History at Hunter College, who is well known for his lectures in recent years at the Metropolitan Museum; Dore Ashton, author of *The Unknown Shore*, whose critical articles last year won the Frank Jewett Mather Award; moderator Peter Selz, Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, whose publications include works on Art Nouveau, German Expressionism and "New Images of Man."

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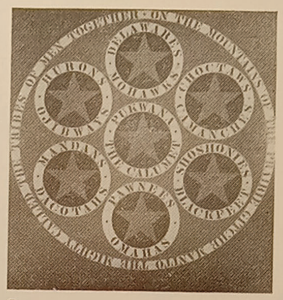
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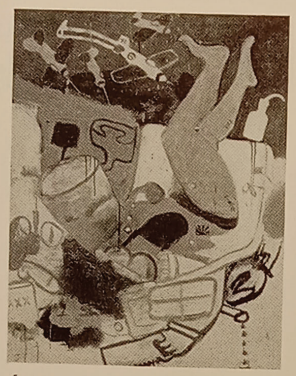
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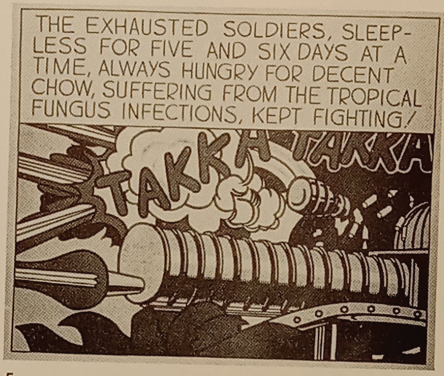
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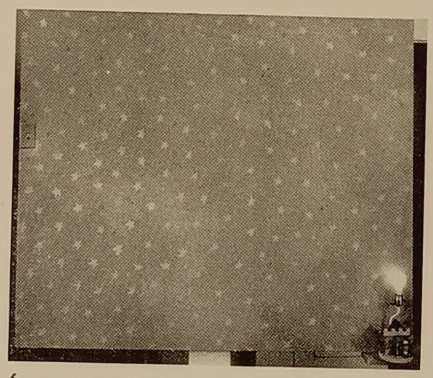
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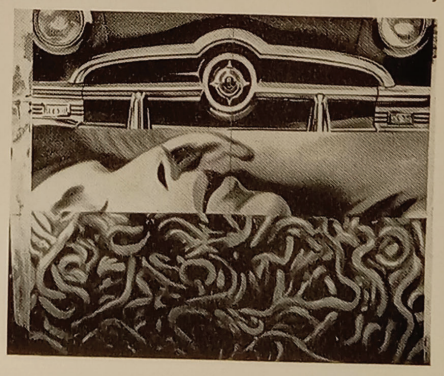


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1 Photograph by Russell Lee, Sign at a gas station (1938).

2 Robert Indiana, *The Calumet* (1961); Gevirtz-Mnuchin Collection, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University.

3 Claes Oldenburg, *Case with Six Pastries* (1961); collection Martha Jackson Gallery.

4 Peter Saul, *Tokyo Rose* (1961); courtesy Galerie Breteau.

5 Roy Lichtenstein, *Takka-Takka* (1962); courtesy Castelli Gallery.

6 James Dine, *Child's Blue Wall* (1962); courtesy Sidney Janis Gallery.

7 Robert Rauschenberg, *Canyon* (1959); collection Mr. and Mrs. M. Sonnabend.

8 Andy Warhol, *Martinson's Coffee* (1962); courtesy Stable Gallery.

9 James Rosenquist, *I Love You with My Ford* (1961); courtesy Green Gallery.

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HENRY GELDZAHLER

It is always a simple matter to read inevitability back into events after they have happened, but from this vantage point it seems that the phenomenon of pop art was inevitable. The popular press, especially and most typically *Life* Magazine, the movie close-up, black and white, technicolor and wide screen, the billboard extravaganzas, and finally the introduction, through television, of this blatant appeal to our eye into the home—all this has made available to our society, and thus to the artist, an imagery so pervasive, persistent and compulsive that it had to be noticed. After the heroic years of Abstract Expressionism a younger generation of artists is working in a new American regionalism, but this time, because of the mass media, the regionalism is nationwide, and even exportable to Europe, for we have carefully prepared and reconstructed Europe in our own image since 1945 so that two kinds of American imagery, Kline, Pollock and De Kooning on the one hand, and the pop artists on the other, are becoming comprehensible abroad.

Both Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg have written that increasingly in the twentieth century, art has carried on a dialogue with itself, art leads to art, and with internal sequence. This is true still, even with the external references pop art makes to the observed world. The best and most developed post-Abstract Expressionist painting is the big single-image painting, which comes in part out of Barney Newman's work—I am thinking of Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland, Ray Parker and Frank Stella, among others —and surely this painting is reflected in the work of Lichtenstein, Warhol and Rosenquist. Each of these painters inflates his compulsive image. The aesthetic permission to project their immense pop images derives in part from a keen awareness of the most advanced contemporary art. And thus pop art can be seen to make sense and have a place in the wider movement of recent art.

I have heard it said that pop art is not art, and this by a museum curator. My feeling is that it is the artist who defines the limit of art, not the critic or the curator. It is perhaps necessary for the art historian, who deals with closed issues, to have a definition of art. It is dangerous for the critic of contemporary art to have such a definition. Just so there is no unsuitable subject for art. Marcel Duchamp and Jasper Johns have taught us that it is the artist who decides what is art, and they have been convincing philosophically and aesthetically.

Pop art is a new two-dimensional landscape painting, the artist responding specifically to his visual environment. The artist is looking around again and painting what he sees. And it is interesting that this art does not look like the new humanism some critics were so eagerly hoping for. It points up again the fact that responsible critics should not predict, and they should not goad the artist into a direction that criticism would feel more comfortable with. The critic's highest goal must be to stay alert and sensitive to what the artist is doing, not to tell him what he should be doing.

We live in an urban society, ceaselessly exposed to mass media. Our primary visual data are for the most part secondhand. Is it not then logical that art be made out of what we see? Has it not been true in the past? There is an Ogden Nash quatrain that I feel is apposite:

I think that I shall never see
A billboard lovely as a tree
Perhaps unless the billboards fall
I'll never see a tree at all.

Well, the billboards haven't fallen, and we can no longer paint trees with great contemporary relevance. So we paint billboards.

A proof I have heard that pop art cannot be serious is that it has been accepted so readily. As everyone knows, the argument goes, great art is ignored for years. We must examine this prejudice. Why are we mistrustful of an art *because* it is readily acceptable? It is because we are still working with myths developed in the years of alienation.

The heroism of the New York School has been to break through and win acceptance for the high and serious purpose of American painting. There is now a community of collectors, critics, art dealers and museum people, a rather large community, that has been educated and rehearsed to the point that there is no longer any shock in art.

For the first time in this century there is a class of American collectors that patronizes its advanced artists. The American artist has an audience, and there exists a machinery, dealers, critics, museums, collectors, to keep things moving and keep people on their toes. Yet there persists a nostalgia for the good old days when the artist was alienated, misunderstood, unpatronized. The new situation is different. People *do* buy art. In this sense too there is no longer, or at least not at the moment, such a thing as an avant-garde. Avant-garde must be defined in terms of audience, and here we have an audience more than ready to stay with the artist. One even gets the idea that shock has become so ingrained that the dealer, critic and collector want and expect it.

The general public has not become appreciably more aware of good painting, but the audience for advanced art, partly because of the influence of the Museum of Modern Art, is considerably wider than it has ever been in this country.

Through our writers and art historians we have become very conscious of the sequence of movements, of action and reaction. The clichés and tools of art writing have become so familiar that we can recognize a movement literally before it fully happens. About a year and a half ago I saw the work of Wesselman, Warhol, Rosenquist and Lichtenstein in their studios. They were working independently, unaware of each other, but with a common source of imagery. Within a year and a half they have had shows, been dubbed a movement, and we are here discussing them at a symposium. This is instant art history, art history made so aware of itself that it leaps to get ahead of art.

The great body of imagery from which the pop artists draw may be said to be a common body, but the style and decisions of each are unmistakable. The choice of color, composition, the brush stroke, the hardness of edge, all these are personal no matter how close to anonymity the artist may aspire in his desire to emulate the material of his inspiration, the anonymous mass media. The pop artists remain individual, recognizable and separate. The new art draws on everyday objects and images. They are isolated from their ordinary context, and typified and intensified. What we are left with is a heightened awareness of the object and image, *and* of the context from which they have been ripped, that is, our environment. If we look for attitudes of approval or disapproval of our culture in this art, of satire or glorification of our society, we are oversimplifying. Surely there is more than satire in Hogarth, the Longhis, Daumier, Toulouse-Lautrec. There is a satirical aspect in much of this art, but it is only that, one aspect.

Pop art is immediately contemporary. We have not yet assimilated its new visual content and style. The question at hand is not whether it is great art; this question is not answerable, or even interesting, just now. I think the point is *not* to make an immediate ultimate evaluation, but to admit the possibility that this subject matter and

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these techniques are and can be the legitimate subject matter and technique of art. And the point is too to realize that pop art did not fall from the heavens fully developed. It is an expression of contemporary sensibility aware of contemporary environment and growing naturally out of the art of the recent past.

HILTON KRAMER

Perhaps I should begin my remarks on the phenomenon of pop art, neo-Dada, New Realism, or whatever we finally agree to call it, on a positive note (since there will be much to say in the negative) and admit straightaway that I do believe it represents a significant historical breakthrough, as we say, in one—but only one—respect. It represents something new, not so much in the history of art as in the history of art criticism, for criticism, from its beginnings, has suffered from the humiliating predicament of having to deal with a class of objects—namely, works of art—which were far more interesting than anything that might be said about them. With the coming of pop art, this humiliation has at last been abated. It has, to all appearances, been triumphantly overcome. The relation of the critic to his material has been significantly reversed, and critics are now free to confront a class of objects, which, while still works of art more or less, are art only by default, only because they are nothing else, but about which almost anything critics say will engage the mind more fully and affect the emotions more subtly than the objects whose meaning they are ostensibly elucidating.

Pop art is, indeed, a kind of emancipation proclamation for the art critic, and while I hesitate to labor the point unduly, it may just conceivably be possible that *some,* though surely not all, of the interest this movement has generated among critics—and among museums, too, and museum symposia—is traceable to the sense they have of being placed by this new development in a more advantageous position vis-à-vis the work of art than they have heretofore enjoyed.

Why is it the case, as I emphatically believe it to be, that this work is interesting for what is said *about* it rather than for what it, intrinsically, is? Primarily, I think, because it is so preponderantly contextual in its mode of address and in its aesthetic existence; so crucially dependent upon cultural logistics outside itself for its main expressive force. It neither creates new forms nor gives us new ways of perceiving the visual materials out of which it is made; it takes the one from the precedents of abstract art and the other from the precedents of window display and advertising design. It adopts and adapts received ideas and received goods in both spheres—form and content—synthesizing nothing new, no new visual fact of aesthetic meaning, in the process. The critic Sidney Tillim, in writing about Oldenburg's last exhibition, said: ". . . at no time in Oldenburg's work was there ever a possibility for form to have a destiny;" and to this correct observation I would myself add: There was neither the possibility of content having a destiny, for the brute visual facts of the popular culture all around us, and upon which Oldenburg was drawing, had already endowed this material with a destiny that only a formal and psychological and social imagination of the greatest power and magnitude could hope to compete with and render artistically meaningful.

Pop art derives its small, feeble victories from the juxtaposition of two clichés: a cliché of form superimposed on a cliché of image. And it is its failure to do anything more than this that makes it so beguiling to talk about and write about—that makes pop art the conversation piece *par excellence*—for it requires talk to complete itself. Only talk can effect the act of imaginative synthesis which the art itself fails to effect.

Why, then, are we so interested in it just now, so interested in the art and in the talk?

In answering this more general question, it seems to me imperative to grasp the relation of this development to the current popularity of abstract painting, and particularly abstract painting which has been so extreme (whatever its other achievements may be) in denuding art of complex visual incident. This poverty of visual incident in abstract painting has given rise to practically every new development of the last couple of years; happenings, pop art, figure painting, monster-making, kinetic art—all have in common, whatever their differences, the desire to restore to complex and recognizable experience its former hegemony over pure aestheticism. And it is as part of this desire that the taste for pop art must be understood—again, I emphasize, a contextual meaning rather than an intrinsic, creative one.

Pop art carries out a moderately successful charade—but a charade only—of the two kinds of significance we are particularly suckers for at the present moment: the Real and the Historical. Pop art seems to be about the real world, yet it appears to its audience to be sanctified by tradition, the tradition of Dada. Which is to say, it makes itself dependent upon something outside art for its expressive meaning, and at the same time makes itself dependent upon the myths of art history for its aesthetic integrity. In my opinion, both appeals are fraudulent.

But pop art does, of course, have its connections with art history. Behind its pretensions looms the legendary presence of the most overrated figure in modern art: Mr. Marcel Duchamp. It is Duchamp's celebrated silence, his disavowal, his abandonment of art, which has here—in pop art—been invaded, colonized and exploited. For this was never a real silence. Among the majority of men who produced no art, and experienced little or none, Duchamp's disavowal was devoid of all meaning. Only in a milieu in which art was still created, worried over, and found to be problematical as well as significant and necessary, could Duchamp's silence assume the status of a relevant myth. And just so, it is only in the context of a school of painting which has radically deprived art of significant visual events that pop art has a meaning. Place it in any other visual context and it fades into insignificance, as remote from our needs as the décor in last year's Fifth Avenue windows.

Duchamp's myth does carry a moral for pop art. If his silence means anything—and it surely means much less than has been made of it—its meaning is more biographical than historical. At a certain point in Duchamp's development as an artist, the experience and objects of modern life defeated his ability to cope with them. This is not an uncommon development in the life of an artist, but Duchamp was perhaps the first to turn his aesthetic impotence into a myth of superior powers. His ready-mades were simply the prologue to the silence that followed. It was *not* Duchamp, but artists like Mondrian (in his "Boogie-Woogie" paintings) and Stuart Davis (in his paintings of New York) and David Smith (in the very way he used factory materials) who told us what it felt like to live in this particular civilization at this particular moment in history.

Pop art does not tell us what it feels like to be living through the present moment of civilization—it is merely part of the evidence of that civilization. Its social effect is simply to reconcile us to a world of commodities, banalities

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and vulgarities—which is to say, an effect indistinguishable from advertising art. This is a reconciliation that must—now more than ever—be refused, if art—and life itself—is to be defended against the dishonesties of contrived public symbols and pretentious commerce.

DORE ASHTON

When Lawrence Alloway first discussed pop art he explained that it was based "on the acceptance of mass-produced objects just because they are what is around." The throwaway materials of cities as they collect in drawers, closets and empty lots are used, he said, so that "their original identity is solidly kept." For Alloway it was essential that the "original status" of junk be maintained. He bared the naturalistic bias of pop art when he insisted that "assemblages of such material come at the spectator as bits of life, bits of the city."

The urgent quest for unadorned or common reality, which is the avowed basis of pop art, was again asserted by Alloway two years after. In an introduction to Jim Dine's catalogue he flatly poses pop art as an antidote to idealism: he suggests that aesthetic tradition tends to discount the reality of subject matter, stressing art's formality "which can be made a metaphor of an ideal order."

And here is the crux of the matter: the contemporary artist, weary and perplexed by the ambiguities of idealism (as in Abstract Expressionism, for instance) decides to banish metaphor. Metaphor is necessarily a complicating device, one which insists on the play of more than one element in order to effect an image. The pop artist wants no such elaborate and oblique obligation. He is engaged in an elementary game of naming things—one at a time.

Perhaps the movement can be seen as an exacerbated reaction to the Romantic movement, so long ascendant in modern art history, in which artists were prepared to endure an existence among things that have no name.

Or perhaps pop art is a defensive movement against overwhelming Romantic isolation. Baudelaire said that the exclusive passion of art is a canker which devours everything else. Perhaps this generation is fearful of being devoured—fearful of life itself.

The impatient longing to reduce reality to the solid simple object which resists everything—interpretation, incorporation, juxtaposition, transformation—appears again and again in modern art history. But it is always delusive. The artist who believes that he can maintain the "original status" of an object deludes himself. The character of the human imagination is expansive and allegorical. You cannot "think" an object for more than an instant without the mind's shifting. Objects have always been no more than cues to the vagabond imagination. Not an overcoat, not a bottle dryer, not a Coca-Cola bottle can resist the onslaught of the imagination. Metaphor is as natural to the imagination as saliva to the tongue.

The attitude of the pop artist is diffident. He doesn't aspire to interpret or re-present, but only to present. He very often cedes his authority to chance—either as he produces his object, or as it is exposed to the audience which is expected to complete his process. The recent pop artist is the first artist in history to let the world into his creative compound without protest.

A few brief history notes: Apollinaire said Picasso used authentic objects which were "impregnated with humanity"—in other words, he used them metaphorically. When Duchamp exhibited his urinal he was careful to insist that it was significant because he, Duchamp, had chosen it. Schwitters wrote that "every artist must be allowed to mold a picture with nothing but blotting paper, provided he is capable of molding a picture."

But by the time pop art appears, the artist as master image-maker is no longer assertive. He gladly allows Chance to mold his picture, and is praised for it, as when John Cage praises Rauschenberg because he makes no pretense at aesthetic selection. There is a ring of Surrealism and Lautréamont in Cage's observation that between Rauschenberg and what he picks up is the quality of an encounter—but not the metaphorical encounter of sewing machine and umbrella—only a chance encounter in the continuum of random sensation he calls life.

In the emphasis on randomness and chance, on the virtual object divested of associations, on the audience as participant, and in his rebellion against metaphor, the pop artist generally begs the question of reality. He refuses to take the responsibility of his choices. He is not the only one. Alain Robbe-Grillet, commenting on his filmscript *Last Year at Marienbad*, parallels him when he says that the spectator can do with it what he likes; he, the author, had nothing decisive in mind.

The contemporary aesthetic, as exemplified by many pop artists and certain literary and musical figures, implies a voluntary diminution of choices. The artist is expected to cede to the choice of vulgar reality; to present it in unmitigated form. Conventionally, choice and decision are the essence of a work of art, but the new tendency reduces the number and quality of decisions to a minimum. To the extent that interest in objects and their assemblage in non-metaphorical terms signifies a reduction of individual choices, pop art is a significant sociological phenomenon, a mirror of our society. To the extent that it shuns metaphor, or any deep analysis of complex relations, it is an impoverished genre and an imperfect instrument of art.

Far from being an art of social protest, it is an art of capitulation. The nightmare of poet Henri Michaux, who imagines himself surrounded by hostile objects pressing in on him and seeking to displace his "I," to annihilate his individuality by "finding their center in his imagination," has become a reality for many would-be artists. The profusion of things is an overwhelming fact that they have unfortunately learned to live with.

I can see the movement as cathartic—art protecting itself from art. But catharsis is by no means an adequate response to the conundrum of contemporary life.

LEO STEINBERG

I have put down three questions: First: Is it art? Second: If it is—if pop art is a new way in art—what are its defining characteristics? And Third: Given its general characteristics (if definable), how in any particular case do you tell the good art from the bad? Since I have only seven minutes, if I can't answer these questions, I can at least complicate them.

The question "Is it art?" is regularly asked of pop art, and that's one of the best things about it, to be provoking this question. Because it's one that ought to be asked more or less constantly for the simple reason that it tends to be constantly repressed. We get used to a certain look, and before long we say, "Sure it's art; it looks like a De Kooning, doesn't it?" This is what we might have said five years ago, after growing accustomed to the New York School look. Whereas ten years earlier, an Abstract Expressionist painting, looking quite unlike anything that looked like art, provoked serious doubts as to what it was.

Now I think the point of reformulating this question time and again is to remind us that if there is a general

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principle involved in what makes a work of art, we have yet to establish it. And I mean specifically this: Do we decide that something is art because it exhibits certain general characteristics? Or because of the way we respond to it? In other words, exactly what is it that the artist creates?

Victor Hugo, after reading *Les Fleurs du Mal*, wrote to Baudelaire and in five words summed up a system of aesthetics: "You create a new shudder." This implies that what the artist creates is essentially a new kind of spectator response. The artist does not simply make a thing, an artifact, or in the case of Baudelaire, a poem with its own beat and structure of evocation and image. What he creates is a provocation, a particular, unique and perhaps novel relation with reader or viewer.

Does pop art then create anything new—a new shudder—or not? The criticism of pop art is that it fails to do it. We are told that much of it is prefigured in Dada, or in Surrealism, or worse still, that it simply arrests what advertisements and window displays throw at us every hour. In other words, there is not sufficient transformation or selection within pop art to constitute anything new.

This I cannot accept because I think there is nothing new under the sun except only man's focus of attention. Something that's always been around suddenly moves into the center of vision. What was peripheral becomes central, and that's what's new. And therefore it really doesn't help the discussion of any artistic experience to point out that you can find antecedents for every feature of it. And so I still think it justified to apply to pop art the remark that Victor Hugo applied to Baudelaire: it creates a new shudder.

Just what is it that's new about it? I will limit myself to my own experience; it involves Roy Lichtenstein, who paints what appear to be mere blow-ups of comic-book illustrations. When I first saw these paintings, I did not like them, and I don't like them now. But I saw in them a new approach to an old problem, that of relating the artist to the bourgeois, the square, the Philistine or pretentious hipster. We remember that twentieth-century art came in with the self-conscious slogan *Epater le bourgeois*: to outrage or needle the bourgeois, keep him as uncomfortable and worried as possible. This program lasted roughly through the 1930's, when it was pursued chiefly by the Surrealists. The heroic years of Abstract Expressionism in New York after the Second World War brought another approach, an approach so organic that it was hardly formulated; it simply ignored the bourgeois. The feeling was, "They don't want us, we don't want them." The artists developed a thoroughgoing camaraderie: "We know what we're doing, the rest of the world never will. We'll continue to paint for each other." This surely was a radically different phase in the relationship of artist and middle class.

And when I saw these pictures by Lichtenstein, I had the sensation of entering immediately upon a third phase in twentieth-century painting. The idea seemed to be to out-bourgeois the bourgeois, to move in on him, unseat him, play his role with a vengeance—as if Lichtenstein were saying, "You think you like the funnies. Wait till you see how I like the funnies!"

I think it has something to do with God and idolatry, God being understood as the object of man's absolute worship. (I know no other way of defining the word.) Wherever people worship respectably, there is rivalry among worshippers to show who worships the most. Where the object of worship is disreputable, we pretend that our respect for it is very casual or a matter of mere necessity. And now Lichtenstein and certain others treat mass-produced popular culture as Duccio would treat the Madonna, Turner the Sea, Picasso the Art of Painting—that is to say, like an absolute good. Something like this is now going on, I think; the artists are moving in, naïvely or mockingly, each in his way, an uninvited priesthood for an unacknowledged, long-practiced cult. And this may be why, as Mr. Geldzahler was able to tell us, several pop artists were working along the same lines for years, though in ignorance of one another.

Whether their productions are works of art I am not prepared to say at this point. But that they are part of the history of art, of its social and psychological history, is beyond question. And if I say that I am not prepared to tell whether they are art or not, what I mean is that I cannot yet see the art for the subject. When I tell you, as I told Mr. Lichtenstein, that I don't like his paintings, I am merely confessing that in his work the subject matter exists for me so intensely that I have been unable to get through to whatever painterly qualities there may be.

This leads me to the second question I had wanted to touch upon. We have here one characteristic of pop art as a movement or style: to have pushed subject matter to such prominence that formal or aesthetic considerations are temporarily masked out. Our eyes will have to grow accustomed again to a new presence in art: the presence of subject matter absolutely at one with the form.

One thing I'm sure of: critics who attack pop art for discarding all aesthetic considerations talk too fast. They forget that artists always play peekaboo. Sometimes—and I am now thinking of all the history of painting—sometimes they play with latent symbolism, at other times they disguise their concern with pure form. Today, for some reason, these pop artists want the awareness of form to recede behind the pretense of subject matter alone, and this creates a genuine difficulty. Why they assign this new role to subject matter, after almost a century of formalist indoctrination, is not easy to say.

I see that some critics of pop art denounce it as a case of insufferable condescension. Several writers regard it as ineffectual satire (I myself see almost nothing satirical in pop art). Others think it's simple conformity with middle-class values. And there is always the possibility that the choice of pop subjects is artistically determined; that the variegated ready-made, pictorial elements he now uses furnish the artist with new richness of incident both in surface and depth, while allowing him not to worry about "the integrity of the picture plane." For since the elements employed in the picture are known and seen to be flat (being posters, cartoons, ads, etc.), the overall flatness of the picture-as-object is taken care of, and the artist, confronting new problems galore, faces one old problem the fewer. But it is obviously impossible to declare whether pop art represents conformity with middle-class values, social satire, effective or otherwise, or again a completely asocial exploration of new, or newly intriguing, formal means. It is impossible to give one answer because we are not dealing with one artist. We are asked to deal with many. And so far, there has been no attempt around this table to differentiate between them. And the fact that there has been no such differentiation encourages me to say something here which, I hope, won't sound too pedagogical.

There are two ways of treating an exhibition experience, especially one like the recent pop-art show at Sidney Janis'. One way consists of the following steps: First: Walk around the show, noting the common features. Second: Describe these features in one or more generalizations. Third: Evaluate your abstracted generalizations and, if you find them wanting, condemn the

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whole movement.

The other way begins in the same manner. Walking around, you observe this and that, passing by all the works that do nothing to you. Then, if any one work seems at all effective, open up at once and explore it as far as you can. Lastly, ponder and evaluate your reaction to this single work; and this, strangely enough, also yields a first generalization: If this one work in the show produced a valid experience, e.g., a new shudder, then the whole movement is justified by its proven ability to produce a valid work. The generalization emerges from the more intense experience of the particular. This is another way of doing it, and I prefer it, not only because I enjoy thinking about one work at a time, but also because the artists we are discussing share no common intention.

I am sorry to see that my time is up, so that I cannot comment on my question 3.

STANLEY KUNITZ

Confronting this sudden and rather staggering proliferation of "pop art" in our midst, I am tempted to echo the exclamation of the French artist Paul Delaroche when in 1839 he saw a daguerreotype for the first time: "From today," he said, "painting is dead." If I resist the temptation—and I do—it is not because I am afraid of sticking my neck out, for fear I may be proven wrong, but simply because I have every confidence that art is too tough a bird to die of either shame or indigestion. It has outlived even worse disasters. Of course, M. Delaroche was not completely mistaken: something did die after the invention of photography, namely M. Delaroche, together with his brand of bad academicism. The more I reflect on the subject, the more I am convinced that if we are ever to get an ideal history of art, it will have to be written by a master of comedy.

How does one explain the overnight apotheosis not of a single lonely artist but of a whole regiment wearing the colors of pop art, for whom the galleries and the museums immediately open their doors, and the collectors their pocketbooks? The best analogy I can think of is a blitz campaign in advertising, the object of which is to saturate the market with the name and presence—even the subliminal presence —of a commodity. "Repetition is reputation," said one of the great tycoons of American industry. The real artists in this affair, I submit, are the promoters, who have made a new kind of assemblage out of the assorted and not necessarily related works of dozens of painters and sculptors, to which they have given the collective title (substitute brand-name) "pop art," or the "new realism." I wish I had time to discuss the significance of style in art as the signature of a culture, but I must be content with merely noting that history has become subject to such an acceleration of tempo that the life-span of a style, which used to be measured in centuries, has been reduced first to generations, and more recently to decades. Some of the vibration, I am sure, of American art has its source in the speed of our transit; but I am not persuaded that anything is to be gained by treating art as though it were almost exclusively a commodity, pliant to the whims of the market place and subject to the same principle of planned obsolescence as is inherent in the rest of our economy. I seriously doubt that we really need an annual change of model. And what of the role of the Museum in this development? Much as I love this place, I must confess that I wonder a bit about the ultimate consequences of such a rapacious historicity, such an indefatigable search for novelty. I find it disturbing that in concept and function a museum of art, traditionally a conservator of values, should grow closer and closer to an industrial museum, such as the one opened and operated by the Ford Motor Co., which was designed as a showcase for every model of a Ford car manufactured since the founding of the company. The art-establishment, as a whole, seems to be in such a hurry to get on the bandwagon these days that sometimes it gets there too soon and has to build the contraption before it can jump on it. Of course it is a peculiar kind of stupidity to regard any change of style as a form of subversion; but it is an equally peculiar kind of folly to greet every new twist of style as a revelation. We have in our time invented a new kind of tyranny, which is the tyranny of the avant-garde.

Anyone who has ever written on art must know that it is impossible to prove in words that a given work of art is either good or bad. In the end the art-object must stand as its own witness. Nevertheless I want to try to indicate, in a few paragraphs, why my response to pop art, or, let me say, to most of what passes as pop art, is largely negative. We have had the supreme fortune of a great art in this century, and a substantial part of that greatness originated and flowered here in this country. For the past dozen years in particular I have rejoiced in the companionship of an art that at its best, regardless of the modalities of style, I have felt to be notable for its courage and self-reliance; its self-awareness, sprung between psyche and medium; its rich spontaneity of nervous energy; the pitch and range of its sensibility; and the simultaneous sense that it has often given me of a wild act of assertion combined with a metaphysical entrapment in the infrangible web of space-time. An art of beginnings, misdirections, rejections, becomings, existences, solitudes, rages, transformations.

The archetypal pop artist, who is nobody apart from the brute reality of his milieu, will have nothing to do with the intense subjectivity of what he calls "a painterly aesthetic"—a phrase that is intended to ring like an abusive epithet. He has no interest whatsoever in converting existential feeling into unique gesture. The world of pop art is a clean, well-lighted place where we can see a deliberately tidy arrangement of the most anonymous traces of collective man, presented to us as though they were things in themselves, now that they have been detached from our Western karma, the cycle of manufacture and consumption. The pop artist assiduously refrains from divulging his feelings while he is setting up his store. Perhaps he has had a hard day at the supermarket which is our world, but he is as reticent about his private responses as a newscaster on a network station. Perhaps he is saying that it is futile to attempt a new creation, given the facts of our situation, but we can only guess at that. All that we know is that he has limited himself to a rearrangement of familiar counters. In so doing he unwittingly demonstrates what Coleridge defined as the difference between fancy and the imagination. This is an art not of transformation but of transposition.

If the pop artist is concerned with creating anything, it is with the creation of an effect. Consider, for example, the celebrated rows of Campbell's Soup labels. We can scarcely be expected to have any interest in the painting itself. Indeed, it is difficult to think of it as painting at all, since, apparently, the serial image has been mechanically reproduced with the aid of a stencil. If I insist, however, on classifying it as a painting, I am constrained to describe it as a kind of literary painting, since the effect for which it was created depends entirely on my recognition of an implied pair of references: first, to the pre-existent supermarket from which the labels are borrowed; and, second, to the pre-existent paintings from whose painterly aesthetic this composition departs.

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There is no value and, to give modesty its due, no pretension of value in the painting, *per se,* unless we read the footnotes, as it were, and get the drift of the allusions.

Ever since the Enlightenment, the arts have been the vehicle for conveying much of the mystery and disorder, the transcendental yearnings, that the Church had been able to contain before it became rationalized. Consequently the modern arts have found their analogue in religious ritual and action, in the communion that predicates the sharing of a deeply felt experience. The enemy has been consistently identified as bourgeois society and bourgeois values. Pop art rejects the impulse towards communion; most of its signs and slogans and stratagems come straight out of the citadel of bourgeois society, the communications stronghold where the images and desires of mass man are produced, usually in plastic.

Condemning an aesthetic of process, the pop artist proposes to purify the muddied stream of art by displaying objects in isolation, the banal items of our day refurbished, made real, by their separation from the continuum. What a quixotic enterprise! Even a seventh-grade science textbook informs us that objects are the least solid of our certainties. Heisenberg, who demonstrated that the very act of observation changes the phenomenon to be observed, quietly asserts—without feeling the need for an exclamation point: "Modern physics, in the final analysis, has already discredited the concept of the truly real." Probing the universe, man finds everywhere himself. In the words of another Nobel Prize physicist, Niels Bohr: "We are both spectators and actors in the great drama of existence." When Sartre brought the full weight of his philosophical intelligence to bear on this theme in an early novel, he significantly entitled his book *Nausea.* The theme is still being pursued by some of the best creative minds of France, notably by the writers and film-makers of the so-called *nouvelle vague.*

Pop art, in conclusion, seems to me to be neither serious nor funny enough to serve as more than a nine days' wonder. It brings to mind a recent Stanford Research Institute study on the contemporary boom in American culture—a study that is as amazing as it is, unintentionally, depressing. No doubt some of you will be even more depressed than I at the disclosure that there are as many painters in this country as hunters. Altogether some fifty million Americans are currently being stimulated to "do it yourself" in the practice of the sundry arts. One major explanation of this tidal wave is the growing availability of "instant success" products, such as chord attachments for pianos and automatic light meters for cameras. "These devices," concludes the study, "come close to making a pro out of a dubber."

DISCUSSION:

SELZ: I have a number of questions here which I would like the panel to discuss, questions I had prepared before . . . but before doing so, or perhaps instead of doing so, I will just take the place of the moderator and open it right up to you people.

GELDZAHLER: I'd like to ask Mr. Kunitz a question. I'd like to ask Mr. Kunitz what he feels the role of the Museum of Modern Art, or the art magazines and so on is, if it's not to record and to present to the public what is going on in the contemporary art world. If pop art is being done in New York City, if the Museum of Modern Art is involved in the hurly-burly, in the course of twentieth-century art and its most current manifestations as it has been since 1929 when it was founded, how could it possibly ignore something like this?

KUNITZ: I don't think for a moment that the Museum should ignore what's going on, especially a museum of *modern* art. But there are obviously principles of selectivity and of timing that enter into any active choice. I do have a feeling that in this terrible effort to get everything even *before it happens,* something strange happens to the landscape of art in our time.

GELDZAHLER: Then you feel modern art becomes modern in time but not right away?

KUNITZ: Well, the old debate of the difference between contemporary and modern is, I think, an exhausted one, and I don't want to get into that at this moment, but obviously I do believe in a principle of value.

KRAMER: May I ask Mr. Geldzahler a question on that? Do you then conceive the role of the Museum to be like that of a kind of three-dimensional tape recorder, giving us back what is currently being seen a few blocks away?

GELDZAHLER: I will agree that there has been some confusion in recent years between the galleries and the Museum of Modern Art. The Ad Reinhardt retrospective was given at the Section 11, the big Dickinson show was at the Graham Gallery, not at one of the museums where it should be, the "Sixteen Americans" was here, the "35 Painters under 35," or whatever it was—a lot of whom didn't have galleries—was at the Whitney, and as far as that goes, I would agree. But my feeling is that I pointed out the fact that this all happened terribly quickly (instant art history, etc.), but it is a fact that it has been considered and seen as a movement, and that the Museum of Modern Art with its dedication to contemporary art was made aware of it immediately, and couldn't ignore it. I just feel it was a compelling issue, and had to be engaged.

KUNITZ: But if the motto becomes "Make it new," and not only "Make it new," but "Make it new fast," and if obviously the role of the Museum is, as you see it, to introduce the *new,* then the sure way of being admitted to the Museum is to make it new faster than anybody else. And this becomes, it seems to me, a merry-go-round.

STEINBERG: There is no shortage in the world today of museums, even museums dedicated to modern art (I'm thinking, for instance, of the Tate Gallery in London), which make a practice of waiting until quality can be sifted. The Tate Gallery now is trying to raise I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of dollars to buy a Matisse. (They're very short on Matisse. They missed out on him.) And I would like to remind everybody here of a remark of Mr. Alfred Barr's, who is Director of Museum Collections, and I quoted it once before from this platform because I've always admired it for its straightforward intelligence and humility and understanding of the nature and difficulties of contemporary art. Mr. Barr apparently said that if one choice in ten that we make now turns out to be valid in retrospect, we will have done very well indeed. It is very difficult, if you think of art-buying in the last hundred years, to find anyone who would have scored that well, and perhaps the Museum is buying a thousand percent to get its eventual hundred. I think that the words that Mr. Kunitz used and *repeated,* that the Museum is trying to get there before it happens, I think these are amusing words, but I don't understand what they are supposed to mean. They are not getting there before the pictures are painted, and they are clearly reacting to paintings that have been made, so what are you trying to say when you say "before it happens"?

KRAMER: May I make a comment on that, because I think, Leo, that you are completely ignoring the role that

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the Museum plays in *creating* history as well as *reflecting* it. It is its responsibility as a factor determining the course of what art is created, that people are objecting to.

GELDZAHLER: It is too late for the Museum of Modern Art to step out of history. It is very much involved in the action and reaction of contemporary history.

STEINBERG: Hilton, in answer to this I would say that of course the Museum has a role to play in making history, but fortunately this is a pluralistic society, and there is a balance of power. The Museum is not alone. The Museum had very hard days when it was fighting against God knows everything, from artists picketing on the street to Senators in Congress. And now that the opposition from Congress is hardly to be expected any more, the Museum has very tough competition from other museums that have arisen in New York.

KRAMER: Not really.

STEINBERG: Well, it certainly is a competition that will grow, but if the competition is not tough enough, then it's because Mr. Selz, Mr. Seitz, Mr. Barr, Mr. D'Harnoncourt, and the others, are faster or more intuitive or more perceptive . . . [cut off]

KUNITZ: But you really aren't answering the question.

STEINBERG: No, I am answering the question because I think that *Art News* and ARTS, and other museums, and the Metropolitan, they all share, quite equally, or potentially equally, in power play.

KRAMER: No. I don't think that's the case, and the difference is measurable.

STEINBERG: You cannot simply accuse a man of exercising power because he buys a certain art and this has an effect upon the market.

KRAMER: Oh yes you can! Of course you can!

GELDZAHLER: Mr. Kramer, how does he correct the situation? Does the Museum of Modern Art step out for five years and hold its breath? I don't understand.

KRAMER: Yes, I see nothing wrong with that. Maybe even *ten* years.

ASHTON: Hilton, why is this whole discussion focusing on the word "competition"? I always thought that art was beyond the notion of competition. If this is a discussion of a genre of art, why don't we keep it within that limit?

SELZ: I think maybe we ought to get back to some of the more basic issues. There is one question that I'd like to ask. It has something to do with one of the things Dore raised, that I'd like to bring out. I think most of us always felt that one of the absolute necessities for anything to be a work of art, was the aesthetic distance between the art and the experience. Now, if an aesthetic distance is necessary for a work of art, is an aesthetic experience possible when we are confronted with something which is almost the object itself? Without any distance, or with a real minimum of distance, which is, I think, one of the problems we are confronted with in looking at this art. The old story of the person witnessing an accident on the highway not having an aesthetic experience comparable to tragedy. Where does the problem of the metaphor come in? There is a distinction to be drawn, I think, in the slides I showed, between some of the art, where the object is presented almost directly, say like in a comic strip by Lichtenstein, and in some of the others where there is a much greater transformation taking place. But what happens really where there is this minimum of transformation? Now Leo said that we don't know yet, that the form is hidden to some extent behind the subject, which is obviously apparent. Yet as critics, I think it is our absolute duty to know this difference and to be able to say yes or no. And my question to any one of you people is: Where is the aesthetic distance? Where does the problem of the metaphor come in with some of these objects?

GELDZAHLER: I would like to say that the means of contemporary art, the ways in which most contemporary art at any point is projecting and creating its magic, are mysterious, and the extent to which they are mysterious, incomprehensible, the extent of the difficulty we have in talking about it, is the extent to which the contemporary vibration, the immediacy, is felt. And when I said at the end of my talk, "I don't know if it is great art or not, we are not going to evaluate it ultimately tonight," and when Leo Steinberg said that the subject matter is so strong that the actual formal means seem to be disguised or behind, we are so confronted by the object, therefore not being used to it for so many years. I think that all this ties into Peter's question that the exact aesthetic distance is difficult to measure at this point.

STEINBERG: I think that aesthetic distance is in any case a nineteenth-century concept, and I do not unhesitatingly subscribe to it as an essential, as a *measurable* essential, of experience. One develops aesthetic distance from works that attain the *look* of art, the patina of art. The objection to an art like Caravaggio, like Courbet, any sort of real, raw, tough, realistic breakthrough in the history of art—the objection to it is always that it ceases to be art. Poussin would say, in the name of art, about Caravaggio, that he had been born to destroy painting. The whole of painting can be felt—after the initial blast of something like Caravaggism—can be felt to recoil, to defend art against the incursion of too much reality. It closes itself off the way a cell would against a foreign body. And what happens always is that aesthetic distance seems to have been destroyed. But not for us who look at it with the distance of time, because this aesthetic distance has been created. Just as aesthetic distance will exist for us for any kind of fashion the moment it is more than twenty or thirty years old.

SELZ: But when we look back does it become a work of art?

STEINBERG: Well, this is exactly when I say that this is premature. When I said about Lichtenstein's paintings that I do not like them as *paintings,* what I meant to say was that I do not feel competent to judge them as paintings, because the pressure of subject matter is so intense. This was not intended as a negative judgment upon them, but as a confession of inability on my part. But as a rider to this, I would say I suspect anyone who claims to know, now, that it is not serious painting.

KRAMER: I find a serious discrepancy in the discussion here. Dr. Selz asked a fairly sophisticated aesthetic question about pop art as art, and Mr. Steinberg, who avers that he doesn't *know* whether it is art or not, answers it in a very complicated way on the assumption that it *is*. Now. Do you think it's art, or not? And, are you in the habit of applying aesthetic criteria and aesthetic categories to a discussion of data or matter that you have not yet determined to have an aesthetic character?

STEINBERG: I think the question is legitimate, and I am very glad it was raised. When I said before that the questions about the art status of a work that is presented to us, depend not merely on analysis of certain inherent characteristics, but may also depend on the nature of the spectator's response, this would imply that before I can answer the question "Is this a work of art or not?" I want to have all the data in. Now the picture itself is part of the data, obviously. The rest of the data will be my reaction to it, the full experience of it. And this means that I must be interested in the kind of reaction a work elicits. Not every work elicits a reaction from me, obviously. And I know for instance, in reading—I have a certain advantage here over Mr. Kramer because I have his article that he wrote in *The Nation.* And the article is, as everything Mr. Kramer writes, exceedingly intelligent. I dis-

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agree with about 90 percent of it. But I disagree with the method. And the method is evident, for instance, when he begins to describe the show at the Janis Gallery. He says: "It is full of things to talk about. There is a small refrigerator whose door opens to the sound of a fire siren. There is an old-fashioned lawn mower joined to a painting on canvas. There are collections of old sabers and discarded eyeglasses under glass. There are even paintings, like you know, with paint on canvas, of pies and sandwiches and canned soup . . ." and it goes on listing these things. Now, at no point is there any indication that Mr. Kramer submitted to any one of these objects singly. Mr. Kramer is the person I have in mind who makes a general rapid survey and is interested in the generalization about the common features. This is a valid way of doing it. It is not the only way of doing it, and it is one that I suspect for my own purposes, because it will never yield an answer to the question whether an individual work is art or not. Now for myself, I feel pretty certain that a good many of the exhibits in the Janis show were not art.

KRAMER: How do you know that?

STEINBERG: This is entirely a matter of . . . [cut off]

KRAMER: And if they aren't art, what are they?

STEINBERG: Perhaps I should modify this. They are art in so far as things produced in the art classes in schools, from first grade up, are art, because they are art classes. In so far as work done in the art department of the layout department, where the art editor lays things out on a magazine—in so far as this is art, this is perhaps the kind of thing that some of the followers of pop art will also produce. Therefore, if I say, offhand, that I suspect that they are not art, they may be only that kind of thing.

KRAMER: A *low* form of art.

STEINBERG: A low form of art—yes, or I think for instance . . . [cut off]

KRAMER: But not exactly *non*-art.

STEINBERG: What is non-art?

KRAMER: Well, that's what I'm asking you, because you are the only member of this panel who has declared himself as being uncertain as to whether these objects are art objects. And if they're not art objects, you must have another category that you place them in. Is it experience, or intellectualism?

STEINBERG: Well, they could be attemps to create art objects, which misfire, couldn't they?

KRAMER: Yes—*"failed"* art.

STEINBERG: Yes.

KRAMER: Still art.

SELZ: May I bring up another point? A point that has been discussed comparatively little on this panel. We picked the term pop art. We might have called it New Realism as they did in the Sidney Janis Gallery, or New Dada. And this New Dada thing interests me. What is the relationship (I think this is something worth exploring) between this and Dadaism? Dada, as we know, was essentially a conscious movement by writers and artists against the spirit of conformity and the *bourgeoisie*. Now this neo-Dada is to some extent—well, we heard Mr. Geldzahler say that the alienation was over, that everything is nice now, and using very much of a Madison Avenue term, he says it's nice because it "keeps things moving." Now if this art is as closely related to advertising and the whole campaign of Madison Avenue that we are so familiar with, as some people say it is, what is its relation to Dada?

GELDZAHLER: The difference between the beginning and the end of the question was a little complicated.

SELZ: Let's try to discuss for a minute its relationship to Dada.

GELDZAHLER: Leaving out Madison Avenue or bringing Madison Avenue in?

KUNITZ: Briefly, obviously, one finds sources of pop art in Dada, and I think the term New Dada has a degree of relevance. Certainly if you think of Schwitters' *Merzbilder*—there's a great relationship there. And then the *objets trouvés* and so forth. But it seems to me that the profound difference is that Dada was essentially a revolutionary movement. It was a movement that had great social passion behind it. It was a form of outrage. And it was launched against the very bourgeois society which the Dadaists felt were responsible for the First World War. It was launched as an *attack* upon them. Now the New Dada instead *embraces*, in a sense, the bourgeois symbols. And is without passion.

STEINBERG: I want to use a technique of Professor Ernst Gombrich, who never gives a lecture without quoting a *New Yorker* cartoon. One of my favorite *New Yorker* cartoons, and one that I think was really prophetic in showing that a new pathway for our admiration was being grooved. This was a cartoon showing an exasperated wife who exclaims to her husband, "Why do you always have to be a non-conformist like everybody else?" Just about that time there was a show of nineteenth-century French drawings mounted in New York, and the artists who were not the well-known revolutionaries of French official art history were labeled as "non-dissenters." I was immensely impressed with this term—this is an invention of real genius—the non-dissenters. Because after being educated as we have been, all of us, in this century, to read the history of art is just one damn rebel after another, and that's all there is, see—the succession of Delacroix, and then it's Courbet, and then it's Manet, and then it's Cézanne, and then it's Picasso—suddenly we find that there is an alternative mode of conduct, the *non-dissenter*. This is terrific, you see, and this suddenly becomes an avenue of extraordinary novelty and originality. You don't always have to be a nonconformist like everybody else. So my answer to Mr. Kunitz is simply this: Sure, Dada was revolutionary. Every art movement we have known for a hundred years was revolutionary. And it may be that the extraordinary novelty and the shock and the dismay and the disdain that is felt over this movement is that it doesn't *seem revolutionary* like every other.

GELDZAHLER: The great excitement and so on of Dada was its anti-formal nature after the great formal revolutions of Cubism, etc., and the break of sequence with the First World War. Dada was an anti-formal excitement. Pop art is definitely a formal art. It's an art of decisions and choices of composition. And I think Mr. Selz has downgraded the extent to which, for instance, Roy Lichtenstein changes the comic strip he's working from and the painting that's finished. I've seen the comic strip, I've seen the painting, the colors . . . [cut off]

ASHTON: What do you need, a magnifying glass? [laughter]

GELDZAHLER: You don't need a magnifying glass, Dore. All you need is a pair of eyes, and an open, willing spirit, and a soul, and a . . . [cut off by laughter]

KRAMER: I think that the question of the relationship of pop art to Dada has really not been taken seriously. It should be. But I think if it's going to be taken seriously, Dada itself has to be looked at in a way that nobody has really been willing to look at it for a long time. And that is that Dada was revolutionary *only* in its ideology, not in its aesthetics. You cannot say that Schwitters broke with Cubism. That's an absurdity. Cubism provided the entire syntax for everything he did. And so, if you're going to compare pop art with Dada, you would have to be very clear about what you're talking about, whether its avowed social ideology or its actual plastic accomplishments. They do not coincide by any means.

[discussion opened up to floor]

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Claes Oldenburg working on *The Month of August*. 1962. Latex on sail cloth filled with shredded foam rubber.

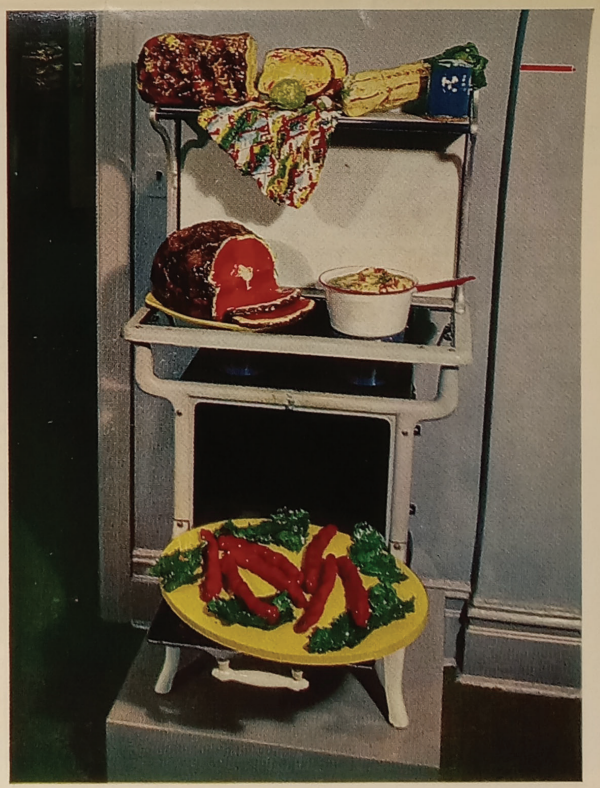
The Living Object

ELLEN H. JOHNSON

Sophisticated, vulgar, ephemeral, lasting, harsh and tender, Claes Oldenburg's work is poignantly alive. The *Two Girl's Dresses* hanging on the wall of his studio in New York's Lower East Side are as full of movement as the dresses dancing in the wind in front of the dingy shops in his neighborhood; but Oldenburg's creations have a compelling aesthetic and human presence. Unforgettable images, they are as personal, evocative and touching as Van Gogh's *Chair*. Oldenburg's painted sculpture dresses, shirts and shoes, in their subtle undulations and projections, bear traces of the human body; they are still warm with life, a life that is there through his art. While the range of his expressive force extends from gay to ominous, even the most appealing little strawberry tart has something of the blunt power which is so arresting in works like the *Big Standing Shirt*.

To an artist who declares himself "fond of materials which take the quick direct impress of life", restriction to the conventional domain of sculpture or painting would be oppressively limiting and the barriers between the two mediums, increasingly threatened in modern art, are completely dissolved in Oldenburg's work. Of painted sail cloth stuffed with foam rubber, or of enamelled plaster built up with burlap or muslin on a chicken-wire base, Oldenburg's objects are both painting and sculpture. Some are in the round and others, like the dresses, pyjamas and sewing-machine, are wall-pieces, reliefs made to be seen primarily from one side; but with their richly painted humps and hollows they are also like canvases with a curiously mobile irregular substance pushing from the back. When traditional sculpture is colored, the paint is usually "added", rather than given an independent existence as it is in Oldenburg's where the paint flows free and drips and splashes in a moving surface. Color is used as a painter uses it—arbitrarily, to construct and accentuate, or when desirable to reduce volume and space.

Like most artists of his generation (or even since the first scrap of paper was pasted to a cubist canvas) Oldenburg wants to demolish the distinctions between art and reality, at the same time



The Stove. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull, New York. Colour plate courtesy The Green Gallery.

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View of the Claes Oldenburg exhibition, Green Gallery, New York 1962.

Actually, this mistake is one that is frequently made by those who talk about art; it is as if they had been thoroughly brain-washed by certain late nineteenth-century Parnassian ideas and so assume that if any aspects of actual life appear in works of art, then they are immediately in the presence of social criticism! No wonder Ibsen insisted in vain that he was a poet and not a public health officer!

I find the ideology of the new realism repellent, although the work itself is interesting and amusing. But, more important, I'm sure that the articulation of an ideology is hazardous, and we can see this in every poetic or sympathetic evocation of the art. Precisely because there is something casual in these works, and playful, and anti-intentional, opposed to "art" values* ,any "understanding" systematized exposition of new realist purposes is bound to be destructive, tearing off all the layers of the onion. Too much must not be made explicit; excessive hymning of junk culture risks turning into a desire to preserve the detritus of society for the sake of art, and this is indefensible. To what extent does this art depend on the existence of a disgusting society? And what action toward that society is being celebrated—repetition compulsion? mockery alone? withdrawing? needing it as the victim needs the executioner? This sort of question immediately arises if you see the new realism as more sociology than play.

It may be objected that there isn't really *so* much fun or play in the new art. That, I think, is true. These new realists are not nearly so witty as the dadaists, they are not so well educated, nor so inventive, they seem to have fewer strings to their bows, they are grimly, murderously, methodical about what they do. One suspects that they may come to the end of their invention rather quickly, that like other contemporary painters, they may not be capable of much more than the same thing over and over again. How many times can Indiana's signs enchant, or Warhol's cans, or Lichtenstein's faces, or Tinguely's monstrosities, or Rosenquist's visions or Christo's packages? Will they have more to say after this, can they continue to interest us? Oldenburg, for instance, seems to me enormously gifted and I was very much amused and taken with his show at the Green Gallery last month. At the Janis Gallery his sculptures were not quite so striking; still very good, they lost something of their force in not being entirely among their own kind, in having to contest other versions of the prevailing sensibility. And it may be the case that no one of these works has the commanding power of serious art, so that one example seems small and insufficient, only the whole range will do, unless the single example has a thoroughly extreme and apocalyptic quality. Yet, Tinguely's self-destructive machine attempted that and notably failed.

Another question worth pondering is the effect on abstract expressionism of the new art. It has already attained a fashionable faddy avant-garde status, something that became increasingly a problem for abstract expressionism. Exhibitions of the new art have been sold out, there is wild buying, and although, so far as I know, no «pop art» has been tested at, say, Parke-Bernet, there is no doubt of its impact on the art market. Furthermore, although the Janis show is the first comprehensive one, and the Museum of Modern Art will follow with a similar survey, a lot of this art has been seen in New York and in Europe, and some of the artists are already *en permanence* at various galleries. Those critics who have spent the last ten years predicting the end of abstract expressionism are relieved, perhaps, to find themselves Cassandras no longer, and to see what seems to them one fad succeeding another. Other more serious and less vindictive observers might wonder nevertheless whether the abstract expressionist painters won't be threatened by this incursion into their territory. For instance, it is a perfectly genuine question whether the new realists have not coopted the element of playfulness and fun which has been characteristic of some abstract expressionist painting. One major painter has welcomed the movement in the belief that it will leave serious painters free and more flexible, that it will draw off excitement, publicity and faddish chic and give abstract expressionist painters a little more privacy, which they greatly need.

There is the further point that, given the birth and flowering and maturity of abstract expressionism, and given the brilliance of its accomplishments, younger artists who wanted to work in their on way, without using the terms or repeating the triumphs of their predecessors, would almost inevitably find something else. They rejected that «return to nature» which was offered to them repeatedly in the last decade. That, and «the new humanism», and «the new image of man» were so insistently forced on the next generation that no one can really be surprised at their independence. But equally the welcome extended to them must not be determined by the lock-step of avant-garde generations — again, ideology tends to reinforce rather than liberate — and there is no profit in giving cold-eyed appraisals. Naturally, no one can predict how durable the movement is, or what its course might be. In art, such movements, such revolutions, don't «accomplish» anything, they can't be said to «succeed» or «fail». No one can tell what effect any art movement will have upon young artists or those who are *disponible*. There is absolutely nothing to indicate whether a new spirit will have echoes and reverberations. No one could have predicted this from the outset for cubism or impressionism or Die Brücke, or the Nabis or the Pre-Rephaelites or the Barbizon School, or Surrealism or The Eight. Still less can we make any sort of statement about the group before us, especially because of all we know about the past. Quite possibly something else will, at a future time, seem to have had greater significance.

One aspect of the new art has great interest, although it may not be the one that is most suggestive. This is the return of the ignored, repressed, forgotten, or exhausted object. Now, one can say that the object has not really returned, because it appears in such distortion and disintegration, so vulgarized, so debauched. This is of course true, and, furthermore, the return of the object is not a guarantee of anything at all, and the new art should not in any way be congratulated for it. The only reason for noting the reappearance (and it is not true for all the new realists, only some of them) is that it may imply a new kind of concentration of visual energies. The visual and optical and consequently imaginative effect of looking at represented objects, even when represented in distortion, is clearly something different from the effect of looking at the enormous and absolute expanse of a Rothko or Newman picture.

* *When anyone speaks of the "anti-art" aspect of new realism or of assemblage, I always wonder: shouldn't these works, then, be shown elsewhere? Shouldn't Oldenburg really be at the A & P, Thiebaud at Child's, Arman at the plumber's, César, or Chamberlain at the local auto body shop? If this art were really the social criticism it's supposed to be, that would be the thing to do!*

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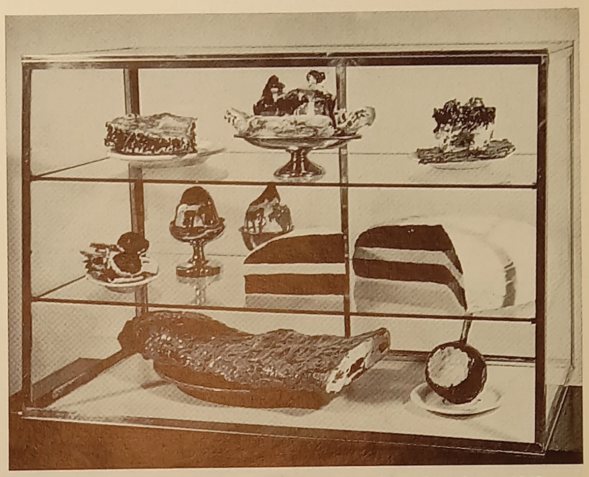
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insisting on the aesthetic autonomy of the created object. As he isolates fragments of his experiences and fixes on them obsessively, he creates images of shocking intensity, more powerful than reality. Thus, the deeper the realism the less illusion and the more startling the creation. By his insistence on both—original object and created object—he recharges the age-old dialogue between art and reality. In his words, "Recreating experience is the creation of another reality, a reality according to the human experience, occupying the same space as the other, more hostile, reality of nature. A reality with tears, or as if a piece of pie had attained a state of moral responsibility."

Oldenburg is a deeply sensuous artist, appealing as much to touch, taste and smell as to the loftier sense of sight. The *Slice of Chocolate Cake* with its thick caramel icing is so luscious that one's mouth may well water in contemplating it. He pushes the realism (and the humor) further by pricing the merchandise in his "Store" at $69.95, etc. and by his manner of presenting it: men's shirts and shorts in cardboard boxes, pastries in glass cases and on little serving dishes, a ham and a tray of frankfurters and a kettle of stew on a stove. In one sense, you can't get more realistic than that, and such extreme realism makes more pungent the ironic realization that these are *created* objects: far from being sweet, sticky and melting, the cake is nasty, solid plaster. (Not a new joke, but still a funny one to people who enjoy marble sugarloaves.) No one would be any more tempted to bite into an Oldenburg pie, even those in natural scale, than into a Cézanne apple.

Always conscious of the evocative power of scale, Oldenburg plays with it, sometimes playing it straight and natural and sometimes putting the objects or fragments of objects in startling, haunting over-size. Something of the effect he wanted to get in installing his 11-foot long ice-cream cone and 4x7-foot hamburger in the Green Gallery was that of big cars displayed in shop-windows uptown. The monumental scale of his new pieces not only affords Oldenburg the challenge, so essential to contemporary artists, to work big, but it also underlines the basic irony in the battle between natural object and created object. As there is a give and take between reality and art, between Oldenburg's experience and his recreation of it, so is there a constant interchange between materials and form, each giving play to the other. (Likewise, his "Happenings" spring from his plastic art as it grows out of them, poetically, spatially and technically.)

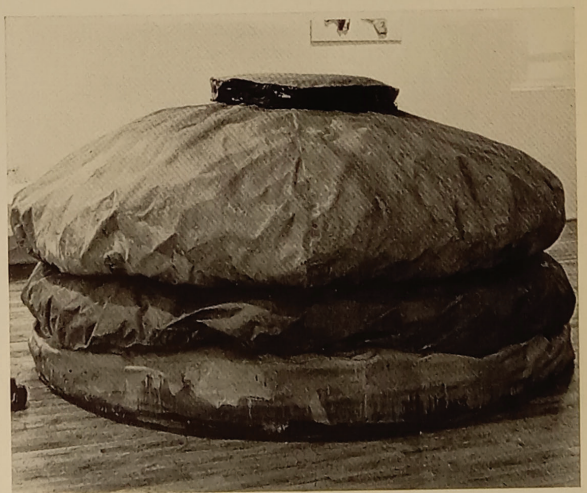
Scaled to size or expanded majestically, Oldenburg's pies, sandwiches and cakes are not intended to attack the materialist-centered American in the way in which Hess interprets Thiebaud's dessert-filled canvases as "major social criticism preaching revulsion by isolating the American food habit". Oldenburg is not throwing the pies back in the public's face; he is not so much condemning us or "urging us . . . to leave the new Gomorrah . . . to flee to the desert and eat locusts and pray for faith" as he is sharing with us his personal experience through the vitality of his art. Granted that part of his experience, on which he comments consciously or unconsciously, is the immense, vulgar and wonderful American love of things, that is not the totality of his reference (let alone the reality of his art). "I am for an art that takes its form from the lines of life, that twists and extends impossibly and accumulates and spits and drips, and is sweet and stupid as life itself." (see his complete, poetic statement for the catalogue of *Environments, Situations, Spaces* show, Martha Jackson Gallery, May-June, 1961) Although one cannot deny that the rough, even violent power of his imagery may harbor a caustic appraisal, as well as open acceptance, of whatever is, still Oldenburg does not preach. He is both too detached and too committed in his art to do that. His subjects and materials are chosen because they are at hand, they are his, and in their cheapness and immediacy they are the most fitting tools for his art in which he celebrates so eloquently the life of the city, dirty, cheap, absurd, ephemeral, always on the move going nowhere. He loves his environment as tenderly and bitterly as Beckett loves Estragon and Vladimir and he takes us with him through the "harsh, sweet poetry" of his work. After seeing Oldenburg's Store, or a performance of his theatre, one feels compelled to walk and linger through the Lower East Side, suddenly aware of the curious, tawdry beauty of store-windows full of stale hors d'oeuvres, hamburgers on Rheingold ads, stockinged legs—of five big old caps standing in a stately row on wooden mounts, of human cast-offs wandering aimlessly or hopefully loitering around the noisy bars. As a poet, Oldenburg does not speak directly of human beings, but their presence inescapably haunts his art. To walk along East



Vitrine with assorted American-type victuals by Claes Oldenburg. 1962. Green Gallery.



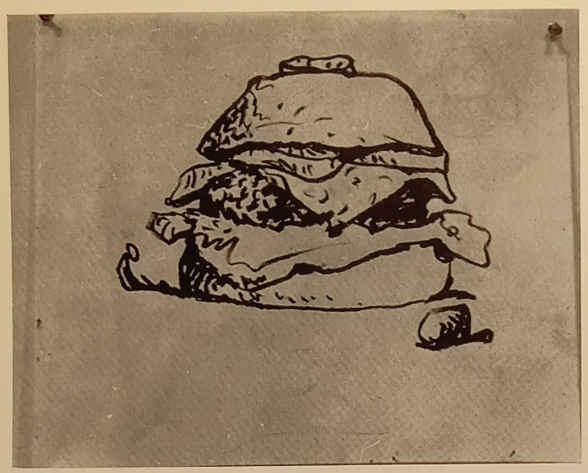
TV Dinner. 1962. Painted enamel on metal tray. Green Gallery.



Double Hamburger. 1962. Painted sailcloth filled with foam rubber. Diameter 84 inches. Collection Museum of Modern Art.

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Hamburger. Crayon drawing. 1962. 13¼×16 inches. Green Gallery.

Third Street is to walk with Oldenburg—it is somewhat like the sensation when driving around Aix and l'Estaque of driving through a Cézanne canvas. But with Oldenburg the sensation is at once more scattered and more immediate and the young American's transformation of his environment is more shocking and strange.

Immediate and ephemeral as Oldenburg's objects may be in character and material, they fix and hold the warmth of the moment, capturing "the timeless with time". Moreover, his objects are permanent symbols of human life, of simple, essential activities: bread, shirts, shoes; sewing-machine, iron, cash register. On first impression the cash register and other "machines" in the Store looked surprisingly nostalgic and old-fashioned for a man so committed to the present and the ephemeral, but it soon became apparent that it is not so much a matter of industrial design which separates them from the latest IBM sterility as it is their used, lived-with character, not to mention their formal exuberance and sobriety. And it is not Park Avenue but the ragged, tattered human and paper-filled streets of lower New York whose sights, smell and feel Oldenburg so powerfully evokes.

The emotive content of Oldenburg's work is heightened by the importance which he gives to the feeling of time. In the shirts and shoes there is a quality of the immediate past, of the present in the dresses blowing in the wind or the icing running down the side of a cake, of the immediate future in the expectation contained in a letter, or the tempting promise of the pastries and in the whole idea of a store, with infinite possibilities of finding exciting, desirable things. Oldenburg's time range is close and concentrated; immediate past, present, and immediate future are all elements of an extended present, sustained in his objects (as well as his Happenings). The immediacy, the look of life on the wing, recalls the work of the earlier New York painters as do many other elements of Oldenburg's art (giving the lie to those critics who see him as revolting against de Kooning, etc.): the expansive size of the work, its subjective, autobiographical nature, the search for identity in the act of painting, its dripping, lively physical character and its harsh, impure expressiveness.

It has frequently been pointed out that the older generation's projection of the picture's space out into our world, engulfing the spectator and demolishing the barrier between him and the work of art, finds its natural outcome in the spatial Environments and Happenings of the younger artists. Among Oldenburg's work in these mediums are *Snapshots from the City, The Street,* The Store, and the Ray Gun Theatre which presented five pieces, each in two versions and two performances, during the winter and spring of 1962. (Ray Gun is a name Oldenburg began using in 1960 in a show with Dine at the Judson Gallery. "It's a name I imagined. Spelled backwards it sounds like New York and it's all sorts of things. It's me and it has mystic overtones." He calls his studio the Ray Gun Manufacturing Company.) For each of his 1962 Happenings (he tends to prefer the word "performances"), Oldenburg, his wife and other members of the cast usually spent three evenings talking it over, exchanging ideas, working out the time, the objects and the spatial compositions. One of his problems is to give his performers free rein while still controlling the action and character of the whole production. In his performances, people are the material which Oldenburg's sensibilities work on, people and objects, in absurd, touching, strange and commonplace events. Although, in his aesthetic detachment, he treats people as objects and emotions as objects, his work is deeply felt and moving.

In the Ray Gun Theatre there are no professional actors, no dialogue and no script, but no Happening is completely unplanned or lacking in sound and action. There is no audience in the traditional sense, only a small almost exclusively "in" group (limited to about 35) jammed together in a narrow passage so physically involved with the performers that one suddenly feels long hair being brushed in one's face or a leg dangling in front of one's nose or swill splashing on one's ankles. It is messy, vulgar and enchanting. The spectator is transfixed as at a circus, expecting and welcoming the unexpected. It is even more like the ancient mysteries; the spectator's participation is emotional, sensory, mystic. Oldenburg's pieces are performed for a public of initiates, often in tense darkness suddenly broken by startling light as something happens in each of the three sections, but no one can see exactly what is happening because distance and angle obscure two of the areas and the third is too shockingly close, surrounding, suffocating. What happens cannot be known; it can only be felt by those who are over-sensitive to things, colors, shapes, to darkness and light, to sound and silence, to movement and suspension of time. Far from primitive, Happenings are the mysteries of the sophisticated.

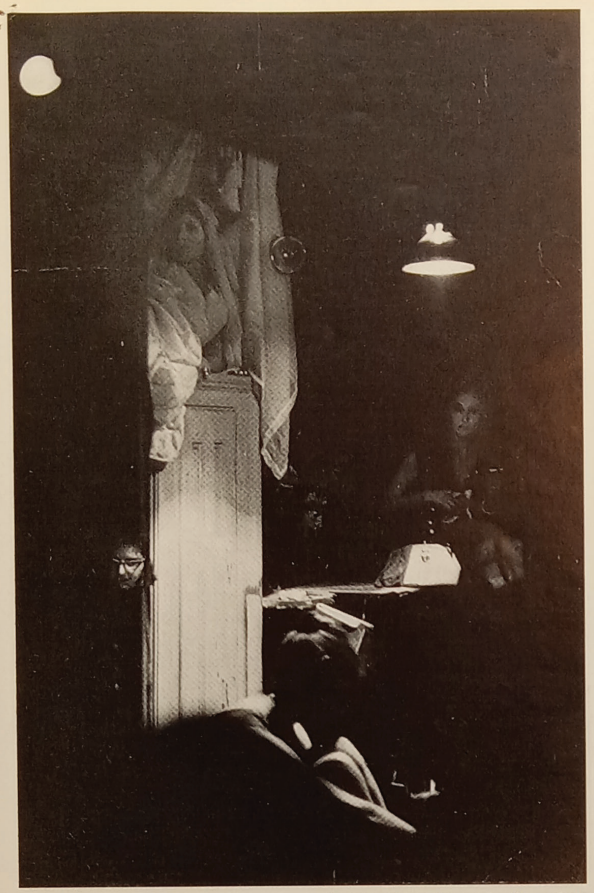
Sensitivity to the absurd is a mark of extreme sophistication and Happenings have obviously some of the same roots as the Theatre of the Absurd, but they are "farther out" and more abstract. In the Theatre of the Absurd persons lose importance but they are not reduced completely to objects and both intellect and sentiment somehow still work together in a coherent way; the *Bald Soprano* is a highly polished, inescapable satire. In the Ray Gun repertory some of the pieces have a little plot but most have none at all and things rarely "mean anything"; certainly they never mean the same thing to everyone. Improvised in appearance, impermanent and irrelevant, they are over much too soon, about 30 minutes. One of the performances ended with a girl dressed in a little blue burlesque costume, passing pink ice-cream directly from her fingers to the spectators' mouths. This outrageous act was a pretty little piece of irony, spoofing one of the basic ideas of Happenings—audience participation. Producing a Happening may sound a little like having someone direct The Game, a kind of charade which we used to play, but the Ray Gun Theatre is conceived, directed and presented by an artist who creates living, moving sculpture with people, objects and events as he does with foam rubber, cloth, latex, chicken-wire, plaster and enamel in his no less moving "still life" sculpture. Man is no longer the measure of things, but with Oldenburg things still measure the man because, as Picasso observed, "The artist is a receptacle for emotions, regardless of whether they spring from heaven, from earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing face, or from a spider's web. That is why he must not distinguish between things. *Quartiers de noblesse* do not exist among objects."

* *

Although he was born in 1929, Claes Oldenburg considers himself only "about 26 in painting age" since he got a late start in his profession. Born in Stockholm, he was brought up in Chicago where his father was the Swedish Consul-General. He graduated from Yale University, majoring in English, and worked first as a newspaper reporter in Chicago, an experience which was of considerable significance in the development of his art. He then studied painting at the Chicago Art Institute and moved to New York in 1956. He had his first one-man show in 1959 at the Judson Gallery, where the next year he exhibited 'The Street' together with Jim Dine's 'The House'. Called the Ray Gun Show, this exhibition concluded with a series of Happenings, among them Oldenburg's first performance, 'Snapshots from the City' in which he was assisted by his wife, Pat, who helps him a great deal in his work, in the sewing, etc. He took part in the two 'New Forms, New Media' shows at the Martha Jackson Gallery, spring and fall, 1960 and in her 'Environments, Situations, Spaces' exhibition, May-June, 1961, where he presented the first version of his Store. In the fall he transformed his studio into 'The Store' open for the month of December (in cooperation with the Green Gallery). During the winter and spring of 1962 he presented several performances at his Ray Gun Theatre and one in Dallas, Texas where he went to install 'The Store' in the "1961" group show at the Dallas Museum for Contemporary Arts. He had a one-man show at the Green Gallery, Sept. 24—Oct. 20, and was included in the New Realists exhibition at the Janis Gallery in November, 1962.

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Store Days, Version I. A performance. at the Ray Gun Theatre in the artist's studio, February 23-24, 1962. *Photo by Robert R. R. McElroy.*



Big Standing Shirt. 1961. Enamel on plaster construction. 46×31 inches. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull.



Large piece in foreground, *Cake-Pie.* Collection Jon Nicolas Streep, New York. On wall, *August Calendar.*

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JUNE 23, 1965 NY POST



In the Art Galleries

JRVING SANDLER

In a number of reviews on Pop-Art in these columns, I have dismissed it as a minor diversion after two decades of heroic art activity. To present an opposing point of view, I interviewed Henry Geldzahler, Assistant Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum, who generally favors this tendency in current art.

Q. How would you define Pop-Art?

A. Pop-Art is a new two-dimensional landscape painting—the artist responding specifically to his visual environment. The artist is looking around again and painting what he sees. We live in an urban society, ceaselessly exposed to mass media. Our primary visual data is for the most part second hand. Is it then not logical that art be made out of what we see? Has it not been true in the past? There is an Ogden Nash quatrain that I feel is appositet:

I think that I shall never see
A billboard lovely as a tree.
Perhaps, unless the billboards fall,
*I'll never see a tree at all.**

Well, the billboards haven't fallen, and we can no longer paint trees with great contemporary relevance. So we paint billboards.

Q. Way did Pop-Art emerge at this particular time?

A. It is always a simple matter to read inevitability back into events after they have happened, but from our vantage point today, it seems that Pop-Art was inevitable. The popular press, especially and most typically, Life magazine, the movie closeup, black and white, Technicolor and wide screen, the billboard extravaganzas and, finally, television have made a blatant appeal to our eye All this has made available to society—and thus to the artist—an imagery so pervasive, persistent and compulsive that it had to be noticed.

After the heroic years of Abstract Expressionism, a younger generation of artists is creating a new American regionalism. But this time, due to the mass media, the regionalism is nationwide, and even exportable to Europe, for we have carefully reconstructed Europe in our own image since 1945.

Q. Is Pop-Art an extension of or a reaction against Abstract Expressionism?

A. Both Clement Greenberg and Herold Rosenberg have written that increasingly in the 20th century art has carried on a dialogue with itself, art leads to art, and with internal sequence. This is still true, even with the external references Pop-Art makes to the observed world.

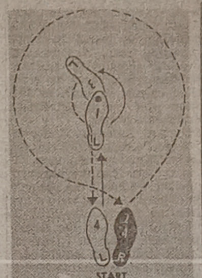
The best and most developed post-Abstract Expressionist painting is the big single-image painting, which comes in part out of Barnet Newman's work. I am thinking of Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland, Raymond Parker and Frank Stella among others. Surely this painting is reflected in the work of Lichtenstein, Warhol and Rosenquist. Each of these painters inflates his own compulsive images.

The esthetic permission to project their immense Pop-Art images derives in part from a keen awareness of the most advanced contemporary art. And thus Pop-Art can be seen to make sense and to have a place in the wider movement of recent art.

Q. Is Pop-Art a movement?

A. About two years ago I saw the work of Wesselmann, Warhol, Rosenquist and Lichtenstein in their studios. They were working independently, unaware of each other, but with a common source of imagery. Within a year and a half they had had shows and had been dubbed a movement. This is instant art history—art history made so aware of itself that it leans to get ahead of art.

The great body of imagery from which the Pop-Artists draw is a common body, but the style of each is unmistakable. The choice of color, composition, brushstroke, the hardness of edge—all those are personal no matter how much the Pop-Artists may wish for anonymity in an attempt to emulate the material of their inspiration—the anonymous mass media.



START

"Fox Trot" by Andy Warhol (1962), is 6 feet long, 4½ feet wide, and is meant to be displayed on the floor.

The Pop-Artists remain individual, recognizable and separate. The new art draws on everyday objects and images. They are isolated from their ordinary context and typified and intensified. What we are left with is a heightened awareness of the object and image, *and* of the context from which they have been ripped—that is, our environment.

Q. What is the attitude of the Pop-Artist to his society.

A If we look for attitudes of approval or disapproval of our culture in this art, of satire or glorification of our society, we are over-simplifying. Surely there is more than satire in Hogarth, Daumier, Toulouse-Lautrec. There is satirical aspect in much of this art, but it is only one aspect.

Pop-Art is immediately contemporary. We have not yet assimilated its new visual content and style. The question of whether it is great art is not answerable, or even interesting just now. I think the point is *not* to make an immediate, ultimate evaluation but to admit the possibility that this subject matter and these techniques are and can be legitimate subject matter and techniques of art. We must realize that Pop-Art did not fall from the heavens fully developed. It is an expression of our contemporary sensibility aware of our contemporary environment and growing naturally out of the art of the recent past.

Q. Do you feel that it is unfair to hold the success of Pop-Art against it?

A. Why are we so mistrustful of an art because it is readily acceptable? Is it because we are still working with myths developed in the years of alienation, when it was felt that great art has always been ignored and that any art which is readily accepted cannot be serious?

The New York School has broken through and has won acceptance for the high and serious purpose of American painting. There is now a community of collectors, critics, art dealers, and museum people—a rather large community—that has been educated and rehearsed to the point that there is longer any shock of art.

For the first time in this century, there is a class of American collectors, that patronizes its advanced artists. The American artist has an audience, and there exists a machinery—dealers, critics, museums, collectors—to keep things moving and people on their toes. Yet, a nostalgia persists for the good old days when the artist was alienated, misunderstood and unpatronized. The new situation is different. People *do* buy art. In this sense too, there is no longer, or at least not at the moment, such a thing as an avant-garde. Avant-garde must be defined in terms of audience, and here we have an audience more than ready to keep up with the artist.

Publicity and popularity, however, have put Pop-Art at a great disadvantage. The work has been overexposed in museums, galleries and magazines. It will take a great capacity for survival if these artists are to continue to paint and to paint better in the awful glare of publicity.

The literary qualities in their work have been seized before the formal problems have been researched and adequately solved. If this painting is to survive, and I think it will, it will be against tremendous odds. I am friendly to its vitality, to many of its works and to its promise. I only hope we let it live.

* Copyright 1932 by Ogden Nash.

game of substitutions and that distaste for mere picturing which first became a powerful force in painting and sculpture around the middle of the nineteenth century. The most pervasive term in modern art is "New Realities." It has been used as the title of vanguard art magazines, of art movements (both abstract and ultra-representational), and of group exhibitions. Painters and sculptors in every mode, from Albers to Shahn, have applied to themselves the name "Realist" (being "New" usually goes without saying). Since it signifies something different for everyone who uses it, the label is meaningless. Its popularity does testify, however,

pie is to dispel illusion, it might more properly be called a criticism object than an art object. To emphasize his point, in case anyone missed it, the artist (critic) suspends from the ceiling of his gallery a pair of denim pants about size 64 (presumably one who eats six-foot pies will need the largest pants he can get).

This is art comically talking about contemporary art in terms of things—a kind of farce ballet, with credits due to "Ballet Mécanique" and "The Gold Rush." The performance should be appreciated by anyone who has reflected on the Pygmalion fable or experienced the shock of running into Mr. Schweppes,



Looking toward

the holidays—
a Young New Yorker
finds Jeane Scott's
soft wool-and-mohair
dress. An overblouse on
a camisole-topped skirt
in yellow or turquoise. Ours
alone. Sizes 3 to 15. 50.00
At all Lord & Taylor stores

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Rosenberg (NYorker Nov. 24 1962

THE ART GALLERIES

The Game of Illusion

IN earlier times, the hero was "represented" by a statue of marble or granite. In Moscow today, the tomb of Lenin contains the actual body of the leader as a statue. The tomb is the world's greatest collage; by means of it physical reality is converted into a powerful substance of fantasy. Such transformation of fact by displacing it into fiction, and of fiction by giving it a setting of fact, is the specifically twentieth-century form of illusionism. "The noises of waves, revolvers, typewriters, sirens, or airplanes," explains Erik Satie, a contemporary of the Cubists, in commenting on his ballet "Parade," significantly subtitled "Ballet Réaliste," "are in music of the same character as the bits of newspapers, painted wood grain, and other everyday objects that the Cubists frequently employ to localize objects and masses in Nature." Another contemporary of the First World War era, Jean Arp, contended that his sculptures ought to be come upon as one comes upon a stone polished by a river; that is to say, that his creations were on a par with those of geology.



Given the enormous dissemination of simulated nature through window displays, motion-picture and television screens, public and private photography, magazine advertisements, art reproductions, car and bus posters, five-and-ten art, it is plain that in no other period or place has the visible world been to such an extent both duplicated and anticipated by fictions. Perhaps the ghostliness of our surroundings has augmented both the fascination of art with the game of substitutions and that distaste for mere picturing which first became a powerful force in painting and sculpture around the middle of the nineteenth century. The most pervasive term in modern art is "New Realities." It has been used as the title of vanguard art magazines, of art movements (both abstract and ultra-representational), and of group exhibitions. Painters and sculptors in every mode, from Albers to Shahn, have applied to themselves the name "Realist" (being "New" usually goes without saying). Since it signifies something different for everyone who uses it, the label is meaningless. Its popularity does testify, however, to the belief, all but universal among twentieth-century artists, that a work of art ought to be a thing added to the world of things rather than a reflection of things that already exist. In short, while the work of art today is not illusory in the sense of being a representation, it is of a nature to give rise to new forms of mystification.

Imagine that a cut of pie manufactured by Ma So-and-So, Inc., is reproduced in plaster in a display case that also contains a show card on which the pie is painted in colors and tones so luscious you can taste the blueberries. To extend this game of the real pie that is ersatz and the painted pie that is full of the flavors of memory, the artist creates, out of plastic or fabric, a segment of pie that looks like fabric, not pie, that is utterly non-suggestive of flavor, and that is six feet long. This "sculpture" is an illusory object, which—since it creates no illusion—is, logically, reality itself. Yet a piece of plastic or fabric pie is not real, either. It is the bastard child of illusion, and its only excuse for existence is to enter into the processes of the aesthetic imagination during the past century, so one would not be inconsistent in considering this inedible non-likeness of pie pure art. The only hindrance is that the pie does not look like art; it is purposely not like art any more than it is like pie, for the quality of its looks is not the point of it. It exists as a demonstration model in an unspoken lecture on the history of illusionism as it occurs in both painting and the streets of big cities. Since the purpose of the pie is to dispel illusion, it might more properly be called a criticism object than an art object. To emphasize his point, in case anyone missed it, the artist (critic) suspends from the ceiling of his gallery a pair of denim pants about size 64 (presumably one who eats six-foot pies will need the largest pants he can get).

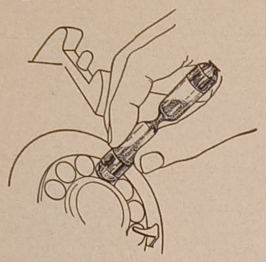
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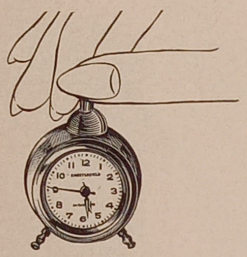
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Hammacher Schlemmer



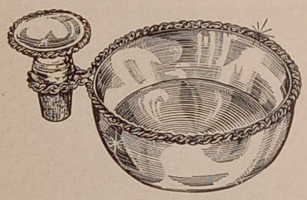
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Three minute timer dialer of sterling silver and glass..6.50



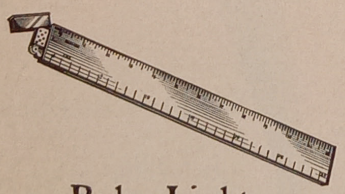
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All above items free delivery within 50 miles, (and all L.I.) beyond, add 35¢.

Hammacher Schlemmer

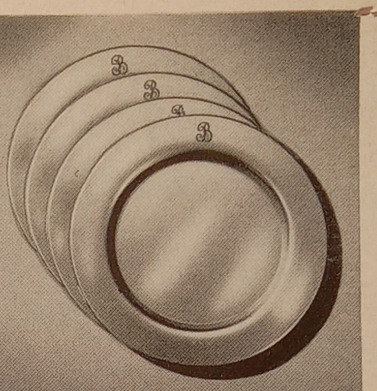
145 East 57th Street, New York 22, N. Y.

parted whiskers and all, not in an advertisement but face to face on Fifth Avenue. In a civilization in which public events and personages exist for us primarily through the communications media, in which (indeed) events often are made to occur exclusively for those media, discourse on illusionism is entirely relevant.

The pie and the pants I have described are, with perhaps some difference of detail, the creations of Claes Oldenburg, the most skillful gamester of illusion among the New Realists, as the creators of this type of art are named by the Europeans, with paranoiac persistence, or "pop" artists, as they are called here and in England. Yesterday's generation of illusionists was headed by Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns.

A FEW weeks ago, on Halloween, Sidney Janis, whose gallery represents de Kooning, Rothko, Guston, and other top Abstract Expressionists, opened a two-locations exhibition of "factual" (i.e., illusionistic) painting and sculpture. Under these auspices, and after fifteen years of the austerity of abstract art, the new New Realism hit the New York art world with the force of an earthquake. Within a week, tremors had spread to art centers throughout the country. A good part of the impact is attributable to the fact that illusionistic art is easy to talk about, in contrast to abstraction, whose rhetoric has been reused until it is all but exhausted. This is a powerful advantage for the new work, since much of contemporary painting and sculpture is art only through having sidled, leaped, or been smuggled into the universe of art words.

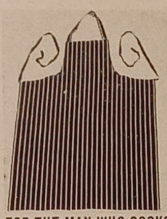
Coupled with the sudden availability of language was the sense that art history was being made, in that it was from the leading emporium of American abstract art that these appetite-wrecking collations and misplaced home furnishings, advertisements, and comic strips were peeking. Exhibitions with much the same content had been given in the past few years by the galleries of individual "pop" artists (the Castelli, Green, and Allan Stone galleries), by Martha Jackson, and by the Museum of Modern Art, in its massive "Assemblage" exhibition. The visual puns of Rauschenberg and Johns, Larry Rivers' adaptations of playing cards and cigarette packages, and (before these) the refined associationism of Joseph Cornell's "boxes" had connected American illusionist vanguardism with the "ready-mades" of Duchamp, Schwitters, Man Ray, and other artists of the First World War pe-



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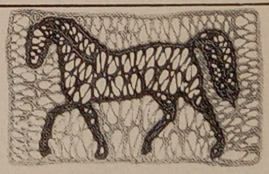


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riod. But with the Janis Gallery converted to the "pops," art politics sensed the buildup of a crisis. Was this the long-heralded dethronement of Abstract Expressionism? Conversation turned to speculation about treachery, secret motives, counter-strategies. What was generally disregarded was that this gallery had prospered by following the decisions of art history without handicapping itself by preferences of taste or ideology. With the New Realism, the Sidney Janis Gallery is venturing for the first time to create a bit of belated art history on its own account—an undertaking not unusual in the present art situation.

The New Realists exhibition proves on analysis to be itself an "assemblage" uniting half a dozen tendencies of the art of the past fifty years. Most of the European exhibits, amounting to more than half the total, and a few of the American had no connection with the theme set in the show by the new United States anti-appeal art packages. Some, like Enrico Baj's "Style Furniture," Mario Schifano's "Propaganda," and Tano Festa's "New Shutter" (these artists are all Italian), merely employ everyday images and surfaces to create works of art in the conventions of Cubism, Expressionism, and Neo-Plasticism; the other day a newsreel showed a young Parisian carting off old billboards to make into new art. Yves Klein's sponge sculpture and reliefs, Peter Agostini's plaster clothesline, and Robert Moskowitz's "Untitled," a handsome gray-on-gray using a glued-down window shade with wrinkles as its upper half, are in the same category of work in accepted art forms created out of odd stuff. In contrast to these things-as-art, other works in the exhibition do not belong because they are simply *things*, without overtones of dream or the power of self-comment. These include accumulations of swords and faucets by Arman, Martial Raysse's "Hygiène de la Vision," and Jean Tinguely's skeletal radio receiver, "WNYR 7," all from France. One of Tinguely's two "Works in Progress," a refrigerator that razzes the spectator who opens it, does, however, belong; so, too, do the ominous cord-and-wrapping-paper bundles of another Frenchman, Christo. In the past, the Europeans have had a much more sophisticated visual vocabulary of illusion than the Americans, while we have plunged into the dream-fact and, as they say, made it work, from millions of chock-full-o'-nuts sandwiches to a lighted waterfall on top of a Broadway building. Perhaps the organizers of the show were hampered in their choice of

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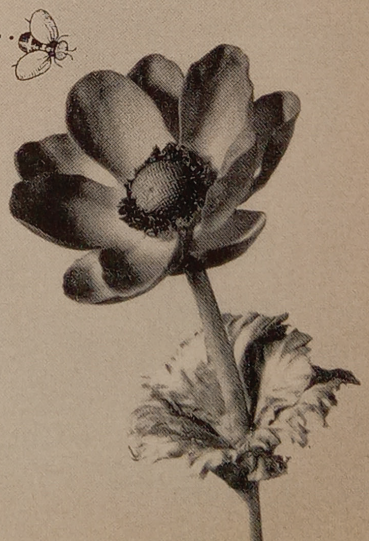


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European examples by putting to work again that nice old term New Realism.

Among the Americans in the show, the most imaginative and critically conscious are Oldenburg, Jim Dine, and George Segal. All three use paint and modelling materials to cause the idea of art to abut upon commonplace objects without lending glamour to them. Oldenburg's plastic-steeped ladies' underwear in the window of the store Janis rented to supplement his gallery for this occasion brings to Fifty-seventh Street shoppers an atmosphere not very different from that of the contents of windows on Fourteenth Street. The essential distinction between the objects as objects is the art reference of the Oldenburgs, provided by the identification of their maker as an artist and the place of exhibition as an art gallery. This is a routing of art qualities that goes far beyond the famous "White on White."

Dine incorporates a lawnmower into art by leaning it against a canvas marked with some Impressionist strokes of green paint, which has also splashed down on the mower. Similarly, carpenters' tools, soap dishes, and a lead pipe become art by hanging or jutting from painted surfaces. The implication is: art is paint and canvas and anything connected (literally) with it—a formula that satirizes the abstract painting of the past ten years.

Segal's plaster family sits around a wooden dining-room table, one member holding in his plaster hand a beat-up aluminum coffeepot. The imprecisely realistic creatures suffer from the fatiguing weight of actual wood and metal, and in this group and in his strangely anguished "Bus Driver," flanked by a genuine coin receptacle, the game of illusion reaches a pitch of pathos that belongs equally to sculpture and the theatre. Segal is the only exhibitor who uses the new illusory combination to create a new feeling rather than as a commentary on art.

Old-fashioned street and shop signs and the patterns stencilled on packing cases arouse in Robert Indiana a nostalgia for Americana. Tom Wesselmann reiterates the common point about art and fake by pasting a romantic "fine-art" portrait behind the cutout of the smiling lady who offers standard brands, hamburgers, and hot dogs. Like James Rosenquist's collages, this is advertising art advertising itself as art that hates advertising. Wayne Thiebaud is a competent painter who depicts rows of sandwiches, salads, and ice-cream sundaes in perspective instead of the more customary rows of trees and shrubs. Art lovers who discuss Thiebaud in terms of "paint-



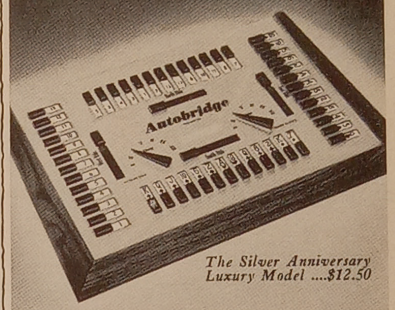
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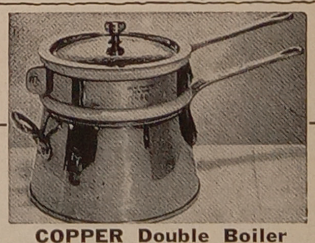
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erly" qualities will miss his point, which is to be painterly but with "no artificial color added." Something similar is true of Roy Lichtenstein, an academic draftsman retooled to blow up comic strips, and of Andy Warhol, who does columns of Campbell's Soup labels in narcotic reiteration, like a joke without humor told over and over again, until it carries a hint of menace.

The new American illusionist contrivances have a deeper identification with commercial art than the plagiarism or adaptation of its images. They share the impersonality of advertising-agency art-department productions. They are entirely cerebral; the hand of the artist has no part in the evolution of the work but is the mere executor of the idea man's command, though in this case the artist himself is the idea man. Nor is the self of the artist engaged by the process of creation. As a phase in the history of modern illusionism, the American contributions to this exhibition, with the exception of Segal's, represent a hyper-objectivism that keeps the game of fictions in the air without a landing spot in reality. If, as some have maintained, there is terror in this art, it comes from its irremediable deadpan—a grin in porcelain.

The attempt to purge Abstract Expressionism by polemics against it in the art pages of the press produced nothing more than ideological nagging. The purging of art by works of art based on a different premise is, however, always vitalizing. Those artists, dealers, and curators who have functioned on the assumption that the look of Action Painting is sufficient to authenticate a canvas have been put on notice by the new illusionist objects that any image, including Coca-Cola lettering or the numbers on a pinball machine, can be equally viable. In sum, there is no greater aesthetic virtue in copying a de Kooning than in copying the design on a beer can. If you do either, you are talking to the audience about itself, not necessarily engaging in creation. In dramatizing this principle, the new art is a contribution to art criticism. —Harold Rosenberg

•

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Introduction and Commentary
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Store Days:
Documents from The Store (1961) and Ray Gun Theater (1962)
selected by Claes Oldenburg
and Emmett Williams.
Something Else Press, 152 pp., $10.00

Hilton Kramer

Claes Oldenburg is, in several important respects, the most appealing artist to have appeared on the New York scene in the last decade. Beside the



increasingly constricted concerns of the abstractionists, his zany sculptures and offbeat designs for monuments offer a robust engagement with the world we actually encounter beyond the perimeter of the art gallery, the museum, and the millionaire's fancy pad. There is a comic energy in the work that suggests that art, contrary to what we had been led to believe, has not lost its capacity to intervene in the affairs of life—to criticize, make jokes, sentimentalize, exalt, and deplore. In Oldenburg's art, the emotions of the *homme moyen sensual* rarely, if ever, defer to the interests of the detached visual technician intent upon distilling from the plethora of workaday sensation some parsimonious aesthetic essence. There is an openness to experience, to the social environment, and to the mind's free-wheeling tendency to proliferate fantasy in the face of these that, in the context of so much bloodless formalism, would be liberating even if the results were not so amusing.

But amusing Oldenburg certainly is, and it is essential to his art that it be amusing. (Whether it *remains* amusing is another question.) Modern art has been, more often than not, a solemn enterprise, and among the self-appointed guardians of modernist purity in the 1960s, this tradition of solemnity has been carried to almost unimaginable extremes of aridity, humorlessness, and farcical self-importance. Oldenburg's art amuses precisely because it mocks this solemnity with such devastating and insouciant authority.

Not only has Oldenburg upset conventional expectations (including those of "advanced" taste) about the way objects and the environment are to be treated in a work of art, but he effectively alters the tone in which the artist speaks to the public. He plays the clown. At the Museum of Modern Art's large retrospective exhibition of Oldenburg's work this fall, the faces in the crowds of spectators were happy faces—smiling, relaxed, often actually laughing. At the very altar of high artistic seriousness, Oldenburg invited the crowd to abandon its pieties and have a good time, and the crowd responded with enthusiasm.

All of this—the openness, the clowning, the energy, and the cheerful embrace of the mundane—is, as I say, very appealing. Yet the exhibition itself was a lightweight affair. Oldenburg's comic talents were abundantly in evidence wherever one turned, and the jokes had not noticeably staled. But as soon as one got past the early work and really examined the "major" pieces of the last seven years, the jokes tended to reduce themselves to a single joke—indeed, to something uncomfortably resembling a formula. The small made large, the hard made soft, the trivial transformed into the monumental: the virtuoso changes wrung on these basic strategies could not conceal

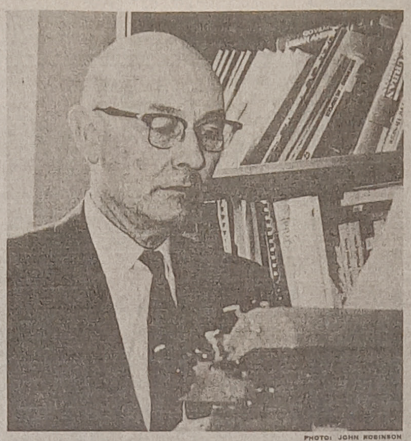


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a certain poverty of conception. Between the amusing giant hamburger (seven feet in diameter) and giant piece of cake (nine feet long), both made of foam-rubber-filled canvas in 1962, and the soft bathroom fixtures of 1966, made of vinyl, wood, etc., there are changes of material and scale, but conceptually the work rehearses the same comic scenario over and over again. The effect of this repetition was to make the exhibition as a whole seem a good deal smaller than the actual space it occupied. Despite the extravagant and infectious display of high spirits, Oldenburg's art showed itself to have a fatally limited range.

It is true, of course, that most large exhibitions devoted to the work of a single artist over a short period of time tend to diminish rather than enlarge our sense of the artist's possibilities. Only the most fecund genius can withstand the kind of exhaustive inventories that museums now lavish on talents of every size, and in this respect Oldenburg—whose exhibition contained over 200 items from scarcely more than a decade—was only paying the price of his current celebrity. What this exhaustive exhibition did make unmistakably clear, however, was the extent to which the nature of Oldenburg's ambition had significantly changed over the past decade. From an art founded originally on alienation—on a profound moral disgust with the established values of bourgeois culture and with a deeply critical attitude toward the way advanced art functioned as a coefficient of those values—Oldenburg has moved in a very short time to an art that accomodates itself with remarkable ease to a form of bourgeois entertainment.

As a measure of the change that has overtaken Oldenburg's work, consider this passage (written in 1961) from *Store Days*:

> If I could only forget the notion of art entirely I really don't think you can win. Duchamp is ultimately labeled art too. The bourgeois scheme is that they wish to be disturbed from time to time, they like that, but then they envelop you, and that little bit is over, and they are ready for the next. There even exists within the b. values a code of possibilities for disturbance, certain "crimes" which it requires some courage to do but which will eventually be rewarded within the b. scheme. B. values are human weakness, a civilization built on human weakness, non-resistance. They are disgusting. There are many difficult things to do within the b. values, but I would like to find some way to take a totally outside position. Bohemia is bourgeois. The beat is bourgeois—their values are pure sentimentality—the country, the good heart, the fallen man, the honest man, the gold-hearted whore, etc. They would never think f. ex. of making the city a value of good.
>
> Possibly art is doomed to be bourgeois. Two possible escapes from the bourgeois are 1. aristocracy and 2. intellect, where art never thrives too well. There again I am talking as if I want to create art outside b. values. Perhaps this can't be done, but why should I even want to create "art"—that's the notion I've got to get rid of.

Oldenburg was never, of course, rid of the "art" notion either then, when he was working on his "Store"—an actual store he opened on the Lower East Side in which to exhibit and sell his painted plaster sculptures of cheap pastries and other mundane food items—or later, when he was more than pleased to show his work in the most stylish galleries and museums. No "totally outside position" was possible, after all. But the passage itself is indicative of the kind of aspiration that governed his work at the beginning of his career—an aesthetic aspiration for an art whose purity and innocence and sharp cutting edge would be safeguarded by a taste too vulgar and too perishable, too low-class and common, to permit any quick or easy absorption into the bourgeois "scheme."

The aspiration itself proved wholly illusory—scarcely a year after it was voiced, Oldenburg found himself amply "rewarded within the b. scheme" as part of the new craze for pop art—but it defined an interesting position. Prior to "The Store," which actually launched Oldenburg as an uptown eminence, he had taken the *art brut* of Dubuffet and the ferociously anti-literary style of Céline's *Mort à Crédit* as his models. This in itself betrayed a certain naiveté, for the styles of Dubuffet and Céline can scarcely be regarded as even near equivalents. Whereas Dubuffet is a very canny Parisian intellectual who long ago mastered the art of playing the primitive for a mandarin bourgeois public, knowing exactly how far he could go at every turn, Céline was a genuine reprobate whose gut hatred of bourgeois values placed him permanently beyond the reach of respectability. If there is such a thing in modern culture as a "totally outside position," then Céline occupied it, and it is a sign of Oldenburg's intelligence to have glimpsed this fact.

But his identification with Céline was, at best, an act of self-deception. Oldenburg's sensibility is actually very cheerful, optimistic, and accommodating; he has never been possessed of the kind of spleen and violence that animated Céline's whole outlook on life. In the so-called "Street" works (1959-60), when all the themes were drawn from unlovely images of life on the Lower East Side, there is a touching throwaway quality, at times even attaining a homely sidewalk lyricism, but the work remained securely locked within a vein of taste that Dubuffet had long established as completely permissible.

Still, one does not feel in the "Street" works or even in the items from "The Store" that the artist has set out deliberately to amuse or beguile. He is still acting under some illusion of resistance and rebellion. But from the moment Oldenburg made his uptown debut—at the Green Gallery, in 1962, where the first giant sewn-canvas works were shown—it was difficult to credit the rebel stance as anything but a useful charade. The public was "ready for the next," and Oldenburg was delivering it in abundance. The possibility that art might be "doomed to be bourgeois" was, to all appearances anyway, faced with remarkable equanimity.

For the next few years Oldenburg was in the mainstream of the pop movement, producing entertaining parodies of the very objects so beloved by the once despised bourgeois public. He had entered art history, and—what nowadays amounts to the same thing—began to enjoy considerable prosperity.

The New York Reviews

1963

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and fame. The strategy of Dubuffet proved to be far more congenial to his talents than that of Céline.

In 1965, Oldenburg embarked upon still another enterprise—his comic designs for colossal architectural monuments. Many of these have already become legendary: a monument in the shape of a baked potato for the Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn, a giant teddy bear for Central Park, a Good Humor bar for Park Avenue, a drain-pipe for Toronto, a windshield wiper for Grant Park in Chicago, a fan to replace the Statue of Liberty. In their put-on iconography, these designs are only a logical, if more grandiose, extension of pop's facetious attitude toward any kind of exalted public symbolism. They are not so much a criticism of what public visual discourse has degenerated into in our culture as a comic elaboration of what, given the infantile-mercantile sensibility that dominates public space in our cities, such discourse might ideally be.

Oldenburg's own attitude in these designs is extremely equivocal; the



satirist is clearly prepared to go "straight" at the first nod from the city fathers, but meanwhile he goes through his comic turns with gusto. What is remarkable about these designs, however, is not their facetiousness—a commonplace among pop artists of every sort—but the style in which they are rendered: a delicate, romantic, old master pastiche, with washes, shadings, and perspective as deft and correct as anything you could expect to find in the old academics.

In another passage in *Store Days* Oldenburg had written: "I want these pieces to have an unbridled intense satanic vulgarity unsurpassable, and yet be art," but in these later drawings, which were mounted in the drawing galleries of the Museum of Modern Art with the kind of solemnity usually accorded a revered master, he adopts a style unsurpassable in sweet respectability. They are indeed the drawings of an academician *manqué*, and they recall us to an essential feature not only of Oldenburg's art but of the pop movement itself—its fundamental conventionality, its yearning to assume the duties of the old and now discredited academic tradition, with its busy civic commissions and public decorations.

Needless to say, none of the books under review regards Oldenburg as anything but the genius of our day. The large volume devoted to his *Drawings and Prints* is a very handsome production, and as Oldenburg is always seen at his best in his drawings, this

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The Johns Hopkins Press
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

1963

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book is, I suppose, an essential document for the study of his work. *Proposals for Monuments and Buildings 1965-69* is also devoted to his drawings, but only those concerned with this special enterprise, whereas the *Drawings and Prints* volume covers the entire course of the artist's career. The latter suffers from an excessively pious text by Mr. Baro, who has a mind so fine that no comic idea of Oldenburg's will ever violate it.

The *Proposals* volume has the advantage of containing an interview with Oldenburg himself, who remains—so far—the best commentator on his own work. At least he makes it sound as if a human being has produced it, which is not always the case with up-tight admirers like Mr. Baro. For this reason, too, the best of these books is *Store Days*, which, although only concerned with a brief phase of Oldenburg's work (1961-62), conveys very accurately the character of his early endeavors, with many of the artist's texts as well as pictures. When one considers the course Oldenburg's art has followed since those days, the book makes rather sad reading, but that too is part of its importance. □

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Inquisition in Czechoslovakia

Hans J. Morgenthau

The political act, in its distinctive essence, is a matter of interests defined in terms of power, which ideologies seek to clothe with rational necessity and moral worth. More particularly, judgments of necessity and worth are relative to the interests and power of the observer; what appears inevitable and noble to one may be condemned as capricious and vile by another. For example, the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet army, as seen from the Western vantage point, may be judged unnecessary, an exaggerated response to a political threat, which lost the Soviet Union more throughout the world than it gained for its European empire. But from the Soviet perspective, it cannot be termed irrational, that is, without an objective connection with the interests and power of the Soviet Union. For it is an existential fact, well recognized by the Czechoslovakian historians of the nineteenth century, such as Palacky, who were also the awakeners of Czechoslovakian nationalism, that Czechoslovakia, unable to stand alone, had to lean on one or the other of its powerful neighbors to the East and to the West.

In other words, Czechoslovakia has never had to choose between independence and alignment, but between alignment with Russia and alignment with Germany (for which in the interwar period France was a temporary and ultimately ineffectual substitute). In the measure that Czechoslovakia moved away from Russia, it was bound to move closer to Germany. It was against this threat that the Soviet Union reacted, and may well have overreacted, in 1968.

However, the political act as the functional employment of certain means for achieving certain interests defined in terms of power is also subject to moral judgment. The political act establishes a relationship between the holder and the object of power, in which the latter is of necessity diminished in his human worth; he is reduced to the means for somebody else's ends. Hence the essential immorality of the political act. What makes that immorality tolerable is the proportionate relationship between means and ends. That is to say, the human quality of the object of power is diminished for the sake of ends endowed with a transcendent value. The extreme case is the sacrifice of life in war for the sake of the nation's survival.

At the other end of the spectrum, the extreme disproportion between means and ends may make the moral condemnation of the means employed inevitable. Genocide is a case in point.

The documents before us are another. These documents were issued by the Czechoslovak Minister of Education, Professor Hrbek, in the middle of September of this year, their authenticity has been vouchsafed by two independent sources. They were brought from Czechoslovakia to France where they were translated into French. They were there discovered by a group of American scholars who translated them into English. They are published here without changes apart from corrections in spelling and punctuation.

The purpose of these documents is twofold. Their first and immediate purpose is not only to weed out from the Ministry of Education and the universities the supporters of the 1968 reforms but also all those who are not completely identified with the neo-Stalinist course of the present pro-Russian regime. Their long-range purpose is to establish ironclad controls over the minds of the remaining employees and faculty in order to prevent a recurrence of the events of 1968 and to assure full support for the new policies. To those ends they propose to kill not the bodies of men but their souls. By confronting the objects of power with the choice between complying to the satisfaction of the authorities and risking social, political, and professional disgrace, the questionnaires aim at the degradation, corruption, and ultimate dehumanization of man in order to make the holders of power secure in their power. To that end, they employ five devices.

1. They make men defenseless before the authorities. How is one to answer the questions pertaining to "personal evaluation"? If one declares oneself satisfied with one's work and capable of carrying it out, one's superiors may disagree. If one answers these and similar questions in the negative, one's superiors may disagree again. In other words, the object of power, by being compelled to give definite answers to questions which are of necessity a matter of subjective valuation, delivers himself into the hands of the holders of power.

2. They force men to denounce themselves without ever learning what is, as if were, the "optimum" of denunciation required. They may reveal more or less than is required, and in either case they must lose.

3. They force men to denounce their superiors, subordinates, and colleagues, again without knowing how much or little of such denunciations would satisfy the authorities.

4. They force men to lie. How else can most of the recipients of the questionnaires answer, for instance, the question: "Are you today sincerely convinced of the righteousness of the policy of the Party, the National Front; are you ready consequently to realise it and gain for it also other co-workers?" (A10)

5. They force the object of power to expose himself to the denunciations of others: "Are you fully aware that eventually, the untruth and incompleteness of your own evaluation will unambiguously testify against you . . . Are you aware that you will also be evaluated by a collective of co-workers, and eventual contradictions in data will be investigated?" (A15)

Two facets are particularly terrifying in this scheme of moral emasculation and spiritual destruction. One is the employment of the victim to design his own moral and spiritual doom. He cannot blame what happens to him on others. He has said too little or too much, or the wrong thing at the wrong time to the wrong person, and thus has sealed his doom and that of others. Perhaps even worse, even if he has been successful in avoiding for the time being all the pitfalls of the questionnaires, he will lead the cursed life of a master dissembler in constant dread of being found out.

What adds to the terror of his fate is the inescapable nature of his predicament. Whatever he does serves only to entangle him further in the self-made network of denunciations, evasions, and lies. There is no prospect of salvation short of suicide. There is only the prospect of an infernal existence where indeed *homo homini lupus*, where men must use and destroy each other in attempting to survive.

The scheme of the questionnaires will bring out the worst in man. But it will do more. By putting a premium, both in moral duty and survival, upon behavior detested by decent men, it will not only make relatively decent men into knaves, ashamed of themselves, but it will transform the latent Iagos, which all societies harbor and decent societies try to repress, into paragons of totalitarian virtue, proud of themselves. The liar, the informer, and the *agent provocateur* become the ideal man.

The inmate of the concentration camp could console himself with the thought that he was the innocent and passive victim of the violence of others, and he could find in the camaraderie of the doomed the remnants of human ties that bind men together. The men to whom these questionnaires are addressed can have no such consolation, nor can they find satisfaction in such ties. They are forced to make their own prisons, devastate their own souls, betray and suffer betrayal, and in the end detest

The New York Review

1963

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Would-be artistic Argonauts, trying to steer between the socially sinful Scylla of shunning the avant-garde and the potentially embarrassing Charybdis of admiring sheer junk, have recently received the navigational challenge of their careers—in an art movement labeled "New Realism" by the Jason of New York gallery owners, Sidney Janis. Mr. Janis, who has been conspicuous at helm and on surfboard through the stormy waters of Abstract Expressionism, recruited his show of New Realists from a horde of practitioners variously called Sign Painters, Comic-Strip Painters, Pop Artists, Commonists, New Realers, Neo-Dadaists, Factualists, Urban Folk Artists and Polymaterialists. A selection of their work is pictured on these pages.

Backing up Janis, New York's Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum recently held symposia on artists who use common objects. The Modern has covered its bets by purchasing several examples. The Guggenheim and Washington's new Gallery of Modern Art plan spring shows of "pop" art; Pasadena's Museum of Art has already had one.

Some apologists claim that New Realists are artists acting as social critics, journalists and satirists, making a stinging visual comment on the banalities of our crass, mass commercial culture. Characteristically, the artists themselves don't buy the apologies. Unlike their Dadaist predecessors of the 1920's, an irreverent and highly intellectual group, New Realists tend to be earnest and intense. Just ask Claes Oldenburg, one of the biggest sellers, and he will begin to speak warmly and gravely to you about the iconography of the hamburger. He should know. He and his wife have slept for months on one of his works of art, a seven-foot foam-rubber and canvas burger he created last summer.

The Bus Driver, George Segal $5,000.00
The Brushless Shaver, spray a friend with six cans of Medal Aerosol Shave Cream 3.00

Blam, Roy Lichtenstein 2,200.00
Craack, All-American Men of War Comics ..... .12

La Vie en Rose, Arman 2,000.00
Confused, 52 25-amp fuses, at 7¢ each, Royal Hardware Co. 3.64

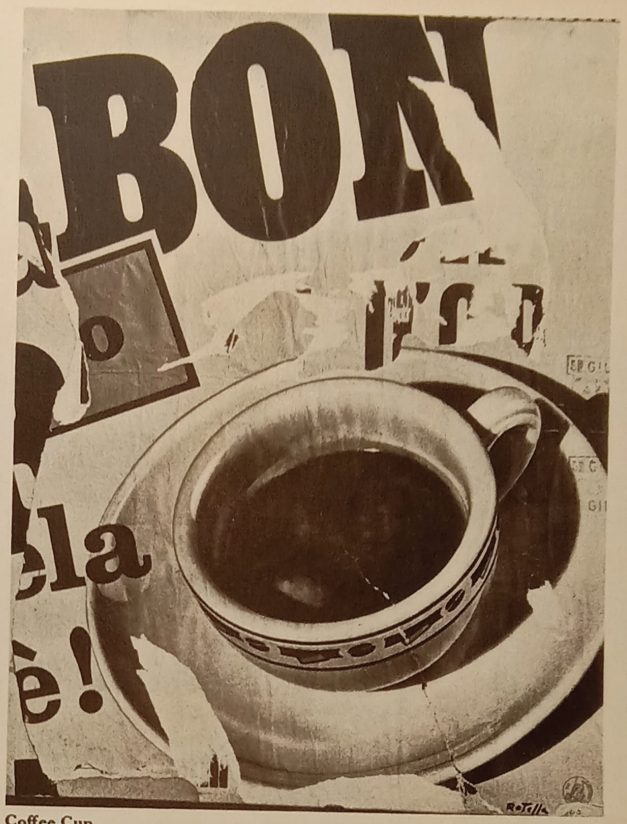
Nineteen Cents, Andy Warhol 900.00
Twenty Cents, Streit's Condensed Chicken Soup with Matzo Balls ..... .20

Mirror (Portrait of France), Martial Raysse 650.00
Home Remedy, comb and brush, Johnson & Johnson tourniquet, toothbrush, shaving brush, razor, Bufferin, dog medicine, prescriptions: $18.80. Cabinet: $5.95 ..... 24.75

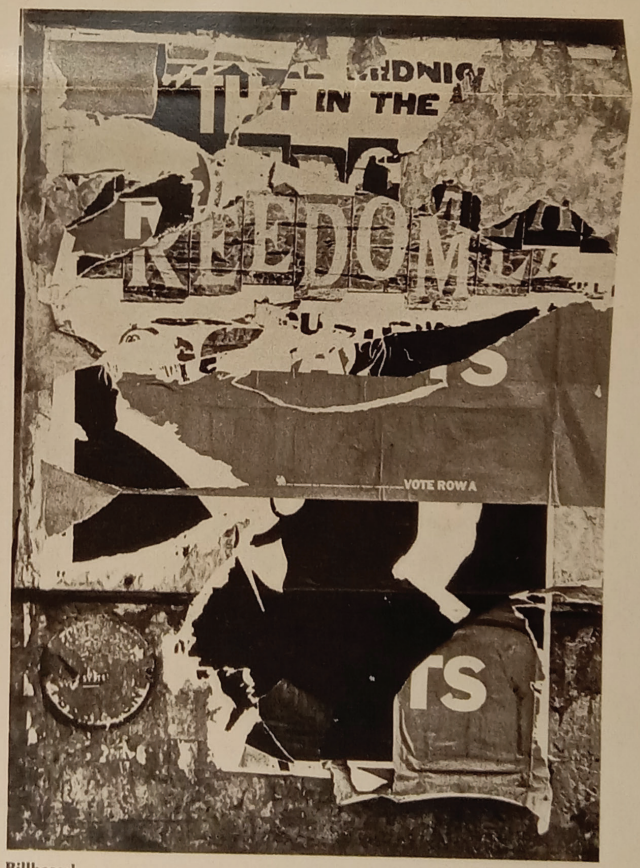
Pastry Case, Claes Oldenburg 1,200.00
Eats, marble cake, vanilla layer, yellow layer, pineapple cheese, chocolate layer, assorted cookies, cherry cheese pie: $2.40 at Essex Market, New York. Display case: $16 at M. Levin Co. 18.40

Coffee Cup, Mimmo Rotella 650.00
Billboard, Second Street and First Avenue, New York ..... ——

Photographed by Melvin Sokolsky



Coffee Cup



Billboard

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Which Twin Is the Phony?

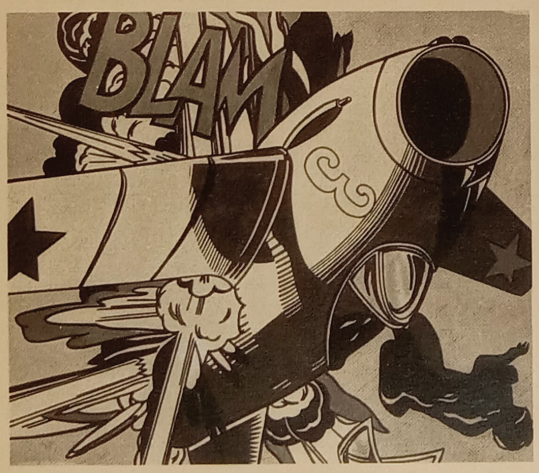


The Bus Driver

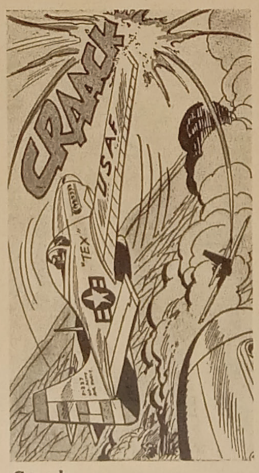


The Brushless Shaver

The New Realists claim to be the New Frontiersmen of art. Test how far-out your aesthetic perceptions are by guessing which of the following creations are "real," which are fake and how much they cost. Answers on page 91.



Blam



Craack

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Mirror (Portrait of France)



Pastry Case



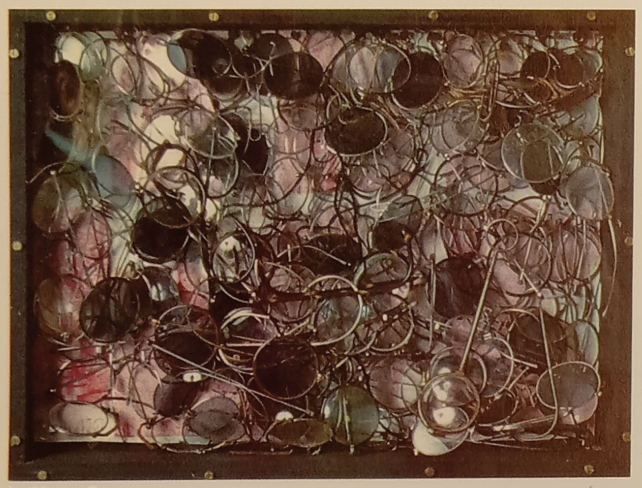
Home Remedy



Eats

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La Vie en Rose



Confused



Nineteen Cents



Twenty Cents

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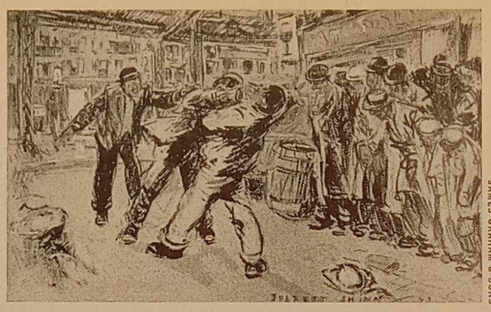
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ART



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State of the Market

Last year's drop in the stock market and the long New York City newspaper strike both hurt Manhattan's long-booming art galleries, and as dealers began sizing up their season's-end experiences last week, it was obvious that the slump had one particular victim: the abstract painting that after the war made Manhattan the center of the art world. "There has been a cresting of the abstract-art market," says Phillip Bruno of the Staempfli Gallery. "Those painters in the $5,000 to $15,000 range have been hit hard. Prices have been too high and a re-evaluation was necessary." The art boom has not collapsed, but it has drastically shifted.

Most dealers agree that the giants of abstractionism will go on selling forever, even though their prices are already beyond the reach of all but the rich. But, says Bruno, "two years ago you could sell a $100,000 Pollock by writing four letters. Today it would take 50 letters." Manhattan's galleries are still flooded with second-grade abstraction, but it is no longer considered much of an investment. Today the investors buy pop art, which is a good deal cheaper and also gets most of the publicity. Says Dealer Lee Nordness, whose own semiabstract and representational artists made 30% more money than last year: "I know several dealers of abstract expressionism, especially second-generation abstractionism, who have had a great deal of trouble. There are even dealers who have urged their abstractionists to switch to pop art."

Wait & See. The avant-garde Green Gallery did three times as much business as last year (which means that it just broke even). But its five abstractionist shows sold only three paintings, while its pop artists accounted for 80% of its sales. "It is generally true," says the Green Gallery's Richard Bellamy, "that there has been so much inferior abstract art in the past six years that the public has reacted to it. Those collectors who can't swallow pop art have adopted a wait-and-see attitude."

Grace Borgenicht, whose excellent gallery took a steep 50% dive, blames the drop on "the carefully publicized vogue for pop art, on the one hand, and the confusion in the minds of others as to the direction of the art scene. The decline in prices of some artificially raised 'name artists' has to a great extent frightened those who are unsure of their tastes." Dealer Catherine Viviano, who found the season "pretty bad," flatly denies that the slump had anything to do with economics. "Trends are changing," says she. "Pop art has helped to make people feel insecure. No one seems to be sure any more what a work of art is."

Time for Oldtimers. Actually, there are still buyers who are sure—and are even ready to take a chance on comparative unknowns. But aside from the pop artists, like Robert Indiana, the painters who did best last year were representational. The Tibor de Nagy Gallery had ten shows last year of which only four made money. Though Robert Goodnough, a first-rate abstractionist, did well, the bestsellers were Larry Rivers, Fairfield Porter and Jane Wilson—none of whom paint abstractions. One of the most spectacular successes of the season was 27-year-old Sidney Goodman of Philadelphia, whose one-man show in Manhattan took place during the newspaper strike and was nearly sold out by the end of the first day.

But it may be that the oldtimers fared best of all. The Downtown Gallery was one of those reporting a healthy increase in business, and that gallery concentrates mostly on established older names such as Ben Shahn, Stuart Davis, Georgia O'Keeffe, the late Arthur Dove, Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Max Weber. These are artists that the country's new museums are eager to acquire. Furthermore, says Downtown's Edith Halpert, the recent Kandinsky, Rodin and Armory shows, as well as scores of exhibitions of older American art, have created an interest in "source paintings" of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Coptic *v.* Contemporary. Dealers Robert Graham and André Emmerich confirm the trend. Emmerich's profits in contemporary art, which is largely abstract, went up only 2%. But his sales of Coptic and pre-Columbian art were up 25%. Graham has two galleries in the same building: the one devoted to contemporary work did about half as well as last year, while the one dealing in 17th, 18th and 19th century art, largely American, did one-third better than last year. A pastel by Everett Shinn of the Ashcan School is worth 14 times today what it would have fetched in 1945. "Americans are becoming more concerned with their heritage," says Graham. "More museums are bidding for those works also."

Duveen, which deals chiefly in old masters, had as good a year as any. And if anyone had any doubt that Americans were still willing to pay record prices for good established art, he had only to go over the results of last week's two auctions of impressionist work at Sotheby's in London. The most dramatic sales were of two Degas pastels, one for $128,800 and the other for $294,000—"fantastic, especially for a pastel," said Auctioneer Peter Wilson. The buyers: a gallery and a private collector, both from California.

Carpaccio at the Palace

Great are the master painters produced by Venice, but none of them, neither Titian nor Tintoretto, Giorgione nor even Francesco Guardi, to judge from their work, took so much delight in the sights and sounds of that city as did Vittore Carpaccio. He obviously loved Venice's busy canals, its processions and pageantry, its fairy-tale architecture—almost every aspect of the place, in fact, down to the brightness of its gondoliers' jerkins and the workmanship of a beautifully wrought bolt on a door. Last week Venice returned the compliment by opening in the Doge's Palace the biggest Carpaccio exhibition ever held (*see color*).

Up-&-Down Reputation. In his ov lifetime, which spanned the late 1 and the early 16th centuries, Carpacc fortunes fluctuated, much as his r tation has waxed and waned ever s When he was in his 50s, he was re but in the last years of his life h scarcely find work enough to

* The price estimate for the 9-ft. Pollock comes from Dealer Sidney Janis; for the Indiana, from Owner Joseph Hirshhorn; for Shinn, from the Graham Galleries.

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THE ART WORLD

Marilyn Mondrian



POP ART is thought to be the art of everyday things and banal images—bathroom fixtures, Dick Tracy—but its essential character consists in redoing works of art. Its scope extends from Warhol's rows of Coca-Cola bottles to supplying the "Mona Lisa" with a mustache. All art is based on earlier art, either consciously or by absorption, but no movement has ever exceeded Pop in alertness to aesthetic cues. Some of the works reproduced in the just-issued "Pop Art Redefined," by Suzi Gablik and John Russell (Praeger), evoke the following: Leonardo, Duchamp, de Kooning, Mondrian, Manet, Monet, Matisse, Picasso, Delacroix, Magritte, Demuth, Pollock. In addition, a section of more than twenty paintings and sculptures by a dozen artists includes pictures of the word "ART" in block letters, depictions of art materials, and portraits of earlier artists, contemporaries, art dealers, and curators. If we count as art the comic strips, lettering, posters, sign paintings, and industrial designs adapted by Pop artists, the Pop movement takes on the character of an exhibition in an art school that combines courses in fine art and applied design. In Pop, America's two cultures, highbrow and popular, meet on the neutral ground of technique. The Pop mode came into prominence around the beginning of the nineteen-sixties, when the American art world had commenced to consolidate itself on a mass-audience basis, and it inaugurated a decade of pedagogy. From the start, the leading Pops declared that their primary interest was in formal qualities and that their representations of pinups and hamburgers were a diversion to get the crowd moving into the lecture hall. "Artists," said Lichtenstein, "have never worked with the model—just with the painting."

Now, at the close of the decade, the underlying abstractness or formalism of Pop is being passionately urged upon the attention of the art world. In the view of art historians and critics, and some of the artists, too, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Warhol, Tom Wesselmann have been engaged in much the same enterprise as the painters of color areas and bands, such as Ellsworth Kelly and Kenneth Noland. Popeye, Marilyn Monroe (I almost said "Marilyn Mondrian"), and "Red, Blue, Yellow" are equally valid occasions for advanced exercises in line, color, and form. "Our intention," writes Miss Gablik, is to "redefine Pop Art as having a more direct relation to Minimal and hard-edged abstract art than is frequently admitted." Alas, others have got there first; the relationship of Pop to late-sixties abstraction has been most enthusiastically "admitted" by Professor Robert Rosenblum and echoed by Professor Barbara Rose and by Miss Diane Waldman, associate curator of the Guggenheim Museum and director of its current Lichtenstein retrospective, and it is a safe bet that the word has been received in Los Angeles and Pasadena. "Lichtenstein," declares Miss Waldman, "has dematerialized the object and effected a new reconciliation with the picture plane." Comic-strip and advertising-agency artists have done pretty well in dematerializing objects, but it takes an authentic fine-arts artist of the nineteen-sixties to effect reconciliations with the picture plane. What Miss Waldman is saying (and her observation has been confirmed by Lichtenstein himself) is that, vis-à-vis the original Donald Duck, the function of Lichtenstein is to shift the image from the realm of the Sunday comics to the world of art—a shift comparable to the one carried out by the Navajos when they adopted the dollar bills and soup-can labels of the first Yankees in the Southwest as designs for blankets. With Pop, the tribe of the art galleries and museums "acculturates" the artifacts of the supermarkets, billboards, and women's magazines by passing them through an art-historical filter. The tool is the pedagogy of the picture plane, today in full swing in assimilating, by reinterpretation and trimming, all art into what Professor Rosenblum calls "the formalist experience of our century."

The aestheticism of Pop, its fixation on art-world devices and art-world reputations, has been obscured by the common misconception that, as Miss Gablik has it, Pop is "based upon real things which are part of everybody's world, and not just a private world of the artist's." This roughly describes the aims of Pop in the heroic days of Oldenburg's "Store" on East Second Street and the exhibitions and Happenings at the Reuben Gallery—the period when young artists in New York felt obliged to break out of the grip of art history as represented by Abstract Expressionism. Unfortunately, there is no such thing in art as "everybody's world," just as, despite the easy formulas of art historians, there was no "private world" for Abstract Expressionists. The issue was, and is, style and creative method—and the adoption by some Pop artists of a set of mannerisms that were the opposite of the mannerisms of Abstract Expressionism was insufficient to exorcise art history and gain contact with real things. Bathrooms by Oldenburg, Segal, Lichtenstein, and Wesselmann, reproduced in "Pop Art



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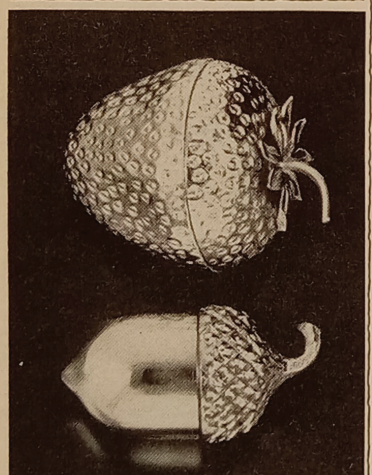
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Redefined," lack the shared characteristics of the products of Kohler or Crane; they are individual restylizations of the art of the designers of plumbing fixtures. Oldenburg messes up a corrugated-paper toilet and washstand with drips of paint and stands his bathtub on end, evoking simultaneously Abstract Expressionist painting and the atmosphere of the slums and loft-building studios. Segal and Wesselmann incorporate sections of brand-new tile walls and chromium-plated fixtures into stage sets that feature nudes reminiscent of Courbet and Matisse; Lichtenstein supplants the physical bathroom with a linear mail-order-catalogue illustration of it.

As for the motif itself, the bathroom comes close to meeting the test of being, at least in America, "part of everybody's world," but a nude stepping out of a bathtub is hardly "everybody's" except in French paintings, and her incompatibility with bathrooms in slums caused Oldenburg to leave her out. In art, "everybody's" world is a style that is opposed to minority styles, and Pop cannibalizes both majority and minority art for its own aesthetic purposes. In the social ambience of the gallery-goer, the "Mona Lisa" is almost as much everybody's as the bathroom, and Duchamp's and Warhol's "Mona Lisa"s are today almost as much public property as Leonardo's. But the "everybody" narrows considerably when it reaches Demuth's "I Saw the Number Figure 5 in Gold" as re-created by Robert Indiana and the drawing by de Kooning that Rauschenberg partly erased. Taking into account such Pop staples as repaintings of Ingres, Delacroix, Rembrandt, and Picasso, a textbook analysis of Cézanne, and a chromium-plated version of Magritte's boots that turn into feet, as well as paintings that refer to art dealers and curators (e.g., Walter Hopps wearing a miniature de Kooning under his coat), one is forced to conclude that in Pop not everybody's world but the enlarged, self-conscious art world of the decade now closing has replaced the Abstract Expressionists' world of artists.

Pop Art reached out not to real things but to pictures of things, and its aesthetic discipline has consisted in seeing objects as pictures or sculptures, so that the Bowery or the suburban kitchen becomes for the Pop artist an art exhibition ready for shipment to the international chain of art showcases. Basically, Pop Art is "found" art; its most potent effect is the hallucination of mistaking the street for a museum or the astonishment of Molière's character



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at learning that he has been speaking prose. In becoming art, objects separate themselves from their functional reality and are changed into thing-like equivalents of themselves—a condition best symbolized by George Segal's solid white plaster ghosts. The inherent detachment of Pop's aestheticized banalities prefigures the "pure" objects of Minimal sculpture and the "reduced" compositions of the color-field painters, misnamed "the art of the real." The extinction of content in Pop Art enabled it to treat in equal fashion a sunset by Turner and a Shell Oil sign, and thus to serve as a bridge between the art of latecomers to Action painting—to whom a de Kooning or a Pollock represented not a new psychic realization but a way of applying paint to a surface—and the varieties of abstract modes that emphasize areas of color disposed on materials of a given size and shape. It might be added that the rising curve of aestheticism in the sixties, with its concept of the world as a museum, represents a withdrawal by the art world from the intensifying politico-social crisis and intellectual confusion in the United States.

The commercial artist or designer who has provided the bulk of "nature" for the Pop artist is an aesthete, too. Like the Pop painter, he converts all styles to his needs, and in illustrating an ad for ice cream he does not forget to shape the drop of chocolate on the sphere of vanilla into the perfect outline of a tear. In appreciating the Lichtensteins now on view (through Sunday, November 9) at the Guggenheim, one is obliged to keep in mind that the comic strips on which they are based were created not by forces of nature, or by children drawing on sidewalks, but by artists who, as Larry Rivers pointed out near the inception of Pop, "went to art schools, traditional & bohemian &... admired the Old Masters & still tell you about Picasso or perhaps Klee & they made lots of drawings.... When you meet them you are not in the presence of a brute." Craftsmen of the commercial workshops are, one might say, the avant-garde of art among the great public, as Lichtenstein and Warhol are the avant-garde of applied aesthetics in the art world. It is the overlay of "high" and "low" aspects of contemporary art practice that characterizes Pop Art as a movement; "real things" have nothing to do with it. As the embodiment of classroom aesthetic dogmas of the sixties, Pop is, as Miss Gablik and the formalists maintain, linked with Minimalism and color-field



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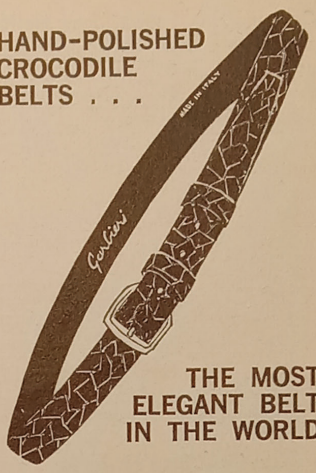
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painting. But it is linked equally with the commercial-crafts spirit of America's newly expanded art world.

THE artist who best represents the basic motives of Pop Art is Roy Lichtenstein, an ex-Abstract Expressionist who has been both a commercial artist and a university art instructor. His more than a hundred paintings, sculptures, drawings, and ceramics at the Guggenheim are dated from 1961 to 1969, and though the works directly based on comic-strip images belong to less than half of this period (roughly, up through 1964) and constitute less than half of the show, they dominate the exhibition. The recomposition of a comic-strip "box" dissociated from the strip—the face of the blonde in the window saying, "I know how you must feel, Brad"—into a large-scale oil painting was Lichtenstein's primordial idea, the discovery that gave birth to him as a painter, and all his works look back to that exciting vision. Many of his paintings of the last five years—landscapes with temples, restyled Mondrians and Picassos, cloud formations that are exercises in spatial ambiguity—seem like random demonstrations of how pictures can be turned into Lichtensteins by the introduction of his comics-derived thick outlines, swimming masses of black, bright colors, and Ben Day dots (a result comparable to the one achieved by Yves Klein through covering canvases and objects with his "International Klein Blue"). Lichtenstein's "Modern Painting with Division" (1967) and "4 Panel Modular 4" (1969) keep abreast of serial pattern painting and Frank Stella's late use of arched elements but retain identification with Lichtenstein through heavy black contours, primary colors, and fillers of Ben Day dots. His sculptures of the last three years, however, which abandon his cartoon ingredients in favor of thirties-style "modernistic" metal coat hangers and theatre-lobby stanchions in polished brass, glass, and aluminum, seem to be searching helplessly about for art-world references. Perhaps the discs of David Smith will come to the rescue.

In formal terms, Lichtenstein is nothing if not consistent; his aesthetic reprocessing, which homogenizes "vulgar" art with high-art forms and high art with formal derivatives from the mass media, cancels the content of both and leaves only design. Formalist criticism, as represented in this instance by Miss Waldman, finds his work to be all of a piece. Comparing Lichtenstein to Ingres, she writes that "Lichtenstein is able to present us with a new vision,

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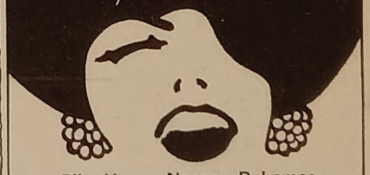
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not one based on the comic strip but more probably based on his understanding of modern art. Starting with a specific subject matter, he arrives at a general or ideal image." Miss Waldman seems unaware that in attributing to Lichtenstein an art that is based on understanding art and that achieves the "ideal" she has conceived of him as the typical modernist academician. No doubt Lichtenstein understands modern art, at least as it has been discussed in the United States during the past twenty years, but his aestheticized comics, far from arriving at an ideal image, are extremely uneven in the quality of their design. "Drowning Girl" and "Hopeless" are interesting Art Nouveau rhythmic compositions; "Takka Takka" and "O.K. Hot Shot" are so cluttered that the eye cannot rephrase them into satisfactory patterns; "Preparedness," a huge three-sectioned canvas done this year, is simply dull, in the manner of the poorer government murals of the thirties—the period with which Lichtenstein is at present engaged in his sculpture.

Apart from keeping up with art history and subsuming the comic-strip craftsman under the system of contemporary art ideas, Lichtenstein's paintings tend to reflect a gentle, professorial humor and a sincere liking for corny themes, colors, and postures. "Mr. Bellamy," not at the Guggenheim, is the cartoon of a resolute American naval officer who reflects, in a comic-strip balloon, "I am supposed to report to a Mr. Bellamy. I wonder what he's like." Done in 1961, the year Richard Bellamy assembled a squad of Pop artists at the Green Gallery, the painting is an excellent In joke. The 1965-66 "Brushstroke" paintings, with their traces of drip and exposed (but Ben Day-dotted) canvas, are my favorite Lichtensteins, because of their wit in isolating and reducing to a "thing" the trademark of Action painting, and Lichtenstein's impeccable handling relates the Action brushstroke to Oriental calligraphy. The balloon of "Image Duplicator," a closeup of the eyes of the Mad Scientist, amusingly sums up Lichtenstein's relation to his public: "*What?* Why did you ask *that?* What do you know about my *image duplicator?*"

The comics are a path back to childhood. A prevailing mood of Lichtenstein, as of Rauschenberg, Oldenburg, and the majority of the Pop artists, is nostalgia; in their scheme, childhood represents reality before it became totally absorbed into art. Lichtenstein's "Composition I," a six-foot-high repro-



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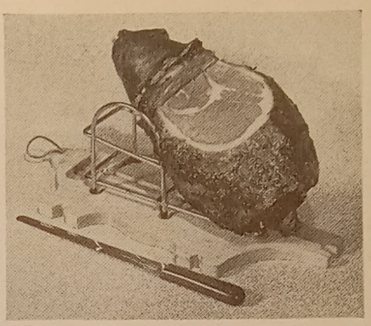
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duction of the cover of a schoolboy's copybook, with a rectangular label in the center headed "COMPOSITIONS," and decorated with an allover design of random black-on-white shapes vaguely reminiscent of Pollock, and bordered on the left by a vertical black band à la Newman, is a brilliant synthesis of the artist's past innocence and present professionalism. Parodying the comics enabled Lichtenstein to reintroduce into painting heroic and romantic subjects—air pilots, cops, George Washington, drowning maidens. Though presented under the cover of aestheticism and Camp, the melodrama of such paintings as "Drowning Girl" ("I don't care! I'd rather sink—than call Brad for help!") and "The Kiss" (with an outline of the departing lover's plane in the background) helps, together with such gags as the "Image Duplicator," to save the Guggenheim exhibition from monotony—contradicting the formalist edict that subject matter is to be played down.

NOMINALLY, Claes Oldenburg is a Pop artist, too—one of the earliest and most forceful, who went through the Pop mill of Happenings, environments, and prop-making. The subjects of his sculptures, constructions, and drawings are taken from the common sources of Pop: packagings (7-Up bottles), art lectures ("Henry [no doubt Geldzahler, now a curator at the Metropolitan Museum] pulls out a rubber lecture"), ready-to-eat items, advertisements, cosmetics, kitchen equipment, tools. With Oldenburg, as with Lichtenstein, stereotypes in and out of art are equalized, and Lichtenstein's coolly conceived brushstroke is matched by Oldenburg's dripping paint pile turned into a plaster mass.

Oldenburg's practice of art and his attitude toward it are, however, radically different from those of Lichtenstein and the typical Pop artist, and to apply the Pop label to him tends to obscure the nature of his work. For Oldenburg, ex-reporter, poet, solitary walker in the city, and introspectionist, art has psychological and social objectives, and the aestheticism of the revisers of clichés is as alien to him as the aestheticism of the Minimalists and color-fielders. If Lichtenstein's accomplishment is confined to nuances of "the formalist experience of our century," Oldenburg has educated himself in the strategies of modernism in order to animate (in the phrase of his "Store Days") "a theatre of action or of things." Oldenburg, too, is absorbed in form—what artist isn't?—but he finds his forms in con-



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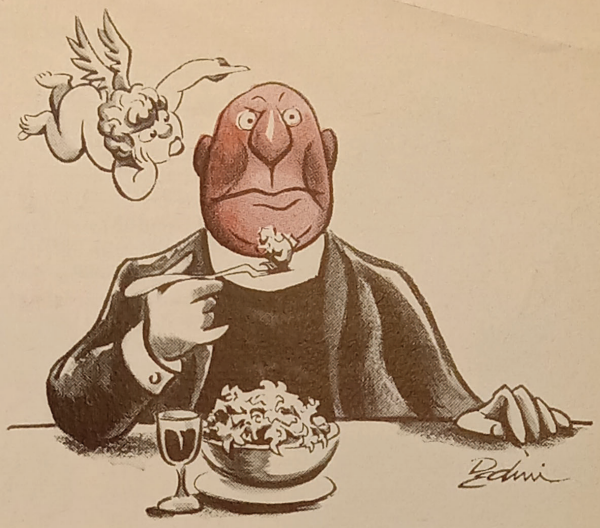
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crete objects and situation rather than by imposing on art a set of procedures derived from currently acceptable modes. Like de Kooning, though with essential differences, he is a "trans-formalist"—that is, one who uses the freedom won through modernist experimentation to cut across the history of styles by means of the unique creative act. His opposition to the ersatz Action painting that dominated New York art upon his arrival in it, in the mid-fifties, expressed itself not in submission to a system of antithetical recipes—impersonality, smooth surfaces, preconceived composition—but in slowly unearthing the creative principles of the pioneers. "Lately," he said in "Store Days," "I have begun to understand Action painting that old thing in a new vital and peculiar sense as corny as the scratches on a NY wall and by parodying its corn I have (miracle) come back to its authenticity! I feel as if Pollock is sitting on my shoulder, or rather crouching in my pants!" An artist who has the feeling of being "occupied" by a predecessor is able to extend the past through his imagination and can dispense with the formalists' chain of rational derivations.

The Oldenburg retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, which, like the Lichtenstein exhibition, covers the current decade (with the addition of a few earlier drawings), is the most inventive—in concept and in use of scale and materials—of any group of works by an American of the post-Abstract Expressionist generation, and its presentation by Miss Alicia Legg, an associate curator at the Museum, is one of the most satisfying installations in recent years. The more than two hundred and twenty items, assembled with the collaboration of the artist, cover every phase of his career except his Happenings, dramas, and environments: the early East Side sculptures of food, clothing, and women's legs, all made out of newspaper soaked in paste, and the later ones of plaster-saturated muslin painted with enamel; the "flags" concocted in Provincetown out of driftwood and bits of rubbish; the giant "soft" sculptures of toothpaste tubes, telephones, typewriters, electric mixers, fans, and models of the Chrysler Airflow, circa 1935 (the nostalgic element), made of stuffed canvas and vinyl; and a large miscellany, done in the past three years, from the "Giant Soft Drum Set" to the shining 1969 "Giant Saw," which flows from the wall onto the floor in hinged segments. Most of these pieces are extremely amusing in an eye-opening way; in

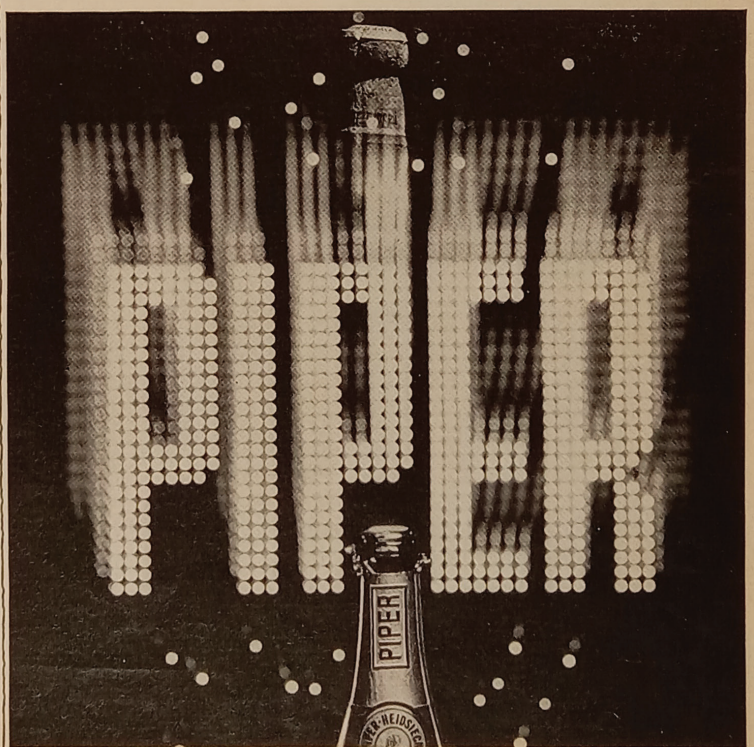


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them the familiar and manmade pass over into the natural, the absurd, and the abstract, as in the assemblage of cylindrical forms that turn out to be simulations of enlarged cigarette butts, and the row of pendulous organs that identify themselves, with some difficulty, as four Dormeyer mixers. Oldenburg has the offside mind and deadpan of the comedian-visionary. (Physically, he reminds me of Arp, who half a century ago unveiled the sculptural possibilities of an eggcup.) His natural attitude is anti-social in the bohemian tradition; he conceived his theatre as "a poor man's theatre." His attacks on society are potshots, as befits an artist; the forms he finds inhering in objects may "of themselves" become grotesque or savagely satirical.

That Oldenburg achieves his formal disclosures through a Swiftian isolation and blowup of detail inevitably associates his constructions with fun-house novelties and Hollywood dream carpentry, and this association is encouraged by his lapses into literalism, as in the huge light switches, mammoth shirts, and period-style West Coast motel bedroom. For those who know his work largely through his oversized tea bag and twenty-four-foot lipstick designed as a monument, Oldenburg has probably defined himself as a maker of visual gags. I can think of no better way to correct this impression than to start the tour of his Museum of Modern Art retrospective with the drawings and water-color sketches on the third floor. There the ideas of the artist appear in their inception, when the qualities of his draftsmanship and his thinking contend on equal terms with his subject matter, so that the study of a Good Humor as a monument, or a pack of cigarettes as a museum, is no more distracting than the drawing of an obelisk or a figure on horseback. Throughout his career, Oldenburg's object-making, like his experiments with theatre and environments, has been accompanied by tireless sketchbook drawing and writing. The pencil, crayon, and water-color drawings, in their sensitivity of line and compositional clarity, put his poetry and his tactile imagination in first place, and relieve him of debt to either prevailing art concepts or the Pop ace-in-the-hole of aesthetic incongruity.

—Harold Rosenberg

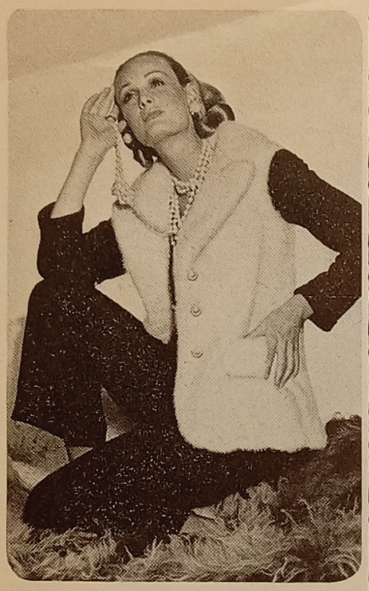
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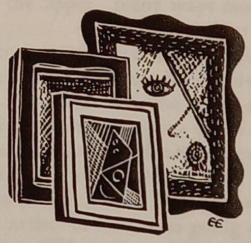
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THE ART WORLD

The Antic Muse

A FORMER Long Island City public school reborn as an "alternative space" for art and artists, P.S. 1, recently put on a show of humorous art by eight young artists. The New Museum, on lower Fifth Avenue, has scheduled for next fall an exhibition called "Not Just for Laughs," which will consist of what the curator calls "extremely funny works in various media that use paradox, exaggeration, outrage, incongruity, surprise, subversion, and/or false logic as basic formal means." A new trend? It is the fashion in certain circles, of course, to treat the whole spectacle of contemporary art as a vulgar comedy, but I doubt whether even the holders of that view expect to laugh out loud in an art gallery—as I did last season, for example, at Sharron Quasius's very large sewn and stuffed canvas replicas of famous tableaux, such as "The Raft of the Medusa," "The Rape of the Sabines," and "Custer's Last Stand," at O.K. Harris. I was also much diverted by Robert Arneson's ceramic portraits, at Allan Frumkin, one of which showed Pablo Picasso scratching his back in a gesture exactly matching that of a formerly enigmatic figure in "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," and by a show of Polaroid photographs by William Wegman, at Holly Solomon's, in which Wegman's talented weimaraner was caught in a variety of risible costumes and poses with a female model. The season's real boffola, though, was Sam Wiener's "Splendors of the Sohites," at O.K. Harris last September. A sly parody of blockbuster museum loan shows, right down to the attached gift shop, "Splendors" featured archeological fragments of a supposedly vanished SoHo civilization —"funerary objects" that strangely resembled abandoned hubcaps, heavily patinaed beer-can tabs labelled "hermaphrodite symbols," and other marvels.



Until fairly recently, comedy has been a very minor tributary of the mainstream of art. The priapic paintings on Greek pots, the fanciful beasts that enliven the margins of medieval manuscripts, the grotesqueries of Bosch and Bruegel, the satiric wit of Rowlandson, Hogarth, and Daumier are acceptable to art history, to be sure, but in a peripheral way; there has been no real counterpart of the comic tradition in literature that allows Molière and Mark Twain into the pantheon with Racine and Melville. Serious art could not be humorous, and vice versa. Along with many other aesthetic assumptions, this sober view began to break down early in our century. Picasso, Miró, Klee, and Max Ernst tapped veins of humor and wit without descending to "minor" aesthetic levels: Picasso's "Baboon and Young" sculpture, with two child's toy automobiles for a head, is among his best-known works, while Klee's birdlike, semi-abstract "Twittering Machine" is one of the prizes of the Museum of Modern Art. It was Marcel Duchamp, however, who quietly undermined the whole notion of serious art and its humorless hierarchies. Duchamp's humor was subtle and blasphemous. He had come of age as an artist a few years before the First World War, at a time when art was an intensely serious matter to most of his colleagues (his brothers included). For reasons that are still endlessly debated, Duchamp recoiled from this attitude. Art, he decided, was "a habit-forming drug," pleasant enough in its way but not nearly so important a thing as daily life. The religion of art, he said, was "not even as good as God." Duchamp's absolute iconoclasm led to his invention of the "ready-made"—a factory-made object, such as a bottle-drying rack or a snow shovel, removed from its utilitarian function and metamorphosed, by the mere act of his signing it, into a work of art. For nearly half a century, Duchamp's message was largely ignored or misunderstood—ignored in Europe, where until ten years ago he was considered a minor artist who had gone to live in New York, and misunderstood here, where in recent years his acolytes have attempted to prove, on the basis of his meagre and extremely bizarre oeuvre, that he was the most important artist who has ever lived. It is almost never recalled that Duchamp referred to his "Large Glass"—the "masterpiece" on which he worked, off and on, for eleven years and then left unfinished—as "a hilarious picture." Not many people got the joke.

A few did, though, and they went on to invent Pop Art. Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Warhol, Rosenquist, and the other Pop artists may not have been thinking of Duchamp when they began using commercial objects and advertising images as subject matter, but they were certainly acting in his spirit. Rauschenberg and Johns, whose influence on the Pops was more immediate, had absorbed certain things from Duchamp—notably the desire to make works that were not reflections of their own personal feelings—but neither of them really went along with Duchamp's iconoclasm. Rauschenberg and Johns still believed that art was a serious matter. Pop-Art infuriated people at first, because its perpetrators appeared to be totally unserious. They were making fun of art—not only of Abstract Expressionism, with its cult of the heroically suffering self, but of all art, past and future. How else could you interpret a painting that was an almost verbatim blow-up of a Mickey Mouse comic strip, or a stuffed hamburger seven feet across? These things were in the art galleries, and people were laughing, and other people were buying them, and that, the die-easies said, was it—the end of art.

Art has survived, it seems. More surprisingly, the leading Pop artists turned out to be every bit as serious as the Abstract Expressionists. Oldenburg evoked many laughs in the sixties with his drawings of proposed colossal monuments—a giant Teddy bear for the north end of Central Park, a vast toilet float for the Thames in London, a towering clothespin as a "Late Submission to the Chicago Tribune Architectural Competition of 1922"—but in the seventies some of these actually got built. (A forty-five-foot-tall "Clothespin" stands in Philadelphia's Centre Square.) "Yes, my work is humorous, but you get over that," said Oldenburg, who now devotes most of his time to monumental public commissions. Rosenquist, without abandoning his style of juxtaposed images in large scale, has become an artist whose work is now seen to have a connection to late Surrealism. Warhol, whom the spirit of comedy never touched, was always more inter-

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ested in notoriety than in art, and there he has succeeded beyond all expectations. The only one of the original Pop group who still evokes the antic muse more or less full time is Lichtenstein. Although Lichtenstein is not generally thought of as an artist with followers, I suspect that his enormous success, critical as well as financial, has not been lost on the younger generation. With Lichtenstein, it could be said that humor has finally broken through into the upper brackets of serious art.

The currently touring retrospective exhibition of Lichtenstein's work of the last decade, organized by Jack Cowart, the curator of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art at the St. Louis Museum, should solidify Lichtenstein's standing as the most prolific, consistent, and intelligent artist to emerge from the Pop movement. (The exhibition comes to the Whitney Museum in September.) To this observer, who has followed his career with interest and some perplexity, it is a surprisingly beautiful show. I had never before thought Lichtenstein's work beautiful. The drastic oversimplifications of his well-known style—unmodulated standard colors, heavy black outlines, and the use of enlarged benday dots and striping to simulate the mechanical processes of printing—had seemed to work against the sort of pleasure that one feels, for instance, in looking at a Matisse. Lichtenstein's basic style has not changed much in the work of the last decade. The pictures and the metal sculptures are executed in the same cool, uningratiating, impersonal manner. But the over-all effect is decorative in the best sense: there is an inner harmony that gives pleasure. Lichtenstein has enlarged his palette somewhat. Although he depends mostly on the same unvarying blue, red, yellow, and green that he settled on in the early sixties, he has added subtler hues, which he uses sparingly but to excellent effect—blue-greens and pale blues, several shades of gray, peach, silver, rose. He is a clever manipulator of color. Instead of modulating his basic primaries and secondaries, he achieves the color balance he wants by adjustments in scale or by placement; the limitations he chooses to impose make his effects more intense. I am inclined to think, though, that the beauty of this show has a lot to do with the eye of the beholder. When Pop Art first broke on the scene, in 1962, all we could really see of it was the subject matter. Lichtenstein's subjects were in many ways more shocking than either Oldenburg's or Warhol's—war comics and love comics and blowups of the most banal advertising images. Lichtenstein used a great many different images—more than anyone else—but gradually we got used to them, to their crudeness and their cold, commercial look, and began to be able to see what else was going on. A decade of critical exegesis has made the point that Lichtenstein, with his clear, flat color areas and carefully organized pictorial space, has more in common with his contemporaries Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella—abstract painters—than with Oldenburg and Warhol. This helps to explain why his work now looks beautiful. But to turn Lichtenstein into a formalist artist is to blind ourselves in another way. His work, after all, is not abstract. The subject matter may have become acceptable, but it is still there, in a very large way, and it is still humorous, and therefore subversive, and therefore a problem.

"When I get an idea for a picture, it's usually funny," Lichtenstein told me recently. Not necessarily comical, he went on to say—it could be funny in the sense of odd, of something not usually associated with art. In the current retrospective, for example, there are some paintings from a series he did of business offices—paintings that mimic the advertisements for chairs and desks which one sees in the back pages of newspapers. The pictures are not "funny," but the idea of doing them was certainly odd. The idea, it seems to me, is distinctly reminiscent of Duchamp's readymades. Lichtenstein simply took the machine-made, utilitarian object at a further remove (its printed reproduction) and converted it into "art." The Duchampian irony was compounded in the sixties when Duchamp's readymades were recreated in multiple sets (the originals

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had almost all been lost or destroyed) and sold for high prices to collectors. Lichtenstein's paintings of office furniture sell for much higher prices than those today, but the irony goes unnoticed. Is it possible that we are missing half the fun?

In the early seventies, Lichtenstein, whose work usually runs in series, did a number of paintings of mirrors. The paintings are as close as he has come to abstractions. What we see is white canvas interspersed with patches of dots in graduated scale, areas of solid color or black, and occasional curved lines. These mirrors reflect nothing but light and shade—not the light and shade that obsessed the Impressionists and generations of earlier artists but light and shade as shown in cheap commercial ads. He also did a series of "Entablatures," paintings based on the geometric stonework designs under the cornices of buildings on Wall Street and elsewhere; among other things, the Entablatures can be viewed as early Greek Revival Minimal Art. Another series recalls the meticulously painted trompe-l'oeil pictures of the nineteenth-century American artists William Harnett and J. F. Peto; they are imitations of imitations, right down to the fly on the wall, which in Lichtenstein's version will never be mistaken for a real one.

In the sixties, Lichtenstein had "done" Picasso, Mondrian, and Monet, sometimes in direct imitations of specific works but more often by simply appropriating salient characteristics of the master and applying them to paintings à la Lichtenstein, with benday-dot shading and striping. Lichtenstein's versions of Cubism, Purism, Futurism, Surrealism, and Expressionism, all done in the seventies, make up a large part of the St. Louis retrospective. His method, as before, is oversimplification—boiling down the original to the point where it can be "reproduced" in his commercial-printer's style. Often this results in a dazzlingly clear restatement of a complex visual idea—an image that is in some ways stronger than the original, although totally lacking in subtlety or nuance, and a lot truer to the original than most of the color reproductions that we get in art books. What are we to make of such an odd procedure? Lichtenstein's Cubism is not exactly a parody, but something funny is going on all the same. Observe, ladies and gentlemen, how the Lichtenstein art machine can save you work: Understand Cubism in one easy lesson! See how the Futurists tried (and failed) to capture motion on canvas! Penetrate the mysteries of Surrealism without inconveniencing your subconscious! Lichtenstein presents recent art history as a readymade. It is quite conceivable that he will go on to do the same for earlier periods, all the way back to the Old Stone Age.

Much of the art of any period is "about" other art, insofar as it is about anything. Not since Duchamp, though, has an artist treated the subject of art with such sweeping irreverence. At an early point in his career, Lichtenstein looked around and saw that "almost all of the landscape, all of our environment, seems to be made up partially of the desire to sell products." In the sixties, he painted the products and the idiotic, hard-sell ads behind them. In the seventies, when art became a high-priced commodity promoted by hard-sell techniques, he painted that, too. The joke is there, but the joke is not all that's there. Lichtenstein's most recent series of paintings makes new use of the famous "brushstroke" with which he satirized the spontaneity and emotionalism of Abstract Expressionism in the mid-sixties. The earlier pictures showed one or more large, dripping brushstrokes that filled the frame—simulated brushstrokes, laboriously painted in slow stages. The new paintings are still-lifes—simple and uncluttered images—whose contours are formed by the thick, flowing line of the simulated brushstroke. These are lovely paintings. The pleasure they give is warmer, less cerebral, and more intense than any I have found before in this artist's work. It is as though, after gently kidding Matisse on numerous occasions, Lichtenstein had decided to step into his shoes for a moment. The humor here is very close to high comedy—a grace that touches the emotions.

—Calvin Tomkins

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Max Kozloff, The Nation, 7/14/62

of existential gimmicks (sculpture into Dada object) and a concentration on vividly awkward sensations which emphasize lightness and mobility rather than density and mass.

THE MAIN current of the year, however, has flowed through the trough of a chic surrealism. And the Museum of Modern Art has used this current, with its "Assemblage" show, to irrigate the environment. I recall that affair as momentous, but overcrowded, with the result that the conglomeration of competing personalities resembled a Gargantuan collage. Whether because of the ensuing confusion, or a feeling that everything had already been more or less said, there were remarkably few repercussions to this exhibition. One suspects that the motivations underlying assemblage are equivocal, and that the greater its rhetorical value, the more dubious the artistic premise. As an experience, too, whimsicality or indictment tends to weary on repetition. Furthermore, the emphasis on techniques distracts from the poetic imagination of the artist, so that he becomes one more item in a kind of artistic automobile show, illustrating mechanical features or supporting design clichés (broken glass, doll legs, etc.). Already we are gaining the perspective which either demotes the insolent into the topical, or removes the anti-art disguises from essentially traditional work. In the latter case, one can legitimately ask, why assemblage?

Despite these predicaments, a number of satellite exhibitions this year were droll or handsome or horrifying. I mention the shows of George Ortman, Peter Agostini, Robert Mallary, Bernard Langlais, Arman and Marisol. The last, a young Venezuelan woman, exposed a folksy menagerie of painted, carved wooden caricatured personages, spouting plaster casts and wearing apparel. It was the *cause célèbre* of the spring, simultaneously stylish, accomplished and desperate — for it breathlessly tried to maintain its individuality by the very number and openness of its derivations. There is some originality, perhaps, in blatantly admitting one's lack of it. But this is not a path, I think, which leads anywhere.

TO THE unwitting decadence of some current assemblages has more recently been added the knowing cynicism of the "pop cult" artists, perhaps the most thoroughly "new" phenomenon to emerge in the past year. Here again is an antagonism to abstract forms, but curiously, too, an unprecedented abstractness of *feeling* that sets one's teeth on edge. Despite the unabashedly American origin of their subjects — steals from comic strips, billboards and commercial illustration — these artists totally lack a kind of traditional American romanticism in their vision. Gelid young men like James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol (in his copies of Campbell Soup ads) and Roy Lichtenstein have carried to extremes a coarse simplification of shadow and outline that counterfeits the grossness, not of the amateur, which is a familiar enough sight in a gallery, but of the condescending illustrator, which isn't. They have given us not only an apotheosis of the corny in all its bellowing obstreperousness, but have gone so far as to provide, lovingly, a kind of *explication de texte* of this whole subliterate world. Their mistakes have been to think that in embracing *Kitsch* they are affirming art, and that the least transformation of a motif implies the greatest daring. (Rather, it signifies the end of liberty.) A painting by Lichtenstein is at once ingenuous and vicious, repulsive and modish — the latest sensation.

Still, there are other alternatives within the genre, as proved by Claes Oldenberg and Jean Tinguely, whose penchant for socio-political theatrics and projection of the creative act into a public performance ("happening") I don't much like. Much more ambiguous were Jim Dine and Peter Saul, the only ones among the group who seem to be aware that the ironic mode requires irony. They are more witty and more painterly (which keeps them from being smart alecky) than their fellows, but their lively sense of the absurd cannot fail to limit their efforts, even as it lends them intelligence.

Finally, there appeared a West Coast painter, Wayne Thiebaud, removed from all this perverse "show biz," even if his bakery and grocery goods subject matter superficially allies him with the pop cultists. The short time that has passed since his show reveals him at his best as a "straight" painter whose wonderful hedonism mocks his iconography, rather than the other way around, as with Dine and Saul.

ALMOST as an addendum to the disquiet with abstraction, the Museum of Modern Art's end-of-the-season figure show earned a unanimous disapprobation which was, for once, justified. There had been defensible complaints about the exclusion of one group of artists or another, but I doubt whether any of them would have salvaged a display, the primary fault of which was the absence of either passion or innocence. Depriving themselves of metaphysical overtones, different figure painters fell into an obnoxious sentimentality, or worse, into Philistine positions about representation which were outmoded before Impressionism. Overrated artists such as Larry Rivers or Alex Katz, on the other hand, tried to preserve a certain modernity by keeping their fingers in the pies of abstraction, pop cult and the figurative at the same time, yet only succeeded in spreading themselves too thin. For the most part, however,

The Red Piano

A red piano
he says
a red piano.
I never saw one.
I knew a man who had a red typewriter,
he hardly ever used it.
A red piano.
Would it seem lighter to carry upstairs
than a black one?
A red piano, a red piano.
Let me think more musical thoughts.

Anselm Hollo

July 14, 1962

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LICHTENSTEIN: DOUBTFUL BUT DEFINITE TRIUMPH OF THE BANAL

By BRIAN O'DOHERTY

ONE of the worst artists in America has raised some of the most difficult problems in art. The artist is Roy Lichtenstein, whose recent exhibition at the Castelli Gallery continued what some might be impolite enough to call his gimmick — pop paintings based on comic strips and done in a sort of typewriter pointillism (derived from photoengravings) that laboriously hammers out such moments as a jet shooting down another jet with a big BLAM and a baseball player scowling because, according to an expert on the gallery floor — a child — "he got hurt and didn't know if he could pitch again." Such matters of iconography aside, Mr. Lichtenstein briskly went about making a sow's ear out of a sow's car. Vacancy is a mode of expression that apparently suits him.

The first argument that fills the vacuum around Mr. Lichenstein's paintings is whether he reproduces his comic-strip originals or whether he transforms them. Lichenstein experts say his work shows slight differences from the originals, proving that he doesn't transcribe but transforms like a good artist should, differences it takes a Lichtenstein expert to find.

The question of transformation became acute when Mr. Lichtenstein lifted a diagram "explaining" a portrait of Mde. Cézanne from a monograph by Erle Loran, a California professor. Enlarged with mechanical devotion, it became art. Or did it? And the game was on.

It's not a new game. Marcel Duchamp, the old master of innovation, started it all years ago by setting up his readymades (suitcases, a urinal, etc.) and calling them art, leaving on us the burden of proof that they were not. Forty years later, they are definitely part of the history of art. Since then there have been numerous such acts of wicked aplomb, all forcing a definition of art, and all putting stress on the basic idea that art in some way alters or transforms life, nature, reality or whatever you want to call it. Mr. Lichtenstein's art is in the category, I suppose, of the handmade readymade.

What he has done is put a frame of consciousness around a major part of American life (the funnies) we take for granted, fulfilling a criterion



POP—A recent Lichtenstein.

students have been writing about in their notebooks for years — "Art intensifies one's sense of the world around us."

In fact his banal work fulfills enough textbook criteria of what art should be that it calls the criteria into question. The Lichtenstein controversy is really a symptom of a deep unease among critics, historians and some artists as to what art is all about — a more difficult problem than usual nowadays when anyone with any honesty often has to admit he just doesn't know.

So exactly how does one express a deep conviction that Mr. Lichtenstein's work isn't art, or more important, isn't worthy of becoming so?

Those holding that Lichtenstein transforms his material are wide open. Naturally, his subject matter is beyond attack since anything can be the subject of art. But the content of a work of art is partly in its attitude — formal or otherwise—to its subject. The best Mr. Lichtenstein can do is offer us a dead-pan vacuity. His work provokes a double-take because nothing could be that empty. (It is, which may be a creative achievement of a sort). However, the point is how long banality can represent banality and where it stops.

But when one looks at Mr. Lichtenstein's paintings as handmade readymades, the problems are much more complex. While in my opinion, what he does is certainly not art, time may make it so, with a little help from the present.

It becomes art through a process that forces the critic outside art as such to become a sort of social critic. For unless one goes around with one's eyes closed one cannot help but notice how art of no importance, such as Mr. Lichtenstein's, is written about, talked about, sold, forced into social history and thus the history of taste, where it is next door to acceptance as art. One cannot escape an uneasy sense that for the first time in history, instead of our art choosing us, we are choosing our art. The next question is "Who does the choosing?"—a question that brings the Furies down on one's head, half of them pure believers, the other half, naturally, vested interests. They elect to choose, denying others the freedom to unchoose. There is something wrong in a process that makes the artist a bystander at a struggle deciding whether his work will qualify or not.

Mr. Lichtenstein has produced paintings that carry no inherent scale of value, leaving that value to be determined on how successfully they can be rationalized, tucked into society and placed in line for the future to assimilate as history, which it shows every sign of doing. A strange convergence of circumstances has enabled Mr. Lichtenstein to add an unworthy graft to the body of art. It seems to be taking, and there seems to be nothing one can do to stop it.



TENDER OBSERVATION—"Woman in a Plaid Blouse," pencil, by Steinlen, in one-man show at the Slatkin Gallery.

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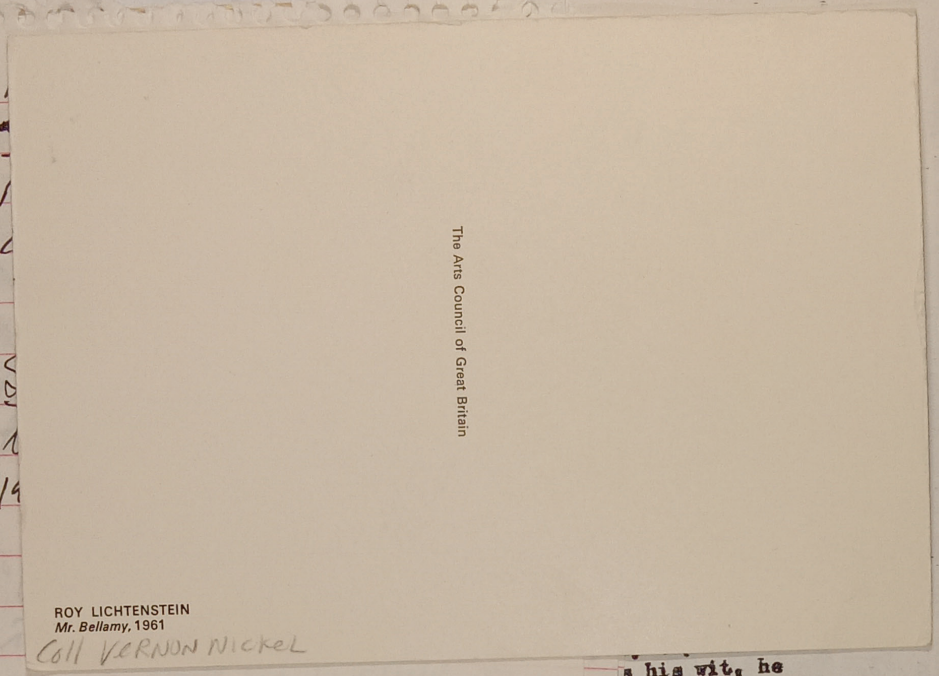
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ROY LICHTENSTEIN
Mr. Bellamy, 1961
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"Baked Potato", ink + tempera on paper, sold 1962 for $125. Resold several times; bt. 1984 by MoMA, $25,000.

Seascape With Dunes, plastic, magna, board (1965) - sold to Luigi Johnson 1965 for $350.

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By 1970, a RL ptg. brought $75,000 at Parke-Bernet - "Big Painting no 6" a 1965 work. Equalled the previous auction record for a ptg by a living Amer artist. Went to Galerie Rudolf Zwirner in Munich (NYT, 11/19/70)

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"The kind of criticism I would level against L. is not that his pictures are ugly or that their content is vulgar; it is, rather, that they are trivial... he is one of the most amusing artists working today; but I remain unconvinced that he is something more."
– Michael Fried, Art Internatl., V. 9

"What is remarkable in all this is the poise, the lucidity, the sense of style; and, allied to these, the striking power. These are tremendously forceful pictures."
– John Russell, The Sunday Times, 14 Jan. 1968 – re Tate Show

RL's "Smoking Pistol" on cover of Time, 6/21/68 – story "The Pain In America"

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Reviews

"Lichtenstein fails because he cannot convey his skill either as a commercial or as a fine artist."

- Irving Sandler, NY Post, 2/18/62

"... he has succeeded in assimilating the ugliness of his subjects into new works of art whose force + originality may even help to reconcile us to the horrors of the Brave New World in which we live."

Robt Rosenblum, Metro 8, April 1963

"Lichtenstein re-creates Walt Carrill as an academician would. And in his slick artistry, he weakens the crude fantasy found in the comic strips."

- Irving Sandler, NY Post, 10/6/63

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ART NEWS February , 1953

Roy Lichtenstein (Heller; to Feb 6), showing for the third time in two years, exhibits oils and water-colors in which the subject is based on the American Indian, the pioneer in the covered wagon and naïve nineteenth-century paintings of these things. His style is based on the flat Surrealist abstraction of Picasso, like the Musicians of the 'twenties. He pretends at first to be interested in the illustrations in grammar-school history books, he pretends to be copying them—but what is he thinking of, how did it turn out this way? The surprise if very funny, that what he is really thinking of is painting, and that he is an extremely sophisticated young man. He hides his wit, he hides his comment, butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. It is the reverse of putting a moustache on the Mona Lisa; he dresses innocent, dull provincialty in fashionable city clothes, because, after all, innocence and provincidity are just as interesting as the acceptable still-life. And so he kids also the city. And while he does this he shows that he understands the essential nature of painting. He gets it down in one spontaneous layer, and he gets it down right.

Fairfield Porter

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1963-5

LICHTENSTEIN: DOUBTFUL BUT DEFINITE TRIUMPH OF THE BANAL

By BRIAN O'DOHERTY

ONE of the worst artists in America has raised some of the most difficult problems in art. The artist is Roy Lichtenstein, whose recent exhibition at the Castelli Gallery continued what some might be impolite enough to call his gimmick — pop paintings based on comic strips and done in a sort of typewriter pointillism (derived from photoengravings) that laboriously hammers out such moments as a jet shooting down another jet with a big BLAM and a baseball player scowling because, according to an expert on the gallery floor — a child —"he got hurt and didn't know if he could pitch again." Such matters of iconography aside, Mr. Lichtenstein briskly went about making a sow's ear out of a sow's ear. Vacancy is a mode of expression that apparently suits him.

The first argument that fills the vacuum around Mr. Lichenstein's paintings is whether he reproduces his comic-strip originals or whether he transforms them. Lichenstein experts say his work shows slight differences from the originals, proving that he doesn't transcribe but transforms like a good artist should, differences it takes a Lichtenstein expert to find.

The question of transformation became acute when Mr. Lichtenstein lifted a diagram "explaining" a portrait of Mde. Cézanne from a monograph by Erle Loran, a California professor. Enlarged with mechanical devotion, it became art. Or did it? And the game was on.

It's not a new game. Marcel Duchamp, the old master of innovation, started it all years ago by setting up his readymades (suitcases, a urinal, etc.) and calling them art, leaving on us the burden of proof that they were not. Forty years later, they are definitely part of the history of art. Since then there have been numerous such acts of wicked aplomb, all forcing a definition of art, and all putting stress on the basic idea that art in some way alters or transforms life, nature, reality or whatever you want to call it. Mr. Lichtenstein's art is in the category, I suppose, of the handmade readymade.

What he has done is put a frame of consciousness around a major part of American life (the funnies) we take for granted, fulfilling a criterion



POP—A recent Lichtenstein.

students have been writing about in their notebooks for years — "Art intensifies one's sense of the world around us."

In fact his banal work fulfills enough textbook criteria of what art should be that it calls the criteria into question. The Lichtenstein controversy is really a symptom of a deep unease among critics, historians and some artists as to what art is all about — a more difficult problem than usual nowadays when anyone with any honesty often has to admit he just doesn't know.

So exactly how does one express a deep conviction that Mr. Lichtenstein's work isn't art, or rates important, isn't worthy of becoming so?

Those holding that Lichtenstein transforms his material are wide open. Naturally, his subject matter is beyond attack, since anything can be the subject of art. But the content of a work of art is partly in its structure — formal or otherwise — to its subject. The best Mr. Lichtenstein can do is offer us a dead-pan vacuity. His work provokes a double-take because nothing could be that empty. (It is, which may be a creative achievement of a sort). However, the point is how long banality can represent banality and where it stops.

But when one looks at Mr. Lichtenstein's paintings as handmade readymades, the problems are much more complex. While in my opinion, what he does is certainly not art, time may make it so, with a little help from the present.

It becomes art through a process that forces the critic outside art as such to become a sort of social critic. For unless one goes around with one's eyes closed one cannot help but notice how art of no importance, such as Mr. Lichtenstein's, is written about, talked about, sold, forced into social history and thus the history of taste, where it is next door to acceptance as art. One cannot escape an uneasy sense that for the first time in history, instead of our art choosing us, we are choosing our art. The next question is "Who does the choosing?"—a question that brings the Furies down on one's head, half of them pure believers, the other half, naturally, vested interests. They elect to choose, denying others the freedom to unchoose. There is something wrong in a process that makes the artist, a bystander at a struggle deciding whether his work will qualify or not.

Mr. Lichtenstein has produced paintings that carry no inherent scale of value, leaving that value to be determined on how successfully they can be rationalized, tucked into society and placed in line for the future to assimilate as history, which it shows every sign of doing. A strange convergence of circumstances has enabled Mr. Lichtenstein to add an unworthy graft to the body of art. It seems to be taking, and there seems to be nothing one can do to stop it.



TENDER OBSERVATION—"Woman in a Plaid Blouse," pencil, by Steinlen, in one-man show at the Slatkin Gallery.

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ference. Wherever one edge meets another, there is something right to be observed in the execution. This is definitely not an art in which God is in the details. It is an art designed — and designed it very much is — to be seen at a distance across the room.

Where this tendency toward design yields its most effective pictorial images, I think, is in the near-abstract paintings from the "Mirrors" and "Entablature" series of the early 70's. What Mr. Lichtenstein has done in these interesting pictures is to combine the strategic flatness of Pop Art with those of Color-field abstraction. The imagery remains recognizable, but our experience of the painting itself is more akin to what we find in a purely abstract art. Here, too, there are very delicate insensitivities in the execution, but viewed across a large open gallery, these paintings — especially the "Entablature" that seem to owe something to the art of Kenneth Noland — attain a level of quality not readily discernible in the exhibition as a whole.

world culture and popular culture. This is not an art of satire or social criticism, however — it does not ridicule or question the objects it focuses on. If anything, it takes a rather faithful and affectionate attitude toward them.

From a pictorial style so heavily indebted to these mechanical counterfeits of modern art, which it simulates with an evident empathetic relish, we cannot expect much in the way of nuance, delicacy, poetry or personal expression — and, certainly don't find them in his work. All of Mr. Lichtenstein's paintings have a vivid, graphic, posterlike power, and some of them positively assault the eye with their broad visual effects. Some of them are quite amusing, too. But as painting it is pretty coarse stuff. Physically, the surfaces of the paintings offer little pleasure to the eye. The black outlines tend to be greasy and shiny while the areas of color they contain are brittle and lifeless. Clearly, the paint has been applied with an attitude of indif-

Continued From Page C1

duced into the fabricated image. Far from despising these travesties, Mr. Lichtenstein cheerfully accepts them and at times seems positively to adore them. He certainly emulates them in piling his own distortions on the ample distortions already there in the "originals." It is, in any case, upon the visual fictions to be found in the reproductions that he constructs his own pictorial imagery. In this respect, certainly, his "modern art" paintings continue the course begun in his early attempt to make significant art out of debased visual materials.

What we have left in Mr. Lichtenstein's paintings of the 1970's is art about the modern vulgarization of art, about the use that has been made of it in commerce, education and the communications media since it acquired its present popularity — art, in other words, about certain aspects of art-

Lively Lichtenstein of 70's at Whitney

9/25/81

By HILTON KRAMER



"Stepping Out," done by Roy Lichtenstein in 1978

THE American artist Roy Lichtenstein earned immense international renown in the early days of the Pop Art movement, in the 1960's, as the painter who specialized in turning comic-strip cartoons into paintings. But time passes, perspectives alter and artists develop in unforeseen ways. In the 1970's, Mr. Lichtenstein set about the task of turning images of paintings — some very famous paintings by Picasso, Matisse, Léger and sundry other eminences of the modern movement — into cartoons. They, too, have quickly won a place among the classics of contemporary art, and a large exhibition devoted to this work of the 70's has now come to the Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Avenue at 75th Street (through Nov. 29).

Organized by Jack Cowart, curator of 19th-century and 20th-century art at the St. Louis Art Museum, where the exhibition was first seen last spring, "Roy Lichtenstein 1970-1980" consists of 50 paintings, 9 sculptures and 53 drawings. Many of the paintings are large, their forms easily legible at a distance, their colors — mostly primaries framed in bold black outlines — bright and cheerful. The whole atmosphere they create when brought together in this quantity is light, bouncy, high-spirited and good-humored. It is less the kind of atmosphere we associate with the higher altitudes of the fine arts than, say, with that of a very slick and brassy Broadway musical. If Broadway were ever to mount a musical based on the masterworks of modern art — horrible thought! — its design would probably look a lot like this exhibition.

For most, but by no means all, of the paintings in the show are based on the kind of reproductions of modern masterworks that we commonly encounter in books, postcards, exhibition catalogues, etc. From these mechanically printed images of familiar works of art, Mr. Lichtenstein has distilled, through a process of simplication and magnification, the forms and formats of his own paintings. What exist as integrated shapes, lines, positive and negative spaces, patches of color, fragments of images, even individual brush strokes in the "originals" — that is, in the printed reproductions the artist is making use of — are torn from their contexts, reduced to an elementary design vocabulary, exaggerated in scale and made to serve as the bases of new compositions that echo the original sources, and indeed parody them, without really repeating their pictorial strategies.

The result is not exactly art-about-art, however, though art is one of the subjects these paintings are about. But it is not so much art itself as the kind of counterfeit experience its reproduction is made to serve that is the central focus in Mr. Lichtenstein's paintings of the 1970's. It is assumed — correctly, I think — that the mechanical reproduction of art always produces, in one degree or another, a visual travesty of the original because of the radical changes in color, scale, texture, touch, material, etc., that are intro-

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By Edward F. Fry

Inside the Trojan Horse

AR Oct. 1969

Lichtenstein, at the Guggenheim this month, may be a pivotal figure, standing between the death of an old idealist culture and the rise of a new terrestial idealism which has barely begun

Author: Edward F. Fry organized the superb David Smith show for the Guggenheim Museum last season and wrote the accompanying catalogue. He has written articles for ARTnews on modern sculpture and Larry Poons's paintings.

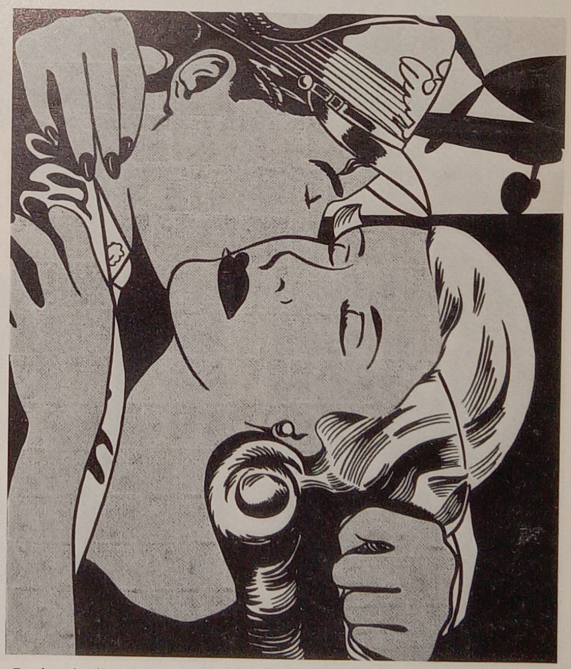
After the initial notoriety of the early 1960s, at what in retrospect now seems a halcyon moment in New York of discord, polemic and ferment, Lichtenstein has quietly emerged as an outstanding figure in modern American art. Possessing an international reputation, crowned by retrospective exhibitions at the Tate Gallery, London, and now at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, this steadily prolific artist at the age of 46 shows no sign of flagging or indecision, nor of abandoning his metier for theatrical-participatory or other post-artistic ventures. Lichtenstein has repeatedly confounded the best laid traps of his direst critics and bewildered his warmest admirers with what appeared to be a sequence of heterogeneous motifs and styles, from each of which he has escaped at the last moment of viability—only to reappear in yet another guise.

His apparent lack of consistent style, of a stylistic signature or handwriting, has discouraged the acceptance by formalist critics



Lichtenstein at work on *Yellow and Green Brushstrokes*, 1962, 64 inches high, reproduced in its finished state below (lent by Karl Stroher, Darmstadt): the heroic brushstroke of Abstract-Expressionism mocked by objective treatment in comic-strip idiom.





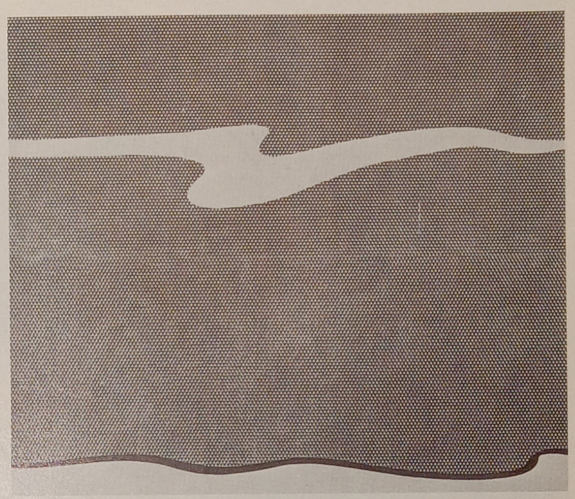
Cool esthetic reorganization of kitsch sentimentality: *The Kiss*, 1962, 80 inches high. Nelson Gallery, Kansas City.

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ART as art, 1962, 36 inches high. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Meyerhoff, Baltimore.



Ironic schematization of printing techniques and visual clichés: *White Cloud,* 1964, 68 inches high.



Enlarged Ben-Day dots flatten a Wistful Vista: *Red Barn, 2,* 1969, 44 inches high. Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne.

of Lichtenstein's work on its own high merits, despite the existence of Duchamp as a precedent and the emergence since 1965, in New York and elsewhere, of whole schools of conceptual artists. This formalist rejection was followed by a more sophisticated critique, according to which (and rightly so, in my opinion), the artist had more in common stylistically with such "post-painterly" abstractionists as Stella and Noland than was apparent to those observers obsessed with Lichtenstein's "subject matter," more in fact than did the majority of other Pop artists. Accompanying this second thesis was the view that Lichtenstein's subjects and imagery were of little intrinsic importance, but rather a Trojan Horse, or species of ruse through and against which the artist projected his purely formal concerns.

From the very beginning of his public appearance, however, Lichtenstein's iconography has attracted more interest and speculation than any other aspect of his art. Following the initial violent reaction to his use of comic strips, common objects, the imagery and reproductive techniques of printed mass media and other culturally debased visual clichés, much controversy arose concerning the sociological implications of the artist's work. Lichtenstein was cited as a telling example of American vulgarity, in whose paintings were displayed all too vividly the crassness of a gadget-ridden society oriented to the consumption of tawdry products and amusements. Typically, this high-brow criticism stemmed more from America itself than from abroad where, with the exception of a characteristically French denunciation of United States cultural imperialism, particularly on the occasion of his inclusion in the 1966 Venice Biennale, critical reactions to Lichtenstein reflected a bemused fascination with yet another product from the exotic country that had previously offered the world jazz, Broadway musicals and Westerns.

Subsequent to these various reactions during the early and middle 1960s to Lichtenstein's subject matter, however, one finds a curious lack of response to the sheer fact of his widely ranging iconography and to its continuous development, as though a degree of apathy, brought on by shock, had paralyzed further reflection or analysis. It also seems to be difficult at best for many observers, in the present as in the past, to acknowledge and enjoy the brilliance of wit, pun and satire which permeate Lichtenstein's work, as though the vestiges of a Puritan concept of high culture were still effectively governing one's responses and controlling their permissible settings. To an even lesser extent has Lichtenstein's sense of irony been appreciated, nor has his ability to establish concatenations of double, triple and even quadruple levels of irony within a single visual context been sufficiently recognized.

In consequence of all the foregoing issues and conflicts surrounding his work, Lichtenstein as an artist has, in the end, simply been accepted as a phenomenon, now usually with the added qualification of being the foremost painter to have emerged from, or survived, Pop art. To be just, however, one must begin by accepting, rather than excluding or polarizing, the multiple responses engendered by his work, and by similarly recognizing the complex and multiple intentions which underlay it. Lichtenstein is at once figurative and abstract, mocking and serious, naïve and cunning; but he is, above all, in both eye and mind an artist of extreme sophistication—possibly as much or more so than any living artist. His sophistication, furthermore, takes the unusual form of a principle of going against the grain: of tension, ambiguity, displacement and paradox—of irony, in other words, in all its guises and stratagems. It is this polyvalent irony, accompanied by and fused with a most acute visual intelligence, which distinguishes

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Inside the Trojan Horse

Culturally debased imagery raised to the level of esthetic idealism: *Okay Hot-Shot,* 1963, 80 inches high; lent by R. Morone, Turin. In Lichtenstein's retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, to Nov. 16.

Lichtenstein's work from that of all other artists with whom he has been associated and which serves as the continuous thread of his style.

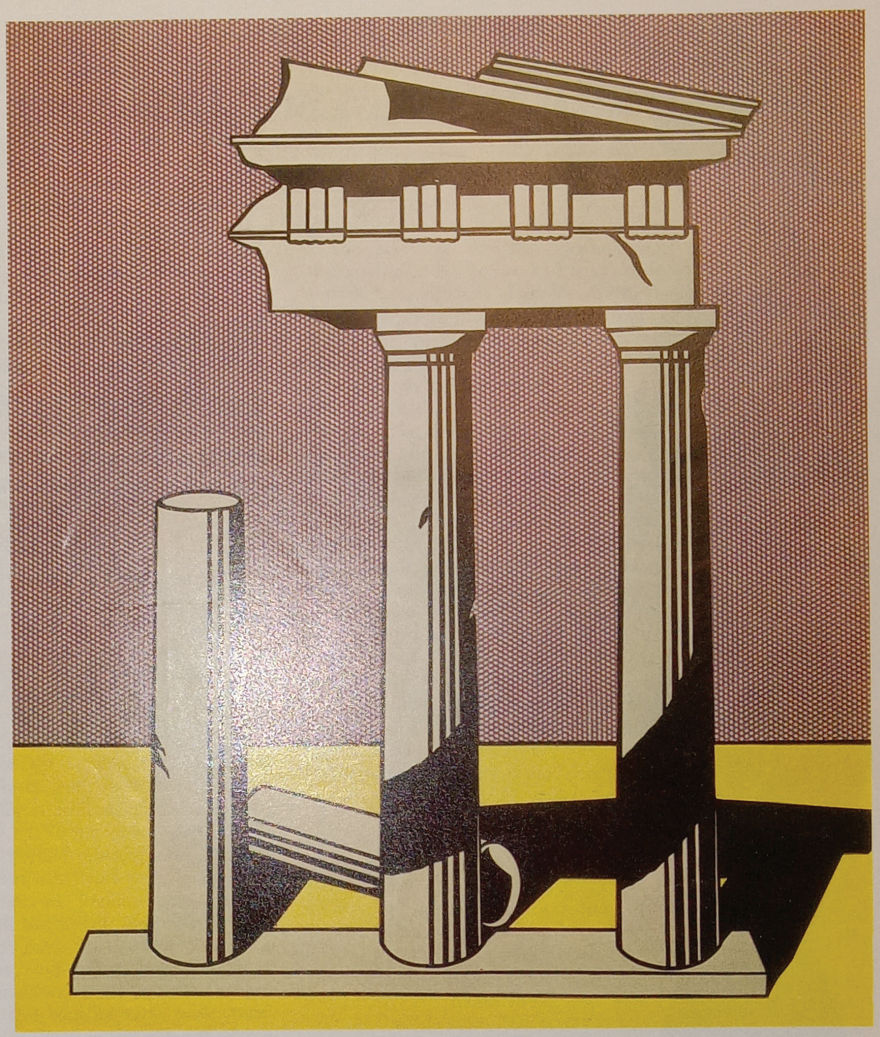
To situate Lichtenstein's art historically, one may begin by admitting that his iconographic sources have been potentially available for decades, as is shown by the examples of Léger, Murphy, Davis and others whose works employing popular imagery are frequently cited as precedents for 1960s Pop art. The cultural prohibitions against such imagery, however, and the associated concept of high, serious or major art as opposed to kitsch or other forms of popular, middle- or low-brow culture were a product not only of Puritanism but also of the struggle to create a significant artistic tradition within the relative cultural barrenness and crudity of America during the 1930s and 1940s. The idealist view of art and culture implicit in such hierarchic values remained strongly in force throughout the history of Abstract-Expressionism and during the 1950s entered into the very fabric of its esthetics.

Lichtenstein is related to the general rejection of idealist, hierarchical esthetics and metaphysics that has taken place during this decade in all aspects of life style. A break that had required as a precondition the development of sufficient affluence in already liberal, industrialized democracies, particularly England and America, it was made with an ease and totality that varied inversely with the age of its perpetrators. Thus for the young Frank Stella in 1960, at the age of 24, it was a far different matter to overthrow idealist esthetics in favor of a rigorously logical, self-defining and self-referential art of finite materiality than it was

Continued on page 60

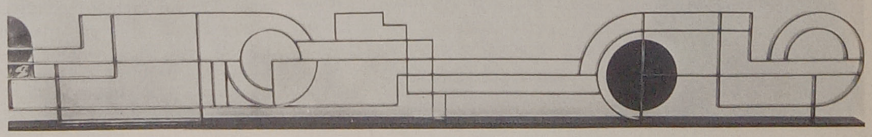
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The culturally reverenced slighted by comic-strip treatment: *Temple, 2,* 1965, 80 inches high; lent by Dr. and Mme. A. F. Esselier, Paris.

Lichtenstein's use of 1930s decorative style for felicitous abstraction: *Study for a Modern Railing,* 1969, brass, 8 feet long. Castelli Gallery.



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Inside the Trojan Horse
Continued from page 38

for Rauschenberg, Johns, Noland, Lichtenstein and others of a preceding generation.

Lichtenstein's procedure in arriving at a positively materialist esthetic has been no less effective than other solutions, but it is considerably more complex; and, in contrast to that of artists such as Stella, it depends strongly on exterior references. Not only did he banish from his work that virtuoso brushwork of heroic Abstract-Expressionism which he would later parody with such telling irony, but he also chose as a substitute to simulate the uninflected and impersonal Ben-Day dot patterning of modern printing technology. Lichtenstein similarly adopted from printing technology a limited and uniform range of colors: either black and white alone, or in combination with a more or less standardized printer's red, yellow and blue, with their complementaries occasionally included. In his actual motifs, almost all of which imply or refer to a previous printed source that may or may not have existed, Lichtenstein has consistently avoided hierarchical, Cubist or post-Cubist composition and instead aims for the realization of a gestalt. Here his avowed indebtedness (ARTnews, Nov. 1963, p. 25) to the important but insufficiently well-known gestalt psychology of Hoyt Lee Sherman undoubtedly has had its effect, for an analysis of his compositions reveals an overwhelming preference for either a unified field or a single, completely unified image. Similarly, his use of diptychs, and to a lesser extent of triptychs, in combination with a unified field provides an even stronger guarantee of a non-hierarchical gestalt.

Lichtenstein's single, usually centered, images are an exact counterpart to Noland's non-hierarchical concentric circles of the early 1960s. His treatment of these images is almost invariably to intensify the schematized effect of the seemingly printed antecedents to which they refer, thus forcing the image to join with the flatness of the ground plane. The effect is as though the entire painting were itself a new, flat, printed image, separated from any experiential source by at least two removes.

Lichtenstein's unified field compositions, whether based on cartoons, advertising clichés, chromolithographs of sentimental landscapes, reproductions of works of art or the banalities of 1930s Radio City-Art-Deco style, have an inherent flatness derived both from their references to presumably printed sources and from their surface continuum of simulated Ben-Day dots. The artist enhances the two-dimensionality and sense of artifice through such devices as the intensification of cloisonné divisions or the emphatic use of an over-all, sinuous, Ingresque linear patterning. In combination with the Ben-Day dots, both of these devices serve to establish a unified field gestalt and to maintain flatness. Compositionally, Lichtenstein favors a maximum degree of coincidence between the edges and corners of the canvas and the interior elements of the image; this coincidence is accompanied by tight cropping and closeups, particularly when the human face or body figures importantly in the image. The consequence of all these devices is, as with the conceits of 16th-century Mannerist painting, to increase the vividness of a paradoxically flattened image and to emphasize the finite materiality of the work as a whole.

This fusion of culturally debased imagery with stylistic means that guarantee the flatness and hence materiality of the work constitutes Lichtenstein's response to the heritage of cultural and esthetic idealism. The most extreme and revealing example of this anti-idealist position, although consequently a somewhat special case, is his handling of the art idea itself, as when he reproduces an apparently printed reproduction of a Cézanne, Picasso, Mondrian or, most recently (1969). Monet, and presents it as a painting. The implications are not only that modern art has been publicized into a clichéd oblivion but also that the printed reproductions of these works may be used as source material for the Lichtenstein meatgrinder just as well as any other printed material. If one is first shocked and then slyly amused by cartoons become "art" (and let us not forget that Lichtenstein has created a situation in which we are encouraged to laugh at and with paintings), then why not accept Art or images of Art as "art"? The most extreme case is his painting *ART* and its later corollaries, the paintings of stretcher frames, both of which are superbly ironic statements to the effect that "If what you really insist on is Art, then this is what It looks like."

Having reached this point of extreme anti-idealist irony, Lichtenstein seems to have found in his adaptation of 1930s decorative style (an eminently kitsch and culturally debased source) a felicitous mode in which to create abstract paintings, many of which, as with his *Four Panel Modular Four,* compare favorably with the works of his leading formalist contemporaries. That he continues to make works of art—paintings and sculpture—is of greater significance, however; for it reveals him to be perhaps a residual idealist, despite his irony and super-cool detachment. Historically he may be a pivotal figure, standing between the death of an old idealist culture and the rise of a new, terrestrial idealism, the making of which lies before us and has barely begun.

The Lichtenstein exhibition will travel to the Nelson-Atkins Gallery, Kansas City, Mo., (Dec. 18-Jan. 18), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (Feb. 7-March 22), Seattle Art Museum (April 10-May 17) and the Columbus (O.) Gallery of Fine Arts (July 9-Aug. 9). There is an illustrated catalogue by Diane Waldman, who organized the exhibition.

Paris
Continued from page 18

the Brussels World's Fair. The model for it, which was exhibited without much publicity at the Hôtel de Ville, has already aroused numerous criticisms: excessively offset walls that don't conform to the circular outline of the Rond-Point, etc. Even given the omnipresent desire to make building space yield higher profits, one wonders what the Champs Elysées and even the speculators themselves have to gain from this massacre of two charming *hôtels* which are apparently (the Dassault one especially) in perfect condition.

The misfortunes of Paris don't, alas, stop here. The parking-lot disease is spreading. The pavement of St. Germain des Prés has been dug up for months; the Place Vendôme and the Place des Vosges are threatened by access ramps as clumsily obvious as those that already partly disfigure the Place de la Concorde; the Saint-Sulpice fountain has been taken apart. It will rise again, if its numbered parts can be put back together, more quickly than the trees and terraces of the Jardin du Luxembourg, where an underground garage for the senators is being constructed: if the work on this project had begun a little sooner, M. Poher would have received even fewer votes in the last presidential elections.

Pavements are being torn up all over the city, and this time with official blessings. Let's hope that the resulting traffic jams won't keep Parisians away from the big and middle-sized exhibitions of the fall season: Vieira da Silva at the Musée d'Art Moderne (October) followed (from Nov. 24) by Klee; Giacometti at the Orangerie (from Oct. 14), Chagall at the Grand Palais (December) followed by Matisse.

Meanwhile UNESCO has made some progress in its negotiations with the artists whom its advisers (Penrose, Leymarie, Franz Meyer) have chosen for the decoration of its new building, to be designed by Zerfuss; there are plans for a Giacometti sculpture,

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The New York Times (by Neal Boen

John Kloss relaxes in his Kips Bay apartment-workroom. Model wears one of his "jigsaw puzzle" dresses in orchid, green and gray crepe, which is $135 at Bendel's

The Kloss Style: Modern Art and Jigsaw Puzzles

By ANGELA TAYLOR

JOHN KLOSS is a designer on his way up—in designs and location.

Four years ago, he was working in a waterfront loft in the same building where Robert Indiana was painting. Private clients, like Lisa Fonssagrives, the model, used to trudge up the stairs to see him.

Now the 28-year-old Detroiter turns out his trend-setting clothes in an airy apartment in Kips Bay surrounded by a private collection of Indiana canvases. Fashion editors, buyers and Seventh Avenue manufacturers whizz up to the sixth floor by elevator.

In the fall, Mr. Kloss plans another move—24 blocks north to 67th Street for a "sort of Jax operation" designing [illegible] selling.

As the mop[illegible]igner has changed his street address, so has he changed his style. In 1962, the clothes that emerged from the Coenties Slip loft were gently elegant affairs with waistlines. In 1963, he had changed to simple dresses in blocks of color—two years before Yves Saint Laurent turned Mondrian into fashion's household word.

The geometric color patterns have now changed to waves and swirls and stylized flowers, in a manner he describes as "a kind of jigsaw puzzle." He composes basically simple, young dresses, letting the shape come out of the way the colors are stitched together. His coats have niceties like linings that follow the dress color patterns exactly.

"I'm influenced by what's going on in the art world," Mr. Kloss said one recent afternoon, perching on a mirrored cube of his own design. The influence is obvious throughout [illegible]

besides nearly a dozen Indianas, paintings by Tom Wesselman, Roy Lichtenstein and Adele Weber cover the walls. A swatch of Kloss fabric, mounted like a painting, hangs in the hall.

The women who wear his clothes—Liza Minnelli, Anne Bancroft, Lena Horne and Geraldine Stutz, president of Henri Bendel—also inspire him.

In Touch With His Clients

"I like to be in touch with the women who buy my clothes. When I move uptown, I'll be selling as well as designing. I don't like to see racks of my clothes in stores," Mr. Kloss continued.

Kloss designs currently hang on racks, priced from $90 to $135, at Henri Bendel. Jean Rosenberg, a vice president of Bendel's, describes John Kloss as "part artist, part architect [illegible]er."

was one of the first to catch the new beat of young clothes," Miss Rosenberg said last week. "In a way, he's lucky, he didn't start out to be a mass designer and is free to do what he wants."

What the Detroit-born Mr. Kloss wants most is to keep his freedom, working at home with just three assistants and doing things for Seventh Avenue from time to time. His recent lingerie designs for Cira Creations—which used his color technique, plus cutouts—was a success and he is currently working on a second collection. This time, he is using white voile for beguiling copies of men's underwear—skivvy shirts and little shorts and petticoats six inches long.

He is also working on a children's line to be sold at Bendel's and making maternity clothes for a friend.

like to [illegible]" he adds.

[illegible] within which this can happen. Thus the new painting and writing give a deep validity to the form of this society."

Sept. 26, 1960 address of Fidel Castro at U.N.

"The Hasheesh Eater" by Fitzhugh Ludlow (facsimile of 1857)

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HASTY PAPERS

1960 Allen Ginsberg – aged 33, sniffing ether in the Hotel Commercio in Lima, writing: "... There are hard and easy universes. This is neither..." He ~~suddenly feels old~~ suddenly feels old Kerouac, Snyder and others, and at the end he suddenly feels old – "34 coming up... age of Burroughs when we first met."

Robt. Oppenheimer address to Cong. for Cultural Freedom: "... it seems to me that in the United States we have ~~come~~ perhaps come first of the era in which production for consumption's sake has reached a kind of completeness;" speaks of dangers that accompany the fulfillment of basic premises of technological rev.

Kluver: "In this country, at present, the artistic and intellectual growth is a magnificent ~~combination~~ confirmation of man's independence of the general systems... The most remarkable aspect of this new assertion of man's freedom is the existence of the American Society, within which this can happen. Thus the new painting and writing give a deep validity to the form of this society."

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books

CLAES OLDENBURG'S STORE DAYS

"STORE DAYS, Documents from The Store (1961) and Ray Gun Theatre (1962)," selected by Claes Oldenburg and Emmett Williams, photographs by Robert R. McElroy. Something Else Press, $10.

by David Bourdon

No shop on the Lower East Side was more determinedly shoddy than the store on East 2nd Street which opened to the public on the first of December, 1961. Even on opening day, it looked like a week-old rummage sale. The store offered a disheveled array of general merchandise—mostly clothing (girdles, shirts, stockings) and food (sandwiches, fried eggs, and pastry). The prices would have been steep in any neighborhood—a pair of white gym shoes for $199.99, a cherry pastry for $44.98. The inflationary direct-to-you prices were made possible by the ingenious proprietor, who was up to his elbows in plaster in one of the back rooms, turning out replicas of merchandise in crudely modeled plaster, painted garishly in hot-colored dripping enamels.

Today the proprietor of the store is internationally known for his voluptuous soft sculptures of vinyl telephones, typewriters, and fans, as well as for his fanciful projects for urban monuments (a colossal banana in Times Square, a knees monument for London). But the store was Claes Oldenburg's first major art work and, despite its brief physical existence, it remains one of the prime landmarks of pop art.

The store was a didactic art environment that blurred distinctions between what was real and "real" in order to pose questions about the nature of art and the role of the artist.

Like other pop artists, Oldenburg used common "found" images as a way of making his creations seem less personal and subjective. But his work does not fit the canons of pure pop art because he permitted his psychological attitude and his hand to get in his way. For one thing, his objects frequently differed in size from their prototypes. And he could not resist intensifying the object by applying lurid Abstract Expressionist brushwork to the rough-textured, lumpily modeled form. In effect, he produced expressionist work—the kind of pastries Edvard Munch might have eaten.

One branch of 20th-century art owes its existence to the theory, original with Duchamp, that any "found object," removed from its original context and put in another, becomes a "readymade" art object. But there is a limit as to how many "readymades" can be found, for it is not the number of objects in this world but the idea that is so quickly exhausted. Jasper Johns scored nicely in 1960 when he created his "counterfeit readymades"—a pair of hand-painted bronze Ballantine ale cans. These must have given Oldenburg food for thought. Circling all the way back to Duchamp's original premise, Oldenburg stocked his phony merchandise in an "original," "natural" context, thereby transforming a real environment into a work of art.

Oldenburg's aim in doing business in an actual neighborhood was to contrast his store with the real thing. Displayed in a "real" store, his plaster pastries and stockings were offered for sale in a dual sense. In merchandising art objects as though they really were the lowly consumer goods they purported to be, Oldenburg was obviously criticizing the commercialism of the art world which piously traffics in consumer goods of a more "spiritual" nature.

The store had a number of practical functions: it was an artist's atelier, a place of business, a factory, and a showroom. But it was also a moralistic tableau on the American artist's new role as high-class cultural purveyor. The wave of recognition and commercial success that engulfed the Abstract Expressionists in the late 1950s set the stage for an affluent new era in which the artist was no longer a solitary craftsman feverishly expressing himself in the privacy of his own loft, but a photogenic, quotable, taste-making "star." In Oldenburg's store, the artist's sense of guilt connected with huckstering, money, and sales was objectified and brought into comic relief.

Because the store existed in both a literal and a metaphorical way it cast the spectator in an ambiguous role, setting him on a twin-track reality. For many people, the store environment invoked a sense of deja-vu, making the "customer" conscious of physically re-enacting an everyday activity in a slightly discordant key, trying to reconcile the difference between actual and virtual activity. The setting was conducive to a modest form of improvisational theatre involving such stock situations as exchanging a purchase, getting satisfaction from the surly shopkeep, etc. The degree of make-believe fell somewhere between "playing house" in the backyard and showing-off in a community pageant.

The store's built-in theatrical dimension was more original and absorbing than any of the overt or explicit entertainments that were offered there—the series of Ray Gun Theatre happenings that were performed in the early part of 1962. I have seen only four Oldenburg happenings in all (two at the store) and, while wishing to be moved by their poetic images and subtle moods, have been too brutalized and bored to recommend them to anyone. Despite the fact that Oldenburg is one of the pioneers in this field, having done his first happening in 1960, he is not as forceful an innovator in happenings as either Allan Kaprow or George Brecht.

Some of the concepts at work in the Store are now clarified by "Store Days," a book containing selected entries from Oldenburg's notebooks, dozens of drawings (many in color), and other pictorial documentation from this period. Reading this book is like peering at Oldenburg's diary over one of his soft lumpy shoulders. Constantly free-associating, his ideas and images metamorphosing even as he records them, he jots down random observations on himself and his art, never hesitating to change his mind or contradict himself in mid-passage. "Objectivity is really beyond me," he confesses. "Opinions are my weakest area, so I put these in letters that is personal statements and freely which like statements spoken may thus be discredited by being momentary and subjective and contexted." One of the book's surprises is that

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BOOKS: STORE DAYS

Continued from preceding page

there exists a thread of labyrinthine continuity to all of Oldenburg's projects, with many of his current projects clearly predicted in these notes. Consequently the book is much more than a souvenir album of the store; it affords safe passage into one of the most devious, diabolical, and creative minds in the New York art world. How refreshing it is to find a mind that teems!

Oldenburg is a writer by inclination and by training, and a gifted writer. After graduating from Yale, where he majored in English, he worked as a reporter in Chicago from 1950 to 1952. He has been filling notebooks (or are they logs?) since 1956, when he moved to New York.

Critics who have likened Oldenburg's sensibility to that of two writers, Walt Whitman and Rabelais, have scored a direct hit, for Oldenburg writes: "My approach is a direct strong vulgarity/Lisztian Beethovian Bruegelian Orozcoan Whitmanian Rabelaisian/including delicacy." Oldenburg's voracious appetite for the vulgar is nowhere more evident than in the howling, beat bombast of his extraordinary manifesto, written in 1961, which begins:

"I am for an art that is political-erotical-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum.

"I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is art at all, an art given the chance of having a starting point of zero.

"I am for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap and still comes out on top.

"I am for an art that imitates the human, that is comic, if necessary, or violent, or whatever is necessary.

"I am for an art that takes its form from the lines of life itself, that twists and extends and accumulates and spits and drips, and is heavy and coarse and blunt and sweet and stupid as life itself."

Oldenburg's manifesto is as extreme in its way as any of the gleefully bleak dogmas of the late Ad Reinhardt. Reinhardt, the great dissenter, took an elite view of "pure" art, excluding all nonpainting to begin with, and then most of the visible properties of painting, until he arrived at a square black canvas—the "ultimate" painting that he tirelessly reiterated. In contrast, Oldenburg takes an all-inclusive view, basing his credo on total acceptance of all the unrefined, accidental, clumsy, ludicrous, and extra-artistic things that art can be.

Oldenburg has always been "bothered" by distinctions—between commercial and fine art, between abstraction and figuration, between good and bad. More than most artists, he hates to be pegged. "The only defense against being trapped in someone's idea of your intention," he says, is to keep changing your field and work very hard, so that the *fact* of your creation, which will always be the most important thing, always overshadows its interpretation." His resistance to categorization is frequently perverse. He used to refer to his three-dimensional plaster objects as paintings. He likes to think of his soft pieces as kinetic sculptures—pointing out that they are less predictable than the motorized variety. He called his last New York happening a sculpture. "It is important to me that a work of art be constantly elusive, mean many differen things to many different people," he says. He is still upset that his environmental bedroom set was not included in last year's primary structure show.

Recently Oldenburg's reputation has been plumped up by some of our brighter critics, who correctly point out that his soft-state works are a major innovation in sculptural form. Oldenburg is a particularly difficult artist to deal with in formal terms because his forms and subjects, attitudes and content fuse in an especially complex way. He aspires, I think, to a scarcely credible—and mystical—union of contrary and even irreconcilable qualities. For instance, he simultaneously strives for elegant and vulgar forms, animate and inanimate forms, solidity and bodilessness, empathy ("what I see is not the thing itself but myself—in its form") and indifference ("gravity my favorite form creator") In addition, he is coping simultaneously with metaphor and concreteness, figuration and abstraction, memory and present, mystery and commonplace, individuality and mold, commerce and art. No polarities, it seems, are foreign to him. "My art is a resolution of opposites," he says—or likes to think. For in reality, opposites are not always won. Nevertheless, his astonishing aspirations make all but the very best present-day art look one-dimensional.

Fascinating and revealing as this book is, the store succeeds in preserving its mystery, eluding even the artist's attempts to define it. This must suit Oldenburg fine. "I know that down to the last simple detail experience is totally mysterious," he writes. "What I want to do more than anything is to create things just as mysterious as nature."

Those who see Oldenburg as a mere hardwarephiliac (stimulated perhaps by his claim that he takes his appliances to bed with him) should consider that he wants to put the magic back in objects, "Then the magic inherent in the universe will be

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BOOKS: STORE DAYS

Continued from page 7

restored and people will live in sympathetic religious exchange with the materials and objects surrounding them. . . . What is now called an art object is a de-based understanding of a magic object.' When our vision is clouded by bourgeois values and by removal from an actual functional ...ation (through museum-civili-...) the power of the object which was a functioning object becomes suspended and only its artificiality, that is its craft and design (which are the lowest and easiest of creations), are noted. This is 'art.' Think how many children a day are being perverted into art and their natural recognition of the magic in objects stamped out!''

Camp Registration

Registration begins on December 26 for the summer camps operated by the Educational Alliance, 197 East Broadway, and will continue Mondays and Tues-...days thereafter from 1 to 8 p. m.

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Pop Art

Term first used in mid-fifties by British critic Lawrence Alloway, to refer to products of mass media; soon gained currency to describe work coming out of the milieu of the IG (Independent Group) and the Royal College of Art in London. In the U.S., work of Johns and Rauschenberg incorporating popular images was first dubbed "neo-Dada," but by the time Oldenburg, Warhol and Lichtenstein first showed uptown is was being called Pop. Comic strips, ads, posters, billboards adapted, and also the techniques of commercial art. (Oldenburg differed in this respect, executing in fine-arts tradition).

Crucial formal innovation of the sixties, that united the art of that period and set it off from earlier periods: Change from depiction, in which shapes are isolated against a negative background, to presentation, in which image or shape is coextensive with the whole field, as in Johns's flags. (Rose,128)

Synthetic Cubism, collage, and assemblage were the main formal inspirations of Pop. (B Rose, Oldenburg cat., p. 140).