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as serious. Anything much better a masterpiece. But this was a elity: to an old man in a frock three acts on stage sets, with anks. What is dramatic in *When Awaken* is a pattern of voices and found myself closing my eyes, to the frock coat and the backcloth, I saw were faces in a kind of ulpture—Ibsen's actual and un- image. And then I have said gh that film can be moving sculp- en, like Strindberg, writing the before the mechanical inven- e could formally write, though, y beyond theatre, and similarly yond television in its ordinary and reproductive conventions.

Cameron's *The Sleeping Sword* was a sharp examination of the nt of the Labour Party into its apitalist orthodoxy. Its strength pportunity it gave to non-Estab- igures to articulate their experi- their questions; its weakness its recognise any socialist thinking e style and era of *Tribune*.

ssell's BBC 1 *Dance of the Seven* an extravagant squib: tearing a p off Richard Strauss. It had its such as the sentimentally grotes- otion of Hitler, and some old nockabout farce with a Teutonic ot exactly stressing, by the way, uss's source was Oscar Wilde). e other elements: Strauss's vio- sensationalism were sometimes d with the mock-heroic of super- s—a reduction of cruel bombast But it was difficult to feel that it was not also enjoyed in its erms. The slaughter of the cow, lation, the war nightmare, were nly backgrounds. But scenes like ged rape of the hero, by a group ritually, and by Potiphar's Wife, f parody of wrestling—a scissors- the womb—raised different ques- e, it seemed, was a mind half in its own debris, enjoying the con- satire and the thing satirised, ncertainty with technique.

lio

ankian Christopher me

nusual radio play which I heard me round and then again on the as *Gulliver's Way* by Michael o my ear at least it was Fir- the quality of the humour high what rare, making special de- the listener. John Tydeman's n was well cast—it was marvel- ar Barbara Couper again in a part her so well—and played with feeling for the grotesque. Plot and venue are as defiant of current fashion as a taste for Firbank might be—an aesthetic house-party with the real world breaking in, a romance, or nearly, and unpremeditated 'happenings' to confuse and upset the premeditated ones. The guests, or some of them, are hired, like the butler and cook, including a retired female chess master and that Twenties figure, a Negro cicisbeo: all of them assembled by Mrs Gulliver (Miss Couper) to adorn a gilded cage for her son, Ashby (Richard Briers), who has been hand-reared till the age of 31 with a lot of learning but no experience. Madeleine Potts, the practical red-haired beauty whom he breaks away from his mother to marry, was deliciously played by Zena Walker.

If it did not make quite the impact it should have, there may have been a fault of structure. Perhaps writer and producer could have given more strength to the narrative line. The sharp cutting from one short scene to the next worked well enough once the piece got going, but it seemed a bit too tightly packed at the outset.

Tydeman was the producer of a less intricate but also very amusing piece by Ian Rodger, *A Short Visit to Cockaigne*. This was robust, goonish, more in the direct tradition of radio comedy, a take-off of the City of London's love for Elizabethan ceremonial. A successful businessman, Chubb (excellently played by Maurice Denham), is appointed to a high office in a livery company, the Posset-Makers. His rivals in a take-over battle want to get him out of the way. For a year he has to drive around from one solemn junketing to another with a party of liveried retainers, who turn out to be surprisingly well-informed about business matters. With their help, and a telephone in his car, he turns the tables on his opponents. A feature of the production was the remarkable clamour of ancient instruments, real or feigned, which accompanied Chubb's civic rides, all provided by the Radiophonic Workshop,

The institution of link-men or anchormen, those key performers who compere a programme and hold it together, is probably as necessary to Sound as it is to TV. Some of them started in Radio, where people are judged more by what they know about outside the medium than by what they do on it. But TV, of course, sets the pace, and those patient, ubiquitous, ebullient personalities who, always talking, talking, are thrust into every kind of possible and impossible situation for the entertainment and instruction of British viewers, often have little time for radio. When they do pay us a visit, it is hard to say whether the TV hair-do and the miscellaneous props and fancy dress which accompany so much TV journalism affect a man's image in the mind's eye of the radio audience. Perhaps just a wisp of ectoplasm and a clatter of stones on quarrymen's white helmets is all our memory retains of news-making activities on the other box. Even so, there has been something of a TV style about Magnus Magnusson's current stint in *The World of Books*. He or his producer have made it very much *his* programme—not a monologue, but with the other distinguished participants playing supporting roles.

Media

The Greatest Shows on Earth by John Richardson

One of the most discussed figures around New York today is Thomas Hoving, Director of the Metropolitan Museum. A brilliant administrator, impresario, fund-raiser, political operator, he is young, rich, dynamic and attractive; he is also an expert on medieval art and an enthusiast for modern art. In a very few years he has transformed his museum into a public relations dream palace. Scholars complain because attendance has increased so much that it is impossible to see, let alone enjoy, whatever is on view. In addition, he has mounted one mammoth exhibition after another—something his predecessors never bothered to do.

The first show, a big spectacular called 'The Taste of Kings', was widely castigated as a sop to American nostalgia for royalty. The second, 'Harlem on My Mind', was a calculated political gambit: alas, it went wrong. Hoving and Mayor Lindsay hoped to woo New York's coloured minority with a lavish tribute to the Negro ghetto. Because it was so controversial, 'Harlem on My Mind' packed them in, but coloured people didn't like it. Worse, New York's Jewish community took offence—justifiably—at the anti-semitic tone of the catalogue preface, compiled by a coloured schoolgirl. Angry Jews demonstrated outside the Metropolitan, and Hoving is still having to apologise to rabbis in the New York area.

Now, a year later, we have the first of a new series of exhibitions celebrating the Metropolitan's centenary. 'New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970' is devised to prove that the 'New York School is the historical successor to the School of Paris'. In 36 galleries 43 painters and sculptors are given what amount to one-man shows. Once again there has been an outcry. Some have questioned the ethics of having a great corporation—in this case Xerox—foot the bills. Others have criticised the show on philosophical or political grounds, or because no coloured artists are included. Yet others are scandalised, because this or that artist has been excluded—Larry Rivers, Louise Nevelson or Al Held, for instance—or badly represented, or over-represented at the expense of someone else. But in the last resort virtually all the attacks have been personal ones on Henry Geldzahler, the Metropolitan Museum's charismatic young curator of contemporary arts.

The *New Yorker*'s critic Harold Rosenberg accuses Geldzahler of having perpetrated 'the latest and largest' exhibition 'in which works of art serve the career strategies of curators'. *Life* Magazine complains that Geldzahler has 'assembled a hit parade'; the *New York Times* critic questions 'the exact nature of his critical'

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criteria'. Poor Geldzahler is the victim of his own personality cult. True, he is often perverse in his judgments, a bit of a Miss Jean Brodie when it comes to protégés, and his name is mentioned more often in *Vogue* than in the *College Art Journal*. But for all his quirks, Geldzahler has put together the most stimulating and refreshing exhibition of recent years. Even in the United States contemporary American art has never been exhibited on this vast scale, let alone with such simple, tasteful showmanship.

The highlights of 'Henry's Show', as it has come to be called, are too numerous to list. The creators of Abstract Expressionism—Pollock, De Kooning and Kline—are all seen at the top of their form, but the gallery devoted to Mark Rothko is especially stunning—like a *chapelle ardente*: Rothko's walls of colour fill the gallery with what I can only describe as a diapason throb. Also somewhat chapel-like is the all-black gallery devoted to Joseph Cornell's boxes—boxes containing samples of the night sky, elixirs, memorabilia. Spot-lit in the dark, they are like reliquaries for our time—ex-votos for lunar explorers.

Even more eye-opening are the galleries devoted to the generation after the Abstract Expressionists. Here Jasper Johns emerges as the master. The gravity of his work constitutes a subtle reproach to his more showy neighbours. Johns stands out because he disdains the easy lure of the jumbo-sized canvas; nor does he smear or drip his ego all over his pictures, like the Abstract Expressionists. Public intimacies are not for him. Instead he continues to delve into pictorial science, into the properties of primary colours as opposed to *grisaille*, into the nature of pictorial truth and untruth, into the implications of Helmholtz's colour theories. By contrast, his former associate, Rauschenberg, emerges as little more than a bravura performer.

Aside from Johns, another even younger painter emerges from this show as a master: Frank Stella, whose enormous shaped abstractions—they used to be pin-striped, now they are runic—establish him as the leader of the Cool School. 'I want to re-do geometrical abstraction of the Twenties and Thirties in terms of new American techniques and discoveries,' he once told me. He has succeeded so well that his recent work makes abstractions of the Bauhaus era look obsolete—turbo-prop as opposed to jet. The other so-called 'Cool Artist' who triumphs in this show is Ellsworth Kelly.

So kind to some, these sky-lit white galleries mercilessly show up weaknesses in others. Hans Hofmann comes across as an academic boor—true, an influential one—and two other favourites of Geldzahler's, Jules Olitski and Helen Frankenthaler, don't measure up to the rest. By perverse selection and wickedly clever hanging, Geldzahler has managed to cut certain artists down to size. A case in point is Barnett Newman, the grand panjandrum of the New York School. Geldzahler sees to it that Newman's uncompromisingly minimal canvases, which many revere, rub shoulders with other people's sculpture—*lèse-majesté* that has caused considerable dismay.

This is the most important exhibition held in this country since the famous Armoury show. It has established without a shadow of a doubt the supremacy of the New York School. In addition it looks beautiful and has a wonderfully tonic effect on the eye. If only it could travel to Europe! But then it might show up so much European art as thin and provincial. And where would we find 52,000 square feet to show it? Olympia?

This account was broadcast in 'The Arts This Week' (Third Programme).

Films

Soul Food

by Gavin Millar

The difficulty for any critic of society is to keep the targets under fresh observation. There occurs, in *Alice's Restaurant* (Windmill Theatre, director Arthur Penn), the ironic line: 'The educational system of the United States has always encouraged freedom of thought and expression.' A general audience of under-thirties greeted this with hoots of knowing derision. They had recognised a target and they loved firing at it together. Well, that's a legitimate pleasure of being an audience, or a society. The trouble starts when the pleasures of solidarity glaze the vision. This critique of old warlike America by young peaceful America is conducted by a mediocre folk-hero, Arlo Guthrie, son of Woody, the fine folk-singer, and his targets are too vague to be in focus. He plays himself, and, if the representation be true, in a world nodding and bobbing with boring folk-singers Arlo bores his way effortlessly to the top. He is small and limp, with waterfalls of hair, and he stands looking at us over the threshold of the film like a spaniel which has fought its way gamely towards you through long wet grass and can go no further.

The tale told in the film, adapted from his record *The Alice's Restaurant Massacree*, is allegedly true. He frequents a band of hippies living in a deconsecrated church owned by a middle-aging couple, Ray and Alice, who run a restaurant. The drawbacks of hippy life are not avoided: drug deaths, insecurity, the desolation of gregariousness. But they are mentioned rather than discussed. Arlo himself, arrested for tipping garbage, becomes ineligible for the draft and is left looking for 'a who and a where', apparently. Perhaps the hippies are notable, it strikes you, not because, set down beside a conventional community, they appear to have style, but precisely because they have none: in their extravagance, spontaneity and variety of appearance and habit one can read not decision but indecision, not approval but simply rejection, not community but restlessness. Few of these reflections get into the film. One thinks fondly of the fierce and honest *Easy Rider*.

Information

Alisdair Fairle

Capitalists and Ble

I had always thought that the mo cess of the artificial flower was a n to do with the detergent industry' for thrusting plastic bouquets hands of its acolytes. So I was int hear, on last Thursday's program Marie Lloyd on Radio 2, that her fa been a maker of artificial flowers. at a report of the 1851 Census, I fo in that year there were no less th others in the same trade. That sam is a monument to other trades wh declined at least as much. There example, over 7,000 barrow-boys 20,000 shepherds, over 4,000 paw (there are only a few dozen today quarter of a million dressmaker charladies, over 20,000 governes 904,611 registered paupers. The 30,000 pedlars. (I used sometimes into a coffee-bar renowned for its tuals, one of whose most portentou tants was an Indian mystic, his b shiny like a polished pebble. He sit there reading through a heav books by Hegel, Kant, Wittgens Kafka—utterly inscrutable, excep occasional weighty smile. The ra he said were distant, strange, a mystical. He had a hushed reput widely-read profundity. Once he s me by asking if I would help hin letter to the Home Office. The su said, was very delicate. I was honoured—and then even more s The letter turned out to be a requ pedlar's licence, and he wanted n ance because he could neither r write).

Some of the 1851 enumerations first sight, scarcely credible. Ima example, the daily lives of the 88 of leeches. Modern Census-taking s ceals that sort of detail: our multi breeders of fruit-flies are doubtle fied as 'geneticists', and maggot- ('Maggots—we cater especially small user. Thoroughly cleaned an in bran. No mess or smell. Sent senger train'—so read the adverti as 'purveyors of anglers' sundries met a man who made £5 to £10 a stalking round golf courses with a lamp on his head, spearing eart and selling them as bait to fisher I have never met a cart-horse coll facturer: there were 48 in 1851 same year there were 77 ble thought I'd met a few of them, found that in fact they were the n sort. And what of the three pea-s The two sellers of bees? The five merchants? And that year, when K had already been living in England years, was it the fact that the C ported a mere 198 capitalist encouraged him to think of their as inevitable?

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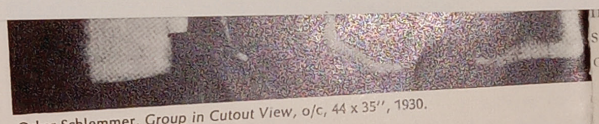
Rosenberg on "Henry's Show" - see"Ecole de New York" in De-Definition.

"...merely the latest and largest in a series of history-falsifying survey exhibitions in which works of art have been employed to serve the career strategies of the curators who assembled them..."

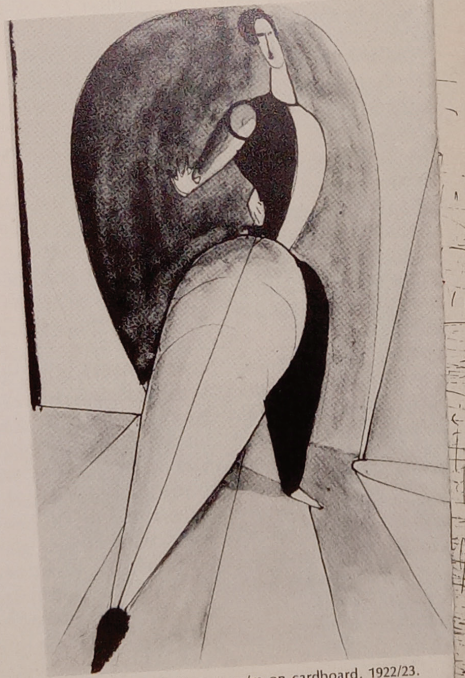
"a form of theater"

Lichtenstein -"Roy is a real picture maker, the most inventive in the business since Picasso. He has a picture going into a show at Fourcade, that I think is the best he's ever done. He's working with Surrealist images. Leo can't sell him any more. He used to sell everything Roy did, but his prices are so high now... Forty, fifty, seventy thousand right off the easel...

Blum



Oskar Schlemmer, *Group in Cutout View*, o/c, 44 x 35", 1930.



Oskar Schlemmer, *Dancer*, m/m on cardboard, 1922/23. Spencer Samuels Gallery.

...s about the inclusions and omis-
...of Geldzahler's extravaganza is to fall into a trap prepared in advance in order to provide meat for "Henry's" public relations—a field in which he has been doing sufficiently well. "Henry" is an entertaining talker with an attractive manner, and given to costumes suggestive of gone-by periods of middle-class elegance. In general makeup, he belongs to the age of Balzac, and had he contended that he, rather than the "New York School," was the successor to Paris, or to someone in Paris, I should have made no objection. The press kit for the show contains a glossy of Geldzahler in shirtsleeves, as if he were a movie director on location; flanked by an assistant, he is explaining an installation to one of his favorite artists. No doubt is left as to who is in charge. In the past few years, art in America has given birth to a new type: the Swinging Curator. Museum art-historical spectaculars have been discussed in this column in connection with "crea-

...sents a single development and point of view.

"At least you needn't be hostile."

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(ARTFORUM, Dec. 1969)

MODERN AMERICAN ART AT THE MET
"...as beautiful as any we are likely to see again."

PHILIP LEIDER

When the *New York Times'* Grace Glueck, in the first of the pre-opening puffs, called what was to become "New York Painting and Sculpture, 1940-1970," simply "Henry's Show," one's heart sank. So that was to be the way of it: America is given a culture by a handful of geniuses and the celebration of it, come at last, was to be just Henry Geldzahler's show. Later, *Time* featured Henry leaning on a David Smith and *New York Magazine* had four pages of Henry along with some pictures from the exhibition, but smaller. In the end, Grace Glueck turned out to be right—it *was* Henry's show, not because he *painted* all of those pictures (it became harder and harder to keep in mind that he painted not even one of them) but because there was no understanding the exhibition without referring to Geldzahler and his peculiar relations to the art of his time.

The exhibition is exquisite and rude, high-minded and petty, ravishingly beautiful and monumentally vulgar, and at no point can one be certain that one is dealing with a toughly thought out presentation rather than a series of irresponsible caprices. Had Henry Geldzahler, for example, truly pondered and deliberated, and having thus pondered and deliberated decided that Tony Smith was a greater artist than David Hare, Herbert Ferber, Louise Nevelson or Richard Stankiewicz? Had he considered deeply and concluded that Roy Lichtenstein and James Rosenquist were deserving of space in an exhibition with Pollock and Smith but that Jack Tworkov, Ray Parker, John Ferren and Conrad Marca-Relli were not? Had he really meant to divide a room between Guston and de Kooning while Stella and Noland are given a room each and Ellsworth Kelly is practically given a suite? Does he mean what he implies by showing late Motherwell but not late de Kooning? Does he really think that the only value of sculpture is to enhance paintings?

Yes and no. For Geldzahler has been true—consistently and ruthlessly true—to his own experience, and he is plain in recounting to us in the catalog essay what that experience has been. It has not been an experiencing of art (about the experiencing of art there is nothing) so much as an experiencing of the art world, of dealers and galleries and museums and collectors and magazines and critics. It is a milieu the worst part of which consists of hypocritical art profiteers and mental go-go girls, but the best part of which can more or less be defined as that group in American society which passionately shares the belief that Jackson Pollock and David Smith are cultural figures of an importance equalled only by the like of Herman Melville or Walt Whitman. Geldzahler came into it at a time when de Kooning was being cannibalized by swarms of gestural artists professing to be recording their "actions," and his earliest enthusiasms were for artists of another persuasion: Stella, Frankenthaler, Noland, Olitski, Chamberlain, Johns, Rauschenberg. Admiring them, he admired the artists they admired—Pollock, then Hofmann, later Newman and Louis—and the critics they, or most of them, admired, Greenberg above all.

Another side of Henry (or maybe the same side) was attracted instantly to Pop, to having his picture taken floating about in Happenings, to underground movies and to assiduously attending art world parties at which he met the people who bought the paintings and who, because of Henry, bought more paintings, and better paintings. And as Henry convinced more and more people that an artist like Clyfford Still might be at least as central to our life as a culture as, say, Philip Roth, even the Metropolitan Museum of Art, dedicated to the exhibition and collection of great art, finally came to exhibit and collect the great art that had been born on its doorstep. In this sense, too, it is "Henry's Show." No Henry, no show.

Experience of the kind Geldzahler describes doesn't disqualify one from putting on a show like "New York Painting," and one wonders why Hilton Kramer* thinks that it should. In its main outlines the show argues that the movement of the best art made in America extends from Pollock, Smith and the artists of the First Generation to Louis, Frankenthaler, Noland, Stella, Olitski, Johns and Rauschenberg. Although Mr. Kramer suggests that the exhibition called for a more heavily accredited "authority" with less "received ideas" than Geldzahler, it is difficult to imagine what kind of authority would have produced a show substantially different in its basic outlines. To be sure, someone like William Rubin, say, would not have allowed himself the eccentricities of the Geldzahler show, might have been more generous in his treatment of the fifties and certainly would have been more consistent with regard to sculpture, but the general argument of the exhibition would have remained the same. Besides, in modern art especially, it has been established more than once that "authority" does not make the show: the show makes the authority. Peter Selz has proven the former and Henry Geldzahler, it seems to me, has proven the latter, for he has put together an exhibition of American art of the past 30 years as beautiful as any we are ever likely to see again.

Quite simply, the exhibition represents great taste, and this taste in the end overrides the rudeness, the imbalances and eccentricities. The level of taste is maintained unimpeachably in most of the early rooms of the exhibition, those devoted to the first generation Abstract Expressionists. Still, Hofmann, Gorky, Rothko, Tomlin and Kline are each represented by a group of paintings of remarkable overall quality. The Hofmann room seemed to me superb, and probably the finest moment in the exhibition. The paintings by Franz Kline measured up to the Stills in the same room in a manner I could not have imagined, and Geldzahler deserves thanks, if for nothing else, for restoring to Kline the status he had held prior to the dismal retrospective organized by the Whitney's authorities last year. The room Gottlieb and Motherwell shared dropped a bit; Motherwell's *Africa* seemed terribly bombastic and messed up the scale of all the works, and the Gottlieb sculpture, a dumb, happy, totally unserious thing took over the room like a kind of good-natured, overgrown puppy. The surprise was in a small adjoining room, where a beautifully chosen group of small, early works by both Motherwell and Gottlieb achieved a dimension of dignity that one would have thought impossible for smaller works in this exhibition; the room is one of the show's high moments.

De Kooning is treated shabbily. Sharing a room with Guston, who hardly provides a foil, he is represented by too many Pink Angel pictures, and, unlike Newman, Motherwell or any number of younger painters, is denied any recent work at all. The grudge represented by this spiteful treatment is a grudge against 10th Street and the excesses of the late fifties, but it is a grudge that has long since died in others and should have long since died in the Curator of Contemporary Art at the Met. (This will not be the only instance in which Geldzahler's insistence on being true to his experience rather than re-evaluating it will damage the exhibition and throw his judgment into question.) The Reinhardts looked thin and tinny—perhaps because they were confined to a very small room; very much the same pictures looked much more impressive in Maurice Tuchman's First Generation exhibition several years ago. The attempt to re-create the splendid Pasadena installation of Cornell by Walter Hopps failed rather badly; what was intimate and jewel-like in the context of the Cornell retrospective in the old Pasadena Art Museum was theatrical and precious in the context of this exhibition, but there was something admirable and fraternal, nevertheless, in inviting a colleague from another institution to install the works of an artist with whom he is especially familiar.

The high level of taste in the individual selections drops badly in the rooms of the ludicrously over-represented Ellsworth Kelly. Hilton Kramer correctly protested an entire roomful of Kelly drawings in the absence of similar attention to the drawings of de Kooning or Gorky. But in addition, Kelly's sculpture, which has yet to attain the state of utter, Matisse-like simplicity for which it strives, is represented by five examples in an

*See his review of the exhibition, *N.Y. Times*, October 19, 1969.

based: that art in New York 1940-1970 represents a single development and point of view.

"At least you needn't be hostile."

taculars have been discussed in this column in connection with "crea-

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exhibition which contains no more than five Calders, four Judds and three Chamberlains. Louis, Frankenthaler, Noland and Stella are all adversely affected by a decision to present a sampling of their various periods in preference to a strong selection from one or two of their best series while Olitski is hurt by a decision to do just that. And in every case except perhaps Frankenthaler, a chronological installation would have greatly enhanced the presentation. Stella's room looked especially disorderly, dominated as it was by an uninspired and eccentric 40-foot long picture, *Sangre de Christo*, though the quality of the other selections was extremely high. The exact and particular decisions each represented in terms of color, shape and scale were lost in the disorder of the installation.

While almost every Stella period was touched on, several critical Noland periods were ignored: no pre-1961 paintings were shown, though they look better with each passing year, and none of the "cat's-eye" series were represented. Nor did it seem to me that either *Via Lime* or *Trans-Median* conveyed a sense of the extraordinary level of the paintings of the past two years. The decision to exhibit several pre-1960 Olitskis (which, unlike pre-1960 Nolands are of no interest at all) and no Olitskis from the period between 1960 and 1965, was one of the most arbitrary in the exhibition. Here we are done a serious disservice, for we are permitted no opportunity to gauge for ourselves the success of Olitski's lifelong struggle with the Surrealist dreamscape. To have simply excised five years out of Olitski's mature career represents one of the most inexplicably senseless decisions in the exhibition.

The Johns and Rauschenberg rooms are among the most impressive in the exhibition, with works chosen carefully and with confidence from the artists' best periods. Surprisingly, the works of Johns that are shown do not convey either Stella's debt to him or Robert Morris's, but works like *Device Circle, Painting with Two Balls, Screen Piece, Jubilee* and (especially) *False Start* instead point to where only three other works in the exhibition point: outside the Museum, to the literalism and problem-solving that characterize such artists as Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra and Peter Young. In Rauschenberg's room, the big surprise is *Factum I* and *Factum II*. A generation of critics appear to have understood these works as a kind of exposé of Action Painting, the frenzy that inspired *Factum I* supposedly casually and deliberately being repeated in *Factum II*. But *Factum I* turns out not to be especially frenzied and *Factum II* is specifically *different* rather than the same in almost every detail. In fact, the pair seems to be more about how different two "same" pictures can be than how "same" two different pictures can be, more about the impossibility of choosing which one is "better" than which one is genuinely spontaneous.

The room devoted to Larry Poons is one of the most successful in the show, and it is here that we can see how a more or less chronological hanging helps a clear and orderly presentation. One of Poons' most recent pictures, *Night Journey* rounds out the exhibition perfectly, for the picture irresistibly points, even to its title, to the spirit of the late '40s in the work of the older generation of artists on whose shoulders the entire exhibition rests. It is as if Poons has sensed, at this stage in his career, that if there is to be such greatness again then one must begin again. But of course, to begin again does not mean to paint as *they* painted in *their* beginnings, but to be lost, as they were lost, to be desperate, as they were desperate, to be as totally without a sense of what to do as they were.

Had the exhibition ended with Poons, the difficult and ungenerous view which it takes of recent American art would have been more than simply defensible—it would have been, if not "definitive" (as Hilton Kramer would have liked) certainly the standard view. For if the show was proposing to exhibit only works the quality of which seemed to be more or less beyond question it had for the most part done it magnificently, and in good measure the magnificence lay in the toughness, even rudeness, with which Geldzahler had dismissed from the exhibition those works which did not meet that criterion. But Poons's room is followed by three galleries full of Pop art, an art whose quality is not only *not* more or less beyond question, but whose quality is questioned by Geldzahler himself in the catalog essay. Once, of course, the exhibition is opened to work whose quality *may yet* prove high, to work which "may well find its converts and adherents in unexpected future corners and pockets of major art," then hosts of artists come out of the shadows and claim their right to the same generous view of *their* possible future influence.

Why commit such a blunder? Again because Geldzahler is being true to his experience, and a vital part of his experience was his early defense, at a considerable risk to his own career, of Pop art, and his patronage of the movement extended right up to the exhibition of Rosenquist's *F-111* at the Met in 1967. Simply unable to apply the standards of the exhibition as a whole as rigorously to those as to other artists, he opens himself painfully to Kramer's charge that "energy and enthusiasm" have replaced the "clear intellectual" authority needed for the exhibition.

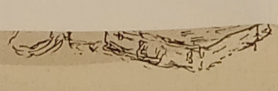
A second blunder, considerably more serious, is the show's treatment of sculpture. About sculpture Geldzahler seems to be in possession of only a single conviction, that of the greatness of David Smith, but even this is insufficient to prompt Geldzahler to give Smith a room of his own. Throughout the exhibition sculpture is simply deposited in the rooms that deserve it, used as message-carrying markers. Thus the Pollock and Stella rooms are heavily planted with David Smiths—something IMPORTANT is always signalled by a David Smith. De Kooning and Guston only get a Gabe Kohn (message: "Three Dear Souls"); Johns gets a Chamberlain (message: "Two Stars of the Late Fifties"); Poons gets a di Suvero (message: "Young Painter, Young Sculptor Carrying on the Great Tradition").

While Geldzahler would never think of showing David Smith's or John Chamberlain's occasional paintings, he sees no problem in showing Gottlieb's, and Newman's and Olitski's occasional sculpture (which, whatever they are serious about, are not serious *about sculpture)*, a fact which lifetime sculptors such as Nevelson or Ferber or Hare have a right to find galling. For, by its exclusions, the exhibition is proposing that subsequent to David Smith an entire generation passed before anything of consequence happened in sculpture again. It is a very tough statement, but not one that could not be defended. But to bypass that generation in order to land on Tony Smith, Noguchi and Gabe Kohn is simply to do violence in no cause. After the David Smith the best piece of sculpture in the exhibition is Don Judd's huge, heavy and perfectly scaled new box, and Geldzahler might just as well have gone straight to it and had done with it. Then, at least, his position would have been clear and the exhibition as a whole might have come to some sort of sensible, if difficult, conclusion. As it is, no one is happy.

Had this exhibition been held in 1960, the youngest artist in it would probably have been Jasper Johns. In his work would have been hints of the oncoming Stella and the developing Noland, of Robert Morris and even of the Pop artists to come. No single figure in the current exhibition even hints, as Johns would have ten years ago, at the kind of art consciousness that has been developing among many younger artists although, in addition to the Johns's previously mentioned, the new Judd box, the Flavin room and Rosenquist's *Tumbleweed* all make motions in that direction. (With none of his grease, mud or process pieces in the exhibition, Morris is simply muzzled down to a Minimal artist *circa* 1966.) The figure needed to bring out these suggestions and indicate the manner in which their implications have been picked up and extended is, of course, Carl Andre, and Geldzahler's failure to include him is a part of the same failure to think things through that characterizes his treatment of sculpture generally.

As it is, Judd's box and Rosenquist's *Tumbleweed* will have to stand for the directions sculpture has taken in the work of Andre, Sonnier, Nauman, Smithson, Heizer, Serra, Bollinger, and Saret. Less than 15 years after Pollock's death, Conceptual Art has come to passing its messages on the back of index cards, Michael Heizer has dropped a steel ball fifty feet to the pavement of the Kunsthalle at Berne, Robert Smithson is covering an island with broken glass, Richard Serra has built a work in an Alhambra steel foundry too heavy for the floors of any museum in the world. It is as if their main concern is that, whatever happens, "American Painting and Sculpture, 1970-1980" will be an impossibility. The cultural shock waves of "Pollock and those guys" seem hardly to have begun. ■

based: that art in New York 1940-1970 represents a single development and point of view.



"At least you needn't be hostile."

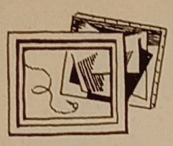
taculars have been discussed in this column in connection with "crea-

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THE ART WORLD

École de New York



THE exhibition of "New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art purports to display the wealth of creation that, according to the catalogue, by Mr. Henry Geldzahler, curator of contemporary arts, who directed the show, has made "the New York School the historical successor to the School of Paris." That art in New York is today on the same plane that art was in Paris during the seventy or eighty years before the last war is a momentous proposition, in regard not only to New York but to contemporary world culture and to the status of America in it. Successor to Paris as "the dominant center of world art," New York, in the view of the Metropolitan's curator, has attained intellectual preëminence, the right to state the problems and to propose the solutions for artists everywhere, and by the magnitude of its creations it has arrested and reversed the decline of the West. As Geldzahler puts it, "something magnificent has happened." Nor does the issue of the qualifications of New York to carry out its historical assignment trouble Geldzahler, since he apparently takes it for granted that the centrality of New York in the current production, exhibition, and marketing of paintings and sculptures automatically confers upon the metropolis qualities of imagination, inventiveness, and intellectual depth equivalent to those of the City of Light. In his summation of New York's greatness in art, there appears not the slightest doubt that "we" are every bit as good as "they" ever were. Indeed, so dazzling is his belief that he fails to notice the oddness of the assumption on which his faith is based: that art in New York 1940-1970 represents a single development and point of view. "By reason of its own achievement," he writes, "and the clear and indisputable effect it has had throughout the world, the art of the New York School stands as the most recent in the grand succession of modern movements from Impressionism through Cubism and Surrealism." New York art has become a "School" and is comparable to European art *movements*. Geldzahler has mistaken a place for a style and for an idea. The history of American imitations, revivals, individual and shared idioms, rotations of modes and subjects during the past thirty years—Expressionist emblems, Action painting, figure painting, romantic sculpture, Pop Art, Optical painting, kinetic constructions, assemblages, stripes, EAT, shaped canvases, Happenings, Minimal sculpture, mathematical abstraction—has suddenly been amalgamated into a purposeful collaborative development on a par with the Cubist and Surrealist revolutions and deserving a place in history alongside the sum of Paris modernist experiments. In Geldzahler's reverie, which the thirty-five-gallery exhibition at the Metropolitan is designed to buttress, Gorky, Warhol, Albers, and Still are aesthetic and intellectual blood brothers. Or, in terms of the New York-Paris succession, a totem pole consisting of Still standing on the head of Albers, who stands on Warhol, who stands on Gorky, tops the Eiffel Tower.

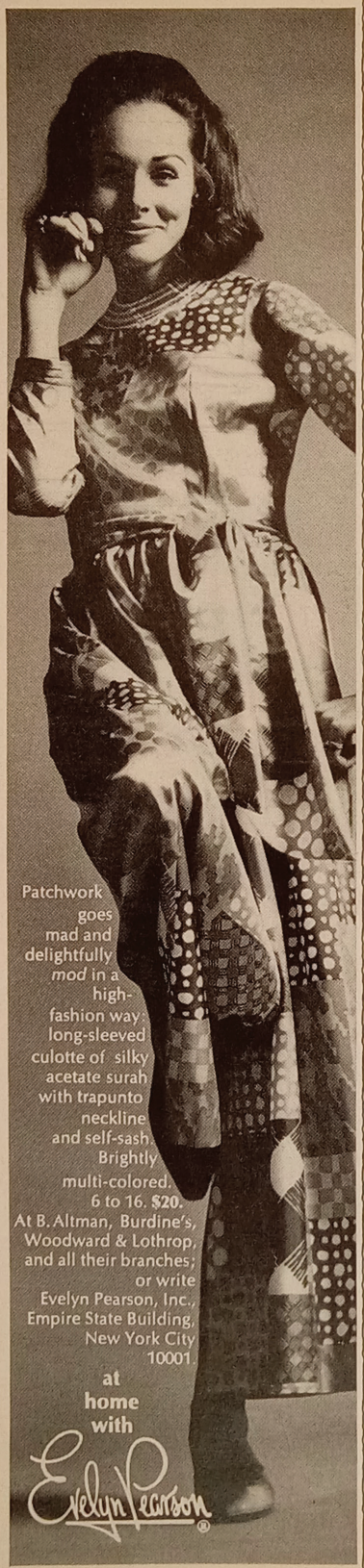


"At least you needn't be hostile."

While the relation of New York art today to that of prewar Paris is worth discussing, the Metropolitan exhibition of the nonexistent New York School is not, except perhaps as a phenomenon of art-world power politics, chauvinism, and institutional reputation-building. "New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970" is merely the latest and largest in a series of survey exhibitions in which works of art are employed to serve the career strategies of the curators who assembled them or to call attention to their mental fixations. (The Metropolitan exhibition has been commonly referred to in the press as "Henry's Show.") To engage in arguments about the inclusions and omissions of Geldzahler's extravaganza is to fall into a trap prepared in advance in order to provide meat for "Henry's" public relations—a field in which he has been doing sufficiently well. "Henry" is an entertaining talker with an attractive manner, and given to costumes suggestive of gone-by periods of middle-class elegance. In general makeup, he belongs to the age of Balzac, and had he contended that he, rather than the "New York School," was the successor to Paris, or to someone in Paris, I should have made no objection. The press kit for the show contains a glossy of Geldzahler in shirtsleeves, as if he were a movie director on location; flanked by an assistant, he is explaining an installation to one of his favorite artists. No doubt is left as to who is in charge. In the past few years, art in America has given birth to a new type: the Swinging Curator. Museum art-historical spectaculars have been discussed in this column in connection with "crea-

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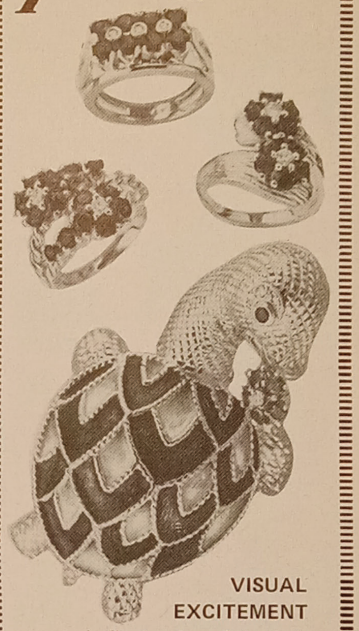


tive" undertakings—such as the art of the thirties and the sixties and of the first generation of Abstract Expressionists—by representatives of the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney. With "Henry" and his show, the Metropolitan has leaped to the forefront in this form of theatre.

Each of the theatrical art surveys has been the biggest in its category to date, and the Metropolitan's "1940-1970," with more than four hundred paintings, sculptures, and drawings, and covering three decades in a single roundup, outnumbers them all. It is billed as "the most monumental showing of contemporary American art ever to be brought together anywhere," which bit of Barnum magniloquence is undoubtedly supportable by the facts. When, however, Geldzahler goes on to claim that his project is the first chance people have had "to see . . . paintings and sculptures in large numbers by the major figures" in New York art, he is talking rubbish. Many figures more "major" than some he has chosen are not included in the show and its catalogue, and among those who are included most have had much more satisfactory representation in individual retrospectives, have been exhibited again and again in predecessor survey exhibitions, and can be seen nearly any time in galleries around Fifty-seventh Street; several can be seen more often than almost anyone would want. In making his show so big, Geldzahler serves no useful purpose; he has employed quantity to force assent. Indeed, it is by the frequency with which they have been displayed that the artists in his show have presumably met Geldzahler's criteria: that the works shall have "commanded critical attention or significantly deflected the course of recent art." Works that command critical attention do not remain unseen in New York, and unseen works do not "deflect." At the Metropolitan, more works than ever before by contemporary Americans are being offered in one place at the same time, but whatever be the advantage of encountering forty-two Ellsworth Kellys, it is offset by the fatigue that this experience induces, particularly in a spectator disappointed by the quality of the nine Pollocks that represent that artist's share in Geldzahler's "vital tradition."

"Critical attention" and historical "deflection" are Geldzahler's sententious terms for confessing his adherence to the star system. What he is actually saying is: I have been going through museum catalogues and art magazines, and from the artists most talked about

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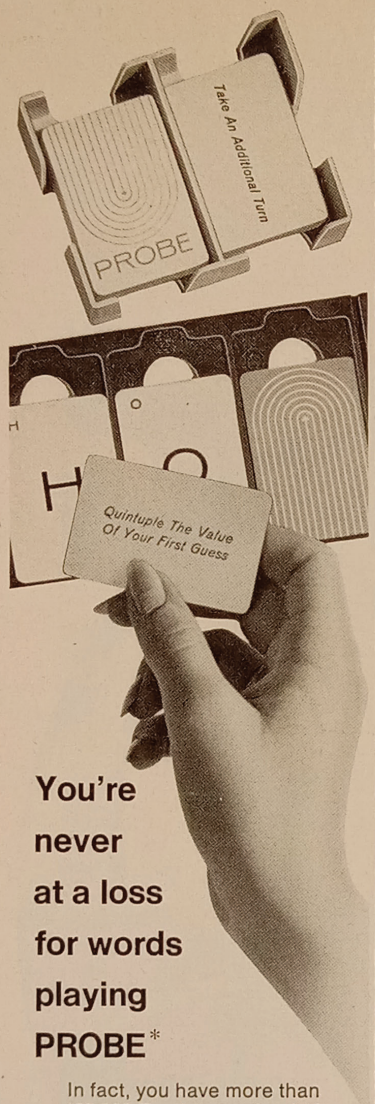
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I have picked the ones I like best. (Later, no doubt, he plans to introduce starlets of his own discovery.) In choosing a cast for his show from this pool of talents certified by magazine linage, Geldzahler has been at liberty to play down or exclude artists who are responsible for the international prestige of postwar American art but who, since they are no longer a novelty, are not talked about as much as they used to be. Putting on museum mammoths has become a competitive enterprise, and Geldzahler's views are not appreciably different from those of rival curators; he belongs to the "formalist" orthodoxy that is centered on "the problem of the picture surface," and it is the formalist reading of American art history as a progressive handling of problems of surface and depth that enables him to see American painting and sculpture of the past thirty years falling into place as a single art "movement." Given the fact that Geldzahler's heroes were predictable—Dr. William Rubin had followed the same line in his "New American Painting and Sculpture" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art—it seems likely that the numerical unbalance of his choices and the blatancy of his omissions were deliberate; his aim seems to have been a *succès de scandale*, in order to distinguish himself by his boldness and avoid being outdone by the denunciations and high attendance of the Metropolitan's "Harlem on My Mind" exhibition. If this was Geldzahler's purpose, he has carried it out expertly. The arbitrariness of his representation of American art has tempted even the most ungifted and conformist reviewers to put on a show of strength by attacking Geldzahler's errors of judgment and, with a list obligingly supplied in his catalogue by Geldzahler himself, by recalling the names of well-known figures, from Baziotes to Larry Rivers and Marisol, whom he has cast into the void. With the assistance of its creator, the Metropolitan exhibition has managed to achieve an almost universal disapprobation; approaching the vast area set aside for the show through a corridor flanked by rows of Cyprian votaries, I fancied that I saw them grinning into their marcelled beards.

Only Mr. Thomas Hoving, director of the Metropolitan, seems to have been convinced that "Henry's Show" was grounded on unassailable values, supported by his curator's "formidable visual talent." In a statement that turns itself inside out before the reader's eyes, Hoving declares that Geldzahler's

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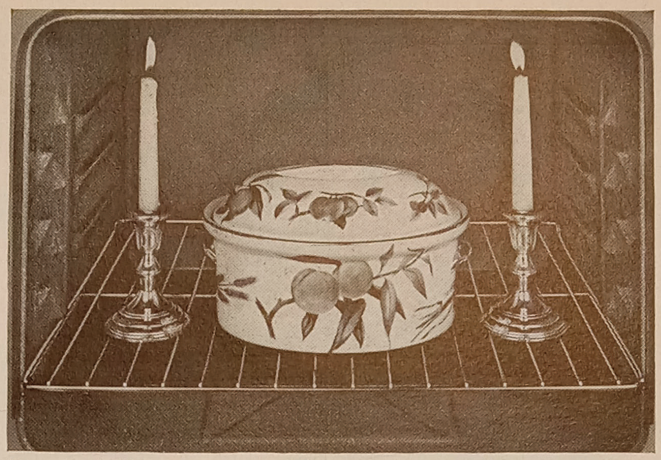
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choices were inevitable. "Although it is conceivable," he says, "that no two people would have picked anywhere near the same works of art from the New York School, 1940-1970, it is highly unlikely." Actually, *nobody* but Geldzahler would have put together this show, and he himself, I am convinced, would be the first to say so. Just what Hoving had in mind by his "no two people" sentence is difficult to figure out—perhaps that the "New York School" has attained the absolute, and that its virtues are so clearly manifest that all men of good will must joyfully assent that in the Metropolitan exhibition "the highest quality of this exciting time has been fully captured."

EUROPEAN avant-garde art had exhausted itself before the war; the last three in Geldzahler's "grand succession of modern movements," of which the "New York School" is presumably the heir, were anti-art. Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism had renounced continuity with the art of the past in favor of protest and of "research" into the social and psychic peculiarities of the modern world. By the nineteen-thirties, advanced artists were in flight from Central Europe and were trying to form combinations against war and Fascism. It is this fatal and irreversible breach of historical continuity that the Metropolitan's critical guides are endeavoring to conceal in their glorification of the "New York School" as the heir of "a continually vital" tradition.

The legacy that New York artists inherited from Paris consisted of the tradition of overthrow, of unlimited formal experimentation and parody, and of fragments of radical ideas. It was on the basis of the consciousness of loss and renunciation of support by the past that a new creative principle was sought by New York painters. The genius of the wartime generation of Abstract Expressionists, veterans of the W.P.A., lay in their ability to get along on nothing—aesthetically as in other respects. In Whitman's phrase, they had "all to make." Out of this pioneer situation, forced upon them by world catastrophe, came the great, flawed art of Gorky, de Kooning, Pollock, Rothko, Gottlieb, David Smith, Still, Newman, Hofmann, Kline, Guston, and a dozen others—individuals bewildered, uncertain, and straining after direction and an intuition of themselves. No description could be less relevant to these artists than Geldzahler's reference to Gorky, Pollock, and



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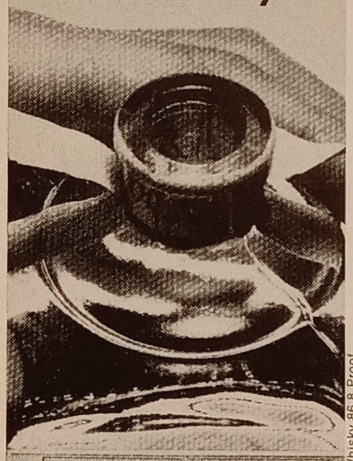
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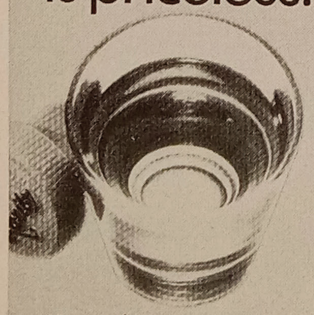
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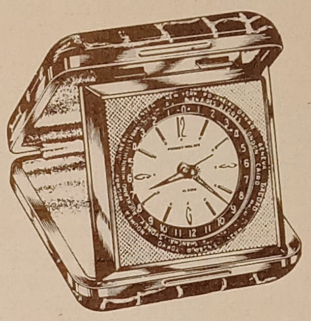
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Smith as "giants." Giants do not paint pictures, they roll boulders down hills.

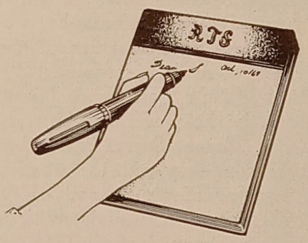
It is in the American artists' will to art that the continuity lies between New York and European modernism. Nineteen-forty-six to 1952 or 1953 was a remarkable period in American art, and no period since has come close to equalling it. In that period, art began to flourish in this country through the powerful impetus of the myth of the artist—a myth that, although it was inherited from Europe, proclaimed America's independence of Europe and turned to an art of symbols drawn from Africa and pre-Columbian America and to self-explorations through action on the canvas. The continuity of New York art with the School of Paris thus consists in the recognition that besides the model of the artist as witness to the predicament of contemporary creation, Europe had no longer anything to offer but a mixture of memories. Despite the efforts of Geldzahler's mentors to prove that American paintings and sculptures "breathe naturally in the history of art," alienation from the past remains the inescapable condition of American creation, as is evident even in the schoolmaster art of the sixties, built upon one traditional element of painting, such as color or shape, that overcrowds the Metropolitan galleries.

New York artists have been compelled to confront the predicament of art in this century with reduced resources of consciousness—philosophical, political, psychological. The question of the survival of art under these conditions remains open. Not only does New York lack the intellectual attributes required to assume the role of Paris but "School of Paris" itself was close to being a misnomer. Style in modern art is determined not by place but by ideology. There are, for example, decisive differences between a Fauvist and a Cubist painting executed at the same time on the Left Bank, and there are similar differences in the work of an individual who has shifted from one concept to another. The open structures of Giacometti the surrealist are stylistically remote from the impacted portraits and walking men of Giacometti the "realist." In the United States, the most notable phenomenon of the art of the forties was the artist who was "cut in two"—individuals, such as Rothko, Guston, Gorky, who after years of working in one vein underwent a crisis out of which emerged a new artist with a new approach. The "conversion" phenomenon has continued to manifest itself, though it is al-

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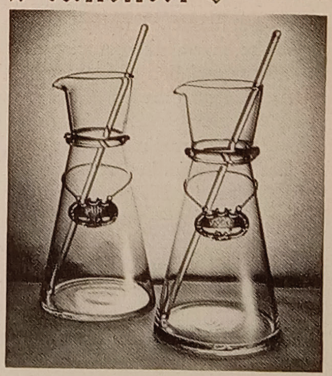
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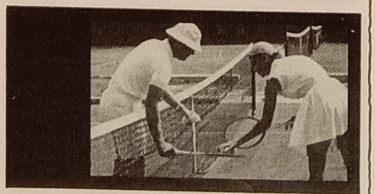
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most entirely suppressed in museum survey exhibitions. Among the artists presented at the Metropolitan, Lichtenstein, Noland, Louis, and Olitski are ex-Abstract Expressionists, but apart from two extremely poor Action paintings by Olitski, done only ten years ago, no hint is given of these artists' aesthetic biographies. This submergence of the artist's experience is of itself sufficient to present the distorted image of art as a craft for illustrating ideas that meet the demands of art history. Such ideas are, of course, the specialty of critics and art historians, and the basis of their status in the art world; artists are compelled to expend some of their energies in handling physical substances. Geldzahler's fantasy of a "New York School" comes from seeing all art in terms of one idea; what but ideology could cause him to elevate Louis and Judd and exclude Held, Sugarman, and Nevelson?

"It is the fate of every myth," wrote Nietzsche, "to creep by degrees into the narrow limits of some alleged historical reality, and to be treated by some later generations as a unique fact with historical claims." The myth of the artist that inspired Pollock, de Kooning, and their contemporaries has undergone precisely the destiny described by Nietzsche. Geldzahler's absurd account of uninterrupted advances from Pollock into higher and higher realms of excellence in a New York School centered on Noland, Stella, and Judd represents the kind of institutional history that confers the stature of European art on New York and the invention of baseball on the Russians. If, despite the ideologies of modernism, "School of Paris" is a term not altogether devoid of meaning, it is because the ancient city diffused its aura upon creations there regardless of their intellectual divergence. The aroma of Paris, debased in perfume advertisements, was present in the paintings of Matisse and Braque and in the tube of "air of Paris" that Duchamp packed in his suitcase when he emigrated to America; imagine anyone carrying off air of New York except to a laboratory. The ephemeral influence that binds responses together beyond the antagonisms of minds is lacking in New York. Art movements in America challenge each other on dogmatic grounds, with a challenge to the death and with a poverty of sensibility that is often appalling. Sensibility has never been the strong point of painting in the United States; even the best of American nineteenth-century landscapes and genre paintings tend toward the tight-



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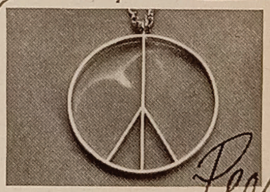
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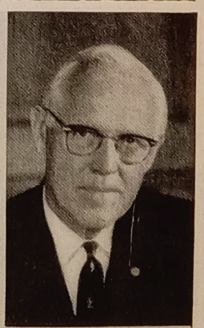


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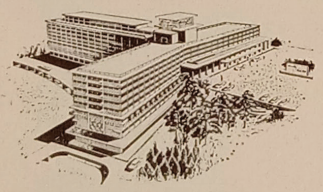
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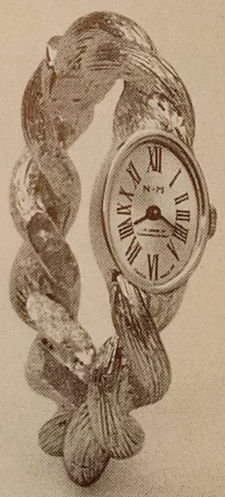
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ness and literalness of an art based on painstaking scrutiny untempered by style. Barnett Newman stated the issue prophetically in the forties by demanding an art denuded of sensibility and "truly abstract" if American painting were to liberate itself from the seductiveness of the Paris schools. Whether or not one accepts Newman's program, it is a fact that sensibility in New York is an individual acquisition and not a collective poetry of place. Americans tend to substitute recipes for the fluctuations of thought and Proust's "intermittences of the heart." Geldzahler's stars of the sixties—Louis, Kelly, Noland, Olitski, Stella—are all recipe painters. The recipes were supplied, or authenticated, by critics. To these critics, New York's continuity with Paris is established through carrying forward such "issues of Modernism," to quote Michael Fried, one of the critics, as "the need to acknowledge the literal character of the picture-support." Here, Minimal and color-field art is exposed as the product of an elementary interpretation of modern culture.

Geldzahler seems dimly aware that his "New York School" is less a communion of artists than a congeries of artifacts and forces, including the force of prevailing official opinion. He speaks of the "climate of discussion, theory, and technical advance" that makes New York today's world center, but he concludes that "perhaps most important of all [are] the museums and continuing gallery exhibitions." It seems evident that for him the significant ideas are those of curators and critics, and he goes as far as to express the astonishing belief that the fall of the School of Paris was brought about by the absence of enterprising museum personnel. "One of the reasons French art weakened so considerably after World War II was that the key paintings and sculptures of the first half of the century were not on view in Paris." The decline of Europe could, it seems, have been averted, after all. As for American vanguardism, it is today safely in the hands of competent art managers and communicators. America's contribution to the 1969 São Paulo Bienal was to have consisted of works in light, inflatable forms, and kinetics by anonymous artists organized into teams by a professor at M.I.T.; the curator of the Los Angeles County Museum has instituted a vast collaboration between artists and industry; the chief curator of the museum of the Rhode Island School of Design has obtained the services of Andy Warhol in

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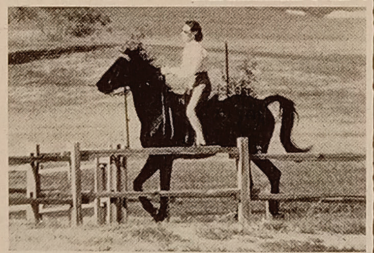
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mounting an exhibition of basement discards that mixes paintings and sculptures with old shoes; someone in the current *Artforum* discusses an exhibition arranged by a female critic that achieves a "total style" and thus leads to the discovery that it is the critic who "is in fact the artist and that her medium is other artists, a foreseeable extension of the current practice of a museum's hiring a critic to 'do' a show and the critic then asking artists to 'do' pieces for the show." In the movies and TV, a critic-artist whose medium is other artists is called a producer.

With the myth of the artist brushed aside by the showman who fits paintings and sculptures into his schemes, the only aspect of modern art that has steadily advanced in New York is its crisis. For obvious reasons, the curator-producer who covets the spotlight will favor artists of non-temperamental character and works in which personality has been reduced to a minimum. At the Metropolitan, the largest displays are by so-called object-makers—"post-painterly" canvases; that is to say, smooth-surfaced, cool, and tending to blend with their setting. The largest work, Stella's mammoth, shaped canvas, ten by forty-two feet, is not a picture on a wall but a wall; one can imagine a building constructed around it. It is composed of joined segments set at angles to one another, and the contours of each segment are emphasized by the parallel lines that constitute the painting. The result is comparable to the kind of rhythmical patterning with which bricklayers decorate a façade by setting bricks in contrasting directions. Using pieces of this sort, Geldzahler has created some rooms with brilliant decorative effects. But the exhibition is tone-deaf, and, in its indifference to the personages, from de Kooning to Nakian and Saul Steinberg, who have reduced the gap that separates New York from Paris of the past, "Henry's Show" makes art in America seem in a more precarious position than it is. —Harold Rosenberg

•

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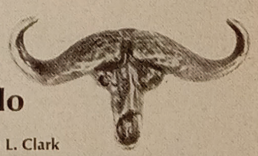


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OLDENBURG SHOW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

An exhibition of 116 three-dimensional objects and over 100 drawings executed by Claes Oldenburg since his first one-man show in New York ten years ago will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from September 25 through November 23.

Directed by Alicia Legg, Associate Curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, the exhibition has been drawn from more than 100 public and private collections in eight countries.

Oldenburg, 40-year old artist, has chosen the themes for his work in terms of environments, particularly The Street, The Store, and The Home. In treating these subjects he allows his fantasy free play, as he also does in his projects for imaginary monuments. The sculptures are on view on the first floor; most of the drawings, including pages from Oldenburg's notebooks, are on view in the third-floor Paul J. Sachs galleries.

"Oldenburg's art is a challenge to the viewer," Alicia Legg says. "Its celebration of the commonplace upsets traditional values. Taking as his subject contemporary products that meet the basic needs of life -- food, clothing, and shelter -- he endows them with wit and even compassion. His approach, however, goes beyond subject matter. Scale is an original concept in his production. His treatment of a wide range of materials brings out his extraordinary sensitivity to form and surface; his craftsmanship, whether in three-dimensional objects or in his light-filled drawings, commands admiration."

The figures, signs and objects relating to The Street (1959-60) are made of various discarded and often fragile materials -- cardboard cartons and used garbage bags. Oldenburg developed these reliefs from sketches made along the Bowery and Lower East Side where he lived. Besides such subjects as the Street Head and the Street Chick, Oldenburg represented the Ray Gun -- an invincible weapon (adapted from comic strips)

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that became his personal emblem and alter ego -- in such objects as the "Empire" ("Papa") Ray Gun and in numerous drawings and posters.

For The Store, which he opened in December 1961 in a non-gallery situation, a former store on East 2nd Street, he made his own version of the food and merchandise displayed in neighborhood shops. These works, such as Girls' Dresses Blowing in the Wind; Red Tights; Two Loaves of Bread -- One Cut; and Pastry Case, II, were made of muslin soaked in plaster over wire framework and brightly painted with enamel. In 1962 Oldenburg began to make similar objects in giant scale and of soft material, usually canvas stuffed with foam rubber. These include the Floor-Burger, 7 feet in diameter, the Floor-Cone, a 10-foot long ice-cream cone, and Giant Blue Men's Pants.

The Home environment began with the Bedroom Ensemble, a room-size tableau based on a motel, with bed, chair, dresser and night tables constructed of wood and other materials in false perspective, first constructed in Los Angeles in 1963. Later objects for The Home include the complete "soft" furnishings for a bathroom -- washstand, toilet, medicine cabinet, scale and tub made of vinyl filled with kapok and painted. Oldenburg also made hard (wood, cardboard, or formica), soft (vinyl filled with kapok) and "ghost" (canvas or muslin) versions of such familiar electrical and mechanical objects as a pay phone, a typewriter and a toaster, some of normal dimensions and some greatly enlarged.

In 1965 Oldenburg began to concentrate on The Car, which he regards as a typical American icon and also as an environment in itself. In this series, based specifically on the Chrysler Airflow of 1935, Oldenburg dissects the car and its parts - engine, tires, etc. - rendering them in hard, soft and "ghost" versions and in six different scales, the largest over life-size. In the exhibition, this series culminates with a large, recently completed multiple, Profile of Chrysler Airflow, of molded polyurethane over a two-color hand-painted lithograph.

The first of Oldenburg's proposals for colossal monuments date from 1965. They originally took the form of drawings, over two dozen of which are in the show. Among

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them are Proposed Colossal Monument for Central Park North; New York: Teddy Bear and Proposed Colossal Monument for Ellis Island" Frankfurter with Tomato and Toothpick. Subsequently Oldenburg began to construct three-dimensional models, such as the Proposed Colossal Monument for Coronation Park, Toronto: Drainpipe.

The only monument actually erected so far is the Lipstick unveiled on the campus of Yale University in May 1969, its costs contributed by a group of faculty, alumni, and students. Represented in the exhibition by models showing its three stages of extension, this lipstick, mounted on a tractor, is also a phallic symbol and a missile. It exemplifies Oldenburg's critical stance toward certain aspects of American life, the erotic content that pervades his work, and his recent interest in objects fabricated by factory techniques.

A consciously vulgar, representational are of formal significance, Oldenburg's work raises virtually every significant critical question involved in a discussion of contemporary art, Barbara Rose says in the introduction to her major monograph* on the artist to be published by the Museum this winter. She defines these critical questions as "the interaction of form and content, the relation of representational to abstract art, and the nature and importance of formal radicalism in new art. With a thorough knowledge of the art of the past and an extreme consciousness of contemporary relevance, Oldenburg calls into question the very concept of style itself, by proposing a rampantly eclectic style that in essence presupposes all the historical movements preceding it. An understanding of Oldenburg's art, therefore, is absolutely crucial for an understanding of what is at stake in the art of the 'sixties."

The drawings in the exhibition include some early works of the 1950's as well as notebook sketches. Their subjects relate in general to the same themes as do the three-dimensional objects, but there are also several costume and theater sketches, suggesting Oldengurg's deep and continuous interest in the theater, environments, happenings, and films. During the course of the exhibition, the Museum will show special films,

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including some of happenings that he himself has created, and some that other film-makers have made of his work.

A modified version of the exhibition will travel to Europe next year under the auspices of the Museum's International Council and will be seen in London, Amsterdam, and Düsseldorf.

In 1961 The Museum of Modern Art acquired Red Tights, the first work by Oldenburg to enter the collection of any Museum.

Checklist, photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Public Information, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, N. Y. 10019. 956-7501, 7504.

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*Claes Oldenburg by Barbara Rose; 168 pages; 224 illustrations (54 in color); flexible binding of vinyl over foam-rubber padding, with a silk screened inscription. $15

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'I don't think that what we're doing
can be called Pop art anymore,' says Lichtenstein.
'It would be like calling Matisse a
Fauve for the rest of his life.'

Roy Lichtenstein: From outrageous parody to iconographic elegance

by John Gruen

There is nothing ostentatiously "Pop" about Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein. He maintains no "Factory," does not move with an entourage, is never seen with society's *haut monde*, attends no chic parties; nor has he transformed his person into a persona whose mystique is an international phenomenon.

Defying the cult tendencies engendered by Pop, Lichtenstein is a refreshing anomaly: a man of conservative taste in a movement long noted for its outrageous lifestyle and creative expression. A man of gentle disposition and appearance, Lichtenstein prefers privacy, solitude and the inconspicuous pleasures of a low social profile, living and working quietly the year round in Southampton, L.I., in an elegant and comfortable house and studio.

A recent visit with the 52-year-old artist revealed a personality that eschews pretentiousness or ego-ridden flamboyance, qualities that could come naturally to a hugely successful Pop artist, whose paintings sell from $20,000 to $80,000 each, and whose market value for early works has recently risen to $250,000 per large canvas. But wealth and its trappings make themselves known, with consummate understatement, in a handsomely appointed two-story Cape Cod house, painted pristine white, that stands in symmetrical austerity in the winter landscape of the more manicured section of Southampton. Its interior is at once spacious and intimate. A large living room holds modern furnishings in subdued colors, some of it designed by Lichtenstein himself. The glass coffee table, for example, has four gold metal

Gian Franco Gorgoni



Roy Lichtenstein with *Still Life with Crystal Dish*, 1972, oil and magna on canvas, 52 by 42 inches. Leo Castelli.

John Gruen is a critic and writer on art.

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Art Deco motifs bearing the distinct Lichtenstein style protruding from each side. A number of small Ben Day-dotted Lichtenstein cups-saucers-and-spoons, in bright colors, are discreetly placed about the room, while a larger sculpture made of black metal, and resembling a cartoon emblem, stands on the coffee table.

A grand piano occupies one corner of the room, and on the wall, to its right, hangs the only Lichtenstein painting in the entire downstairs of the house. It is a bright yellow cartoon landscape, its two hills outlined in black. The rest of the art belongs to other painters: a Warhol portrait of Warhol's mother; a superb early Léger, under glass; a vintage Ozenfant print; two tiny floral oils by Robert Kulicke; two small early American cityscapes. The nearby dining room, almost overwhelmed by a small forest of house plants, is dominated by a long roughly hewn wood dining table, and a huge double portrait by Warhol of Lichtenstein's pretty young wife, Dorothy. Below it hangs a small Warhol portrait of Chairman Mao. Yet another Warhol, of four anemones, is adjacent to a handsome early American corner cabinet. This verdant and homey setting infuses the many Warhol works with the appeal and nostalgia of fading 19th-century postcards.

Lichtenstein, dressed in a heavy green-blue turtleneck over jeans, tells me that he's been very much on his own during the past weeks, his wife having decided to join a friend on an archeological trek in Africa. ("Dorothy loves to travel. I much prefer staying put!") The artist's two sons by a former marriage—Mitchell, 19, and David, 21—now live on their own. The serenity and silence of the house seem reflected in Lichtenstein's own peaceful demeanor, as he tells me something about his background.

"I was born in New York, and as a child I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to do or be. But from about the age of 15, I did an awful lot of drawing. In fact, I took a painting class at the Art Students League, because there were no art courses given in the high school I attended. It was a life class taught by Reginald Marsh, and I did sort of appalling paintings. I hadn't the faintest idea what was doing, but it was a kind of Reginald Marsh realism, built on a sort of Renaissance technique. I attended the League just for one summer—it was either 1939 or 1940. In the meantime, my parents wanted me to get some sort of degree, and I was all too willing to get out of New York. And so, I went to Ohio State University. I got a bachelor's degree, as well as a master's degree in painting. In the middle of all that—in 1943—I was drafted into the army and stayed until 1946. When it was over, I returned to Ohio State to finish up my schooling. I graduated with my master's in 1946, and returned to New York, not knowing what to do."

'The Pop art movement was not an optimistic movement at all, and, of course, it didn't last all that long. Once the movement was understood, it declined. It really attracted very few younger artists.'

Lichtenstein set about to become a painter, albeit of unfocused intent or direction. Abstract Expressionism had just begun to attract attention, and the young artist was a frequent visitor of the Egan Gallery and the Parsons Gallery. He was fascinated by what he saw. While the style attracted him, and while abstraction would insinuate itself into his own work, he did not abandon recognizable subject matter.

"I did paintings of cowboys and Indians. They looked like official American paintings, but also looked Cubist, on their way toward becoming expressionist. Actually, they were influenced by just about everybody from Picasso to Klee. The fact is, I was sort of nowhere. What saved me, was a telegram from Ohio State, asking me if I'd be interested in returning there to teach. I accepted instantly, and stayed for five years."

Lichtenstein settled into teaching art, and later, married his first wife and began to raise a family. It seemed that teaching would become Lichtenstein's permanent vocation. However, in 1951, the teachers who were up for tenure were denied it—Lichtenstein among them.

"My wife found work as a decorator in Cleveland, and so we all moved there. We lived in Cleveland for six years. I held various jobs. I worked in sheet metal design for Republic Steel. I did window displays. At one point, I worked for the Hickock Electrical Instrument Company, doing some drafting. At another time, I made maps for an architectural firm. These were odd jobs, lasting about six months each. All along I painted. I would make enough money at one job, then I'd quit and just paint. During those six years in Cleveland, I had painted enough to have about seven shows at the Heller Gallery in New York, as well as one show at the Carlebach Gallery. So, I would come to New York as frequently as possible, hoping also to find a teaching job in the East. In 1957, I came back to live in New York. My painting, at that time, was completely abstract."

In 1960, Lichtenstein found a teaching job at Rutgers University, only an hour's drive from New York City. There, he met Allan Kaprow, Robert Watts, Claes Oldenburg, among other young artists, all of whom were also teaching and working at Rutgers. The encounter with these gifted experimentalists proved felicitous.

"Suddenly, I found myself in the stream of an entirely new and exciting creative outlook. Kaprow was inventing the Happening. Oldenburg set up his 'Store' on New York's Second Street. Of course, I was influenced by it all. Actually, at the time, I didn't realize that I was being influenced. When I started doing my first cartoon paintings, I was unaware of any connection with Kaprow or Watts or Oldenburg. I mean, I was doing these abstract paintings, except that I started to introduce some comic book figures into them. I used Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse, but they were also done quite abstractly. I was, of course, aware that Oldenburg, Kaprow, Rauschenberg and Johns were using objects of a merchandising or 'junk' nature—Oldenburg's *Bacon and Eggs,* Kaprow's *Tires*—things like that. But I really didn't make that connection—not immediately.

"Ultimately, what I did was to copy things from commercial art—from bubble-gum wrappers, and so forth. It was something that just occurred to me, and I don't really know why. It seemed somehow appropriate, although I'm sure 'appropriate' isn't the word. Anyway, I taught at Rutgers for about three years, and I had my first show at Leo Castelli's in 1962. I showed those first cartoons, and paintings of commercial products, like a Roto-Broil, an engagement ring, a golf ball, and a round picture of a cat, copied from a

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Kitty Litter box."

The by-now famous Lichtenstein style had coalesced into what looked like a totally daring and outrageous personal statement. Was this dramatic stylistic departure in a spirit of revolt against Abstract Expressionism? Was it done out of a sense of personal frustration—perhaps desperation—over the stagnant elements of his previous work? Did Lichtenstein decide to put something over on the public?

"No, no! None of those things. It's true that when I looked at what I was doing, it offended my own sense of taste. I mean, I realize that you don't paint through taste, that taste develops as you work, and that you have respect for other people's art, and all the things you've learned. Well, this was, without question, contrary to everything one had been taught about matters of style and substance, and so forth. And, of course, I realized that what I was doing would look hysterical. In fact, when people saw my show at Castelli, they said it was the end of Abstract Expressionism. But I didn't really feel that, because, as far as I was concerned, I was just happily working away in my own way. As a matter of fact, when I did those things, I thought they would just be a temporary phase . . . just to see what that kind of thing would look like. It wasn't a transition, or anything like that. It was just that . . . well, *something* made me do it. And I was very keyed-up about it.

"Somehow, once I did those paintings, I couldn't work in any other way. I just couldn't go back to what I was doing before. And so, I kept doing these paintings, and they stood around my studio, and they were just too insistent. Actually, I didn't think anyone would be interested in them—and I didn't really care. That part wasn't important. What was important was that I was doing them."

The early critical reaction to Lichtenstein's new work was, if anything, skeptical. Indeed, the art press seemed aloof to the early stirrings of Pop art (which had, in fact, received its earliest and quite independent attention in Britain, and been given reverential treatment by the English critic Lawrence Alloway). In America, it was not the art press that publicized this new movement, but the general press. Even as American art critics derided these seemingly foolish and simplistic works, newspaper columnists and fashion writers, among others, took it up as entertaining copy, finding Warhol, Oldenburg, Kaprow, Dine, Lichtenstein, Wesselmann, Indiana and Rosenquist diverting and amusing subjects of highbrow trivia.

"We received a tremendous amount of publicity, and the New York art critics thought that was just terrible. The fact is, almost none of them took us very seriously. Then, little by little, we did receive some serious attention. But,



htenstein, *Cubist Still Life with Lemons,* 1975, oil and magna on canvas, 68 by 90 inches. Collection of the artist.

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mainly, we Pop artists were sort of taken up by the media. I'm sure I personally loved the idea, but I also thought a lot of it was pretty silly. Actually, the people in the movement didn't band together very much. Oh, we met at parties, or after an opening, but it wasn't anything like in the '50s, when artists had a real struggle, and felt they were doing something significant, but that nobody was looking. With us, *everybody* was looking, and a lot of it was simply a matter of luck."

Lichtenstein's imagery and style has developed in varying directions throughout the years. But whatever its tendencies, the look of his work remains uniquely his own. There is no mistaking a Lichtenstein painting, whether he deals in cartoons, landscapes, brush strokes, diagrams after Cézanne or the "commercialized" reinterpretations of Mondrian, Picasso, Monet, Greek temples, Donald Duck, Ben Day sunsets, Art Deco themes, or more recently entablatures, the artist's studio and Futurism. Given his wide variety of subject matter and stylistic approach, Lichtenstein's oeuvre remains firmly and affectionately fixed in cultural parody.

"I suppose all my work is a kind of shorthand. I mean, I wasn't putting down Picasso or Mondrian or Cézanne or Monet or anyone else. What I think I was doing was to take a kind of idiot's view of, say, Picasso, and making a painting of that. The subject for me wasn't Picasso, but someone's funny idea of Cubism. I certainly didn't think my paintings were competing with Picasso, or that they were as good as Picasso. I did those Cubist works, because Cubism had been repeated again and again and again, by so many painters, that it finally lost its significance, and it was this non-significance that appealed to me. It was the same with Monet. I didn't set out to put down Monet. I just liked the notion that I could make something look like Impressionism out of Ben Day dots. It was a humorous notion that industry could produce something that looked like Impressionism—the simple way. Actually, I think it took me ten times as long to do it in my 'simple way' as it took Monet to do it his way."

What, in Lichtenstein's view, is his art really saying?

"I guess what it's saying is that we're living in an industrial-scientific age, and that art is heavily influenced by that. Abstract Expressionism was very human looking. My work is the opposite. It was a pseudomechanical look—as though it were done by a machine. . . . that it was thoughtless. It makes a definite statement, like . . . this is red, or this is blue. The lines are unyielding, and it gives a sense of complete insensitivity. Of course, when I'm painting, I'm trying to be sensitive. It's just that I'm doing it in a style that seems not to be, and which may occasionally not be, which is a fault. But, basically, I was taking subject matter from the past or from the present, and making an absurd statement, although not intending to make my work look absurd, because I hope it's well put together and well organized.



Roy Lichtenstein, *We Rose Up Slowly*, 1964, oil and magna on canvas, 68 by 92 inches. Collection of Karl Stroher, Darmstadt.

"Stylistically, my work is devoid of emotional content. And it's what I want. Of course, the work has its own emotion, but, as I said, it relates more to modern technology. Don't forget that during the '60s there was a tremendous interest in the scientific—the Space Program, etc. But, at the same time, there was something rather sinister and pessimistic about that interest. Artists didn't look to technology in a do-good sense, as with the Bauhaus people, who really believed that factories could produce works of esthetic quality. During the '60s, the artist's view of technology was that it wasn't all that beneficial—there was a feeling of futility connected with it, even though, at first, it seemed very positive and forward-looking . . . you know, the Kennedy years . . . the glamour.

"In retrospect, I feel that the Pop art movement was not an optimistic movement at all, and, of course, it didn't last all that long. Once the movement was understood, it declined. It really attracted very few younger artists, who stuck with it for any length of time. What is more, the movement was never really popular, either critically or intellectually. There were very few serious critics of the movement. Frankly, I don't think Pop art has led anywhere. The statement was made, and those of us who are still in it are just moving in whatever direction it's leading us.

"Actually, I don't think that what we're doing can be called Pop art anymore. I mean, it would be like calling Matisse a Fauve for the rest of his life! My recent work—things like the 'Entablatures,' for example, can't really be called Pop anymore. It's using an architectural motif to make an abstraction, and that's the furthest thing from Pop. The label just doesn't fit anymore, and that holds true for Warhol as much as for any of the other artists who were part of the movement."

Having admitted, in so many words, that Pop art is dead, Lichtenstein nonetheless remains the movement's most classic and enduring exponent. These days, his work is neither shocking nor passé. Its so-called irreverence has passed into an almost taken for granted iconographic elegance. Indeed, his paintings, prints and sculptures have become object lessons in meticulous stylistic refinement, masterfully welding the industrial look to the age-old precepts of fine art. ■