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Peace Eye Bookstore, 383 East 10th Street. Started by Ed Sanders, of the original Fugs, publisher of Fuck You/A Magazine of the Arts.

RR came to Stockholm for Movement show and got in 1964 - only time. Pontus did suggest he do a perf. One of series of "American nights" at museum - Cage - Tudor, RR, Stevn, Oyvind, Alex Hay. Elgen Tic was meeting. Cow was his brother-in-law's; it couldn't pull wagon after all - slippery floor - pregnant - majestic - & man pulled cart & led cow simultaneously; just before exit, cow made a great "splash."

Pontus very impressed by Bob's starting to work an hour or so after he arrived for Movement show - picking up stuff near museum & making pieces.

Many major RR's were in "4 Americans" show, including Monogram (purchased 1965).

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The Drug Culture and Structural Films

Jonas Mekas says the wish to destroy the image and reduce it to patterns (i.e. in structural films) was largely the result of drug culture. Jack Smith, Barbara Rubin, Ron Rice very heavily into it.

Structural films (static) relate to minimal art; Warhol films to pop art. Film as mediation - things observed only through duration.

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|---|---|---|
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Griel Marcus on Altamont (from Obst book)

"...the murder (of Meredith Hunter) crystallized the event. A young black man murdered in the midst of a white crowd by white thugs as white men played their version of black music --it was too much to kiss off as a mere unpleasantness...

Altamont "did not in and of itself 'end' anything. Rather, as Robert Christgau has said, it provided an extraordinarily complex and visceral metaphor for the way things of the Sixties ended. All the symbols were marshalled, and the crowd turned out, less to have a good time than to help make countercultural history. The result was that the counterculture, in the form of rock and roll, Hell's Angels ('Our outlaw brothers,' as many liked to call them), and thousands of politicized and unaffiliated young people, turned back on itself. No one knew how to deal with a spectacle that from the moment it began contradicted every assumption on which it had been based, producing violence instead of fraternity, selfishness instead of generosity, ugliness instead of beauty, a bad trip instead of a high. Only the music kept its shape — in fact, driven on by the fear and danger of the day and the moment, the music, as the Stones played it, achieved a shape more perfect than it had ever taken on before. Take that for what it's worth."

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Pontus – Feb 28

Beaubourg crowds increasing still. 400,000 + for Berlin-Berlin show, unheard of for Paris. The museum has changed a lot of things – other institutions spurred, Paris again a stop on everybody's itinerary.

The crowds are our insurance – without them God knows what would happen to this place. Protection against budget cuts.

In the sixties there was great interest in art, but all focused on the new. Today it's more general – ~~not~~ not just new art, or old art, but art. More respect for the artist, what he is saying. More central role. This is increasing.

RR came to Stockholm for Movement show and ~~for~~ in 1964 – only times. Pontus did suggest he do a perf. One of series of "American nights" at museum – Cage-Tudor, Kn, Stevs, Oyvind, Alex Hay. Elgen Tic was meeting. Cow was his brother-in-law's; it couldn't pull wagon after all – slippery floor – pregnant – majestic – 2 men pulled cart + led cow simultaneously; just before exit, cow made a great "splash."

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West Coast art scene — Artforum start 1962

~~RR start lithos & silkscreens 1962 (started 1961) — see last pg~~ (showed Grill 1962)

~~Dyebaby (Sept. 1962)~~

Alan Solomon (RR '63; then "Toward a New Abstraction" - Louis, Noland, Stella; Then Johns)

Jewbays retrospective Pasadena — Oct. 1963 (at Cordier-Ekstrom, Jan. 65)

~~Pop festival in Wash. DC — "Pelican"~~

JFK - Bay of Pigs (61); Berlin Wall (61); first combat troops to Vietnam (61); Riots at U. Miss (Sept '62); Cuban missile crisis (Oct. 62) Assassination

Space - Gagarin orbits ('61); Glenn orbits ('62)

Museums - Met buys Aristotle for $2.3 m. ('62); Mona Lisa comes '63
MOMA gets first Landing Jump ('64)
Guggenheim's "6 Painters & the Object" (63); "Popular Image" = DC, etc.

Social - Bernstein's Harlem Bathing suit (62)
Beatles hit it big (64)
Free Speech Movement at Berkeley (64)
Race riots in Harlem & other cities (64)
McLuhan's "Understanding Media" ('64)

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SIXTIES Decline of (male) authority – Women's Movement

"Starting from the high road" of cultural supremacy – Hess

Spirit of festivity (early 60's)

Art boom since mid-50's: galleries, sales (100 by 1969 in contemp. art), college courses etc.

Youthquake – the Pill; rock music; drugs – "Youth has become a class" (Vadim)

Radical empiricism – no more goals, heirachies; anti-tradition

No interpretation (Sontag) – no self-expression – art's new function as extension of life – closer to spirit of science

Art as "an instrument for modifying consciousness..." (Sontag) "extension of life"... "... organizing new modes of sensibility" – art to train perception

Influence on fashion – humor, youth, up-from-before – Saints' Bill

Process not product → idea alone as value

"The vernacular glance" (O'Doherty on RR)

~~Inclusion not exclusion (vs. Reductionism)~~

Theater of everyday life – environmental art – guerrilla theater – theatrical terminology

Liberation (both civil rights and human potential)

New Journalism (self)

Breaking down barriers: art/life; high culture/pop culture; artist/public

Anti-illusion – the-thing-in-itself – presentation not depiction (B Rose)

Single-impact art – flatness – the field (all surface) – no hierarchies

Commercialization vs purism

Formalism vs all-inclusiveness; reduction vs. ~~inclusion~~ multiplicity

Shift from nature to culture (Steinberg)

Cool style – NY poets – Black Mtn. poets – JFK

Mixed media – technology

Disappearance of art object – process not product – no more masterpieces

Decline of craftsmanship – throwaway culture of affluence (planned obsolescence)

Boredom

~~The vanguard mechanic (Hess)~~

~~The field (from Pollock) – End of the Renaissance; Ideology (Copt)~~

Participation of spectator – Festivity

Permissiveness – "anything goes" – dissolving line bet. high & popular culture

Passivity – acceptance of

Eclecticism

Publicity – use of mass media – Warhol

Fragmentation – juxtaposition

Eroticism (Duchamp) – the body

Museums become media – conscious – curator as shaper of taste

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→ Olsey: "Getting my act together"; "She's so on"; "Up front";

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Susan Sontag - "Against Interpretation" (1964)

"Whatever it may have been in the past, the idea of content is today mainly a hindrance, a nuisance, a subtle or not so subtle philistinism... What the overemphasis on the idea of content entails is the perennial, never consummated project of interpretation. And, conversely, it is the habit of approaching works of art in order to interpret them that sustains the fancy that there is really such a thing as the content of a work of art."

"The task of interpretation is virtually one of translation."

"In a culture whose already classic dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capacity, interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art.
"Even more, it is the revenge of the intellect upon the world. To interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world — in order to set up a shadow world of 'meanings.' It is to turn the world into this world...
"The world, our world, is depleted, impoverished enough. Away with all duplicates of it, until we again experience more immediately what we have."

"Real art has the capacity to make us nervous. By reducing the work of art to its content and then interpreting that, one tames the work of art. Interpretation makes art manageable, comformable."

"All the conditions of modern life —its material plenitude, its sheer crowding— conjoin to dull our sensory faculties. And it is in the light of the condition of our senses, our capacities (rather than those of another age), that the task of the critic must be assessed.
"What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more... In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art."

From "One Culture and the New Sensibility" (1965)

"What we are getting is not the demise of art, but a transformation of the function of art. Art, which arose in human society as a magical-religious operation, and passed over into a technique for depicting and commenting on secular reality, has in our own time arrogated to itself a new function — neither religious, nor serving a secularized religious function, nor merely secular or profane...Art today is a new kind of instrument, an instrument for modifying consciousness and organizing new modes of sensibility. And the means for practicing art have been radically extended..."

"Today's art, with its insistence on coolness, its refusal of what it considers to be sentimentality, its spirit of exactness, its sense of 'research' and 'problems,' is closer to the spirit of science than of art in the old-fashioned sense."

"The primary feature of the new sensibility is that its model product is not the literary work, above all, the novel. A new non-literary culture exists today, of whose very existence, not to mention significance, most literary intellectuals are entirely unaware."

"The Matthew Arnold notion of culture defines art as the criticism of life — this being understood as the propounding of moral, social, and political ideas. The new sensibility understands art as the extension of life — this being understood as the representation of (new) modes of vivacity."

"...the most interesting works of contemporary art (one can begin at least as far back as French symbolist poetry) are adventures in sensation, new 'sensory mixes.' Such art is, in principle, experimental — not out of an

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| | TOMKINS | IV.C.56 |




elitist disdain for what is accessible to the majority, but precisely in the sense that science is experimental. Such art is also notably apolitical and undidactic, or, rather, infra-didactic."

"What other response than anguish, followed by anaesthesia and then by wit and the elevating of intelligence over sentiment, is possible as a response to the social disorder and mass atrocities of our time..."

"Western man may have been undergoing a massive sensory anaesthesia...at least since the Industrial Revolution, with modern art functioning as a kind of shock therapy for both confounding and unclosing our senses."

"Boredom is only another name for a certain species of frustration. And the new languages which the interesting arts of our time speaks are frustrating to the sensibilities of most educated people."

"If art is understood as a form of discipline of the feelings and a programming of sensations, then the feeling (or sensation) given off by a Rauschenberg painting might be like that of a song by the Supremes." (The popular arts are looked at in a new way, more open etc).

"The new sensibility is definitely pluralistic; it is dedicated both to excoriating seriousness and to fun and wit and nostalgia. It is also extremely history-conscious; and the voracity of its enthusiasms (and of the supercession of those enthusiasms) is very high-speed and hectic. From the vantage point of this new sensibility, the beauty of a machine or of the solution of a mathematical problem, of a painting by Jasper Johns, of a film by Jean-Luc Godard, and of the personalities and music of the Beatles is equally accessible."

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Sixties, general

"...the sixties gave ~~kixxk~~ impetus to both revolution and reform, and tried to combine the quest for social justice with the search for personal authenticity. The civil rights movement and the 'human potential' movement were agreed on one thing: man's right to happiness in the here-and-now.

"The culture of the fifties was European in its irony and sophistication. It put its faith in what it called 'the tragic sense of life,' a fateful determinism that affirmed the obduracy of man's nature and his surroundings. But for the culture of the sixties the watchword was liberation: the shackles of tradition and circumstance were to be thrown off, society was to be molded to the shape of human possibility."

- Morris Dickstein, "Gates of Eden"

"I wish to single out Marcuse, Goodman, and Brown as the theorists whose work had the greatest impact on the new culture of the sixties." (ibid,p70).

Political radicals of New Left "turned the courtroom into a scene of political theater, to illustrate the illegitimacy of the system and the superior wit and more attractive humanity of its opponents." (ibid, p.105).

"Just as the response to the ~~ex~~ war-protest was escalation and the solution to the failures of bombing was more bombing, so the push for more honesty in public debate was met by more public relations and bigger lies." (ibid, p.117 - situation mirrored "Catch-22").

First two years of JFK saw intensification of Cold War: Bay of Pigs, summit with Khrushchev in Vienna, Berlin crisis summer of 1961, Cuban missile crisis 1962..."I think this climate helps explain why black humor began its great efflorescence during the Kennedy years, in apparent contradiction to the idealism, optimism, and high style that we still like to attribute to that period." (ibid, 119)

Early sixties a hopeful period: Supreme Court decisions on civil rights and liberties, nascent civil rights movement, nascent New Left (122).

"Starting with Beat poetry and fiction, subjectivity, self-display, the Romantic trust in the ego returned to the forefront of literary expression... the literature of the sixties -- quite as much as the politics of the sixties -- assumed that everyone was an interested party; it cherished immediacy, confrontation, personal witness." (ibid, 136-137).

"By dethroning the ex cathedra essay of the old high culture, the New Journalism helped to make this sort of anguished self-examination possible, just as the sixties were making it socially meaningful." (ibid, 147)

A period of private theater -- guerrilla theater (p. 152)

..."The struggle for black rights can be said to have ignited the first phase of the politics of confrontation. Later, as the integration ideal gave way to nationalism, the group militance of ~~the~~ blacks spread to students, women, and homosexuals, as well as to ethnic groups including the Jews." (ibid, 156)

"Though changes in the other arts reveal the sixties and expose its sensibility, rock was the culture of the sixties in a unique and special way...The arts of the sixties, even the poetry of the sixties, ~~were~~ were kinetic -- they tended toward dance...The hallmarks were energy and intensity. On the other hand, the arts of the fifties tended mainly toward speech: their hallmarks were irony and control, the sublimation of energy into form."

(more)

Kaprow

The American achievement in the visual arts is the most significant event in world culture since the second world war. This is generally accepted without being understood. The only possible challenge to the sustained achievement of American painting is rock and roll.

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The spirit of the fifties was neo-classical, formal; the sixties were expressive, romantic, free-form. Rock was the organized religion of the sixties -- the nexus not only of music and language but also of dance, sex, and dope, which all came together into a single ritual of self-expression and spiritual tripping." (ibid, p. 186).

"What many highbrow critics are still unable to acknowledge is that the line between high culture and popular culture gave way in the sixties and on some fronts was erased entirely." (ibid, 186),

"But when Dylan plugged in to an electric guitar at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, to the anger of much of his audience, in effect the folk era ended and the rock era began." (ibid, 188).

"...there was a touch of The Bacchae in every successful rock performance. There was a sense of sexual interchange, surely, but also a whiff of possession, loss of control, a hint of destructiveness in the air." (190) ..."The frightening quality of these rituals was an all-too-faithful reflection of the changes in America since the comparative innocence and hopefulness of the folk period. Dylan went electric at almost the very moment that Lyndon Johnson began bombing North Vietnam and escalating the war in the south...The illusion of the folk period was that we need only a good community for our natural goodness to shine through...Rock music, on the other hand, is aggressively urban." (ibid, 191).

Three phases of the sixties: see p. 215.

"The sixties encouraged us not simply to take sides but to find out who we really were or had the capacity to become. There was a surge of autobiography during the period..." (ibid, 250)

Quoting from "Appeal from the Sorbonne, June 13-14, 1968: "The bourgeois revolution was judicial; the proletarian revolution was economic. Ours will be social and cultural so that man can become himself." (267)

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Johan Huizinga - "Homo Ludens" - A Study of the Play Element In Culture"

"First and foremost, then, all play is a voluntary activity... By this quality of freedom alone, play marks itself off from the course of the natural process." (p.7)

"A second characteristic is closely connected with this, namely that play is not 'ordinary' or 'real' life. It is rather a stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own." (p.8)

"This is the third main characteristic of play: its secludedness, its limitedness. It is 'played out' within certain limits of time and place. It contains its own course and meaning." (p.9)

"Inside the play-ground an absolute and peculiar order reigns. Here we come across another, very positive feature of play: it creates order, is order...The least deviation from it 'spoils the game,' robs it of its character and makes it worthless." (p.10)

"The element of tension in play...plays a particularly important part. Tension means uncertainty, chanciness; a striving to decide the issue and so end it." (p.10)

Play can be intensely serious. All ritual originates in play, in the sacred game. Quotes Plato, Laws, vii, 796: "I say that a man must be serious with the serious. God alone is worthy of supreme seriousness, but man is God's plaything, and that is the best part of him. Therefore every man and woman should live life accordingly, and play the noblest games and be of another mind from what they are at present... Life must be lived as play, playing certain games, making sacrifices, singing and dancing, and then a man will be able to propitiate the gods, and defend himself against his enemies, and win in the contest."

The agonistic factor.

"Though the primary important of play as a cultural factor is the main thesis of this book, we still maintain that the origin of art is not explained by a reference to a play-'instinct', however innate." (p.168)

The play spirit went into serious decline in the 19th century (after reaching zenith in the 18th). Industrial Rev. made work and production the ideal. "Never had an age taken itself with more portentous seriousness. Culture ceased to be 'played.'" (p. 192)

"A gradual process extending over many centuries has succeeded in defunctionalizing art and making it more and more a free and independent occupation for individuals called artists. One of the landmarks of this emancipation was the victory of framed canvases over panels and murals, likewise of prints over miniatures and illuminations... Art became more intimate, but also more isolated; it became an affair of the individual and his taste... Along with these changes in form there went another, even more profound, in the function and appreciation of art. More and more it was recognized as an independent and extremely high cultural value. Right into the 18th century art had occupied a subordinate place in the scale of such values. Art was a superior ornament in the lives of the privileged. Aesthetic enjoyment may have been as high as now, but it was interpreted in terms of feligious exaltation or as a sort of curiosity whose purpose was to divert and distract. The artist was an artisan and in many cases a menial, whereas the scientist or scholar had the status at least of a member

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of the leisured classes.

"The great shift began in the middle of the 18th century as a result of new aesthetic impulses which took both romantic and classical form, though the romantic current was the more powerful. Together they brought about an unparalleled rise in aesthetic enjoyment all the more fervent for having to act as a substitute for religion. This is one of the most important phases in the history of civilization... Only towards the end of the 19th century did the appreciation of art, thanks largely to photographic reproduction, reach the broad mass of the simply educated. Art becomes public property, love of art bon ton. The idea of the artist as a superior species of being gains acceptance, and the public at large is washed by mighty waves of snobbery. At the same time a convulsive craving for originality distorts the creative impulse. This constant striving after new and unheard-of forms impels art down the steep slopes of Impressionism into the turgidities and excresences of the 20th century. Art is far more susceptible to the deleterious influences of modern techniques of production than is science. Mechanization, advertising, sensation-mongering have a much greater hold upon art because as a rule it works directly for a market and has a free choice of all the techniques available." (p. 201-202)

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(Goldzahler)

"Everybody's so pathetic. What is it? Is it just the end of the sixties?"

Ann Beattie, "Chilly Scenes of Winter"

of craftsmanship and permanence.

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(Goldzahler)

Lawrence Alloway has observed that our "throwaway" culture has permeated the methods + substance of art - the abandonment of craftsmanship and permanence.

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(Goldzahler)

The Sixties

"Sixties Art: Some Philosophical Perspectives" - Sheldon Nodelman

"...Perhaps the most important and comprehensive -- and certainly the most obvious -- change in pictorial structure between the nineteen fifties and sixties has been the definitive renunciation of illusionist representation."

"...the sixties picture has organized itself in terms of the inherent energies of color and shape as such...Liberated from bondage to a modelling system, colors do not hang back from the spectator in an internally focussed quasi-world of their own, nor do they lie passively on the picture-plane -- they leap forward at the spectator, accepting no distance from him."

"Sixties art appears as the fulfillment of the long evolution toward steadily greater use of chroma for its expressive and constructive -- as against its merely decorative -- effect..."

"...the picture explodes upon the spectator."

"Thus there is created a picture-phenomenon which simultaneously bursts with all the physicality of sculpture into the life-space of the spectator, brutally obtruding or hysterically capering in front of him, demanding reaction in the same terms as might, for instance, a dangerous animal -- and which yet is completely non-physical, an explosion of intangible chroma."

"All art has striven to modify the consciousness of the spectator, but sixties art has taken up this task as the inheritor of a modern tradition far more radical in this ambition than was ever previously the case. It seeks not merely to modify but to transform, fundamentally to alter the manner in which he inhabits his world."

Links it with change in attitude toward the established order, thus the art is "inescapably charged with social significance."

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(Goldzahler)

(M.)

Henry on The Sixties

"The impersonal side of sixties art doesn't look so impersonal xxxxxxxxxx in perspective, Stella's paintings now xxxx have a much more 'handmade' look.

"What seems to be the case is that while all the excitement was going on in the art world, the really important work of the sixties was being done in private, quietly -- Hoffman's last paintings, the late work of David Smith, Rothko..." Although the idea seemed to take precedence, it still comes down to a few masterpieces in the end. (Note: Henry and Hoving got the trustees in Jan 1971 to buy Scull's Rothko for $125,000, plus Warhol's portrait of Ethel Scull and a Stella).

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Tom Hess on "Then and Now" (PR, No. 4, 1975)

During and mostly after WWII, "for the first time Americans were able to confront major parental figures in Europe ... to elude them, avoid being smothered by them, get still work in the contexts of Cézanne, Géricault, Michelangelo, Giotto.

"The brilliance, energy, excitement, gaiety, intensity, and pathos of those years have kept them vividly in mind for all who lived them. Their (our) recollections have become, one imagines, a bit of a bore for those who didn't."

Big diff. for next (RR) generation was that "suddenly, as it were, young artists could start from the high road. ~~It was that~~ This, it seems to me, is the critical change that took place between the fifties and the sixties, between, say, Franz Klein and Frank Stella.

["no names, please," as Ad Reinhardt used to shout at the Artists Club]

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JEFF PERRONE

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This will at once establish the seriousness of Alloway's dedication to every kind of subject matter that can comfortably sit in the range of "art," and his

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# BOOKS

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This will at once establish the seriousness of Alloway's dedication to every kind of subject matter that can comfortably sit in the range of "art," and his willingness to explore all different kinds of antithetical productions. He writes a sensitive appreciation of Agnes Martin, a clear discussion of Leon Polk Smith, and exhibits a surprising dedication to the outcast Norman Bluhm. This kind of inclusiveness, even from a "selected" body of work, sometimes risks being merely "topical"—or now, at reprint, of being of less than passing interest. But it is to Alloway's credit that he sticks by his idea and includes whatever he thinks will give a real picture of a complex situation. This kind of catholicism is surely more welcome than the more familiar critic's view which would exclude, *a priori*, large groups of work that did not fit into a highly defined historical or political scheme. What we would expect of Alloway's general acceptance is a refreshing view of the last 30 years, because he encompasses so much, is at pains not to constrict his visual experience, and feels that reporting lesser known artists gives the most true picture of an era.

We might also expect that this attitude would work against highly defined taste and agreed-upon value judgments. Yes and no. But I want to discuss why, given the positive orientation of his outlook, I cannot accept this view of diversity and differentiation, and why at almost every point I feel uneasy with Alloway's reporting.

Alloway does encourage open-ended, unbiased experience with visual material. We find on almost every subject, at the beginning of the discussion, an explication of the "differentiation" scheme. "Efforts are made to unify these discrete movements . . . but obviously this delivers very little . . ." (pg. 17). This occurs in the first article, on "The Biomorphic '40s," and the reference is not just to the '40s, or to Abstract Expressionism, but to "the movements of 20th-century art." What Alloway finds most appealing in the art of the Biomorphic '40s is "the impression . . . of a natural and personal abundance" (pg. 20). He begins a monographic piece on Gottlieb by distinguishing between the "clap of thunder" theory of New York painting and a "complex and graduated set of real relationships." It is clear which Alloway prefers, and he makes more than convincing use of Gottlieb's, and later, Pollock's and de Kooning's careers to prove this same point. (And here one would like to add that many of the ideas initially expressed in Alloway's Abstract Expressionism articles have later become such common currency that it is difficult to separate the original from the cliché, certainly the problem with topical but extremely influential types of reporting.)

Pop art, a term originated by Alloway in England, was part of the largest infusion of new visual material into the art context that we had ever seen; it was the perfect representation of Alloway's "expansionist esthetics, aimed at relating art to the man-made environment of the '50s" (pg. 119). The relevance of Rauschenberg is that "instead of an iconography in which each part is tightly related, we have an iconography of divergent episodes and simultaneous events . . ." (pg. 132). And rather than seeing Lichtenstein as a rather narrow stylist, Alloway finds the overall effect of "diffusion," because he works in an "extended situation, as opposed to trying to squeeze everything into one knock-them-dead picture" (pg. 145). And of criticism in general, Alloway sees two opposed approaches: "one that aims to distill and purify and one that studies the expansion and connectivity of art" (pg. 193). Alloway, it should be noted, was quite interested in Noland, Stella, and rather rigorous, "tightly related" kinds of painting. Later he comes to repudiate the work—but for no reason having to do with its value *as art*. We can, however, read his interest in Minimal-type painting as an ongoing effort to "cover the scene" in all its complexities.

This willingness to accept variety permits Alloway to accomplish an amazing feat—he could report with appreciation any of the dominant styles from 1945 onward—and we can hardly say the same of any other critic in this period of time. "It is not necessary to believe in the historical succession of styles, one irrevocably displacing its predecessor, to see that a shift of sensibility had occurred" (pg. 81). He is speaking here in the essay he wrote for his Guggenheim show, "Systemic Painting" (1966), and his point is to stress the multiplicity of stylistic inputs discussable in the recoil against gestural abstraction.

Within the philosophy of variety there is a possibility that what passes for reportage may degenerate into passive and uncritical acceptance of all art system components, especially when accompanied by an impersonal tone devoid of value judgments. The well-known Cageianism (which Alloway quotes) "value judgments are destructive of our proper business, which is curiosity and awareness," can be seen as a definite period philosophy (early-60s liberal). Accepted literally, it can lead into a dead-end of nonchoice, where any evaluative distinctions are abhorred because they strike the writer as being not "open" enough. Yet at what point is the "open" critic simply describing the system at hand, and to what point is he just being manipulated? (Although Alloway will finally come to this very question, he does not illuminate his own situation, but the "crisis" of some other critics.)

There is nothing wrong with a many-sided approach to experience, and the good critic will not be "closed." But the critic must be more than a reporter. "An art critic's function is the description, interpretation and evaluation of new, or at least, recent, art" (pg. 251). Yes, exactly, except this must be done with the realization that a critic cannot simply accept the opinion and values of the artist as gospel, and that the critic's own value system is at stake at every moment. With Alloway, the most conspicuously absent quality is the evaluation. If the biggest bugaboo of the '60s is now formalism, modernism, or, specifically, the question of "quality," then we can appreciate Alloway's nonpartisan reluctance to assign ultimate merit according to intuition. But the substitution of the ineluctable "quality" motive with a rather promiscuous "quantity" schema has just as many problems.

Of course, just because a value judgment is not in evidence does not mean that a judgment has not been made. As I have said, we know that the mere occurrence of an article on a certain work of a automatically confers importance. Judgment superseded by sheer exposure. The question mains—does Alloway write about something bec he likes it, or because it happened?

Any reader will understand that Alloway rather write about what interests him, what he has value, than give space, and thus promotion which irritates him. Yet because he relies neith grand historical notion of development, necessary methodology of individual ach nor any position of advocacy, he is left with kinds of presentation.

The first is description. Description is the task, but it is really only a matter of practic It is learned, and can be valued on the a vision, on the ability to perceive wha salient, along with the purely technical this acuteness. At this point one mig description is reporting, and that "object is at stake. Yet "objectivity" is real (reporting itself is not a neutral act preconceived ideas can *enhance*, not ability to explain. To be a good desc thing, and Alloway does it well. I t of observation are best expresse series of articles on women sculpto piece on Cecile Abish (*Artforum*, which is reprinted here.

The other form of preser "interpretation" of the work, wh artists' statements. Because o toward subject matter, and h often tends to accept uncriti especially in reference t uncritical acceptance, to are blended in one ar Disappearing Work of Art"

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# Rosenberg, in Art News (May 1976):

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viously not exactly in love with it—and points out that it represents only a small segment of contemporary art—he takes it seriously, and winds up with the thought that it is a challenge. "It challenges us," he writes, "to discover and make explicit the grounds for beliefs and values which we unconsciously take for granted. . . . Can we do more than simply assert our beliefs? Can we give empirically verifiable reasons for them?" Teleological considerations have been the basis of painting from the cave painters to Picasso, of music from the Renais-



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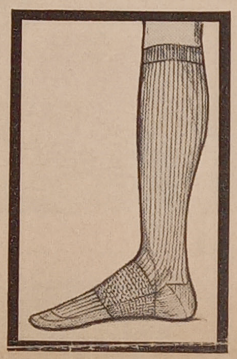
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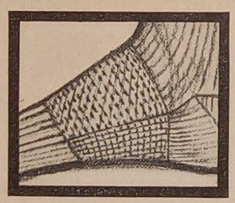
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# MUSICAL EVENTS

*It Just Is—or Is It?*



IN the summer issue of the *Hudson Review*, Leonard B. Meyer, whose book "Emotion and Meaning in Music" I discussed in these pages some time ago, has an article concerning the aesthetic of those widely publicized artists who use chance, or random means of expression, in their work. They include, of course, the composer John Cage, littérateurs and playwrights like Jackson MacLow, and a great many contemporary painters, among them Pollock and Mathieu. In attempting to explain them, Mr. Meyer is led into some pretty deep philosophical reflections, and distinguishes two opposed aesthetic attitudes: the *teleological*, in which art is supposed to have goals of one sort or another, including such goals within itself as are exemplified by cause and effect in literature, symphonic structure in music, and deliberately contrived composition in painting, and the *anti-teleological*, or *radical empiricist*, which regards art as a product of accident and as something that the onlooker perceives through fresh observation and experience, without regard to preconceived traditions. Mr. Meyer makes out a certain rationale for the anti-teleological position, relating it to Existentialism, quantum mechanics, and Zen Buddhism, but admits that anti-teleological art cannot be a form of communication (since communication depends on an understood vocabulary and a set of logical expectations on the part of the audience), and also that it cannot be subjected to criticism (since it involves no anticipations and no meanings). Anti-teleological art has no purpose, it just *is*, and though Mr. Meyer is obviously not exactly in love with it—and points out that it represents only a small segment of contemporary art—he takes it seriously, and winds up with the thought that it is a challenge. "It challenges us," he writes, "to discover and make explicit the grounds for beliefs and values which we unconsciously take for granted. . . . Can we do more than simply assert our beliefs? Can we give empirically verifiable reasons for them?" Teleological considerations have been the basis of painting from the cave painters to Picasso, of music from the Renais-



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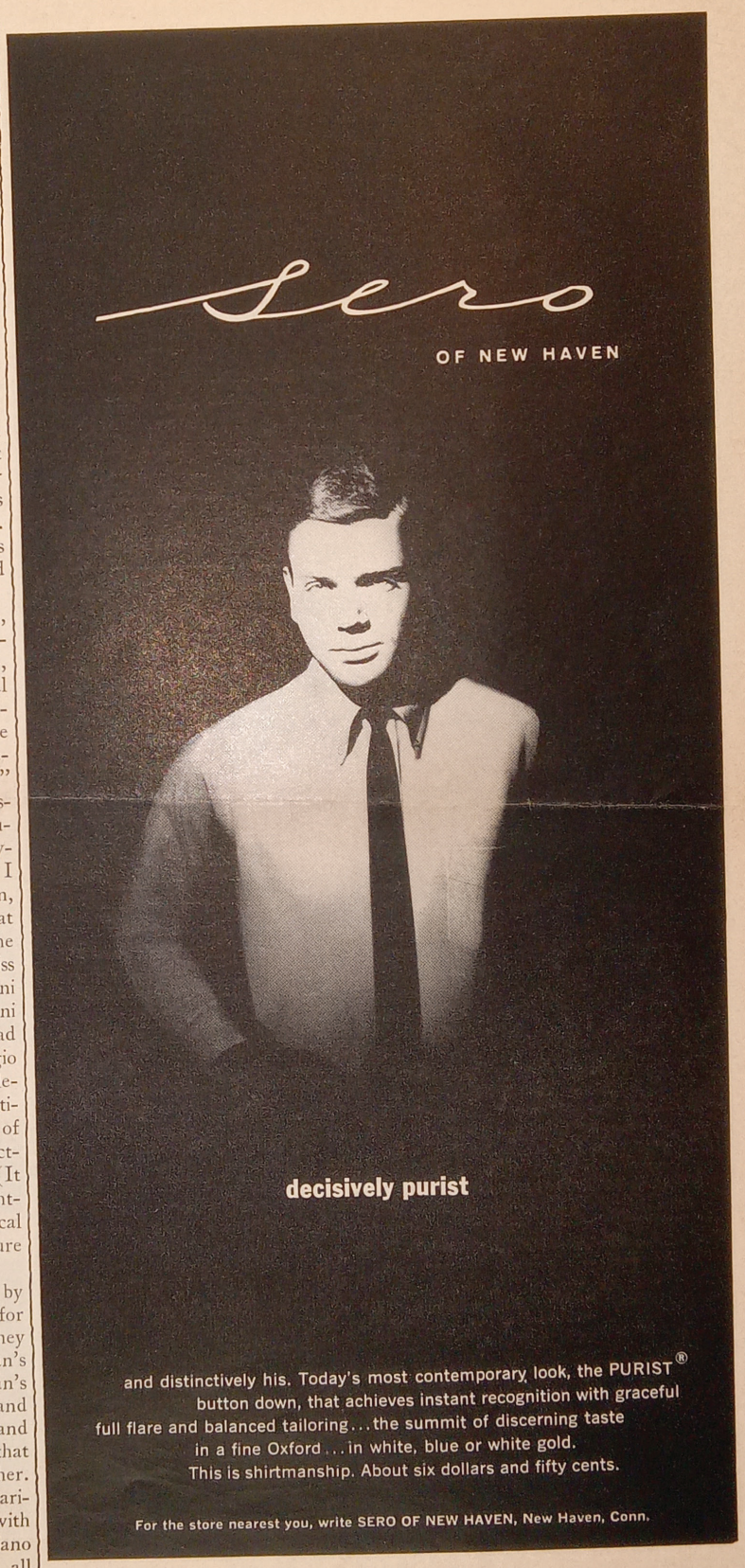
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sance to Stravinsky, of literature from Homer to the work of most of our modern novelists and playwrights. Mr. Meyer implies that anti-teleological art has been with us only since around the time of the Second World War. I am inclined to trace its origins a little further back, and to discern signs of the breakdown of teleology as early as Schoenberg and Kandinsky, finding its first symptoms (in music, at least) in Schoenberg's abolition of tonality and in his invention of serialism—a sort of arbitrary, or ersatz, teleology not backed up by musical experience. But let that pass. Anti-teleological music is, in the average man's phrase, music that "is not going anywhere." And the average man might well also ask the question "If art is the product of accident, why bother to create it?" The answer, of course, is that "bother" is a teleological concept. Some people *do* create it—if the process can be called creation—and, as I stated before, it *is*.

Armed with Mr. Meyer's rationale, and trying to put myself in a radical-empiricist mood (precluding criticism), I attended a concert of anti-teleological music at Judson Hall on Tuesday evening of last week. To my surprise, the first number on the program, something called "Composition 1960 #13," by La Monte Young, sounded suspiciously like eighteenth-century music. "Awfully teleological," I said to myself. But during the intermission I had a chat with Charlotte Moorman, the cellist who played it, and found that Mr. Young's score had consisted of the words "Play anything you like." Miss Moorman happened to like Sammartini (whether it was Giuseppe or Giovanni Battista, I failed to learn), and we had been listening to a Sammartini adagio for solo cello. Thus, it appears that teleological music can form part of an anti-teleological program, the element of chance being present in the unpredictableness of the performer's choice. (It strikes me that there is something slightly subversive of the anti-teleological position in this, but I can't quite figure it out.)

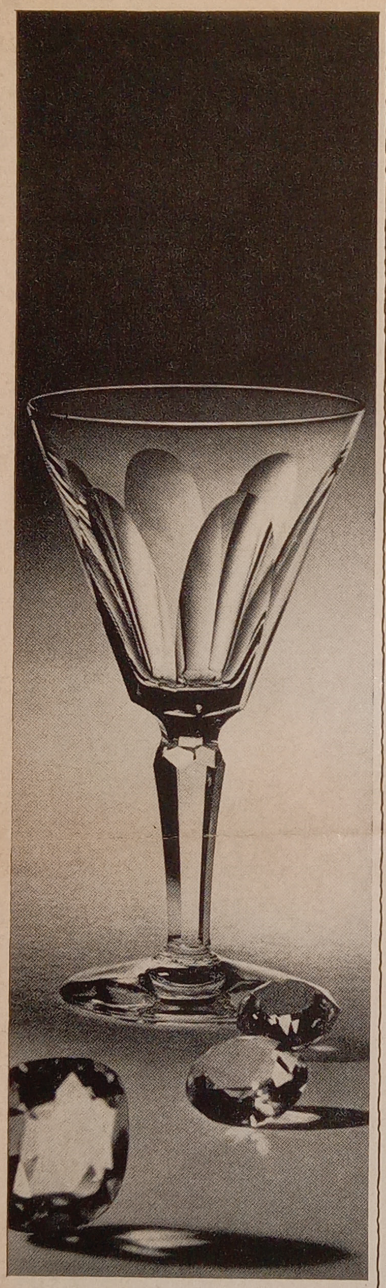
Following Mr. Young's piece by Sammartini, we heard three items for cello, with and without piano. They were, successively, Morton Feldman's "Projection 1," Ornette Coleman's "City Minds and Country Hearts," and Earle Brown's "Music for Cello and Piano." I confess, with some shame, that I was unable to tell one from another. They all seemed to be made up of various hoots and swoops on the cello, with disconnected thumpings on the piano when it was present, and they all



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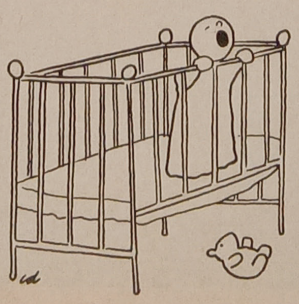
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sounded like the work of the same creative mind.

After the intermission, we had a piece of "visual music" by Philip Corner entitled "Solo with . . ." This was performed by Miss Moorman. The score consisted mainly of stage directions. Miss Moorman walked onto the stage with her cello, put it down, went back offstage, reappeared with her handbag, registered difficulty in finding her score on the music stand, gave up, went away again, came back, and tuned up. Meanwhile, ominous sounds—a little like something thought up by Edgar Varèse—issued from a loudspeaker, and continued for the rest of the time she was onstage. There was more shuffling of sheet music. Miss Moorman wiped her cello with a handkerchief, played a single pizzicato note, and began to annotate her score with a pencil. This was followed by delighted applause.

Last came an extended composition called "34'46.776" for a Pianist and a String Player," by John Cage himself, performed by David Tudor and Miss Moorman. "I'm not entirely in sympathy with the aesthetics of *all* this stuff," Miss Moorman had told me during the intermission, "but"—unconsciously betraying a subversive penchant for teleology—"I think the Cage work is going to *live*." Technologically, like most Cage works, this one was a lulu. Mr. Tudor, reading from a score that resembled a checkbook, was equipped with fifteen or twenty varieties of drumstick, and his piano with rocks—or objects that looked like rocks—and heaven knows what else. Every once in a while, he would rise and peer into its interior, like a truck driver looking for a defective sparkplug. Both he and Miss Moorman blew whistles from time to time, and several children's balloons were burst with loud pops. At one point, Miss Moorman hurled a cymbal into the middle of the stage floor, where it landed with an imposing crash.

Well, I guess I am a confirmed believer in teleology where music is concerned, but I found Tuesday evening's concert a good deal less boring than



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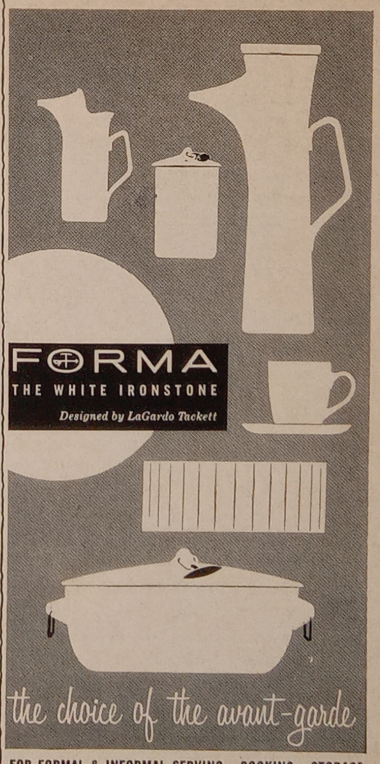
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some of the more pretentious examples of supposedly teleological music that I have heard in our larger concert halls. The means—a cello, a souped-up piano, and a loudspeaker—were modest, and nearly everything was done with them that could have been done, including producing teleological music.

—WINTHROP SARGEANT

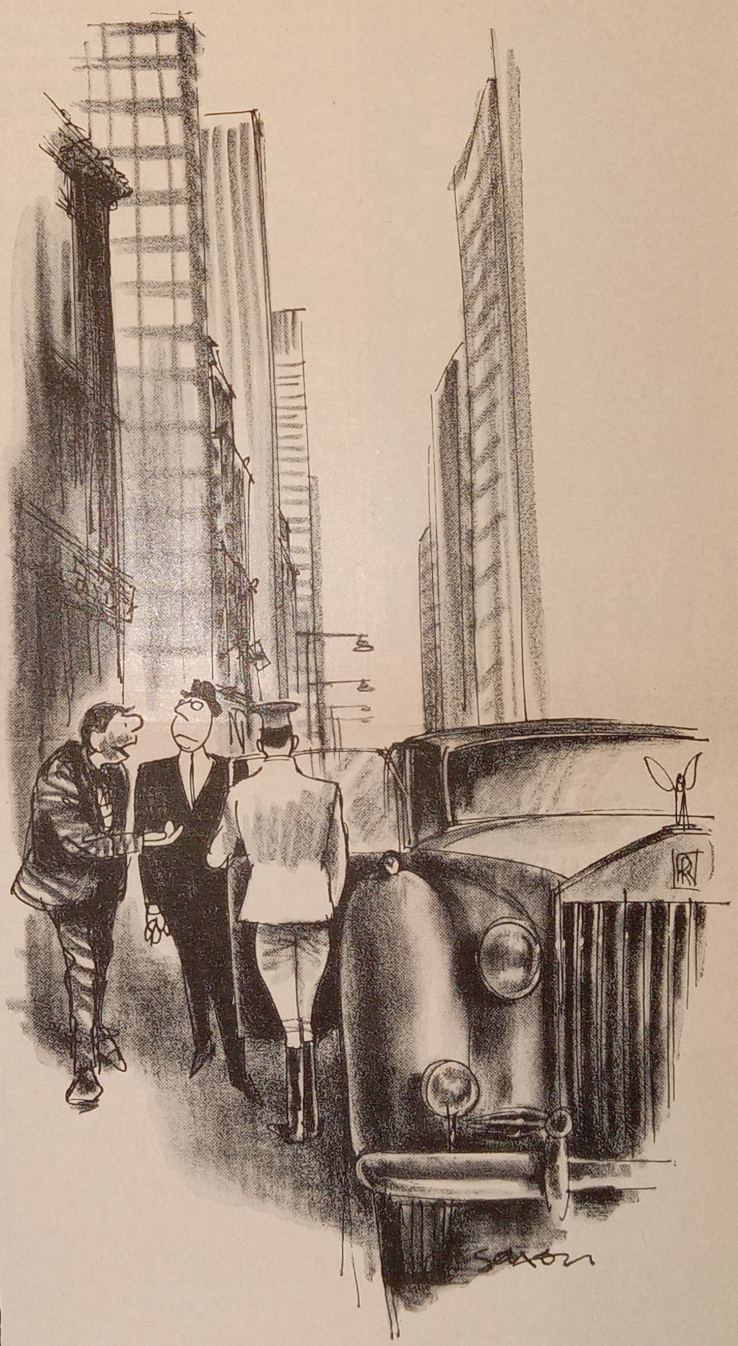
## JAZZ

### *Turnabout*

FREE will is as free as the wills of others permit. Consider the exercise in initiative that Pee Wee Russell, the consummate fifty-seven-year-old clarinettist, has been bent on for the past couple of years. Russell, at an age when memory begins to usurp the place of action, has turned his back on his past—or, rather, on a past constructed for him. An advanced swing musician by 1930, he has not changed, but he is attempting to erase the image of Pee Wee Russell, Picturesque Dixieland Clarinettist, that was fashioned by his admirers (and detractors) twenty-five years ago. He has done this by loosening his associations with the remnants of the Eddie Condon group and by forming a quartet whose textures, attack, instrumentation (clarinet, valve trombone or bass trumpet, bass, and drums), and repertory (John Coltrane, Billy Strayhorn, Ornette Coleman, Count Basie, Tadd Dameron, Bix Beiderbecke, and Thelonious Monk) fit in between the present and the still fresh cool strain of Lester Young and Charlie Christian. But this turnabout has not been smooth. Russell tires more easily than he used to; the clarinet itself is out of fashion as a jazz instrument; his style is less extrovert than ever; the picturesque is a nearly shatterproof stereotype; and the economic bottom seems to be again dropping out of jazz. Even Russell's recording début with his quartet, some months ago, went against him ("New Groove: The Pee Wee Russell Quartet," Columbia CL 1985). Despite some faultless solos, Russell is overpowered on this record by the resonance of Marshall Brown, his trombonist-trumpeter-arranger, as well as by a busy, overrecorded bassist and drummer. Nonetheless, the gist of what Russell is trying to do is clear throughout, and it was even clearer last week at the Village Vanguard, where he appeared for a brief stand with a reorganized quartet, mysteriously augmented by a piano.

The group included Marshall Brown, Bob Hammer on piano, Joe Six on bass, and Ron Bedford on drums. Perhaps because of the personnel changes and

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the good acoustics of the Vanguard, the imbalances of the recording were absent. Russell dominated the eleven numbers played during the evening, and here and there he offered the eloquence he has long used to transform pap into originality and the worthy into the unique. His style, a kind of unfinished rococo, has in recent years grown increasingly devious and intense. He no longer wails (as he had to in Dixieland ensembles), he no longer growls in self-derision, he no longer sounds stiff and stilted. Oblique, lower-register murmurs that are more innuendo than identifiable statements have replaced these devices, as have ingenious figures in which he glances off some notes, bangs the heads of others softly together, and drops in long, catch-me-if-you-can runs that suggest someone racing through a labyrinth he knows by heart. Chins-out phrases abruptly recede into gentle, middle-distance ones, and barely audible patterns explode into staccato efflorescences. Against-the-grain "wrong" notes abound. Thus, in "My Mother's Eyes," Russell gave the singular impression in his first chorus that he was tunnelling his way out of a secret deep corner in himself and, once in the air (his second chorus), that he was heading down a mountain in long, bent-backed Groucho Marx strides. He was poignant, then quickly funny. In "Goose Pimples," by Bix Beiderbecke, he played an amazing chorus with just two or three close, flatted middle-register notes placed in an irregular push-the-beat, drag-the-beat sequence. He was kindly and inlooking in Monk's "Ask Me Now" and in Irving Berlin's "How About Me," and in "Red Planet" he intimated that John Coltrane's twelve-tone investigation is no more challenging than beanbags. Hammer, a pastiche pianist, was simply superfluous, and Brown, a Brad Gowans-Bobby Brookmeyer admirer, revealed that even when he plays quietly he is basically a blow-man-blow instrumentalist. Six and Bedford were precise. Brown's arrangements are clever and attractive, and they serve, despite his playing, to set Russell off in the manner he should be accustomed to. May Russell's will be steel.

—WHITNEY BALLIETT

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Lady reports she was shot in the back with BB shot as school bus went by. School stated that bus carried only children in kindergarten and first grade and they do not usually carry arms. Officer suggested might have been gravel tossed up by bus wheel.—*Pittsford (N.Y.) Brighton-Pittsford Post.*

Who said the bus had wheels?

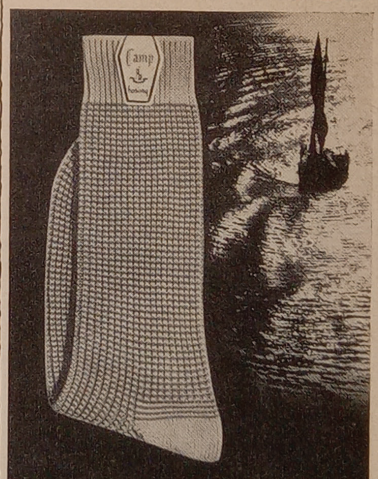



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The Hudson Review, Summer 1963

LEONARD B. MEYER

# The End of the Renaissance?

*Notes on the Radical Empiricism of the Avant-Garde*

## I

No aspect of contemporary art has received so much publicity and so much attention from critics, professional and amateur, as the fact that it is often created by accidental or random means. Nor have the artists themselves discouraged such publicity—the storms of protest, the raillery, and the cries of outraged anguish. For, after all, notoriety, even when based on misunderstanding, is perhaps better than neglect.

While the use of random techniques in the plastic arts has received more publicity, the use of chance in music has been much clearer and more systematic. For though Jackson Pollock dripped his paint on a canvas from a considerable height and the French painter, Mathieu, hurls paint at his canvas from a safe distance, one cannot be sure how much was *really* accidental and how much was governed by an inspired spontaneity—an unconscious control of line, color, and texture arising out of the artists' past training and discipline.

In the composition of music no such doubts arise. For here chance procedures have been employed explicitly and systematically. This has been done in three basic ways: In the first, the composer uses a technique for randomization to create a fully written-out score. As John Cage put it:

> Those involved with the composition of experimental music find ways and means to remove themselves from the activities of the sounds they make. Some employ chance operations derived from sources as ancient as the Chinese *Book of Changes* or as modern as tables of random numbers used also by physicists in research. Or, analogous to the Rorschach tests of psychology, the interpretation of imperfections in the paper upon which one is writing may provide a music free from one's memory and imagination.[1]

In the second way of randomizing music, the composer merely

[1] *Silence* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 10-11.

cern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses." (p. 1015 - re Robert Frost)

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indicates, by means of a graph or schematic drawing, approximate pitches, time relationships, textures, dynamics, and so forth. The realization of this "score" is left to the performer or, if there is an ensemble, the performers. This method has been used by the Italian composer, Sylvano Bussotti, and the U. S. composers, Morton Feldman and John Cage. Peter Gradenwitz describes the score of Bussotti's *Piano Piece for David Tudor* as consisting of "a line-drawing made up of straight and curved lines, arrows, vertical and diagonal signs of direction, ornaments, and so forth. This drawing is to inspire the pianist to whom the composer leaves every freedom to interpret the 'signs' of the 'score'."[2] Where several players are involved in such a performance, the result may be random indeed. For not only are the particular pitches and the precise time relationships not stipulated in the parts played by the performers but, since these are indeterminate, their synchronization is also random. The coincidence of pitches is purely accidental. The third way of creating so-called indeterminate music is somewhat less random. In this case the composer writes down in detail several separate snippets of music, each lasting for only a few seconds. But the order in which these snippets is played is left to the whim of the performer. Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Piano Piece No. 11* is an example of such a work. Here are Stockhausen's instructions to the pianist:

> The performer looks at random at the sheet of music and begins with any group, the first that catches his eye; this he plays, choosing for himself tempo . . . dynamic level, and type of attack. At the end of the first group, he reads the tempo, dynamic, and attack indications that follow, and looks at random to any other group, which he then plays in accordance with the latter indications.
>
> "Looking at random to any other group" implies that the performer will never link up expressly-chosen groups or intentionally leave out others.
>
> Each group can be joined to any of the other 18: each can thus be played at any of the six tempi and dynamic levels and with any of the six types of attack . . .
>
> When a group is arrived at for the third time, one possible realization of the piece is completed. This being so, it may come about that certain groups are played once only or not at all.[3]

Random or indeterminate music must be distinguished from

[2] "The Performer's Role in the Newest Music," *Chesterian*, Vol. 34, No. 200, p. 62.
[3] *Klavierstüke XI*, (London: Universal Edition, 1957).

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electronic music and from computer music. Electronic music is simply music composed *directly* on tape. That is, the composer begins with either natural sounds or those produced by a frequency oscillator, puts them on tape and then by rerecording these sound fragments at faster or slower tempi, higher or lower pitches, louder or softer volumes, backwards or forwards, upside down, and so forth, constructs a piece of music. Such a work may involve chance elements or it may be completely pre-planned. In other cases a pre-planned set of time, pitch, volume, and tone-color relationships activated by an electronic mechanism may be put directly on tape. This kind of music has been written by Stockhausen, Boulez, Luciano Berio, Milton Babbitt and others. Though the composition of "computer music" often *begins* with a series of random numbers corresponding to a series of pitches, the finished piece is not usually random. In computer music a set of rules or instructions—they might be the rules for writing a Bach fugue (if we really knew those well enough) or the rules for writing a popular tune—are fed into a computer which, following these instructions, selects appropriate notes from the random series and thus "composes" a piece of music. Depending upon the nature of the instructions fed into the computer, the compositions it produces can be either highly determined or completely random.

In discussing works of art, the critic can focus his attention upon the work itself—its organization, inter-relationships, process of development, etc., or he may concern himself with the *way* in which the work was created, or he may deal with the cultural beliefs and attitudes which led the artist to employ a particular means in a particular way. Since completely random or indeterminate music is avowedly and purposefully without any organization, it is impossible to analyze or discuss its form or process. I cannot, therefore, deal with the structure and organization of this music—with the music itself. Nor will I be concerned with the random procedures themselves. For while such procedures have received considerable publicity, they are more interesting as symptoms of a new aesthetic than as techniques for creating works of art. In other words, random procedures are a means to an end and their real significance begins to appear when one asks *why*—for what purpose—they are employed. This distinction between means and

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ends is also important because in music, as well as in other arts, the same ends have been achieved in different ways. In fact, as George Rochberg has pointed out, the aesthetic effect produced by random methods of composition are, paradoxically, the same as those realized by totally ordered music.[4] Hence it is not surprising to find that sometimes the same composer writes both kinds.

It is easy, of course, to ridicule art created by accident—by asking "what does it represent?" or asserting that "my little child could have done that." And perhaps the child could. But for these artists that is not the point at all. If we take what they are doing seriously—and, as I shall try to show, their position is a consistent and tenable one—then precisely because the art and aesthetic of the avant-garde represents a radical break with our common cultural convictions, we shall be forced to examine and make explicit those fundamental assumptions about the nature of man, the universe and man's place in it, which are so much a part of our habitual modes of thought and perception that we unconsciously take them for granted.

## II

What characterizes the music with which most of us are most familiar—the music of Bach or Haydn, Wagner or Bartok? Their compositions differ in many important ways: in melodic style, rhythmic organization, harmonic idiom, texture and instrumental timbre. But they are alike in one fundamental respect. In this music, tones are related to and imply one another. Think, for instance, of the "Liebestod" of Wagner's *Tristan,* rising in cumulative sequences towards its powerful moment of climax; or of the kinetic intensity with which the slow introduction of Bartok's *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* surges toward the Allegro which follows; or of the way in which the rondo-finale of a Haydn symphony plays with our expectations that the main theme will return—failing to appear just when everything seems ready for its return or arriving just when it is least expected.

Because of its marked, though not necessarily obvious, structure and pattern, as well as because of our past experience with its grammar and syntax, such music is perceived as having a purposeful direction and goal. As we listen, we make predictions—albeit un-

[4] "Indeterminacy in the New Music," *Score,* Jan. 1961. p. 11 f.

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conscious ones—as to where the music is going and how it will get there. Of course, our predictions may not be correct. What we expect may not occur or may do so at an unexpected time or in an unexpected way. But whether expected or not, what actually does take place is colored by the fact that predictions were made. That is, muscial events are felt to be normal and regular, surprising, amusing, or even shocking, as they conform to, or deviate from, our predictions. Such goal oriented music I shall call *teleological.* (Similarly, the converging lines of perspective in a painting by Raphael or David, the swirling kinetic curves in a Delacroix or Van Gogh, the directional "arrows" in a Tintoretto or Picasso, all focus the viewer's attention upon particular points of structural culmination—upon visual goals. And in literature the normal syntax of language, the delineation of human motivation, the explication of causal relationships among the sequential events of a narrative, and the presentation of dialectically structured thought processes—all combine to create a purposeful, goal-oriented art.)

But the music of the avant-garde directs us toward no points of culmination—establishes no goals toward which to move. It arouses no expectations, except presumably that it will stop. It is neither surprising nor, once you get used to its sounds, is it particularly startling. It is simply *there.* And this is the way it is supposed to be. Such directionless, unkinetic art, whether carefully contrived or created by chance, I shall call *anti-teleological* art. Here is what one young composer, Christian Wolfe, has to say about this music:

> The music has a static character. It goes in no particular direction. There is no necessary concern with time as a measure of distance from a point in the past to a point in the future. It is not a question of getting anywhere, of making progress, or having come from anywhere in particular . . .[5]

What is involved here is not simply a new technique or method for realizing similar ends—as in the music of Haydn, Wagner, or Bartok where different means of creating goal-directed motion were employed. What is involved is a radically different set of ends, whether these ends be achieved by careful calculation as in the music of Stockhausen, the paintings of Tobey or Rothko, and the writings of Beckett and Alain Robbe-Grillet, or by random operations as in the music of Cage, the paintings of Mathieu, or

[5] Quoted in Cage, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

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the chance theatre of MacLow's *The Marrying Maiden*. And underlying this new aesthetic is a conception of man and the universe, which is almost the opposite of the view that has dominated Western thought since its beginnings.

In spirit, practice, and general aesthetic outlook anti-teleological art has much in common with that inspired by existentialism. Nevertheless, on the philosophical level at least, these positions can be distinguished. Because the differences between these facets of avant-garde art may be important in the future, I shall, where it seems useful, attempt to describe them. However, since both positions continue to change and evolve, the distinctions must be taken as only suggestive and provisional. The relationship of anti-teleological aesthetic to Oriental philosophy—and particularly to Zen Buddhism—is more direct and obvious. For many of these artists have read and been influenced by both Eastern and Western writings on Oriental philosophy. However, it is important to remember that "influence" is not a one-way reaction. The artists' thinking and his creative attitudes must be *ready* to be influenced. It is said, for instance, that Debussy was "enthralled by the Javanese *gamelang* at the Exposition Universelle" of 1889.[6] He was able to be "enthralled" because the art of music, and his attitude towards it, had developed to a point where such an experience was possible. Had Beethoven heard the same music a hundred years earlier, he would probably have walked away muttering: "Barbarians!" It is because Western art had already developed ways of perception, modes of organization, and philosophical attitudes approximating those of the Orient that the avant-garde could be influenced by them.

## III

In his book, *Silence,* John Cage urges the composer to "give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind of music (in the ordinary sense), and set about discovering means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments." [7]

Several important facets of the aesthetic of anti-teleological art are implicit in this quotation. In the first place, one is not listening

[6] Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1936), p. 240.
[7] Cage, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

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to the relationships among the sounds presented, but just to the sounds as sounds—as individual, discrete, objective sensations. A syntax or grammar, which would order these sounds and relate them to one another—creating goals, expectations, or a basis for prediction—is to be avoided at all costs. (And one way to make sure that you establish no syntactical-grammatical relationships is to employ the systematic use of chance as a technique of composition.)

Just as composers have sought, by chance or calculation, to destroy musical syntax by avoiding tonal relationships, repetitions, regular rhythmic patterns and the like, so painters have avoided symmetry, perspective, and the presence of recognizable objects or patterns because these tend to structure visual experience, creating goals and points of focus. Similarly in literature the elements of syntactial organization—plot, character and conventions of grammar—have been progressively weakened until almost only words remain.

Why must one avoid the structured syntax of pattern and form? Can't sounds be heard as sounds, or colors be seen as colors, and still be, so to speak, embedded in an order which relates the sounds or colors to each other? Perhaps. But it seems clear that the more one perceives the relationships among things, the less one tends to be aware of their existence as things in themselves—as pure sensation. You may, at some time, have had a radio or TV go haywire so that the sound was completely distorted. If so, you may recall that when the syntax and grammar became obscured and meaning was lost, you became very aware of sound *qua* sound—you became conscious of the bleeps, bloops and squeaks. Or, if a color slide is so out of focus that the objects depicted cannot be recognized, one becomes intensely aware of the experience of color as color.

It is to the naïve and primitive enjoyment of sensations and things for their own sakes that these artists seek to return. We must rediscover the reality and excitement of a sound as such, a color as such, and existence itself as such. But our habits of perception and apprehension—the accumulation of traditional preconceptions which we bring to aesthetic experience—prevent us from seeing and hearing what is really *there* to be perceived. The avant-garde novel aims, writes Bruce Morrissette, at

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an art which creates a basically true and real image of man's situation among men and in the universe of neutral objects, without metaphysics, and scraped clean of the "crust" of obsolete ideas.[8]

Traditions, theories, systems are obstacles to be overcome by the artist as well as the writer. "As examples of such obstacles," the painter, Mark Rothko, cites "(among others) memory, history or geometry, which are swamps of generalization from which one might pull out parodies of ideas (which are ghosts) but never an idea in itself." [9]

The existentialists, too, seek to destroy our habitual modes of perception and thought. But for somewhat different reasons. The anti-teleological position holds that traditions, systems, and the like are evil because they limit our freedom of thought and action, deaden our sensitivity to sensation and feeling and, in the end, alienate man from nature of which he should be a part. Art should, in Cage's words, be

an affirmation of life—not an attempt to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply a way of waking up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of its way and lets it act of its own accord.[10]

For the existentialists, on the other hand, man's alienation is part of the very nature of things. Nor is the revitalization of sensitivity of paramount importance. For them the accretion of traditional patterns of behavior and modes of thought must be stripped away not only because they limit human freedom, but because, as noted later, they limit the individual's responsibility for the choices he makes.

Particularly when contrasted with the more somber outlook of existentialism, the anti-teleological position with its emphasis upon the value of naïve, direct experience and upon the natural goodness of man, seems characteristically American. This, despite clear overtones of romanticism à la Rousseau. Cage's words, quoted above, remind us of Thoreau's:

If men would steadily observe the realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments

[8] "The New Novel in France," *Chicago Review*, Vol. XV, No. 3, p. 19.
[9] Dorothy C. Miller (ed.), *15 Americans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1952), p. 18.
[10] *Op.cit.*, p. 12.

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> . . . (However) by closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit everywhere, which is still built on purely illusory foundations.[11]

On a somewhat less romantic level, the grammar and syntax of art—and their counterparts in the world of affairs: custom, law, and philosophy—are to be avoided because they continue to act as the vehicles for social and personal teleology. The anti-novel in which nothing happens because no event follows from any other, the directionless painting in which lines and colors lead to no points of culmination, and the anti-kinetic musical composition in which tones are without implications are perhaps at least in part a reaction to the mess that goals, purposes, and strivings have got us into.

The language of science, so full of words like force, tendency, and natural selection which imply purposes and goals, is, according to this viewpoint, misleading. Rightly understood these are purely descriptive terms. Nature has, in fact, no purpose or goal. It simply is. And like nature, art should simply present. Thus Rauschenberg contends that "painting is always strongest when . . . it appears as a fact or an inevitability, as opposed to a souvenir or arrangement."[12] Alain Robbe-Grillet makes a similar point when he says of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* that "the theatrical character is on *stage,* this is his primary quality—he is there.[13] Or, put negatively, the scenes in Robbe-Grillet's novel, *Jealousy,* are, Morrissette tells us, presented "without a word of analysis or commentary, in the pure domain of phenomenological semantics."[14] Similarly Cage, as we have seen, emphasizes that sounds should simply "be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments."[15]

Our relationship to art, like our relationship to nature, ought to be one of acceptance. This is true for both the artist and the audience. The artist, whether employing chance methods of composition or applying a predetermined arbitrary formula, should accept the unanticipated result without seeking to impose his

[11] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and other Writings* (New York: Modern Library, 1937), p. 86.
[12] Dorothy C. Miller (ed.), *Sixteen Americans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), p. 58.
[13] Quoted by Hugh Kenner in "Waiting for Godot to Begin," *WFMT Perspective,* Jan. 1962, p. 49.
[14] *Op.cit.,* p. 18.
[15] *Op.cit.,* p. 10.

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personal will on the materials or making them conform to some syntactical preconception of what ought to take place. Similarly the audience should entertain no preconceptions, make no predictions as to what will occur, and force no organization upon the series of individual sounds, colors or words presented to it. A composer whose graphs are realized or whose notated fragments are ordered by a performer must accept what happens—and so should the audience, just as one accepts the sounds of a thunderstorm, a crying baby, a busy office, or silence.

Here another difference between the anti-teleological position and that of existentialism becomes apparent. In the anti-telelogical view, existence is *one*. Being and non-being are not opposites, but merely different states which may happen to something. Death is a change in existence, not the negation of it. (Again one is struck by the kinship with a sort of pantheistic romanticism and thinks, perhaps, of Wordworth's poem, "A slumber did my spirit seal.") Silence is just as real, just as much a part of existence as sound. As Rauschenberg has said: "A canvas is never empty."[16] For the existentialists, however, being and non-being are categorical opposites. Death is a horrible stupidity, making life absurd, yet at the same time making the human responsibility for individual choice the crucial fact of existence and the basis for whatever human dignity there is.

## IV

The denial of the reality of relationships and the relevance of purpose, the belief that only individual sensations and not the connections between them are real, and the assertion that predictions and goals depend not upon an order existing in nature, but upon the accumulated habits and preconceptions of man—all these rest upon a less explicit but even more fundamental denial: a denial of the reality of cause and effect. Once this is seen, the aesthetic of the avant-garde begins to make sense. For this is a position of uncompromising positivism[17]—or what I shall hereafter call *radical empiricism*.[18]

[16] *Sixteen Americans, op.cit.*, p. 58.

[17] After writing the first draft of this article, I discovered that George Rochberg had also used the word "positivism" to characterize the tendency towards indeterminacy in contemporary music (*Op.cit.* p. 11).

[18] I have decided to call the particular facet of avant-garde art with which I shall be concerned "radical empiricism" rather than using the more usual designation of

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It may, at first blush, seem ridiculous to deny the reality of cause and effect—the existence of necessary connections between events. However, we should remember the contentions of such philosophers as David Hume. And in the world of contemporary science—particularly in quantum mechanics where events are not fully determined or predictable, but only probable—the concept of cause and effect has again become problematical. After quoting from the second edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to the effect that "all changes happen in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect," Henry Margenau states that "physics knows of no such law; as a matter of fact there is no plausible way of defining cause and effect."[19]

Actually this point requires some qualification. What is denied in quantum mechanics and in the aesthetic of radical empiricism is not the theoretical possibility of a principle of causation, but the theoretical possibility of isolating any particular event as being the cause of another particular event. This is the case because, since the world is seen as a single interrelated field or continuum in which everything interacts with—is the "cause" of—everything else, there are no separable causes and effects. Thus, discussing the emission of alpha-particles, Heisenberg writes that:

> We know the forces in the atomic nucleus that are responsible for the emission of the *a*-particle. But this knowledge contains the uncertainty which is brought about by the interaction between the nucleus and the rest of the world. If we wanted to know why the *a*-particle was emitted at that particular time we would have to know the microscopic structure of the whole world including ourselves, and that is impossible.[20]

"Abstract Expressionism" for several reasons: First, the term abstract expressionism has generally been used to apply to painting, but I shall be talking about a movement in all the arts; second, the term has been employed to designate several different tendencies in contemporary painting and consequently lacks precision; third, and more important, applied to the art and aesthetic with which I am concerned, the term is inaccurate and misleading. For the art we are discussing is not abstract in the sense of "being derived from" or a "distillation of." Quite the contrary. It is concrete in the extreme. Nor is it an "expression" of the artists' will or mind. Intention and communication are not involved. However, I did not want to use the term "positivism" because today, at least, that philosophical movement has been engaged in the construction of abstract, logical systems—a concern alien to many of the artists I am discussing.

[19] "Meaning and Scientific Status of Causality," *Philosophy of Science* (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1960), p. 437.

[20] Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), p. 89-90.

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This viewpoint, developed in connection with the *micro*scopic world of electromagnetic phenomena and quantum mechanics, has been applied with varying degrees of precision by the radical empiricists to *macro*scopic events.[21] Cage, for instance, writes that "there are an incalculable infinity of causes and effects . . . in fact each and every thing in all of time and space is related to each and every other thing in all of time and space." [22] Doré Ashton seems to echo this point when he tells us that Mark Tobey's paintings symbolize "his Heraclitan conviction that all things come out of one and one out of all things." [23] In a similar vein Robbe-Grillet asserts that chronological time distorts our experience because it "forces events into a pattern of causality and imposes an unjustifiable logic upon them." [24]

To deny causality is to deny the possibility of prediction. All notions of "if this occurs, then that must, or will probably, follow" disappear. Consequently (if I may be permitted so teleological a word), the music, art and literature of the avant-garde is characteristically unkinetic and unfocused. In a novel by Robbe-Grillet, a composition by Cage, or a painting by Guston one does not, and should not, feel that one event follows *from* (is the result of) what what went before. It simply "comes after." And since no event or action refers to or leads us to expect any other event or action, the sequence of events is, in any ordinary sense of the term, meaningless.

Again there is a difference in emphasis, if not in practice, between the existentialist wing of the avant-garde and the radical empiricist wing. For the radical empiricist, the isolated object freshly experienced is the chief source of value. The existentialist position, on the other hand, is apparently paradoxical: the meaning of the art work lies in its objectification of the meaninglessness

[21] Paradoxically, the aesthetic of the avant-garde at one and the same time accepts and rejects contemporary science. On the one hand, it employs the concepts and terminology of modern physics—indeterminacy, field theory, and the relativity of space-time—with freedom, if not always with accuracy, to rationalize and support its position. On the other hand, it represents a revolt against the world which science has revealed—a world which is an abstract, man-made construct of unseen particles governed by unknown forces. And the radical empiricists, reacting against the artificiality of this unreal world (as well as its fruits), have sought to reaffirm the existence, the poignancy, and the value of directly experienced sensation.

[22] *Op.cit.*, p. 47.

[23] "Mark Tobey," *Evergreen Review*, Vol. 4, No. 11, p. 31.

[24] Quoted in Richard Gilman, "Total Revolution in the Novel," *Horizon*, Vol. IV, No. 3, p. 99.

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of life itself. "What Sartre calls the 'anti-novels' of Nathalie Sarraute," writes Norman Podhoretz, "seem . . . to represent a total submission to the meaninglessness of existence."[25]

The denial of causality and the correlative denial of predictability have important consequences. In the first place, rational choice, which depends upon the possibility of envisaging the results of alternative courses of action, becomes a senseless fiction. (This being so, it makes no difference whether an art work is produced by the consistent use of chance, by a purely gratuitous act, or by the rigid application of a predetermined formula.) And attending to such a work of art, we, the audience, should not attempt to choose, even unconsciously, among alternative possibilities for continuation. We ought to remain detached: seeing, hearing, and observing the objective series of empirical events.

In their attitude toward choice the existentialists differ fundamentally from the radical empiricists. In the existentialist view, one performs a gratuitous act not because choice is meaningless, but because only by such an act can the individual become fully responsible for his actions. In all other actions, responsibility can, in part at least, be attributed to the social order, traditional modes of thought and behavior, habit, and the like. Seen in this light, existentialism seems closer to the tradition of western culture than does radical empiricism. For existentialism still seeks to solve the problems of the human condition—of man's despair in the face of death and his alienation from the world—within the basic framework of humanism, in which man is morally responsible for his own acts.

If predictability and choice are impossible, art cannot be a form of communication. For communication requires that the artist imagine or predict how others—the audience—will interpret and respond to the words, sounds, or visual designs he produces. As I write or speak, I choose my words by acting as my own audience; and I presume that you will respond to my words as I do. If I can't imagine what your responses will be—and the systematic use of chance, for instance, precludes this possibility—then there can be no communication. Furthermore, in literature and music at least, communication depends to a considerable extent upon the use of a traditionally established, shared syntax and grammar. When these

[25] "The New Nihilism and the Novel," *Partisan Review*, Vol. XXV, No. 4, p. 585.

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are destroyed, communication is substantially weakened. The artists and composers of radical empiricism are well aware of this. The painter, Clyfford Still, for instance, asserts that: "Demands for communication are both presumptuous and irrelevant. The observer usually sees what his fears and hopes and learning teach him to see." [26]

Furthermore, because aesthetic experience involves no predictions, no meanings, and no communication, the value of the work of art cannot be judged—any more than one can judge nature or natural objects in themselves. "Value judgments," writes Cage, "are not in the nature of this work as regards either composition, performance, or listening. The idea of relation being absent anything . . . may happen. A 'mistake' is beside the point, for once anything happens it authentically is." [27] Since error depends upon having a preconceived idea of what should occur, this is indeed an art without error. As the painter, Georges Mathieu, has said: ". . . if we reduce the part played by conscious control in favor of spontaneity, we find ourselves in the position where *the very notion of error* . . . disappears." [28]

To deny the existence of causality is to deny the possibility of *form*. For implicit in relational concepts such as beginning, middle and end, antecedent-consequent, or periodicity, is the belief that the events in question are causally connected. An end, or conclusion, is something *caused* by what went before. However, in order to follow the form of a painting by Jackson Pollock, writes Allan Kaprow, "it is necessary to get rid of the usual idea of 'Form', i.e. a beginning, middle, and end, or any variant of this principle —such as fragmentation." [29] Or, as Robert Goldwater has said: "In Mark Rothko's pictures the apparent end lies close to the apparent beginning—so close in fact, or in apparent fact, that they are almost indistinguishable." [30] In a similar vein the composer, Stockhausen, has spoken of "creating in each piece an individual, self-contained world like a crystal, which, when one turns it, is always different, but always the same. It should not matter whether the music is played from the beginning, middle, or end, so long as

[26] *15 Americans, op.cit.*, p. 22.
[27] *Op.cit.*, p. 59.
[28] *From the Abstract to the Possible* (Paris: Editions du Cercle D'Art Contemporain, 1960), p. 21.
[29] "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," *Art News*, Vol. 57, No. 6, p. 26.
[30] "Reflections on the Rothko Exhibition," *Arts*, Vol. 35, No. 6, p. 43.

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it goes full circle."[31] In literature, too, syntactical form has disappeared. Because the human mind—and the world as seen through it—is considered to be an unorganized conglomeration of sensations, thoughts, memories, and affects whose relationships (if such exist) we can never really know, the words and phrases describing the mind's activity have been divested of syntactical significance. The functional relationships among parts of speech tend to disappear. Similarly, sentences and paragraphs do not follow from one another. On the highest architectonic level—that of the succession of described events—expressed motivation and "all rhetorical analysis of psychology" are rejected.[32] "Character and plot having disappeared from the novel," writes Jean Bloch-Michel, "what is left. The object, replies Robbe-Grillet. And an object without meaning."[33]

Because it presents a succession rather than a progression of events, this art is essentially static. There are no points of culmination or of focus. All events are equally important and time, as we ordinarily conceive of it, dissolves. There is only duration. For ordered time depends upon the existence and recognition of the beginnings and terminations of separable events or patterns. Stockhausen's image of music as a turning crystal which is always the same, yet always different, suggests Alfonso Ossario's description of a painting by Jackson Pollock:

> The picture surface, with no depth of recognizable space or sequence of known time, gives us the never-ending present. We are presented with a visualization of that remorseless consolation—in the end is the beginning.[34]

And writing of Samuel Beckett's novel, *Malone,* Robert Hatch says that we "cannot possibly tell whether we are with him (Malone) twenty minutes, two months, or ten years."[35]

These remarks suggest why radical empiricism probably finds its most idiosyncratic and convincing expression in the plastic arts. Since meaningful visual experience is, so to speak, directly and naturally presentational and objective, painting and sculpture can excite our interest and contemplation in the absence of explicit

[31] Quoted in Francis Burt, "An Antithesis," *Score,* March 1957, p. 69.
[32] Morrissette, *op.cit.,* p. 19.
[33] "The Avant-Garde in French Fiction," *Partisan Review,* Vol. XXV No. 3, p. 469.
[34] *15 Americans,* p. 15.
[35] "Laughter at Your Own Risk," *Horizon,* Vol. III, No. 1, p. 113.

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representation and an established vocabulary, grammar and syntax. We can, that is, respond sensitively to fortuitous coincidences of line, color, space and texture, delighting in the patterns and relationships which we discover, even as we do in looking at nature.

Even more important, the plastic arts are *de facto* static and timeless. Motions, goals, time and syntax are not explicitly stated, but must be inferred by the viewer. Hence the order in which events are perceived is never fully determined in painting or sculpture. Even a teleological work in which our attention is directed toward definite focal points, can be viewed in many different orders. Similarly it is possible to experience the structure of the visual world, whether ordered or disordered, without presuming that it communicates, has purposes, or even involves cause and effect.

In music and literature, on the other hand, a *de facto* chronology is *necessarily* established—even in a work whose order is the product of pure chance. And we tend, whether by nature or learning, to infer causal relationships from such a sequence of events. We attempt, that is, to relate earlier events to later ones, discovering implications and attributing a causal order to the series of stimuli. These tendencies are enforced by the fact that the sounds to which we attend most carefully are man-made, conventional events in which teleology and communication are almost invariably presumed. However, though both music and literature are by nature syntactical, temporal arts, they differ in that literature necessarily represents events in the external world of objects, actions, passions and the like, while music does not.

If this analysis is correct, is it not possible that the arts will move in the coming years *not* toward a common, monolithic aesthetic as they seem to be doing today, but toward a plurality of aesthetics, each appropriate to its particular art? The aesthetics of the visual arts might, for instance, continue to develop the tendencies implicit in radical empiricism, reflecting the culture's conceptualization of the natural order of the material universe. And, since language is man's means of relating himself to the external world and to other men, literature might continue to be primarily concerned with the relationships of men to each other and to the universe—with the social-moral order or, if you will, disorder. And music, operating in the realm of pure syntax without reference to external objects or events would, then, develop an order reflecting

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and paralleling the structure and patterns of human mental processes.

## V

Whatever one may think of the art of radical empiricism, the philosophical position of which it is the expression is, as I have tried to indicate, a consistent and tenable one. That this is the case was pointed out by Alfred North Whitehead:

> Suppose that two occurrences may be in fact detached so that one of them is comprehensible without reference to the other. Then all notion of causation between them, or of conditioning, becomes unintelligible. There is—with this supposition—no reason why the possession of any quality by one of them should in any way influence the possession of that quality, or of any other quality, by the other. With such a doctrine the play and inter-play of qualitative succession in the world becomes a blank fact from which no conclusions can be drawn as to past, present, or future, beyond the range of direct observation. Such a positivistic belief is quite self-consistent, provided that we do not include in it any hopes for the future or regrets for the past. Science is then without any importance. Also effort is foolish, because it determines nothing.[36]

New art has always been difficult to understand because it has always sought to replace old habits of thought and perception, old preconceptions and prejudices with new ways of looking at the world and fresh startling insights. But however drastically they may have modified the means of expression, the content, or the form of art, composers, artists and writers of the West have, until now, had the same essential ends—the same essential philosophical orientation—as their predecessors. There is a clear line of development from Aeschylus to Shakespeare to Joyce, from Phidias to Michelangelo to Picasso, and from Monteverdi to Beethoven to Stravinsky.

Radical empiricism is not, however, an attempt to redefine goals and values within the long tradition of western art and thought. Rather it seeks to break decisively with the most basic tenets of that tradition. "This new literature," says Robbe-Grillet, ". . . is going to represent—in its fulfillment—a revolution more total than those from which such movements as romanticism and naturalism were born."[37] And Cage, criticizing Edgar Varèse, the

[36] *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 226.
[37] Quoted in Gilman, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

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patron saint of experimental music, for injecting his personality—his teleology—into the music he writes, says that Varèse "is an artist of the past. Rather than dealing with sounds as sounds, he deals with them as Varèse."[38]

Man is no longer to be the measure of all things, the center of the universe. He has been measured and found to be an undistinguished bit of matter different in no essential way from bacteria, stones and trees. His goals and purposes; his egocentric notions of past, present and future; his faith in his power to predict and, through prediction, to control his destiny—all these are called into question, considered irrelevant, or deemed trivial. For these artists, writers and composers—and, however influential they may be, it must be remembered that they represent only a small segment of the world of contemporary art—for these radical empiricists, *the Renaissance is over.*

Here is Georges Mathieu's description of the present situation:

> Our whole culture has allowed itself to be permeated, since the end of the Middle Ages, by Hellenistic thought patterns which aimed at bringing the cosmos down to human proportions and limited the means of access to an understanding of the Universe to those provided by reason and the senses. . . . For the past ten years, painting . . . has been freeing itself from the yoke of this burdensome inheritance. After twenty-five centuries of a culture we had made our own, we are witnessing in certain aspects of lyrical non-configuration a new phenomenon in painting—and, one might add, in the arts in general—which calls into question the very foundations of 40,000 years of aesthetic activity.[39]

Whether the Renaissance is over for the rest of us—for our culture generally, only the future will tell. But whether it is over or not, the merit of considering the art and aesthetic of radical empiricism seriously is that it challenges us to discover and make explicit the grounds for beliefs and values which we unconsciously take for granted. If we are to defend our beliefs—our faith in a world of purpose and causality, time and prediction, choice and control, communication and morality, we must ask the most fundamental questions that can be asked: questions about the nature of man, his relationships to other men, and his place in the universe. Can we do more than simply assert our beliefs? Can we give empirically verifiable reasons for them?

[38] *Op.cit.*, p. 84.
[39] *Op.cit.*, p. 9.

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VOLUME XVI NUMBER 2 SUMMER 1963

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The End of the Renaissance? | LEONARD B. MEYER | 169 |
| Six Poems | A. R. AMMONS | 187 |
| Summering (*story*) | JOANNE GREENBERG | 203 |
| The Marriage of Pocahontas (*verse*) | LOUIS SIMPSON | 237 |
| Manet: The Execution of Emperor Maximilian (*verse*) | W. D. SNODGRASS | 246 |
| Poem and Translations | HAROLD WITT | 249 |
| Three Poems | W. S. MERWIN | 252 |
| Two Poems | WINTHROP PALMER | 254 |
| Films to Confirm the Poets | VERNON YOUNG | 255 |
| Theater Chronicle | JOHN SIMON | 264 |
| Music and Ballet Chronicle | B. H. HAGGIN | 274 |
| *Reviews* | | |
| The Perilous Balance | ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS | 280 |
| My Neighbor's Garden and What I Saw There | VIVIAN MERCIER | 290 |
| The Poetry of Longfellow | MARIUS BEWLEY | 297 |
| Hopes for Explosions | WILLIAM DICKEY | 305 |
| Two Critics | PATRICK CRUTTWELL | 316 |

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### *Notes on Contributors*

LEONARD B. MEYER, author of *Emotion and Meaning in Music* and *The Rhythmic Structure of Music* (with Grosvenor Cooper), is Chairman of the Department of Music at the University of Chicago.

A book of poems by A. R. AMMONS, entitled *Expressions of Sea Level*, will be published in the fall by the Ohio State University Press. Mr. Ammons is currently acting as poetry editor for *The Nation*.

*The King's Persons*, a first novel by JOANNE GREENBERG, was published earlier this year by Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

A new collection of poems by LOUIS SIMPSON will be published by Wesleyan University Press in the fall.

VERNON YOUNG, who is now in Salzburg, is planning to move to Italy, where he will work on a book about the movies.

A collection of essays by JOHN SIMON entitled *Acid Test* has recently been published by Stein & Day.

ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS, the well-known literary critic, is a professor of English at Columbia. This is his first appearance in THE HUDSON REVIEW.

VIVIAN MERCIER, an alumnus of Trinity College, Dublin, now teaching at the City College of the City University of New York, has recently published a new book, *The Irish Comic Tradition* (Oxford).

MARIUS BEWLEY's next contribution to THE HUDSON REVIEW will be an essay on Stephen Crane.

WILLIAM DICKEY's second book of poetry will be published in the fall by Ohio State University Press.

PATRICK CRUTTWELL will be taking up the Chair of English in the University of the West Indies at Kingston, Jamaica, this autumn.

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Brian O'Doherty - "American Masters: The Voice and the Myth"

"Rauschenberg's career tells us more about the New York art community in the sixties than that of any other artist. For the art community did not care then -- nor does it now -- for sunny figures whose innocent imperialism lies open. Rauschenberg's careless plenitude was distrusted as ambition, his generosity earned him not the affection of others, but inclusion in their self-hate..."

Venice Biennale "unleashed the furies."

RR pioneered "another quasi-lethal success: the museum retrospective for an artist not yet forty." This event signalized "the entrance of museums into competition with and for the media; the emergence of the curator as a shaper of taste rather than its codifier..."

"In the early sixties particularly, his excited, toneless voice, his ebullient laughter, his verbal playfulness, his physical energy, seemed to be everywhere. He was larger than life. He looked larger than he was. It was a ground-breaking personality, in the spotlight and at ease in it..."

"The retrospective's influence in New York was more by permission and example than by any formal promptings. As Bryan Robertson commented, it opened up not so much possibilities, as lots of things to do -- the opposite of an artist like Mondrian, who convinces you there's nothing more to be done."

"As Rauschenberg extended process into a life style, programmatically ignoring distinctions between art and life, his work became performance and his life became art..."

"Duchamp's genius, and it is genius, was to see the modernist era from the outside, while in it. Modernist history won't let Duchamp in, because he spoiled the fun it had in taking itself seriously."

"After mixed success and frequent failure, Rauschenberg, around 1969, became resigned to being 'merely an artist making art'"...

"His art encouraged what could be called the city dweller's rapid scan, rather than the art audience's stare...Rauschenberg had introduced into the museum and its high-art ambiance not just the vernacular object but something much more important, the vernacular glance. While this could be played down as an episode in the history of perception, I believe it was an important moment in the history of sixties art, which, more than most art, made modes of perception its subject and their history its art history."

..."There has always been a cheery vulgarity about Rauschenberg's work" that has tended to get him valued lower than Johns. "...Johns provided everything the New York critical intelligence requires to requite its own narcissism." "...Rauschenberg's work doesn't need criticism the way Johns' does. Johns' work takes the critic very seriously."

"Rauschenberg's voice is inaccessible to formalist pursuit, and its transmission is almost obliterated by noise."

cern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses." (p. 1015 - re Robert Frost)

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The Kennedys

"When their things worked," said Harris Wofford, of the campaign's civil rights coordinator, "it was not because of a great machine but because they released energy in a lot of directions and sort of trusted that... the general goal was right." (Schlesinger, RK and His Times)

JFK to the Alfalfa Club: "I can't see that it's wrong to give him a little legal experience before he goes out to practice law." (ibid)

In 1967, after McGovern spoke out in the Senate against the escalation of bombing in Vietnam, RK rose to praise "one of the most courageous speeches delivered in the Senate since I became a Senator." Kennedy went on to warn that American escalation made counterescalation by our adversaries "inevitable." He condemned the policy of seeking peace "through military action which is really going to bring about the destruction of Vietnam and the people." (ibid)

1967 summer the worst yet in the ghettoes. 26 people killed in Newark. Harlem, Detroit -- LBJ sent in tanks and paratroops. "It's over," RK told Mankiewicz. "The President is just not going to do anything more. That's it. He's through with domestic problems, with the cities...He's not going to do anything. And he's the only man who can." (ibid)

1967 - American forces in Vietnam up to 525,000. American bombers dropping more tons of explosives in Vietnam than on all fronts in WWII. Negotiations forgotten. March on the Pentagon. Gov. Otto Kerner, chairman of LBJ's Commission on Civil Disorders, reports (Feb 1968) a nation "moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate but unequal" and proposes strong action to reverse "deepening racial division." According to Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The White House would not receive it."

The day RK announced his candidacy in 1968, Lt. William Calley and Company C massacred the inhabitants of My Lai.

From A Thousand Days:

"The Kennedy style was the triumph, hard-bought and well-earned, of a gallant and collected human being over the anguish of life. His 'coolness' was itself a new frontier. It meant freedom from the stereotyped responses of the past. It promised the deliverance of American idealism, buried deep in the national character but imprisoned by the knowingness and calculation of American society in the fifties." (p. 115)

JFK "was a natural President, as other men were natural writers or outfielders or steeplechase riders." (Last one was Roosevelt) - p. 676.

Reston once asked him if he had some goal to guide his decisions. JFK looked appalled. "'It was only when I turned the question to immediate, tangible problems that he seized the point...' Reston concluded that Kennedy had no large designs; but I suspect that the President was simply stupefied by what he regarded as the impracticality of the question. He was possessed not by a blueprint but by a process." (p. 679)

April, 1963 - Bull Connor vs King in Birmingham (p. 958)

"May and June 1963 were exciting months for an historian. One had seen no such surge of spontaneous mass democracy in the United States since the organization of labor in the heavy industries in the spring and summer of 1937." (p. 966)

JFK at Amherst, Oct 1963: "When power leads man toward arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the area of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses." (p. 1015 - re Robert Frost)

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Of his death:

"Pablo Casals mused that he had seen many great and terrible events in his lifetime... 'but in recent history -- and I am thinking of my own lifetime -- there has never been a tragedy that has brought so much sadness and grief to as many people as this.'" (p.1027)

Norman Mailer: "For a time, we felt the country was ours. Now it's theirs again."

Daniel Patrick Moynihan: "Mary McGrory said to me that we'll never laugh again. And I said, 'Heavens, Mary. We'll laugh again. It's just that we'll never be young again."

Lleras Camargo: "For Latin America, Kennedy's passing is a blackening, a tunnel, a gust of cloud and smoke."

Sekou Toure: "I have lost my only true friend in the outside world."

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~~Abstract Expressionism~~

Frank O'Hara: Poet Among Painters - Marjorie Perloff, Braziller, 1977

Often wrote poems during his lunch hour at MOMA. His verse "incorporates specific film techniques, phonetic and rhythmic devices modelled on the music of John Cage and Eric Satie, and such concepts of Action Painting as 'push and pull,' the 'all-over,' and the notion of the canvas as a field which the artist enters." (intro)

His death, 23 July 1966 - pp. 4 ff

New York School poets - Kenneth Koch, James Schuyler, Barbara Guest, Edwin Denby, John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara. Opposed to the "confessional" work of Lowell and others -- O'Hara once said Lowell's "confessional manner" let him "get away with things that are just plain bad but you're supposed to be interested because he's supposed to be so upset," (p. 13)

"See it new" (paraphrasing Ezra Pound). O'Hara said the paintings of Larry Rivers "has taught me to be more keenly interested while I'm still alive. And perhaps this is the most important thing art can say." (p. 20)

O'Hara speaks of wanting "to keep the surface of the poem high and dry, not wet, reflective, and self-conscious...I hope the poem to be the subject, not just about it." (p.22)

Thr literary bar was the San Remo, the artists was the Cedar. "An interesting sidelight to these social activities was that for most of us non-Academic and indeed non-literary poets in the sense of the American scene at the time, the painters were the only generous audience for our poetry, and most of us read first publicly in art galleries or at The Club." (p. 59)

De Kooning referred to The Club's colorless decor as a "no-environment." (address was 39 East 8th) .

In one of his "Art Chronicles" for Kulchur (of which he was art editor in 1962 and 1963), O'Hara distinguishes between Pop artists like Andy Warhol and Robert Indiana, who "tend to make their art out of the vulgar (in the sense of everyday) objects, images, and emblems," and Claes Oldenburg, who "makes the very objects and symbols themselves, with thehelp of papier-mache, cloth, wood, glue, paint and whatever other mysterious materials are inside and on them, into art." (p. 87)

Anne Waldman: "Frank O'Hara gave a whole new generation of poets the freedom to put anything you want in a poem," and "showed that poems could be written on the run." (p. 196)

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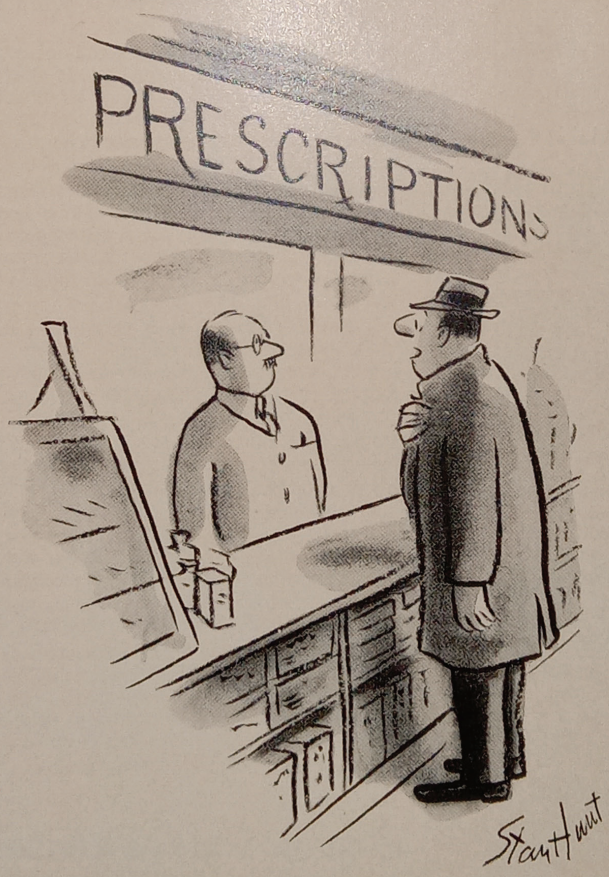
# THE ART WORLD

## *Set Out for Clayton!*



"EVERYONE is welcome! If you want to be an artist, come forward! Our Theatre can use everyone and find the right place for everyone. If you decide to join us, we congratulate you here and now!" This announcement that recruiting is taking place at the Clayton Racetrack for the Nature Theatre of Oklahoma is read on a street corner by Karl Rossmann, hero of Kafka's "Amerika." The Theatre in which everyone is welcome to be an artist is nature as art, a happiness-generating "man-made environment" (to use the phrase popular in current writings on ecological art). "One of the most significant functions of this Theatre," wrote Walter Benjamin, "is to dissolve happenings into their gestic components." In the Theatre, everyone not only can be an artist but is a work of art. As such, everyone is automatically in "the right place;" that is to say, in the world museum. A New York artist, Vito Acconci, periodically notifies the art world, by mail, that on certain dates he will mount a stool in his studio *x* number of times and that this "work" may be viewed at the designated hours. The mounting and dismounting could well be the act assigned to Rossmann in Oklahoma. What does one do in the Nature Theatre? One acts oneself. How can one act oneself when one knows that one is acting? How can one not act oneself? Enough of discussion. "A curse on those who do not believe in us!" Kafka's announcement concludes. "Set out for Clayton!"

The Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse interprets the breakdown of the barriers between art and life, as in the case of Acconci, as a radical assault on bourgeois culture. The Nature Theatre, however, is the vision of a situation beyond all cultures—a situation that offers a role to everyone, regardless of talent or training. It is a democratic Utopia in which the metaphysical problem of identity, the solution of which Marx deferred until the advent of the classless society, is dealt with directly by individuals, each acting in accordance with his inner form. Because the disintegration of class culture (evidenced by the immersion of all strata of society in the same mass media) has outstripped the disintegration of social classes, the cultural revolution has preceded the political-economic one. Relieved of inherited forms, the individual has gained the privilege of molding his own identity out of data pertaining to his body and any mode of busyness ("gestic"). Besides mounting stools, Acconci counts his pulse beats and moves the contents of his apartment to the art gallery and back again. This activity is sanctioned as art by the logic that changed art history into the history of cultural artifacts, and it is presided over by the sublimated mask of Marcel Duchamp. Marcuse quotes a French thinker: "I dance, therefore I am." To enroll in the current equivalent of the Nature Theatre it is necessary only to purge oneself of reverence for masterpieces and to respond to paintings and sculptures as though they were phenomena belonging to the order of rows of windows in a high-riser or snowflakes melting on the hood of a parked car.




*"I am interested in obtaining relief from the pain of headache and discomfort due to cold, neuritis, neuralgia, and rheumatism. Could you suggest something?"*

I report on Acconci without having seen him do his act. Why should anyone see him? That his art is exactly like anything else is the point of it. Once you've got his idea, it is as superfluous to witness his performance as it is to follow Duchamp into a store to see him select his bottle rack. "Already," writes Gene Youngblood, in an essay on "World Game: The Artist as Ecologist" in last August's *artscanada*, "the image of the artist has changed radically. Increasingly, it is the artist's *idea*, not his technical prowess, that is important" (his italics). In the Nature Theatre, there are actors but not necessarily spectators. As the art-world phrase goes, the relation between artist and audience has been revolutionized. It is enough merely to hear about works of art or to receive information about them through other media. Youngblood describes a mobile television "gallery" in Düsseldorf (the West Germans seem suddenly to have sprung forward into aesthetic avant-gardism) that commissions artists to execute earthworks and other environmental novelties expressly for broadcast, and he quotes the proprietor of the gallery to the effect that his "TV gallery exists only as a series of television transmissions. There is no gallery room. We communicate art, we do not sell objects. . . . Collaboration with TV stations . . . is the only hope for the fine arts if they are to endure." In this context, the desire to have "the fine arts endure" is rather surprising. According to Marcuse, "the thesis of the end of Art has become a familiar slogan." Can spectators without objects

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|---|---|---|
| | TOMKINS | IV.C.56 |




cause art to last longer than objects without spectators? Perhaps hearsay art will take on the longevity of folklore.

Parallel to the Nature Theatre is World Game, which Youngblood expects "may become the most important art event in history." The Game is based on the contention of Buckminster Fuller that, in Youngblood's words, "it's now possible to make all humanity physically successful"—an intrinsically Nature Theatre idea ("If you decide to join us, we congratulate you here and now!"). Using data from Fuller's World Resources Inventory, "World Game approaches Spaceship Earth as a work of art." The objective of the Game is not, however, to contemplate the world, in the manner of nineteenth-century nature poets, but to change it. If the world is a work of art, it is also an inexhaustible pile of art materials. Every living creature is a detail in the ecological assemblage; even the mite of carbon dioxide produced by Acconci's exertions contributes to air pollution. The formal activity of World Game consists of composing "geosocial scenarios" by which to transform the art/reality environment. In establishing a global hookup capable of "programming a total environment for total man," the Game brings to fulfillment the theories represented by earth art, information-systems art, process art, electronic-phenomena art, chance art, data-registration art, and conceptual art. Youngblood lists a score of artists who are forerunners of World Game playing. They are art-world Names, such as Andy Warhol, Les Levine, Allan Kaprow, John Cage, Dennis Oppenheim, Robert Morris, and Otto Piene. But when the world network of Game "extension groups" goes into operation (Youngblood is participation planner and, presumably, recruiter at the California Institute of the Arts), names won't be necessary, and there will be roles for everybody in "the great art works of tomorrow."

An earthworks artist has defined art as moving materials from one location to another; a Matisse is paint transferred from tubes to a canvas. In this view, the artist is a species of porter; perhaps this accounts for the fact that porters are a much-favored motif in pre-Columbian sculpture and Egyptian wall painting. Ecologically, we are all porters, in that we pick up air and food from the environment, store them for processing, and convey them back to their source. An artist is a porter who has declared himself an artist while he continues his work as a porter. As in the Nature Theatre announcement, it





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is necessary only to "come forward."

Robert Morris has come forward more frequently and in more roles in the last five years than anyone else in the art world. He has discovered the secret of postwar vanguard art: that existing works are translatable into ideas which can then be demonstrated by models accompanied by a text. His playing of reality against art and as art seems entirely uninhibited by any simple affection for paintings or sculptures. His "reality" art has traversed Jasper Johns' "thing" paintings, Minimalist cubes, boxes, I-beams and L-beams, anti-form (*arte povera*) accretions, process art (tree seedlings in a greenhouse at a Museum of Modern Art exhibition), earthworks, events reported on film, and (momentarily) the renunciation of art in favor of political action. Morris is the leading theoretician-practitioner of an art that could be made by anyone and appreciated through hearsay. "Morris," writes Marcia Tucker, in her monograph on the artist (Praeger, 1970), "eliminates distinctions between 'aesthetic' experience and 'real' experience. . . . The experience of this art is distinguished *quantitatively*, not *qualitatively*, from that of natural events or objects" (her italics). Making quality superfluous removes the major obstacle to immediate art performance (anyone with a recipe book can do it), as well as to immediate acceptance (since the audience has been liberated from uncertainties of judgment based on sensibility). Avant-garde art is at last put on a solid footing by the elimination of the conflict between what is justified by art ideas and what one likes. If there is no difference between art and life, there is no difference between the artist and his public. Instead of representing creative mysteries, the artist becomes a group leader. Collective projects, not the cultivation of individuals, are the aim, and it is sufficient that participants are kept cheerfully occupied.



World Game is the antithesis of the "I" Game, which artists from Symbolism through Action Painting have played in solitude in order to bring to consciousness and transform the inner Resources Inventory of individuals. Like World Game and the Nature Theater, "I" Game is open to everybody, and it has the extra advantage of requiring neither organization nor any apparatus more complicated than pencil and paper. In this aspect, "I" Game is more democratic than World Game but less sociable. Indications are that since art in our time tends to swing from extremes of introspection (Expressionism) to extremes of objectivity (Bauhaus, Minimalism), "I" Game may be expected to return to the foreground of art should World Game and its earthworks and conceptual subsidiaries become excessively popular. What is important, however, is that swings both outward and inward have been occurring in the orbit of related ideas about art. Like Action Painting, which is an "I" Game, all forms of ecological art regard art as an activity and seek a result that is not an object but a force acting on the spectator—even when it acts on him only through rumor. For Morris, says Miss Tucker, "the question 'What does it mean?' [is] irrelevant. The central issue becomes, instead, 'What does it do?'" Should someone during these shifts take the trouble to become a great painter, there would not, I suppose, be any strong objection.

LIKE the Abstract Expressionists of the nineteen-forties, World Game recognizes that art today is being produced in the midst of a world crisis—a situation the art movements and art criticism of the nineteen-sixties took great pains to deny. The crisis is very much alive in the mind of Herbert Marcuse, and he associates it, no doubt correctly, with the present tendency to dissolve forms and mingle art and life. In an article entitled "Art as a Form of Reality," contained in a collection of statements "On the Future of Art" (Viking, 1970) delivered as lectures at the Guggenheim Museum, Marcuse considers the art/life mix to be an expression of revolt against the profit system and its commodity culture. He identifies "real" art with anti-art, and anti-art with the New Left. But, oddly, the radical connections of art-as-life do not endear it to Marcuse. For him, art is higher than revolution; it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that it is higher than life itself. He believes that drowning art in reality is a violation of art values and also unrealizable. Art, no matter what it pretends to be, remains art, and if it tries to be something else it manages only to be bad art. This view puts Marcuse into conflict with all the negative and utilitarian art of this century since Futurism and Constructivism.

Marcuse's axiom is the not unfamiliar one that art is "essentially" different from everyday reality as well as from the realities of science, technology, and politics. What makes a work art is its participation in form, which participa-

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tion removes it from nature and events into a separate realm. Marcuse is committed to the art object; modernist notions of art as action, event, process, communication seem to him distortions of the inherent nature of art. Without needing to name them, Marcuse is condemning World Game, earth artists, conceptual artists, Robert Morris, and electronic-systems artists, such as James Seawright and J. W. Burnham—the last two fellow-contributors to "On the Future of Art." Indeed, to juxtapose Marcuse's idealistic conception of the art object as a "self-contained whole"—"something 'higher,' 'deeper,' perhaps 'truer' and 'better,' " whose creation was "guided by the idea of the beautiful"—with the ecological artist's pragmatic definition of art as moving rocks, dirt, household furnishings, or bodies from one place to another provides a ripe fragment of "found" comedy.



Marcuse's most telling argument against today's "living art" relates to its social effects: that in imagining that it can transform the environment it denies the experience of estrangement and powerlessness characteristic of present-day life. Audience-participation Happenings and displays present what seem to be pieces of reality on which spectators can act, but this reality is aesthetically contrived, and thus unlike the reality over which most people have no control at all. In this way, "living art" changes antagonism to things as they are into approval, and Marcuse concludes that "illusion is strengthened rather than destroyed." So he accuses anti-art of being falsely revolutionary—a conclusion hard to refute. But he weakens his case by being against all art that attacks or puts aside inherited forms. He wants to revolutionize society but to keep art intact above society, in the form it presumably has always had. Art cannot be blended with life, and life can become aesthetic only when "a new type of men and women" begin building an altogether new society. But even the perfect reconstruction of man and his environment will not affect the transcendent status of painting and sculpture, including works of the past; they will continue to embody "a beauty and truth antagonistic to those of reality."

Marcuse's position is an instance of the intrinsic conservatism of the Marxist outlook on contemporary art. In the name of a future new society, it rejects the changing, imaginative substance of the present. Blaming everything on the capitalist system amounts to blaming *only* the capitalist system. Craft work executed in pre-capitalist slave workshops carries no stigma, and it even forms part of changeless standards by which to denounce the creations of free minds. In splitting form from content, Marcuse locates himself firmly in the academic tradition. Philosophically, it may be convenient to isolate art from non-art phenomena; to identify art with form helps, for example, to explain how works produced in one culture can carry over into another. But this "solution" overlooks the progressive deformalization of the modern imagination under the flood of random events and mass-communication patterns. It overlooks, too, the great works of modernism that are improvised in one-of-a-kind forms ("Thus Spake Zarathustra," "Guernica," even the Communist Manifesto) or built out of raw fact ("Moby Dick," Impressionist painting, collage).

No doubt World Game and artists on Youngblood's list of "living-art" pioneers function on the edge of farce and often fall into self-delusion and hoax. But in art it is folly to demand that works should conform literally to claims made for them. The sincerity of "living art" lies not in its ability actually to become part of nature but in the logic with which it carries on the struggle of earlier twentieth-century art movements against fixed ideas of the aesthetic. The resort to direct experience and materials outside of art is an aspect of the cultural crisis; it is the response of artists continually compelled to begin anew. Reality-versus-art may be a slogan of the New Left, but it was also a slogan of nineteenth-century American painters, from Catlin through Eakins, though they, too, were unable, as Marcuse says of today's anti-artists, to escape "from the fetters of the Art-Form." Situations of novelty and crisis induce programs of making do with what lies at hand. The Oklahoma Nature Theatre is a vision of America as a place where anyone can begin again with himself as he is. There, art imposes no forms on life. In the Nature Theatre each must create his own part and his style of performing it. The Nature Theatre is the alternative to the New Order—Marcuse's and anyone else's. The future of art in America has become perfectly clear. "Everyone is welcome! Set out for Clayton!"

—Harold Rosenberg

•

One man I know dives to the bottom of his pool, takes a deep breath and screams underwater.—*Rex Reed in the Times.*

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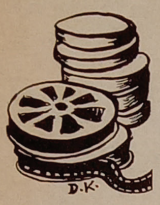
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# THE CURRENT CINEMA

## *Megalomaniacs*

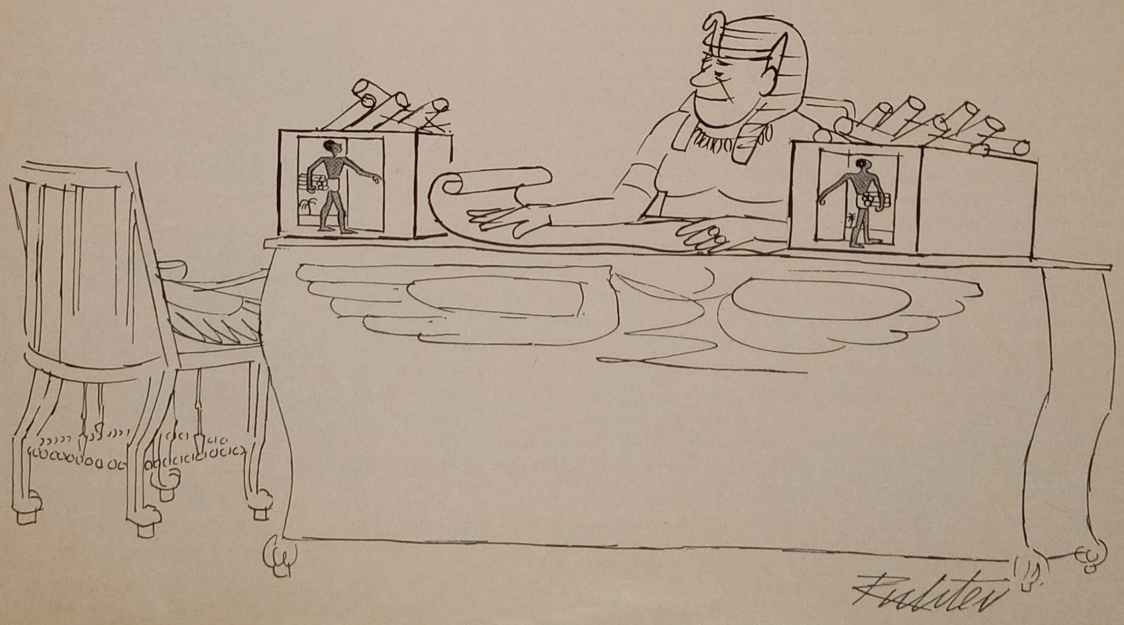


IF in the theatre satire is what closes on Saturday night, in movies parable is what shows at film festivals and never opens. Kafka and Borges may appear to be very cinematic authors, but their epigrams and enigmas don't seem to supply enough sense of life or much texture. Godard and Bertolucci have had their flirtations with Borges; Elio Petri, a movie critic on an Italian Communist paper and then a scenarist, became a director a decade ago, and has from the start shown the influence of Kafka—particularly of "The Trial" and "The Castle." Petri is distinctively unsentimental, and his indirect method of telling a story—which gradually takes the form of a paranoid fantasy—makes the viewer apprehensive. Typically, Petri, who uses Kafka politically, has worked with Marcello Mastroianni or Gian Maria Volonte as his trapped hero. In the remarkably intelligent thriller "We Still Kill the Old Way," Volonte was a foolish professor innocently trying to solve a crime in a land where there was no justice. In that film, derived from "A Man's Blessing," by Leonardo Sciascia, though one anxiously expected the worst at every moment, one feared for the hero and cared about what happened to him; it was a humane thriller. Petri's new "Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion," based on a screenplay he wrote with Ugo Pirro, is a more sophisticated and somewhat perverse political film, and I think it may be too nasty and kinky for the political parable to be effective.

Starting with Kafka's cryptic "He is a servant of the law and eludes judgment," Petri sets out to demonstrate the proposition that those in authority are above the laws they are supposed to serve. He chooses for his demonstration the chief of Rome's homicide squad (Volonte), just promoted to a new post, in which he is to deal with political dissidents. This mad big-shot cop believes he has a license to kill. The theme is fascinating, but the queasy, tense atmosphere derives not from the horror of the proposition itself but from the kinkiness of the details, such as the use of jangly music when the cop slits the throat of his mistress (Florinda Bolkan) and then plants the incontrovertible evidence that he did it. Petri has a fun-and-games approach to chic perversity—like a cold, soured Vadim—and this makes one so jumpy that it distracts one from the meaning of the film. Though the megalomaniac's view of the world proves correct—he is not prosecuted for the murder, even though everyone knows he committed it—Petri doesn't develop this cosmic political joke. Instead of moving forward into a view of how power creates invulnerability, the movie goes backward into flashbacks about the cop's bizarre sex life.

The movie left enjoys the complacent—and photogenic—notion that people seek power because they are sexually inadequate, and that authoritarian personalities can be explained by impotence, repressed homosexuality, and so on. (Didn't Swift make fun of this idea a few centuries ago when he said that Alexander had to conquer the world because all his unused semen had gone to his head?) The thread of the film's argument gets lost when Volonte is revealed to be a sexual weakling and begins cracking up all over the place. Petri fails to take the parable to its conclusion and have the maniac revel in his victory. The end is fumbled, and the point of the film isn't made clear. It's easy to see why: the parable form is short on details, while the vicious thriller is full of possibilities for nervous excitation. The movie is extremely dislikable. Petri doesn't use suspense pleasurably, he doesn't resolve the tensions, and so the film leaves one in rather a foul mood. And, by the way, I'm not at all convinced that Kafka's elusive remark meant what Petri took it to mean.

IF you resist the aggression of a certain kind of loudmouth, he is quick to tell you that you're afraid of life. And no matter how dispassionately you analyze what's the matter with "Husbands"—which is just about everything—those who made it and those who love it will insist that if you didn't like it, you're hung up or uptight, or



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(Goldzahler)

Sixties Art

"Contemporary art is constantly inviting us to applaud the destruction of values which we still cherish, while the positive cause, for the sake of which the sacrifices are made, is rarely made clear. So that the sacrifices appear as acts of demolition, or of dismantling, without any motive -- just as Courbet's work appeared to Baudelaire to be simply a revolutionary gesture for its own sake." (Leo Steinberg, "Contemporary Art and the Plight of Its Public").

"As everyone knows, the American art world today is, on the one hand, insular and esoteric, and on the other hand, commerce-ridden and terribly fashionable." (Susan Sontag, "Non Writing and the Art Scene").

Tom Hess on the vanguard audience: "It retains its allegiance to, and roots in, the political and economic status quo, It goes to the art world for amusement, relaxation, diversion, most of all for a comfortable, colorful social milieu. Costume balls and cocktail parties are goals for the vanguard audience, which looks for the artist at his most sociable, rather than to his work... Because the vanguard audience is fundamentally antagonistic to the content of modern painting, its only possibility of staying in the art world is to agitate for change. It can stay modern and superficial only when the face of modernity stays unfamiliar... In its passive role, the vanguard audience is out for money, prestige, and kicks, in approximately that order.

"An American vanguard audience has come into being and it performs its historical, parasitic role. It patronizes new painting while attempting to contain and muffle its subversive content..."

Ad Reinhardt's black paintings date from 1960.

"Modern art has no need of technique. (We are in the glory of not knowing what we're doing.)" - Cage, "On RR, Artist, And His Work").

"I am trying to be unfamiliar with what I'm doing." - Rauschenberg

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Detail Springbox jigsaw puzzle of Jackson Pollock's *Convergence*, 1952.

LAWRENCE ALLOWAY

The first exhibition of a newly made work of art is in the studio. This first audience of the artist's friends views the art in the work place in which it was created, in the artist's presence and associated with the rest of his life. The satisfactions of this contact are obvious, both to the privileged group and to the artist in touch with his peers. The second exhibition of a work, as a rule, is in an art gallery where it is seen by a larger but still specialized public. (The average attendance at an art gallery during a show is rarely more than a thousand people.) From the gallery the work may be purchased by a collector, travel to other galleries or museums, or be acquired by a museum. Each change of milieu will encourage different expectations and readings by a changing audience. A fourth context is literary, the catalogues and magazines in which the work of art is no longer substantially present as an object, but is the subject of information.

By this point in a work of art's distribution a description in stages is no longer sufficient; it has acquired a record, not simply in terms of places shown and changing hands, but an aura of esthetic interpretation as well. It belongs in the context of the art world, with its special opportunities for comparison and meditation for analysis and pleasure. The density that a work accrues as it is circulated means that it acquires meanings not expected by the artist and quite unlike those of the work's initial showing in the studio. Although wide distribution is the modern equivalent for the classical fame, there is an inbuilt alienating factor. Wide distribution can separate the work from the man who produced it as the variables of other people's readings pile up and characterize the object.

The alienation by distribution effect is not to be avoided except by withdrawal from the art world, for art is now part of a communications network of great efficiency. As its capacity has increased a progressive role-blurring has taken place. Before World War II, for example, museums worked at a fixed distance from the art they exhibited, which was either of some age or could be regarded as the latest form of a tradition of acknowledged historicity. Most American museums have abolished the time lag that previously regulated their policies and now present not only new work but new artists. Though on a different scale and with different motives, such activity connects intimately with private galleries, whose profits can be affected by museum shows of their artists. The Alan Solomon-Leo Castelli collaboration at the Jewish Museum in the early '60s, the Rauschenberg and Johns retrospectives, at the ages of 38 and 34 respectively, is a remarkable example of the conve-

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# NETWORK: THE ART WORLD DESCRIBED AS A SYSTEM

gence of intellectual interest and high profits. Art historians prepare catalogues raisonnés of living artists, so that organization of data is more or less level with their occurrence. Critics serve as guest curators and curators write art criticism. The retrospectives of de Kooning and Newman at the Museum of Modern Art were both arranged by the editor of *Art News*, Thomas B. Hess. (A crossover in the opposite direction was made by John Coplans, former curator of the Pasadena Art Museum and now editor of this magazine.) William Rubin, a curator at the same museum, wrote a monograph on Frank Stella; he is also a collector and lent a Newman to the retrospective. In ten years I have been a curator, a teacher, and an art critic, usually two at a time. The roles available within the system, therefore, do not constrict mobility; the participants can move functionally within a cooperative system. Collectors back galleries and influence museums by serving as trustees or by making donations; or a collector may act as a shop window for a gallery by accepting a package collection from one dealer or one advisor. All of us are looped together in a new and unsettling connectivity.[1]

Henry Geldzahler typifies the interconnections of roles in the system very well. He was — with dealers Richard Bellamy and Ivan Karp, then at the Green Gallery and Leo Castelli respectively — early in recognizing emergent trends of the '60s, and he appeared in two of Oldenburg's happenings. As a curator at the Metropolitan Museum he has retained his knack for publicity even though his big exhibition," New York Painting and Sculpture 1940-1970," was essentially a recapitulation of his commitments of the early '60s rather than a view from the later '60s, when the show was executed. His capacity to expand the traditionally narrow role of curator has been admiringly recorded by Calvin Tomkins:[2] the keeper of the flame doubles as media hero.

In 1910 Apollinaire described attendance at the opening of the annual exhibition of the Société des Artistes Français: "lovely ladies, handsome gentlemen, academicians, generals, painters, models, bourgeois, men of letters, and blue stockings."[3] This was written for a newspaper so the 19th-century typology is journalistically apt but the assumption of a recognizable art world is clear. Painters and models were solidly legible in their roles and their support system was equally clear — generals, young couples, writers. The art world now is neither as clear nor as simple as it seemed then. Not only has the group of artists expanded in number but art is distributed to a larger audience in new ways, by improved marketing techniques and by the mass media. What does the vague term art world cover? It includes original works of art and reproductions; critical, historical, and informative writing; galleries, museums, and private collections. It is a sum of persons, objects, resources, messages, and ideas. It includes monuments and parties, esthetics and openings, *Avalanche* and *Art in America*. I want to describe it as a system and consider what effects it has on art or on our understanding of art. Let me state at once that system does not mean merely "establishment"; as Tomás Maldonado has pointed out,[4] system is often used as a synonym for regime, which vulgarizes an exceedingly useful term.

Recognition of recent art, the art of the '60s, induces a sense of product proliferation. An example from industry is the big airplane, the DC-10, being followed by the short-haul DC-9 in two different versions. Artists use their own work and each other's in this way, rapidly and systematically following up new ideas. In addition, the written criticism of the period has supplied visual art with instant commentary. There has been therefore a considerable increase in the number of short-term orderly projections and their improvised interpretation. The effect is, to quote Henri Lefebvre, of an "enormous amount of signifiers liberated or insufficiently attached to their corresponding signifieds."[5] In reaction to this there has been a widespread discontent with the existing system of information-handling in the arts. The problem of an art for the educated has taken on acute significance with the emergence of an alienated audience, for instance, the youth market and the black community. Reassessment by the artists of their role in society parallels their audience's doubt about art's centrality. The market or exchange value of art has been discussed since 1960, not as a source of prestige but as the taint of corruption. Art is a commodity in a part of the system but not in all of it, and at this point I am more interested in differentiation than reduction.

The art world can be viewed as "a shifting multiple goal coalition."[6] It is, to continue regarding it as an organization, "a 'negotiated environment'. That is, long contracts with suppliers and customers, adherence to industry-wide pricing, conventions, and support of stable 'good business' practice."[7] The contracts are usually less formal in art and good business practice is pretty vague, but the parallel is there. Decisions in art galleries, museums, magazines, and publishing houses are made close to the working base of each enterprise, as in decentralization. Thus we have a network, not an hierarchic structure. As H. J. Leavitt points out, apropos of individuals in a network: "It is enough, in some cases, if they are each touched by some part of a network of communication which also touches each of the others at some point."[8] Such a pattern of partial information fits the complex movement of messages and influences in the art world. Raymond D. Cottoll has referred to "the principle of 'simple structure', which assumes that in an experiment involving a broad and a well-sampled set of variables, it is improbable that any single influence will effect all of them. In other words it is more 'simple' to expect that any one variable will be accounted for by less than the full complexity of all the factors added together."[9] This should be borne in mind for it is absolutely against my intention to reduce the art world to any single influence by describing it as an organization. On the contrary, it is only in this way that its complexity can be kept clear.

"The organization as a system has an output, a product, or an outcome, but this is not necessarily identical with the individual purposes of group members," observe D. Katz and R. L. Kahn.[10] What is the output of the art world viewed as a system? It is not art because that exists prior to distribution and without the technology of information. The output is the distribution of art, both literally and in mediated form as text and reproduction. The individual reasons for distribution vary: with dealers it can be assumed to be the profit motive and with teachers it can be assumed to be the motive to educate, with the profit motive at one remove. Art galleries, museums, universities, publishers are all parts of the knowledge industry, producing signifiers whose signifieds are works of art, artists, styles, periods.

F. E. Emery and E. L. Trist have discussed systems in relation to the various forms of environment that they occupy. The art world would seem to be more animated than a "placid clustered environment" but less momentous than a "turbulent field." Between these two falls the "disturbed-reactive environment."

> This term refers to a situation in which there is more than one organization of the same kind; indeed, the existence of a number of similar organizations now becomes the dominant charac-

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teristic of the environmental field. Each organization does not simply have to take account of the others when they meet at random, but has also to consider that what it knows can also be known by the others. The part of the environment to which it wishes to move itself in the long run is also the part to which the others seek to move.[11]

Certainly the art world meets Emery and Trist's requirement of "the presence of similar others" in a disturbed reactive environment.

The principle of conflict of interest is fully applicable to the situation in the art world. There is, for example, the competition among artists to do a certain kind of work that is potential in the level of knowledge that a group of them shares. It applies also to the relationships among critics: these are rarely antagonistic, but it is noticeable that critics have not as a rule reviewed one another's books, though in the past few years Kozloff, Calas, Lippard, and Kirby have all published collections of their essays. The conflict of interest among museums is marked because topicality favors certain shows at certain times and the institutions know it and know each other knows. Thus there is considerable competition for a limited number of desirable properties.[12]

The essential figure in the system is of course the artist. His is the product on which the system depends. In addition to his initiating act of production the artist has a privileged social role. The prestige of the position was earned by the Abstract Expressionists originally, by the existential and seerlike attitudes with which they confronted a society not then ready for their art. It has continued in the '60s, but on a changed basis: early success and media coverage give artists, or some of them, considerable control of their work, and tax problems replace money worries. One aspect of the enhanced social status of artists has been an increased attention to their words. The typical verbal form of the Abstract Expressionist generation was the statement, essentially a first-person expression putting succinctly fundamental ideas about art. It is summarizing and authentic in that it originates from the same source as the art to which it relates. In the '60s the statement was supplemented, maybe supplanted, by the interview which preserves the virtue of the first person, but on a more conversational level.[13]

On the other hand, statements and interviews both get overused, precisely because of their impeccable origins. Sources become clichés, as has happened to Pollock's, "When I am *in* my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing" and Warhol's machine analogy.[14] Since artists are fairly accessible and their prestige high, critics frequently make a new interview in the preparation of a catalogue or book rather than search the existing ones for complexities of intention, unnoticed details, and changes of opinion. The failure to interpret has left us with a backlog of unevaluated interviews.[15] This documentation constitutes authenticity without context. Contact with the artist can produce information of an accuracy impossible to achieve in another way, but it can also inhibit writers from taking the discussion in directions that the artists resist or have not thought of. If the critic's interpretations are bound by the intentions of the artist, there is a corresponding neglect of comparative and historical information. The authority of the interview has the effect of freezing critical discussion of artists at early points in their development, which is usually the time of the greatest verbalization. Marcel Duchamp has proposed that the function of the audience is to determine the meaning of the work when it is out of the artist's hands by variable acts of "deciphering and interpreting."[16] This is not a frivolous idea, but one that is confirmed by the history of taste and by the record of artists' reputations. The statement and the interview are both aimed to correct this slippage of artistic intention by fixing meaning once and for all.

Artists and their works have changed less than the system by which their art is distributed. The conditions of consumption, in which one is faced with the abundance of world art, have changed more than the conditions of production. Art is still operationally what it became in the Renaissance, a situation of one-man control over an object that provides a full record of process at each stage of the work and thus permits the fullest feedback from the artist. The availability of the whole for inspection along the way combined with the crucial fact of sole authority are basic satisfactions and conveniences of painting, drawing, and some forms of sculpture. In this respect Rembrandt is not operationally different from Lichtenstein: personal decision and direct control are fundamental to them both.

In connection with early Pop art the term "fine art-pop art continuum"[17] was used to describe the interconnections of cultural levels, "low" and "high," unique or mass-produced, in nonhomogeneous groups. It included the esthetic appreciation of mass-produced goods, the appropriation of popular material by artists (Pop art), and the mass media's interest in art. In the '60s, however, it became clear that the art world itself had become subject to a similar nonhierarchic connectivity. The mass media covered prominent artists or museum shows; the occasions of high culture became the subject of publicity. Abstract paintings in *House and Garden* features on collectors, or the Park Place Gallery photographed with fashion models among the sculpture, are two examples. Here the works of art become a part of the lively flow of signs and symbols that populate the environment. In the case of one movement, that of European-based Op art, it was welcomed in the general press earlier and more cordially than in the art magazines.[18] Lichtenstein and Rauschenberg have both done covers for *Time* and Lichtenstein one for *Newsweek* as well. One of Robert Smithson's earliest texts appeared in *Harper's Bazaar* and the first article on earthworks, by Howard Junker, appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, years before Calvin Tomkins got to it in *The New Yorker*.[19] The literature of art now runs copiously beyond the reviewing of exhibitions by critics as art is assimilated to the sphere of consumption. Thus there exists a general field of communication within which art has a place, not the privileged place assigned to it in humanism as time-binding symbol or moral exemplar, but as part of a spectrum of objects and messages.

According to Roland Barthes "what makes writing the opposite of speech is that the former always *appears* symbolical, introverted, ostensibly turned towards an occult side of language, whereas the second is nothing but a flow of empty signs, the movement of which alone is significant."[20] Thus he maintains the traditional separation of closed high art and popular culture as an extension of Saussure's terms language and speech. The proponents of visual art as a closed form, a type of classified information, also suppose irreconcilable levels. To use a statement of Rothko's, one that has become a cliché: "A picture lives by companionship, expanding and quickening in the eyes of the sensitive observer. It dies by the same token. It is, therefore, a risky and unfeeling act to send it out into the world."[21] This view of art, highly estheticizing, but also snobbish, rests on the assumption that a painting possesses a deep singular meaning and that correct reception consists of identifying it. The history of taste and the study of human communication does not suggest such perfect matching as a plausible occurrence. Though art may be a private act in its origins, this is not what we can be expected to see as art becomes part of a system of public information. Art is a public system to which we, as spectators or consumers, have random access.

A work of art consists of at least two levels of information: one that can be translated into another media for reproduction, or that other artists can use, and one that is identified solely with the original channel.[22] Any work of art contains both special channel characteristics (unique) and transmissable information (repeatable). The stratification is not mechanically arrived at, but is a consequence of the interaction of the artist's intention and the spectator's interpretation. One may be more interested in the unique component than the other, but to restrict the work's meaning solely to that is restrictive. In addition, it goes against all one's experience of art to presume that exhaustive interpretation is possible. A consequence of the incorporation of art into the fine art-pop art continuum is that the variable responses inevitably evoked by art have been made more fully visible.

This saturation by information, though new in its scale and intensity, has ample historical roots, of which I shall mention two. To quote Karl Mannheim: "the educated no longer constitute a caste or a compact rank, but an open stratum."[23]

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Linked to this is Mannheim's observation that sophistication is no longer "an adjunct of status and breeding."[24] Thus the criteria for sophistication are separated from a required level of stored knowledge in certain areas and become a reflex of topical orientation. This is a form of knowledge, of course, but adaptive rather than normative. The fine art-pop art continuum, a disordered realm to orthodox humanists and formalists, is a gymnasium for the development of this sophistication without depth that is characteristic of much of the attention that the public brings to art. Its flexibility is preferable to dogmatic avowals of singular meaning and absolute standards. At least it does not reduce one's continued exposure to changing configurations by narrowly set prior standards. When the occasions for viewing art were restricted and the spectators were few in number and socially uniform, there were agreed-on limits of response and interpretation. Now that art is seen in wildly differing contexts, the diversity of response to art is public too. For this reason it seems that the notion of esoteric art and everyday life in opposition needs to be modified to allow for art's presence in the quotidian realm.

Protectiveness towards original works of art, with their aura of uniqueness, derives from a notion of art as the maximized handmade object. Writing in the late '50s, surrounded by Abstract Expressionists, Meyer Schapiro even referred to free handling "as a means of affirming the individual."[25] Intoxicated by the autographic he contrasted Abstract Expressionists with Léger's regard for the reproducible products of technology, "but the experiences of the last 25 years have made such confidence in the vision of technology less interesting and even distasteful."[26] This is like blaming crime in the streets on a TV program, but the fallacy is still common, though now expressed by a new generation of *naturists* reacting against industrial pollution and American militarism instead of World War II and memories of the Nazis. It is presumed that aura is lessened when art is reproduced mechanically. Some properties show up more than others in reproduction it is true: autographic solidity is lightened and connections with other artists and the rest of the world are facilitated, but these are nondestructive emphases. It is not possible to restrict the meaning of a work to its literal presence; art consists of ideas as well as objects.

One work that has been submitted to mass production in a curious way is Jackson Pollock's *Convergence*, 1952. The original painting is in the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; it has been reproduced in the form of a jigsaw puzzle. It is therefore an extreme example by which we can test what remains when art is treated not as a self-evolving process but as something added to the continuum of moving daily signs. The original is not destroyed when the colored reproduction is cut up into little Arp-like free form units. The painting is a Herculean late work, one of the two major efforts Pollock made to recapture and extend the big drip paintings of two years earlier (the other is *Blue Poles*). Is it degraded by its ludic form? I think not, inasmuch as any transmissable image is subject to re-contextualization, whether it is the lion's feet, derived from Egypt, on Napoleonic furniture, or a Coca-Cola sign in a South American jungle. The continuum of translated messages requires acts of continuous estimation before a succession of alternatives. Is the person who successfully completes the puzzle simulating the work of the artist and hence being brought close to the creative process? Obviously not, for the arrangement of standardized parts does not resemble Pollock's way of painting, but it might be like making a Sol LeWitt ("the process is mechanical and should not be tampered with. It should run its course."[27]) The variables of context and interpretation released by 20th-century communications have become the subject of this mass-produced object. A connection can be made between painting and puzzle: the image of the labyrinth, a structure with blocked routes, continually evoked by writers on Pollock, is appropriate to the initial unordered scatter of the bits; and when it is terminated it becomes a sign for the painting, *Convergence*.

The '60s was a brilliant decade in which an exceptional number of young artists emerged, without the tentative or inhibitory starts of their predecessors. Their work, along with the continued work of slower developing older artists, helped to make the decade one of numerical and stylistic abundance. There was undoubtedly a sense of relief and ebullience at having got out from under the gestural form of Abstract Expressionism which dominated the '50s. The escape from de Kooning opened out a series of options which had been excluded by the esthetics and operational lore derived from him. For museums it marked an efflorescence of retrospectives, or their equivalent. Not only were exhibitions on a large scale, there was lavish duplication, such as two different Lichtenstein exhibitions in two years, and big short-term expenditures, such as Morris' colossal piece at the Whitney Museum or Serra's at Pasadena. Museums cooperated in the realization of artists' projects on a vast scale. In the catalogues there is a convergence of art history as a methodology and art criticism as a response to present art. Thus there has been an increase in the objective complexity of data available about living artists. For publishers the '60s included a number of monographs on, to name a few, Johns (Kozloff), Oldenburg (Rose), Stella (Rubin), Warhol (Coplans, Crone), Lichtenstein, Kelly (both Waldman), Frankenthaler (Rose). The support system of the knowledge industry was firmly lined up behind the artists.

It was in the '60s, starting with Pop art, that regular mass media coverage of art began. Previously magazines and newspapers had treated individual stories, often in detail, but now art was recognized as a theme of leisure which was itself named as a subject in this decade. Instead of occasional pieces on defaced statues or extravagant collectors, art was steadily covered as a constituent of the culture. *Life* and *Time*, for instance, had reproductions of and statements by Pop artists long before the specialized art journals got around to them. Later in the '60s, however, it is true that the art magazines and general press share the same subjects much of the time. (It is the promptness of the coverage that is one of the reasons for the corrosion of the concept of an avant-garde. A group's lead-time in new ideas is of almost negligible duration now.) When I wrote a piece on Rosenquist for *Artforum* recently, selection of the color illustrations was delayed until we could find out which of the transparencies available from the Whitney Museum were being used by *Time* and *Newsweek*. Although my article was longer and later, it was essentially no less occasional than Robert Hughes' and Douglas Davis' pieces. I did not time the article myself; the Whitney Museum did. It is a weakness of the art magazines that many of the articles are as much reviews as the shorter pieces acknowledged as such. Color reproductions in the catalogue are reused in the magazines, a convenience that ties later uses closer than ever to the initial occasion. The effect of criticism as reviewing is to produce a series of suddenly uniform topics in the journals, which gives the appearance, to suspicious provincials, of a rigged scene.

To all this must be added the prosperity of the decade. There was money for museums (new plant, new acquisitions) and for investment in private art galleries (Scull's backing of the Green Gallery, for instance, or the support that several collectors gave the Park Place Gallery which raised cooperatives to a new luxurious space). There was as well a willingness to pay high prices for new art, subject to elaborately negotiated discount: Harry Abrams, Leon Kraushaar, John Powers, Scull were among those who attached the principle of conspicuous consumption to the newest art. By the end of the '60s, however, the cluster of social injustice, Vietnam, and inflation had destroyed the favorable situation, for the art world as for other sub-groups. Robert K. Merton has proposed a method of studying social change: it is "the concept of dysfunction, which implies the concept of strain, stress, and tension on the structural level,"[28] of an organization. The smoothly functioning art world of the '60s exhibits numerous dysfunctions now. The price and turnover of goods at galleries are down. The deficits of museums all over the country are getting harder to make up, sometimes resulting in violent abbreviation of services.

The confidence produced by the simultaneous success of two generations of American artists, the delayed recognition of the older and the accelerated recognition of the younger generation coming together, promoted a sense of common identity. At first this amounted to little more

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than a loose agreement to being part of a professional group in a situation sufficiently stable not to demand continual conscious participation. By the late '60s, however, artists had developed a sharper sense of themselves as a permanent interest. Typical of a new intransigence and desire to modify the form of distribution of art were the Art Workers Coalition and the short-lived Emergency Cultural Government, both of which presumed the need for reform of the market and institutions of the art world. Another sign is the move to protect the artist's power of copyright by the Artist's Reserve Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement, a contract that a number of artists require their collectors to sign. (It provides for future remuneration if a work is resold at a higher price.) What has occurred, of course, is that the revival of ideology has extended to the art world. It takes two forms: first, an increase in one's own political commitment and, secondly, a fundamental scepticism concerning other positions. Ideology as a method or argument is corrosive in that it substitutes *my* interpretation for *your* motive. The discontent of many artists with galleries and museums therefore may amount to a fundamental re-orientation of attitude to the entire system that encloses their work.

To the militant artists who have a place in the system can be added other special interests, such as women artists and black artists. These groups include not only professional but lay artists who work outside the traditional options of 20th-century art in naïve forms of realism, expressionism, and abstract design. There is a possibility that the pressure of lay art, the natural product of an educational system that has stressed both the need for art and the easiness of techniques for doing it, may introduce a real revision of our expectations of art in the next few years. If I am right, this pressure from below would be something like the literary history of tribes, cities, and provinces as discussed in terms of local and indigenous characteristics. The sophistication that is a product of 20th-century information services makes it inevitable that the lay art movement will include people who use it for its career and political potential, but this does not invalidate it. It seems then that there have been a succession of crises at different points in the system that meets Merton's requirement of "strain, stress, and tension on the structural level."

It is worth remarking that a majority of writers and curators were trained as art historians. In fact, critics without art historical training often claim the role when all that is meant is an increase in the count of verifiable facts. (Speaking personally, what I write is art criticism with footnotes.) The profession of art historian now shares its own crises with other academic disciplines. It is oriented towards a set methodology suitable for research by graduate students whose incorporation in society afterwards is no longer assured. In the immediate future the important issues may be the devising of alternate methodologies and goals, including analysis of the teaching of undergraduates (who, for one thing, arrive at university with a built-in mastery of the fine art-pop art continuum). It seems possible that the art historian is being displaced as model for critics, for the reasons given and also because of the activation of conscience by recent political events. This has led to an ideological evaluation of historians' supposedly objective techniques.

Both the status of art as an object and the validity of the gallery exhibition as a unit have been questioned. The first sign of the problem may have been in the '50s when Pollock, Newman, and Rothko made their large paintings. After initial consternation, however, the paintings were assimilated into small spaces, like a gallery or apartment, because the artists wanted intimate, participatory contact. Happenings, though sometimes producing residual objects, like Oldenburg's, were outside gallery limits; even more so were Events, which could be imperceptible, except to participants, dispersed, and protracted or momentary. Earthworks, which substitute terrain for the object, were supported by galleries, notably Virginia Dwan's, and what was shown in the gallery was usually the documentary evidence of work in New Jersey or Nevada. The new expansion of scale was wittily stated by Morris when he observed of his *Los Angeles Project, 2* (air conditioning and heating equipment buried in a square mile of earth) that there would be "a little more weather in the area." Smithson's dialectic of site and non-site set up a network of signs between the absent signified and the present signifiers, a procedure which assigns the gallery a partial role, as a container of rock samples, maps, and photographs. Andre's "post-studio art," has the potential, not followed by Andre himself, of going straight from inventory to site, which would make it post-gallery art, needing no middle stage of display. Conceptual art, when it consists of photographs, schedules, lists, maps, and instructions is better viewed in books and catalogues than when mounted and framed on the wall where it subsides to tacky graphics. Finally performance art,such as Vito Acconci's, deals with states of low visibility, interaction, exhaustion, vulnerability which dissolve the usual day-long solidity of spectacle at an art gallery.

In conclusion we must ask what is likely to follow from the crisis of confidence that artists (some artists) feel in the distribution system. There is a basic continuity from (1) the public consumption of prints that started on a big scale in the 17th century and (2) the public display of heterogeneous uncommissioned art in annual exhibitions that started in the 18th century to the '60s. The continuous assumptions are that art is translatable and that public access to new art is desirable. For any development in the '70s to introduce a real difference, these ideas or one of them, would need modification. It is highly unlikely that any change will originate with the galleries which have never been remarkable either for "degree of flexibility" or "span of foresight" to quote two criteria of M. P. Schutzenberger's for evaluating behavior.[29] To judge by the recent record museums do not seem a likely source of new forms of distribution, subject as they are to their own institutional traditions and to the ceiling imposed by wages and overheads. Any change would need to originate with the artists, though the difficulty of making viable changes is suggested by the underlying assumption of public access which I take it nobody wants to abridge. However the cumulative effect of post-studio, site-based, and conceptual art forms is a clear sign of stress, requiring changed forms of presentation. The problem is that search-bias, the tendency to look for a new solution close to the old solution,[30] is pronounced in the art world, because we all tend to conceive the world in the fixed image of our vocation. ■

1. This passage derives from the author's "Art and the Communication Network," *Canadian Art*, June, 1966, pp. 35-37.
2. Calvin Tomkins, "Moving with the Flow," *The New Yorker*, November 6, 1971, pp. 58-113.
3. *Apollinaire on Art*, ed. LeRoy C. Breunig, trans. Susan Suleiman, New York, 1972, p. 87.
4. Tomás Maldonado, *Design, Nature, and Revolution*, trans. Mario Domandi, New York, 1972, p. 51.
5. Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch, New York, 1971, p. 56.
6. D. S. Pugh, D. J. Hickson, C. R. Hinings, *Writers on Organizations*, Harmondsworth, 1971. Paraphrasing Richard M. Cyert and James G. March, p. 81.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
8. H. J. Leavitt, "Some Effects of Certain Communication Patterns on Group Performance," in *Organization Theory*, ed D. S. Pugh, Harmondsworth, 1971, p. 72.
9. Raymond B. Cottoll, "The Nature and Measurement of Anxiety," *Scientific American*, 208, 3, 1963, p. 96.
10. D. Katz, R. L. Kahn, "Common Characteristics of Open Systems," in *Systems Thinking*, ed. F. E. Emery, Harmondsworth, 1969, p. 88.
11. F. E. Emery, E. L. Trist, "The Casual Texture of Organizational Events," in Emery, *Systems Thinking*, pp. 247-248.
12. For an account of one such competition, between The Museum of Modern Art and The Guggenheim Museum, see the author's "Art," *The Nation*, December 30, 1968, pp. 733-734.
13. For fuller details concerning artists' statements, see the author's "Art," *The Nation*, May 22, 1972, pp. 668-669.
14. Jackson Pollock, "My Painting," *Possibilities*, New York, 1948; Gene Swenson, "What Is Pop Art?," *Art News*, February, 1964, pp. 40-43.
15. For the difference between data collection and idle exchange, compare John Coplans' excellent interview in *Roy Lichtenstein*, Pasadena Art Museum, 1967, with Diane Waldman's *Roy Lichtenstein*, New York, 1972.
16. Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," in *The New Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock, New York, 1966, pp. 23-26.
17. The concept of the fine art-pop art continuum is given in the author's "The Long Front of Culture," *Pop Art Redefined*, ed. John Russell, Suzi Gablik, New York, 1969. Originally published in *Cambridge Opinion*, 17, 1959.
18. See the author's "Notes on Op Art," *The New Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock, New York, 1966, pp. 83-91.
19. Robert Smithson, "The Crystal Land," *Harpers Bazaar*, May, 1966; Howard Junker, "Getting Down to the Knitty Gritty," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 2, 1968; Calvin Tomkins, "Maybe a Quantum Leap," *The New Yorker*, February 5, 1972, pp. 42-67.
20. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers, Colin Smith, Boston, 1970, p. 19.
21. Mark Rothko, "The Ides of Art," *The Tiger's Eye*, December, 1947, p. 44.
22. For a wider discussion of translatability, see the author's "On Translation," *Arts*, Summer, 1971.
23. Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*, London, 1956.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Meyer Schapiro, "The Liberating Quality of Avant-Garde Art," *Art News*, Summer, 1957, pp. 38-39.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Sol LeWitt, "Sentences On Conceptual Art, 1968," *Conceptual Art*, ed. Ursula Meyer, New York, 1972, p. 175.
28. Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1949.
29. M. P. Schutzenberger, "A Tentative Classification of Goal-seeking Behavior," in Emery, *Systems Thinking*, pp. 205-213.
30. Pugh, Hickson, Hinings, *Writers*. Paraphrasing Cyert and March, p. 84.

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# New York's Avant Garde, And How It Got There

by Rosalind Constable

The undisputed capital of the art world is now New York. One can date the probable moment New York achieved this eminence with reasonable precision. In 1956 the Museum of Modern Art sent a traveling exhibit of contemporary American painting, including some Abstract Expressionist paintings, to Europe. A young English critic, Lawrence Alloway, fell in love with them and told his skeptical countrymen: "New York is to mid-century what Paris was to the early 20th century: it is the center of Western art." Soon thereafter, young English artists began painting "American-style paintings"—big paintings from "the big country," as Alloway put it. Soon thereafter, too, European collectors began coming to New York for the first time in history to shop for avant-garde American art.

The apparent recent eclipse of Abstract Expressionism has abated neither Europe's interest in American painting nor New York's central role in it. When the "father" of Pop Art, 39-year-old Robert Rauschenberg, was given a retrospective show last February at London's Whitechapel Gallery, English critics raved and crowds stood in line to get in. The London *Sunday Telegraph* called Rauschenberg, who lives and works in a loft on Broadway and 12th Street, "the most important American painter since Jackson Pollock," and the august London *Times* conceded that he "is already a major inspiration to the young painters here, there, and almost everywhere."

In no other art form is the United States in general —let alone New York in particular—so dominant. When we think of the American literary avant garde, the first word that comes to mind is "expatriate." America's greatest literary innovators—Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway—have chosen to create abroad. Most of the young expatriate contributors to *transition*, the famed English-language review published in Paris from 1927 to 1938, soon gave up their youthful liberties with the English language to return to America, either to disappear from the literary scene or to take up lucrative careers in journalism or something close to it.

For a while in the late 1950s it was possible to believe America might have a home-based literary avant garde in the Beat poets and novelists. But Jack Kerouac's stream-of-typewriter novels soon began to pall, and the Beat poets are all but silent today. What appears in New York's many little poetry reviews reads like leftovers from *transition*, or else relies on four-letter words for shock value. Allen Ginsberg, author of *Howl*, Beat poetry's one important poem, spent some time in India recently in search of inspiration. He has returned with quantities of hair and beard but no poetry (so far) of the caliber of *Howl*. The Beat movement seems moribund, possibly blighted by too much publicity—that is, popular attention as distinct from critical interest. Beat poet Gregory Corso was once asked by columnist Art Buchwald to explain their notoriety. "We owe it all to Henry Luce," Corso answered.

Nor has New York any *special* importance for music's avant garde today, except for jazz. To be sure, jazz is an important exception. "There's something about New York," trumpet virtuoso Dizzy Gillespie said recently. "You may be good somewhere else, but New York is where you have to come to get stamped." Jazz aside, composers need not come to New York to be certified. The musical taste of New York audiences is not demonstrably more hospitable to change and innovation than that of any other major city. John Cage, inventor of the "prepared piano," has been unpopular here for over 20 years. When his *Atlas Eclipticalis with Winter Music* (electronic version) was performed last winter at New York's Philharmonic Hall as part of a series of concerts of avant-garde music programmed by Leonard Bernstein, a 77-piece orchestra, each instrument wired to an amplifier, filled the auditorium with ear-piercing shrieks. The performance was roundly booed.

Even so, of course, there is a good deal of innovation going on in New York today, much of it involving "chance." John Cage prefers to call his experimental music "organization of sound," but the term actually includes compositions that seem to be anything but organized—compositions, in fact, that are deliberately left to chance. One of Cage's best known "compositions," for example, consists of seven radios (sometimes more) and seven dial-twirlers tuning in to different radio stations. The result is known as a "chance" composition, also called "indeterminate" or "random." To put it more obscurely, in the words of Cage in his book on music entitled (almost predictably) *Silence:* "Those involved with the composition of experimental music find ways and means to remove themselves from the activities of the sounds they make. Some employ chance operations, derived from sources as ancient as the Chinese *Book of Changes*, or as modern as the tables of random numbers used also by physicists in research."

The world of avant-garde music and its present fascination with chance have close links with both modern dance and the New York art world. John Cage is musical director of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, and Robert Rauschenberg has designed most of the sets, costumes and objects used by the company since its inception in 1953. Merce Cunningham also has introduced the element of chance into his choreography. *Story*, premiered last year with music by Toshi Ichiyanagi, is an "indeterminate" number. The program note explains that "specific directives and freedoms have been given the dancers and they receive cues from one another." The performers can, if they like, change places with the conductor, who is also free to produce sounds. Furthermore, "the dancers are involved with objects that change from evening to evening. They are things found by Rauschenberg in or outside the theater, when and where the dance is performed." These new directions in the dance place unusual burdens on David Tudor, who appears at the piano amazingly often in programs of avant-garde music and dance which require him to produce music from almost anywhere except the keyboard.

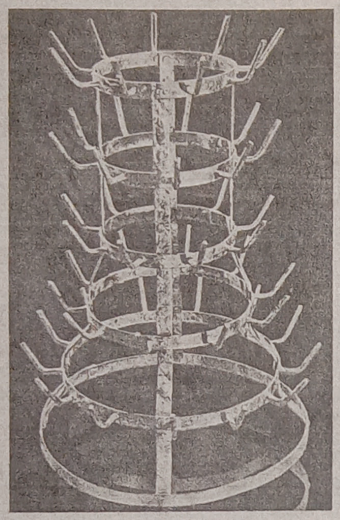
The world of art also spills over into film-making. Jonas Mekas' New American Cinema group, more or less a New York phenomenon, recently showed three films by Pop Artist Andy Warhol based on chance. The first was an eight-hour-long film of a young man sleeping, waking, turning over and going back to sleep. The second showed a young man taking half an hour to nibble his way through a bag of raw mushrooms. The third starred Marisol, the beautiful Venezuelan carver of 20th-century totems, and handsome Harold Stevenson, an artist from Idabel, Okla., in a six-minute kiss. The integration of chance events into an esthetic experience reached a peak of sorts—a point beyond which nothing was possible—in the rash of "Happenings" that broke out in New York in the past *(Continued on next page)*

*"... The undisputed capital of the art producing world is now New York, and its undisputed leader is calm, handsome, and slightly ironic, Marcel Duchamp ..."*

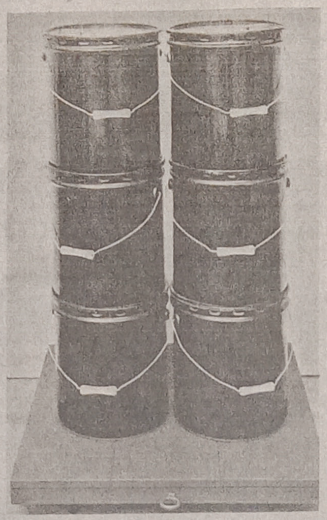
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# New York's Avant Garde



*Duchamp's "ready-made" Bottle-Rack (1914).*



*Aaron Kurilloff's Six Black Cans (1963)*

*(Continued from page 7)* two years or so. "Happenings" were essentially theatrical performances, even if their audiences did, for lack of space, often have to stand up. The sets were lovingly made by the artists, the plots were incomprehensible, and the whole thing was doomed to destruction (by the artists themselves) when the performances were over. The worst of them were simply bizarre. But the best of them had vitality and a strange beauty.

William Burroughs, expatriate author of *Naked Lunch*, which seems to be the only American avant-garde novel getting much serious critical attention, has introduced chance into literature. In a pamphlet called *The Exterminator* Burroughs explains do-it-yourself writing this way: "Take a page of your own writing if you write or a letter or a newspaper article or a page or less or more of any writer living or dead. Cut it into sections. Down the middle. And cross the sides. Rearrange the sections. Write the result message. . . . anybody can be Rimbaud if he will cut up Rimbaud's words and learn Rimbaud language." Burroughs recommends the operation be performed with scissors or switchblade, according to preference. Gregory Corso was invited to contribute a Cut-Up to another Burroughs pamphlet, *Minutes to Go*. Corso complied, but added a postscript to say he did so willingly out of friendship for Burroughs, but "unwillingly because my poetry is a natural cut-up, and need not be created by a pair of scissors."

Edgard Varese, the 79-year-old composer of electronic music, has said: "Contrary to general belief, an artist is never ahead of his time but most people are far behind theirs." And so it would appear among the audiences New York provides for most avant-garde artists—again with the extraordinary exception of painters and sculptors. The booing that followed the New York Philharmonic's performance of John Cage's *Winter Music* late last year stands in startling contrast to the instant-acceptance we are becoming accustomed to in the field of visual arts. Virtually alone among artists, it no longer seems necessary for avant-garde painters and sculptors to undergo the traditional period of martyrdom. Commenting on this situation, critic Nicolas Calas wrote recently: "The role of the critic is no longer to defend art from its detractors but to protect the artist from his admirers."

How fast acceptance can occur here is strikingly demonstrated in the careers of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. In 1957 Leo Castelli opened a gallery in New York with the intention of selling the old masters of modern art (Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline) from his own collection, and exhibiting the work of second-generation Abstract Expressionists. But in a group show that same year he also included Rauschenberg and Johns. Rauschenberg was at that time still the *enfant terrible* of the New York art scene, and his "combination paintings" (among them, a stuffed fowl perched on the canvas) were still too avant-garde to attract all but the most audacious collector. Johns was unknown, but Castelli's eye had lit upon one of his "target" paintings at a group show of young New York painters at the Jewish Museum. Early in 1958 Castelli gave Johns a one-man show of his ambiguous targets and paintings of American flags. It was a sell-out. Rauschenberg began to sell well in 1960. Today a large painting by either artist costs $20,000. (A very large painting by Johns recently sold for $30,000.) Both artists, still under 40, have had retrospective shows at the Jewish Museum, in addition to the recent Rauschenberg retrospective at London's Whitechapel Gallery.

Early in 1962 two new artists appeared suddenly (literally) on the New York scene to receive the same sort of instant-acceptance. The first was James Rosenquist, an ex-billboard painter, who, at the Green Gallery, showed billboard-scale paintings of billboard subjects in a billboard style of painting. The second was Roy Lichtenstein, who, at the Castelli Gallery, showed advertising-style paintings of roto-broilers and lamp cords and, even more startling, enormous blow-up paintings that seemed at first sight to have been copied directly from a frame of a comic strip. Andy Warhol was soon to appear on the scene, at the Stable Gallery, with his now famous portraits of Campbell Soup cans and Marilyn Monroe. By the fall of 1962, just months after the Rosenquist show, Sidney Janis had put his seal of approval on the new movement (which he called New Realism, after the French *nouveau realisme)* with an international exhibition of work by artists using the new commercial style. Pop Art* was in.

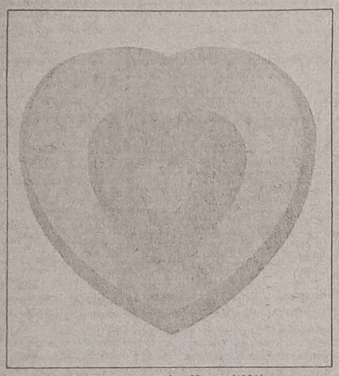
The speed with which Pop Artists found audiences says a good deal about the audience in New York. Pop Art had been snapped up by collectors here even before the artists had found dealers. Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, for example, hung a Lichtenstein among their Picassos and de Koonings a year before his first exhibition. Some "new collectors," like Mr. and Mrs. Robert Scull, bought their first Rauschenberg in 1957, long before he began to sell, and their first Andy Warhol before he had found a dealer. Beat-the-dealer-to-it has become a fashionable pastime, proof of know-how.

How comes this enthusiasm for novelty and change in art here—an enthusiasm not notably demonstrated in music or literature? It is, one suspects, a matter of historical luck, the result of a more or less steady procession of gifted individuals consciously working at the creation of a hospitable climate for innovation here.

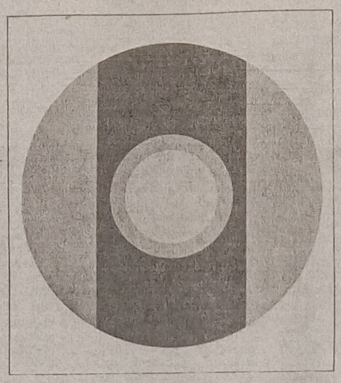
**The British claim, not without justification, to have invented both the art and the name for it. Lawrence Alloway used the term Pop Art in 1959 to describe the mass media that young British artists had begun to use as source material. But it was soon being used internationally to describe the art itself.*

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*Duchamp's Fluttering Hearts (1936).*



*Alexander Liberman's Socrates (1962).*

*"... The role of the critic is no longer to defend art from its detractors but to protect the artist from his admirers..."*

It is generally agreed that the revolution in American taste in art began in 1913, the year of the International Exhibition of Modern Art in New York, better known as the Armory Show. It was here that the New Yorkers took their first horrified look at Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase.*

Actually, however, it was Alfred Stieglitz who first introduced new European art to America. In 1905 Stieglitz, the revolutionary photographer, opened the Photo-Secession Gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue for the purpose of promoting photography as one of the arts. In 1907 he decided also to show works of art in other media. Steiglitz wrote to Edward Steichen, his old friend and collaborator, telling him of his plans and suggesting that if Steichen found anything in Europe worth showing, he would be glad to exhibit it. Steichen cabled back: "Do you want Rodin's drawings?" Stieglitz tells us: "I cabled back: 'Yes.' It was in this simple way that the ice was broken for the introduction of modern art to America."

Stieglitz also published *Camera Work* from 1902 to 1917, a magazine famous for its uncluttered pages that echoed the "clean walls" of "291" and, later, of his famed gallery, An American Place, on Madison Avenue. In 1912 Stieglitz published a special issue devoted to Post-Impressionism, and it was here that Gertrude Stein was first published, introduced as "an American resident in Paris." She was later to celebrate the event in a poem addressed to Stieglitz in which he wrote:

*He was the first one that ever printed*
*anything that I had done.*
*And you can imagine what that meant*
*to me or to any one.*

What Stieglitz had printed were Gertrude Stein's now famous Post-Impressionist prose portraits of Matisse and Picasso, accompanied by a portfolio of splendid examples of their work. Gertrude Stein wrote of Matisse: "Very many were not listening again and again to this one telling about being one being living. Some were listening again and again to this one telling about this one being one being in living." This remains "darkest Stein," and one should be eternally grateful that she abandoned her avant-garde style to write her masterpiece and best-seller, the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas,* in more or less basic English.

But that the Armory Show is the most important event in the history of American art, and of the avant garde in general, properly deserving the epithet "bombshell," is undeniable. Because the public (and most critics) were so wrong about Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase,* Matisse's *Blue Nude* and Brancusi's *Mlle. Pogany,* we have been inclined to assume that the Armory Show was jampacked with nothing but masterpieces. But many people, when they entered the Lexington Avenue Armory last year, to see a re-enactment of the 1913 Armory Show on its 50th Anniversary, wondered what all the fuss had been about. This was not only because they were now familiar with the works or because many masterpieces were missing, but because so many of the paintings were bad. However, following the historical precedent that what is genuinely avant-garde (i. e., as the name implies, simply ahead of its time) will always find a handful of perspicacious admirers, the great works were all bought at the time of the Armory Show by American collectors.

For by 1913 America already had collectors of European art, some of whom loaned to the Armory Show. One was Katherine Dreier (whose father came to America from Germany after the revolution of 1848, and founded a prosperous iron import-export business), who loaned a small van Gogh, said to be the first owned by an American.

It was Katherine Dreier, a formidable woman, who, in the words of Aline Saarinen in *The Proud Possessors,* "in the strategic period between the Armory Show of 1913 and the founding of the Museum of Modern Art in 1929 . . . performed almost single-handedly a courageous service for modern art." In 1917 Katherine Dreier helped organize an exhibition for the Society of Independents, best remembered because it was to this exhibition that Marcel Duchamp (who was in America throughout the first World War) playfully submitted an upside-down urinal, signed R. Mutt. The exhibition committee hid it, but Stieglitz photographed it and Boston collector Walter Arensberg bought it.

In 1920 Katherine Dreier formed her own group, for which Man Ray found a name: the Societe Anonyme Inc. Aline Saarinen tells us that Miss Dreier was fond of explaining the joke. "Since 'Societe Anonyme' is also the French for 'incorporated,' and as we incorporated; we became Incorporated Incorporated," she would say, laughing heartily.

The Societe Anonyme, housed in two rooms on East 47th Street, was in effect *(Continued on next page)*

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# New York's Avant-Garde

*(Continued from page 9)* New York's first museum of modern art. Miss Dreier gave it most of her collection, and with the advice of her friend Duchamp continued to endow it with spendid works. She organized traveling exhibits, and went along herself as lecturer. Miss Dreier did her propaganda work so well that by the time she retired to Connecticut (donating almost all of her vast collection to the Yale University Art Gallery) and the Museum of Modern Art opened its doors in 1929, Post-Impressionism was no longer avant-garde.

A great deal of avant-garde activity in the 1930s took place not in New York but at the Wadsworth Atheneum, in Hartford, Conn., under the directorship of A. Everett ("Chick") Austin jr. A tribute to Chick Austin, published by the Wadsworth Atheneum a year after his death in 1957, gives an idea of his vast contribution toward making it one of the great museums of America.

Chick Austin was interested in all the arts. Lincoln Kirstein, director of the New York City Ballet, credits him with buying, for a fraction of its present value, the now famous Diaghilev-Lifar collection of ballet designs, and for being instrumental in bringing young George Balanchine to America.

It was Austin who put on the first surrealist exhibition in America in 1931, showing Dali for the first time. In 1934 the Wadsworth Atheneum opened the Avery Memorial Wing with the first American retrospective of Picasso (poorly attended), and opened the Avery Auditorium with the world premiere of the Virgil Thomson-Gertrude Stein opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, with sets by Florine Stettheimer. Lucius Beebe, describing the event in the *Herald Tribune* wrote: ". . . bedlam . . . as Messrs. Kirk Askew and Julien Levy burst into unabashed tears, because 'they didn't know anything so beautiful could be done in America' . . . Professor Hitchcock smashed his opera hat and howled for Mr. Thomson . . . tore open his collar and shouted for Mr. Austin." Eugene Berman visited America in 1935, invited by Chick Austin to design sets for a concert at the First Hartford Festival of 1936. Tchelitchew designed the sets for Balanchine's ballet *Magic*. Alexander Calder constructed mobiles for Erik Satie's *Socrates*. (It was Marcel Duchamp who suggested calling Calder's work "mobiles.")

In 1940, after the fall of France, most of the leading European artists fled to New York. The young American artists met in the flesh the men they had known only through their work: Berman, Andre Breton, pope of surrealism, Chagall, Ernst, Leger, Lipchitz, Masson, Mondrian, Ozenfant, Tanguy, Zadkine. This encounter, plus the tension of the war years, helped to crystallize the new American painting which, some 15 years later, was to dominate the world of art.

Along with the European artists came expatriate American heiress Peggy Guggenheim, then married to Max Ernst. She opened a gallery on West 57th Street called Art of This Century, where she showed European surrealist and abstract artists (including her friend and adviser Marcel Duchamp). She gave their first one-man shows to Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell and William Baziotes, Hans Hofmann, Clyfford Still and Mark Rothko, who were to be labeled "Abstract Expressionists" by critic Robert Coates, and "action painters" by critic Harold Rosenberg.

In Pollock, America had its first classic example of an artist ahead of his time. Classically, also, he had a handful of faithful patrons, notably painter Alfonso Ossorio, who bought his first Pollock in 1948, helped keep him from starvation during the lean years, and today owns a priceless collection of his works.

The new American painters also had a champion in critic Clement Greenberg. In 1949, in the *Partisan Review*, Greenberg made his famous prediction that Pollock was an artist capable of competing with John Marin for the title of "the greatest American painter of the 20th century." This statement provoked a great deal of healthy controversy, and in 1952 Pollock had his first one-man show in Paris, an unprecedented event for an avant-garde American artist. In 1956 London's Tate Gallery showed the new American painting, and it was then that an unknown young English critic, Lawrence Alloway (now curator of the Guggenheim Museum), began to beat the drum for Abstract Expressionist painting. Around 1958 the European dealers started coming to New York to buy American painting. When the Tate Gallery bought its first small Pollock in 1960 it paid $10,000 for a painting Pollock's dealer, Betty Parsons, had been happy to sell for $250 in 1949. The boom in American Abstract Expressionism was in full swing.

Peggy Guggenheim, by that time living in a *palazzo* in Venice, visited New York in 1960 to attend the opening of her uncle Solomon's Guggenheim Museum. She was appalled, she wrote later, not only by the Guggenheim Museum, which she thought looked like a garage, but by the whole ambience of the New York art scene. The entire art movement, she said in *Confessions of an Art Addict*, had become an enormous business venture. Nor did she like what her "war babies" were doing. "In fact," she wrote, "I do not like art today. I think it has gone to hell."

One wonders why Peggy Guggenheim no longer liked what her "war babies" were painting, since many of them were doing just what they had been doing when she left. It may well have been this wearisome repetition that contributed to the eventual loss of interest in Abstract Expressionism. (Its enemies had, of course, for some while been predicting its demise, claiming a return to figurative painting was at hand.)

For the moment it is Pop Art that is the most discussed experimental activity since Abstract Expressionism. But it has, inevitably, spawned a host of imitators across America and throughout the world, a fact that should, historically, mean that it is already headed for the pantheon. It may well be that Pop Art will have an even shorter reign than Cubism. And it is too soon to tell whether all of the interest in "chance" compositions will prove in hindsight to have been truly avant-garde, or simply part of the marvelous ferment in the arts that contributes so much to the cultural life of a city.

While we ponder this and other matters, it is an astonishing fact that living in our midst in New York is an artist whose creative life span precedes the Armory Show of 1913, precedes even Cubism, and who continues to be an awesomely rich, rewarding and influential source of ideas. He is Marcel Duchamp, of course, now 77, now an American citizen who spends his time both in New York and in Europe. It was Duchamp who introduced *le hazard*, or chance, into painting. In his famous *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913-'14), he took three canvases and onto each, from a height of one meter, dropped a thread one meter long, whose contours he scrupulously preserved in varnish. It was Duchamp, with his philosophy that everything man-made is art, who anticipated Junk Art with his "ready-mades" (such as his *Porte-bouteille* (1914), an ordinary bottle rack which, when lost, was simply replaced) and gave succeeding artists absolute and total freedom to do anything they wanted to do, to use any materials they chose.

Because Duchamp gave up painting in 1923, ostensibly to devote himself to chess, it is sometimes assumed that his contribution ended then. This is far from the truth. In *The Dada Painters and Poets*, a valuable collection of documents edited by Robert Motherwell in 1951, Harriet and Sidney Janis wrote: "The treasure trove of subtleties in creative ideas and techniques in Duchamp's work is still essentially untouched. Tapping these resources will provide a rich yield for the new generation of painters . . . in whose awareness lies the future of 20th-century painting; for here, deeply imbedded with meaning, is one of the great, little explored veins in contemporary art."

> *". . . If you take a Campbell soup can and repeat it 50 times, you are not interested in the retinal image. What interests you is the concept that wants to put 50 Campbell soup cans on a canvas . . ."*

The Janises actually wrote that in 1945. Today, with the help of Robert Lebel's magnificent monograph on Duchamp, published in 1959, that vein is now being explored. A French critic said recently that the key painting of the 20th century is no longer Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) but Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-'23), sometimes called *Large Glass*. (Given by Katherine Dreier to the Duchamp wing of the Arensberg Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.) Other critics say that Duchamp's contribution is so vast that it cannot be limited to a single work. In 1936, for example, 13 years after he "gave up" painting, Duchamp did a canvas, *Coeurs Volants*, which might well appear in a showing of "Hard Edge" work completed last week.

In a recent interview Duchamp was asked to comment on the difference between Dada and Pop Art. "The humor of Pop Art is not the same," he said. "They seem to feel that in a democracy they should have a more reverent attitude towards a garbage can, go lower and lower in the means used to express the art of their day. Instead of Ophelia they will take a prostitute, or something like that. The lower the material used the better. Reverence in reverse. But it's reverence anyway."

Pop Art, said Duchamp, is a return to "conceptual" painting, virtually abandoned, except by the Surrealists, since Courbet, in favor of "retinal" painting. The Abstract Expressionists put the paint on the canvas, *then* looked to see what they had done. The Pop Artists wait until they have an idea, then find an expression of that idea, not with the retina, but with the grey matter behind the retina. Said Duchamp: "If you take a Campbell soup can and repeat it 50 times you are not interested in the retinal image. What interests you is the concept that wants to put 50 Campbell soup cans on a canvas."

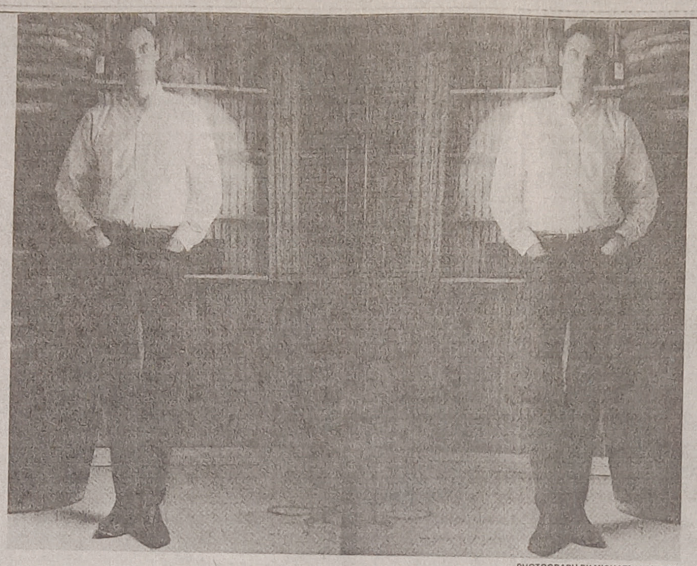
Asked how he feels today about his *Large Glass*, Duchamp replied: "I like it very much. In my career, if I may call it that, it has been a key painting for me, decidedly. There was hardly a trace of tradition in it. I consider that big glass painting of mine something that you don't have to look at to like. That was one of the ideas behind it. You should look at it as at a Sears and Roebuck catalogue. You look at part of it and say: 'This was intended to do this and that.' I intended to do a book that would show reductions of what was on the glass, and why—and not from the retinal angle again, but from the conceptual. That is, the idea before and the execution later. But of course I never did the book."

That book may be one thing that Duchamp did not do. But for over 50 years he has been first a vital force, then a guiding spirit, and today he serves as the inspiration of another generation, another avant garde. If the undisputed capital of the art producing world is now New York, its undisputed leader is calm, handsome, and slightly ironic Marcel Duchamp.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL McKENZIE

# Robert Wilson, the Avant-Garde and the Audience

BY BONNIE MARRANCA

***Einstein on the Beach*** was one of the most eagerly anticipated theatrical events of this season. Premiered at Le Festival d'Avignon in France last summer, it was *subsequently* seen in Italy, Yugoslavia, Germany, Belgium and Holland before being performed at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, where it sold out two performances in November. Tremendous media-hype had preceded the presentation of the Robert Wilson-Philip Glass opera and, strangely, none of the critical establishment questioned the cultural value of its engagement at the Met and, more strangely, it seemed to be accorded the status of a masterpiece though no critic has explained why.

In fact, several people who have written on ***Einstein*** expressed the belief—well intentioned to be sure—that one could only ***experience*** the work, that analysis of it is either "inadequate" or "irrelevant," as if the simple act of coming to terms with the quality of the experience, or its nature, might somehow spoil its integrity as a Work of Art.

Such mindlessness on the part of critics, whose writings help shape the audience's attitude toward the arts, smacks of faddishness and ultimately creates an unhealthy situation in any attempt at prolonged discourse on the arts. This attitude makes critics the cultural lackeys of artists in vogue, champions of a theatre they do not understand but feel they must praise because everybody is talking about it, or worse, it turns critics into glorified press agents.

This strategy is, however, not surprising when one realizes that the avant-garde audience, in general, in New York is an ***anti-intellectual*** elite rather than an intellectual one which, historically, has been at the forefront of modernist movements throughout the world. Soho's lofts and galleries are swarming with self-proclaimed artists (***L'art—c'est moi***) who are pampered by undiscriminating, ready-made audiences. The situation is not only damaging to any notion of a healthy arts environment, but encourages the false notion that anybody can be an artist, be he performer, painter, dancer, filmmaker, video-artist, or writer.

What we are witnessing—in the large, cultish segment of avant-garde circles here—is the development of critics and audiences conditioned to relate to works of art on a purely personal, impressionistic level, as if the work had no relevance outside one's individual witnessing of it (a work of art means what it means to me), as if it had no relation to historical, social, economic, and aesthetic forces surrounding or preceding it. This is particularly true of the performing arts world which has virtually reduced any discussion of performance to the simple level of description.

In choosing to ignore the cultural politics inherent in the cultural contradiction that led to the mounting of ***Einstein on the Beach*** at the Met, most people bypassed the real story, demonstrating in the process the theatre world's lack of sophistication in dealing with the sociological aspects of theatre. Unlike the more sophisticated art, film and music worlds, the theatre world for the most part accepts art at face value.

The production of ***Einstein*** at the Met raises provocative questions about the current status of avant-garde (or experimental) theatre in America, not the least of which are: How has it changed over the years? Where is it headed? Indeed, with Wilson and Glass at the Met, Richard Foreman, Andrei Serban and Jean-Claude van Itallie working at the Vivian Beaumont, and Tom Eyen and Charles Ludlam working on Broadway projects, the present capability of the experimental theatre to "revive" productions, not to mention the acceptance of experimental theatre by universities and foundations, and the media, to conclude that radical changes have taken place in the theatre since the sixties is a gross understatement.

Since its humble, small beginnings in oblivion, the avant-garde has developed to the point where it has found its audience, along with its ability to command attention and praise in establishment publications. Compared with its non-commercial, anti-establishment beginnings, it is now clear that it has formed new, and very commercial, alliances.

The real question should then be: Can one speak any longer of an American avant-garde theatre? Like it or not, present circumstances indicate that we are at the end of an era in what we like to think of as the avant-garde theatre. The avant-garde, begun in opposition to the museum concept of the arts, has now been absorbed into the museum. The Living Theatre represents the other side of the picture: it is an example of a theatre which has consistently refused to become part of the Establishment, and which has been able to do so—even forced to—because of its politics. This group exemplifies the original notion of the avant-garde which united art and politics, a concept which has not held in the twentieth century. It is only because of its politics that the Living Theatre is "outside" the avant-garde theatre in any real sense. The "inside" of the avant-garde is bourgeois.

Robert Wilson exemplifies the inevitable destiny of the contemporary avant-garde artist in our society. His career illustrates the cycle of the artist, from oblivion to acceptance, from cultural nonentity to, literally, the "Talk of the Town" (***New Yorker,*** December 6, 1976). Here is the evolution of an artist who had to fight to cultivate his audience and his theatre to one who could fill the Met twice over with a production that cost as much as a Broadway musical.

Wilson makes us question in sheer quantitative terms whether audiences have changed or whether certain segments of the avant-garde have become fashionable. In ***The Dehumanization of Art*** Ortega observed that "the characteristic of new art from a social viewpoint consists of dividing the public into two classes of men: those who understand and those who do not." To update his observation for the present situation one might enlarge his statement with the phrase, "those who don't understand but think they should." There is something terribly chic about the mounting of ***Einstein*** at the Met. As Renato Poggioli has astutely pointed out, fashion is undeniably a factor in the sociology of taste. The avant-garde used to be characterized by ***scandale,*** now it is ***au courant*** Robert Wilson has supped with the Shah of Iran.

The Wilson phenomenon forces one to confront the notion of avant-garde theatre and cultural chic: the topic hadn't arisen before now. But much has happened in the avant-garde since the last decade, not the least of which has been the ability of its

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most visible figure, Robert Wilson, to attract large segments of various art worlds, including individual patrons on both sides of the Atlantic. It is Wilson's patronage by the art world that is a significant factor in his capacity to mobilize forces in a way that no other avant-gardist in the theatre has been able to. For examples: the "knee plays" from ***Einstein*** were previewed at the Museum of Modern Art; a special program for the opera (it cost $10), more in keeping with a catalogue for an art exhibition, was financed personally by a member of the art world and sold at the Met; Wilson's drawings from ***Einstein*** were exhibited at the Paula Cooper Gallery. The "art" aspect of the event was enforced by each of these situations.

It is Wilson's alignment with art business that makes his enterprise so unique when compared to the rest of the theatre world. The situation also illustrates an important point made by Eduardo Sanguinetti in "The Sociology of the Avant-Garde," which remarks on the avant-garde's initial disdain with artistic commercialism, its eventual capitulation to it, only to be found paradoxically at the forefront of the commercial organization of contemporary art. Parenthetically speaking, we are seeing a vast growth in the marketing capability of art performance (the video field is called "video art," likewise adding the art connotation to its name) here and abroad precisely because it is aligned with the art rather than the theatre world.

It is difficult to speculate what will happen next to the avant-garde theatre, except that it will become more institutionalized. One thing is for certain: it has consolidated its forces and become more sophisticated in its dealings with audiences, funding sources, and the media. Avant-garde artists have always wanted fame and recognition which they have by now proved by their skillful manipulation of resources. Robert Wilson's history in the theatre over the last decade reflects the changes in attitudes of the avant-garde insofar as it participates in them. ●

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*Sheryl Sutton limbering up.*

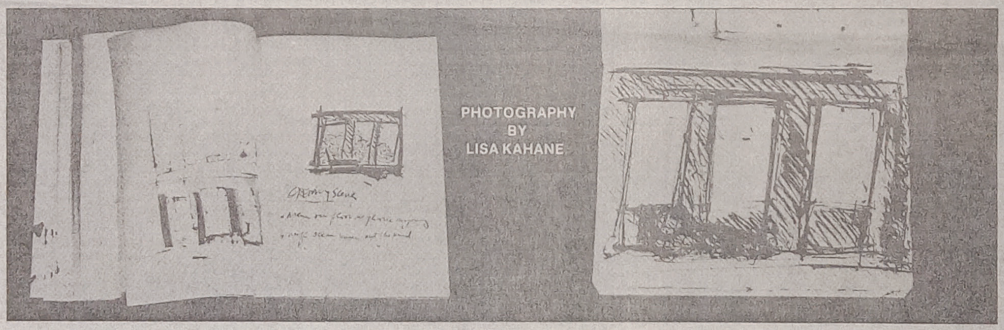


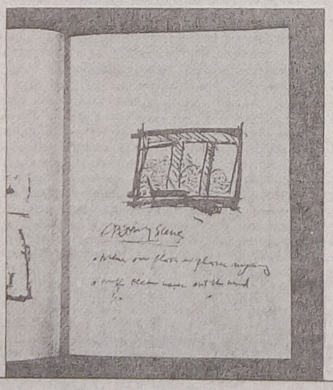
PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL McKENZIE

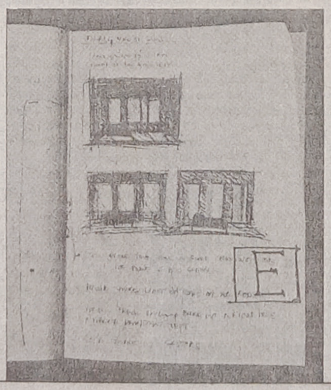
*Sheryl Sutton rehearsing 20 minutes before first performance.*

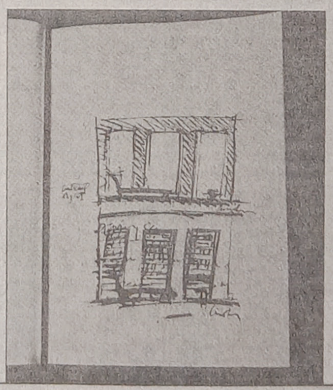
# PAGES FROM ROBERT WILSON'S NOTEBOOK FOR HIS NEW PIECE "I WAS SITTING ON MY PATIO THIS GUY APPEARED I THOUGHT I WAS HALLUCINATING"

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LISA KAHANE









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# new york – the underworld people

A visual excursion through the lower depths of New York City's new Bohemia as viewed through the extraordinary camera-eye of photographer.....**JACK SMITH**



**central park**



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Jack Smith has chosen the fringe-world of the subconscious as the subject for his photographic art. He depicts the shadow area between the normal and the perverse with extraordinary sensitivity to symbol and nuance. Roaming through odd corners of the city, Jack Smith captures those rare moments when the subconscious erupts close to the surface. A scene in a cemetery becomes a necrophilic nightmare; Central Park is transformed into a surrealist vision; a Greenwich Village party, haunted by transvestites, is made uncomfortably visual. Smith's vision is strange, but no one who examines these pages can doubt its power.



**brooklyn cemetery**

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**party in greenwich village**



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By William C. Seitz

# THE RISE AND DISSOLUTION OF THE AVANT-GARDE

During a radio interview last spring Hermione Gingold described a play in which she was appearing as extremely "avant-garde, which is very much the thing to be nowadays." A leading cosmetic manufacturer merchandises a line of lipsticks (including the colours "Madly Mauve" and "Blasé Apricot") as its "Avant-Garde Collection." The term "avant-garde," as everyone knows who can tell a watercolour by Marin from an oil by Miró, has filtered down from the language of modern art. Not everyone realizes, however, that the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin collaborated in editing a periodical called *L'Avant-Garde* during the 1870's, that an anarchist magazine published in New York during the thirties was called *Vanguard*, and that these terms originally called to mind the forward troops of a military force. Albeit only ideologically and without bloodshed, true avant-garde art boldly entered hostile territory, and dug in until its forces were liquidated or won the day.

As Chairman Khrushchev indicated in addressing a congress of Soviet intellectuals last March, art can not be insulated from society: "The Communist Party is waging the struggle and will continue to fight against abstractionism and all other formalistic distortions in art. . . . Art enters into the sphere of ideology. Those who think that socialist realism and formalistic, abstract trends can live peacefully side by side in Soviet art inevitably sink to a position alien to us. . . . We can not be neutral towards formalism."

The great art of the past arose from a sympathetic interplay between artist and wealthy patron. The modern art we most admire today, on the contrary, grew out of an opposite social situation: it was the outcome of alienation from society, and an absence of patronage. This breakdown, evident before 1850, was the result, in part, of the revolution of the rising bourgeoisie against royalty and aristocracy, and of the proletariat against all three. Today, outside the iron curtain, the rupture seems to be healing: we are witnessing the absorption of avant-garde art into "The American Way of Life." Why should we be surprised that some of the less attractive marks of our society—a craving for kicks, exaggeration of the profit motive, the preference of publicity to truth, the scramble for status, a continual search for divertissement—are adulterating the product in the process of absorption?

In the 1840's, as Arnold Hauser, the leading sociologist of the arts, states, "an unbridgeable gulf opens up between the genius and ordinary men, between the artist and the public, between art and social reality." Hauser calls attention to "the bad manners and impertinences of the bohemians, their often childish ambitions to embarrass and provoke the unsuspecting bourgeois, their frantic attempt to differentiate themselves from normal, average men and women, the eccentricity of their clothes, their headdress, their beards; . . . their free and easy and paradoxical language, their exaggerated, aggressively formulated ideas, their invectives and indecencies, all that is merely the expression of the desire to isolate themselves from middle-class society, or rather the desire to represent the already accomplished isolation as intentional and acceptable." He could be speaking of the Dadaists of 1916 as well as the Romantics of 1840.

One document, brilliant and prophetic in its elegant irony, sets a key to the avant-garde arts for the century to follow its publication in 1846: Charles Baudelaire's famous commentary on the official Salon of that year. In a dedication "To the Bourgeois," written in language delicately poised between obsequiousness and sarcasm, the great poet-critic defines a cleavage between the bourgeois, be he "king, lawmaker, or businessman," and the artist. Nineteenth-century standards for artistic development were set in France. There, by the sixties, an insurmountable barrier had been raised between the art of the academy, propagated in official schools and salons, and the art of the new, de-classed band of misfits for whom the pursuit of subjective truth—at that time realism expressed through what both Baudelaire and Zola called a "temperament"—was more important than profit or public acclaim. Until after the end of the century, as the leading historian of Impressionism, John Rewald, recently wrote, the "powerful force of stale academicism . . . managed to drive a wedge between the public and artists of originality, isolating these from support, financial and otherwise, and covering them with ridicule."

In his political activities and certain of his early paintings, Gustave Courbet was the prototype of the American left-wing realists of the 1930's, but

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Édouard Manet, like Courbet's friend Whistler, was a truer precursor of the avant-garde artist: not only did he undermine the painting of literary subjects by what was, in certain canvases, masked abstraction—his art mocked and needled the *bon bourgeois* as elegantly as did Baudelaire's criticism. One of his most provocative sorties was the magnificent reclining nude, "Olympia," shown in the Salon of 1865. It is quite in the tradition of Titian and Goya, except that in this case the lady, naked except for ornaments, gazes with brazen composure toward the spectator, as does her black cat, who stands, tail erect, at the foot of the bed. The Negro maid delivers a gift of beautiful flowers. Entirely without mythic or romantic pretext, the "Olympia" was more provocative to public decorum, for its time, than "The Nude Descending a Staircase" in 1913. An entire book is devoted to the criticism, most of it disparaging, of Manet's painting between 1859 and his death in 1883.



*Edouard Manet, "Olympia," 1863. Musée du Louvre.*

The canvases of the Impressionists were also subjected to abuse, even though their lyrical and luminous paintings of landscapes, flowers, and figures never attack the spectator nor refer to the artist's social dilemma. Manet and Monet, whose paintings remained for years outside the circle of public approval, can serve to represent two kinds of avant-garde artists: the first, polemicists, mixing disdain for Philistinism with their pigment; the second, apparently unscarred by alienation, mindful only of aesthetic concerns.



*Claude Monet, "The Seine at Argenteuil," 1875.*

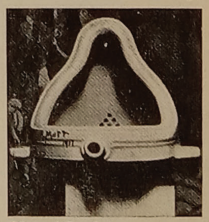
As masterpieces of modernism such as Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" become classic, it is easy to forget that contemporary art took form within a company of penniless poets, eccentrics, anarchists, drunks, and libertines—a community outside decent society. Integrity and devotion rubbed shoulders with poverty, depravity, and desperation. It was under such conditions, and in activities that were often an affront to respectable people, that the glory of twentieth-century art evolved in Paris, Milan, Munich, Dresden, Berlin, and (by the time of Stieglitz's "291" Gallery and the Armory Show) New York. Indeed, the temperature raised by the perennially controversial nature of modern art may be a "secret ingredient" responsible for the incisiveness and iridescence of its masterworks.

To talk of the "avant-garde" is to point out a social mechanism, the operation of which can be documented again and again. It is carefully explained in a book by the Russian Suprematist, Kasimir Malevich, *The Non-objective World*, published in 1927. In outlining the evolution from realistic to abstract art by way of Cubism—a process in direct contradiction to the aesthetics dictated by Stalinist Russia—Malevich points out that, from the time of Cézanne onward, changes came about when a new "additional element" of form or subject became the nucleus of a new style. "If . . . a picture displays new additional elements so that it is no longer possible to fit it into the framework of the familiar norm," he explains, "it is rejected by the public. . . . The public's lack of understanding, however, does not alter in the slightest the actual artistic value of a picture so that when, after a certain lapse of time, the people have accustomed themselves to the unfamiliar, the picture will inevitably come into its own." Malevich's formula says nothing about quality, but it takes for granted a fundamental principle more ethical than aesthetic: avant-garde art did not deviate from its direction in order to find a public.



*Pablo Picasso, "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," Collection, The Museum of Modern Art. 1907.*

No work of art can be avant-garde intrinsically, so the status dissolves as soon as the work or the manner is accepted. As a consequence no avant-garde movement has lasted much longer than ten years. Impressionism was a controversial movement until 1882 or 1883, but gradually the Impressionist image of the world, previously regarded as false and incompetently articulated, was accepted as beautiful and true; Monet and Renoir became wealthy and gained many followers, while the vanguard positions were next occupied by Seurat's Neo-Impressionism, Symbolism, and the beginnings of Expressionism in the work of van Gogh and Gauguin. After 1905 Fauvism lived a brief life, to be supplanted by Cubism in France, Futurism in Italy, Expressionism in Germany, abstract art in Russia, Holland, and Germany, and afterward, internationally, Dada and Surrealism. Intent on their own premises, these groups often excluded each other; but they shared a partisan adherence to convictions that were usually social and philosophic as well as aesthetic, and they refused to capitulate to public taste. As Marcel Duchamp has emphasized, the early avant-gardists were "pariahs." (Continued on page 230)



*Marcel Duchamp, "Fountain," 1917.*

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le voici !

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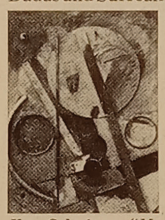
## THE RISE AND DISSOLUTION OF THE AVANT-GARDE

(Continued from page 183)

The transformation of lunatic into luminary is easily demonstrated in the field of literature. Since the 1880's the so-called "little magazine" has been the medium for unproved writing. "Little magazines," the authors of a study which appeared in 1947, analyzing such publications, write, "are willing to lose money, to court ridicule, to ignore public taste, willing to do almost anything—steal, beg, or undress in public—rather than sacrifice their right to print good material. . . ." Their purpose is "to print artistic work which for reasons of commercial expediency is not acceptable to the money-minded periodicals or presses," to carry forward a "spirit of conscientious revolt against the guardians of public taste," to attack "conventional modes of expression," and to bring "into the open new and unorthodox literary theories and practices." Most contemporary poets, and many novelists, now accepted and famous were introduced in these, usually short-lived, publications: among them are T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, Robert Frost, E. E. Cummings, Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound, Carl Sandburg, and so on and on. But just as Duchamp, who exhibited a urinal in 1917, now holds an honorary degree from a mid-Western university, the circle of acceptance for these writers expanded until they are now universally revered, if not widely understood.

The plastic arts differ from the literary arts in their dependence upon dealers and collectors. Trade in uncommissioned works of art, which began in sixteenth-century Florence, had all but replaced direct patronage by the nineteenth century. From the first days of the modern movement liaisons between avant-garde artists and collectors existed. There has always been a rapport between the avant-garde and wealthy devotees of "high culture" but, at least at first, the collectors were as atypical as the eccentrics they befriended. Their love of new art was a deviation from, rather than an affirmation of, class values.

The connection between the avant-garde and politics has always been problematical. The Zurich Dadas of 1916 were anti-war littérateurs. Certain of the Dadas and Surrealists were Communists. Yet it is evident in retrospect that metaphysical idealism rather than dialectical materialism was the major philosophical penchant of Dada, as one can judge by the naturalism of Jean Arp, the romantic *Merz* pictures and assemblages of Kurt Schwitters, and the writings of both artists. The curious anomaly of Picasso—a professed Communist living high on a pinnacle of capitalist admiration—demonstrates the odd, or nonexistent, radical politics/radical art connection.



*Kurt Schwitters, "Merz Construction," 1919.*

During the 1930's in New York, as the sculptor Seymour Lipton once remarked in conversation, there was "a sort of mystical union between art and politics." A society of abstract painters existed, but because of the propaganda for Social Realism, abstract painting was an unappreciated, if not an underground, activity. The Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact, signed in August 1939, turned out to be the Magna Carta of the American abstract artist. Its outcome, vastly accelerated by the flight of great European avant-gardists to New York—Hitler's gift to American art—was the consolidation of the American avant-garde. For more than ten years following the Second World War the "New York School"—active, it must be emphasized, from Provincetown to San Francisco—was a powerful, uncompromising, and authentic vanguard movement. For a marvellous decade, the American avant-garde was unhampered by Stalinist domination without being demoralized by lionization.

The dilemma that began the years of aesthetic freedom is painfully evident in an article by Robert Motherwell, the most articulate spokesman for the "New York School," written in the crucial year 1944. "The history of modern art," he said, "tends at certain moments to become the history of human freedom. It is here that there is a genuine rapport between the artist and the working class. At the same time, modern artists have not a social but an individualist experience of freedom: this is the source of the irreconcilable conflict between the Surrealists and the political parties of the working class." Three years later, a statement of policy in the single issue of a little magazine called *Possibilities I*, edited by Motherwell and Harold Rosenberg, spoke for artists and writers who practise in their work "their own experience without seeking to transcend it in academic, group, or political formulas." The statement concluded: "Political commitment in our times means logically—no art, no literature. . . . If one is to continue to paint or write . . . he must perhaps have the extremist faith in sheer possibility."



*Robert Motherwell, "Elegy to the Spanish Republic, 54," 1957-61. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art.*

Just over a decade later the impact of American abstract painting and sculpture had been felt throughout the Western, and part of the Eastern, art worlds.

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In combination with its European equivalents, Abstract Expressionism became the most widely-spread international style in history.

The steps in the expanding adoption of avant-gardism can be visualized in a diagram of concentric circles. At its centre is the "additional element"—an innovation around which a new style, concept, or orientation forms. The next ring includes a beleaguered in-group of sympathizers, odd-ball patrons, critics, perhaps an exceptional curator, and a dealer or two. The professional avant-garde, which has burgeoned almost beyond control over the last fifteen years, makes up the next circle. Its expansion preceded the astounding rise in the cost of art works that began about 1955. The committed art instructor, with his battery of slides and prints, did a brilliant job of mass education. At first most art historians, especially in the Ivy League schools, were holdouts; but as older professors were replaced and new courses were added, the atmosphere of American universities changed—it can be said with due recognition of *arrière-garde* dissenters—from distaste to sympathy.

In the museums, curators and even trustees moved from conservative to radical sympathies, while more and more graduate students, trained under new conditions, gained positions of importance on museum staffs. A third medium that raised the modern artists' status was the press. After the thirties, while the little magazine was moving toward extinction, *Time, Life, Newsweek,* and other mass-circulation magazines (which will probably always care more for what is controversial than for what is important) gradually abandoned a cliché of snide Philistinism for open-minded journalism that rises on occasion to a nonpartisan consideration rare in the more sectarian professional journals. Back in the thirties colour reproductions of French painting, usually representational, were clipped religiously from *Vanity Fair* by modern-art *aficionados*. Today the pages of Vogue and other such magazines are open wide to almost any current manifestation.

Book publishing proliferated at the same rate. Essential documents of modern art, often with artists as editors, began to be published in New York in the mid-forties. Since then art books have expanded in numbers, distribution, lavishness, and physical size until it has become impossible to scan all their colour reproductions, let alone read them through. "They are no longer bought to place on the cocktail table," somebody remarked recently, "they *are* the cocktail table."

A final stage in the ascent of avant-garde art from the lower reaches of society to its glass-walled summits is its adoption as decoration and public relations by large corporations, usually in the form of painting and sculpture displayed in public rooms and offices—although the granting of major commissions has been slowed more by the non-cooperation of artists and architects than by unwillingness on the part of business patrons.

Only one conclusion can be drawn from this random citation of data: in large centres, if not in the outposts, the battle for avant-garde art has already been won. It is a droll historical reversal to see so many members of a caste once predominantly hostile—professors, museum directors, curators, trustees, and other representatives of the Establishment—travelling back and forth like Byzantine bishops on missions devoted to the people committed, by tradition at least, to undermining everything official.

A parallel *bouleversement* is taking place in the initiation of new art movements. For the first few years after the war abstraction took root largely through its own inner energy, and gained supporters as it grew. Today movements are dreamed up, launched with Scotch, vodka, and buckets of ice, labelled and spoon-fed by promoters, publicity agents, critics, collectors-gone-pro, canny investors, and editors.

The outer circle of integration could be labelled "fashionable commercialism." A few years ago the contest between innovation in art and sophisticated taste was a race in which the artists were always ahead; now, for the first time, leaders and followers are neck and neck. In the past even the most advanced audience drew back momentarily from certain innovations—of the new, indoctrinated following, this is no longer true. They have learned that any eye-catching image or object that looks tasteless, blatant, banal, annoying, or even disgusting—that subverts or contradicts everything once considered sacred—should be embraced at all costs. Especially at all costs! As a bewildered letter writer to a West Coast magazine summed up: "I am now convinced that the true mission of art is to stink."

New manifestations now appear with such regularity and rapidity that the professional or collector who wants to remain in style must switch quickly: adherence to the scene—as in the love relationships of *nouvelle vague* movies—does not allow for abiding attachments. A new enthusiasm must be permitted to obliterate or overshadow the preceding one: it is as if one felt compelled to shift from Presbyterianism to health food to Zen to Castroism to Birchism from month to month, depending on which gets the greatest play. Like a woman who chases the "new look" in clothes whether or not it fits her figure, one must replace ideologies indiscriminately. As in automobiles

(Continued on page 232)

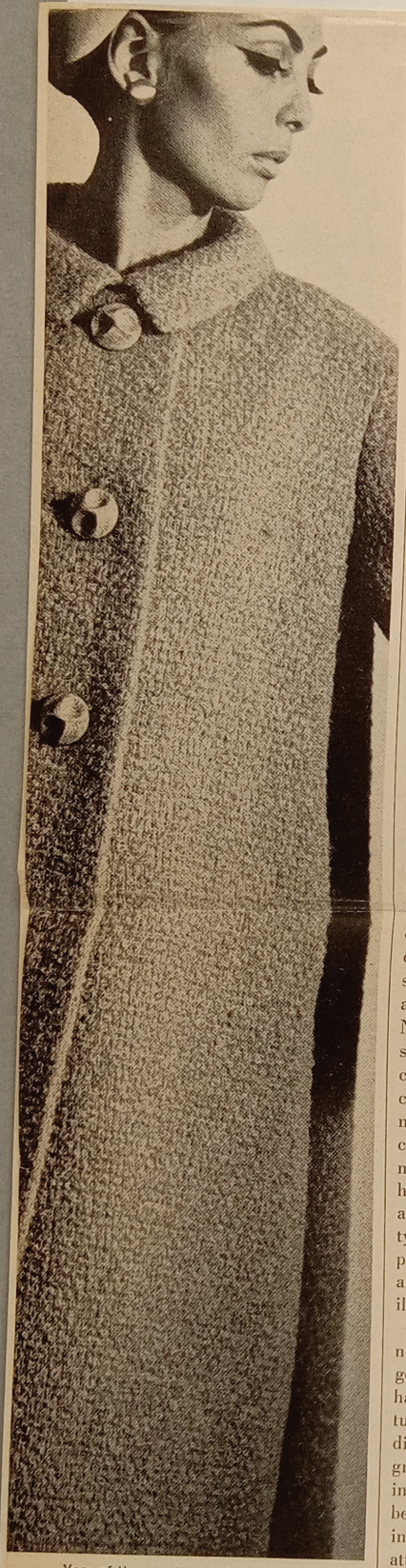
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voilà!

Dior
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## THE AVANT-GARDE

(Continued from page 231)

and dishwashers, it would appear, obsolescence is now built into new forms. Apparently recognizing this trend a few artists —perhaps they are the truest avant-gardists—use the cheapest and most perishable materials, in a form of symbolic suicide named by an English worker in nylon and acid "autodestructive art." Others fabricate objects severe or unattractive enough, perhaps, to turn away the most ardent lover of the new.

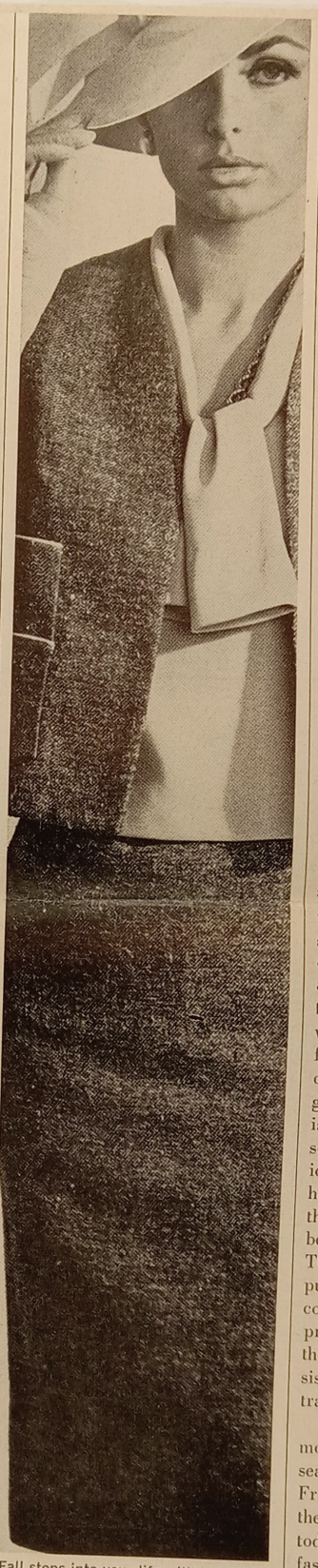
The greatest masters—Leonardo, Rembrandt, Goya, Rodin, Beethoven, Cézanne—have been philosophers in a medium other than words. It is to the credit of the twentieth century that the artist-philosopher became characteristic. Kandinsky, Klee, Brancusi, Malevich, Mondrian, and in America Hans Hofmann and Mark Tobey—to mention a few instances among many—carried forward the fertile alliance between image making and insight. And no group of artists was ever more pointedly committed to art for its own sake, to serious art, to "high" art, than the first generation of New York School painters and sculptors. Art for them was a commitment not subject to the compromises of common business and social life. Some publicized artists of the newest movements, on the contrary, seem to have scrapped these standards and aims. We have bred new types: the artist wit, the artist punster, the artist vaudevillian, and the canonized commercial illustrator.

Contrary to the Romantic notion of the inevitable emergence of genius, environment has a powerful effect on the maturation of a young artist. Total discouragement can stunt his growth; but also, like a balloon inflating, his development can be punctured from all sides by indiscriminate and speculative attention; or, the outside pressure of alienation suddenly replaced by modish acceptance, his bubble can burst.

The future takes form in the present through an exchange of arguments and premises, true and false. This professional conversation can be an act of love, expressing difference without hatred or common interest without collusion. More often, unfortunately, it is an empty and bitter quarrel that distorts or blinds the vision upon which discrimination depends, making true criticism impossible. Only a stupid or vicious critic views all unexpected or extreme innovations with alarm; it is almost as pernicious, today, to welcome every deviation and promotion scheme, *ipso facto*, as an achievement, and its entire cast as instant masters and prophets.

The real villain of this piece, if there is one, is an idea. It now appears that the attacks on history made by such painters as Clyfford Still and Mark Rothko had a real point. Artists used to make conservative art historians a bit queasy, but bit by bit, as scholars became more and more open-minded, artists also gave ground. A harmful historical anxiety seeped into their studios and into their souls. The Futurists' conviction that the weight of the past can be stultifying and deadly has been thoroughly explored; but the dangers of constant pressure on artists to come up each season with something novel—to scrap the ideas of last year before they have been fully articulated or their depths plumbed—has not been sufficiently appreciated. The accelerating succession of publicized innovations has become both a joke and a serious problem. From both poles of the question, this group neurosis is a source of anxiety, frustration, and resentment.

Rather than being an immovable rock around which the seas of live art crashed, as the French Academy was in 1865, the "avant-garde" academy of today is a bandwagon rolling faster and faster. Commitment to continual change of style in art is a principle as inane as commitment to change in bust measurements or the cut of cock-



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## THE AVANT-GARDE

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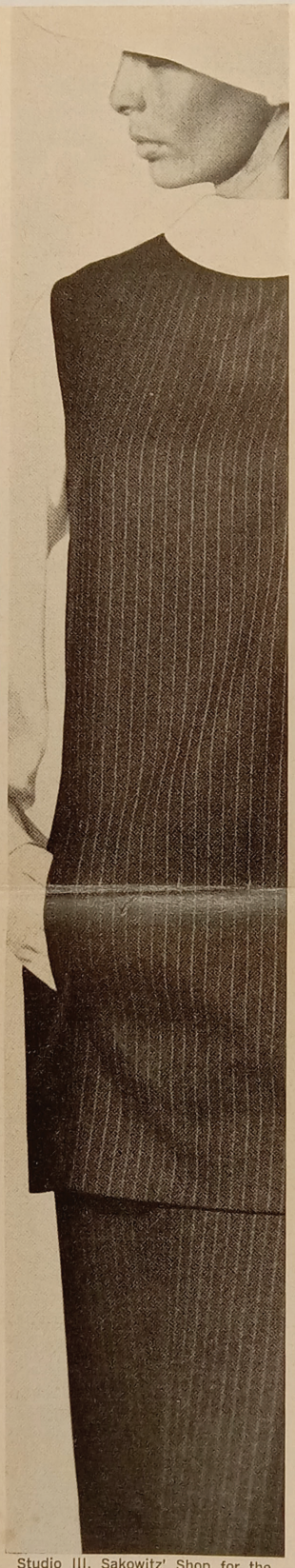
tail dresses, yet there are critics, curators, and collectors who prostrate themselves before any innovation whatsoever rather than be considered *retardataire*. Meanwhile (and this is a real tragedy), the dedicated artist working in an "outmoded" style, if his position is not solidly established, is faced with the agonizing alternatives of total obscurity (if he has the courage to maintain his position) or of an undignified race to keep in the swim.

If the artist becomes more and more enmeshed in the kind of machinery that dictates advertising, pop tunes, the Broadway theatre, and television, he could lose his position of leadership. It would be sad to see the direction of painting and sculpture determined in the same way as the designs of automobiles from Detroit, new dance sensations, or the status ratings of winter resorts: it would be unfortunate, in short, to see the life of art become "art biz." One defense against such a development would be a clean break between serious art and visual entertainment. Extrapolating in another direction, one could imagine that, following the lead of pop art, "high art" would dissolve entirely, to soak into the sands of commercial mass culture leaving no trace—perhaps to emerge someday as an anonymous but *bona fide* social product not labelled as art, like the cathedral in the middle ages or the jet airplane today.

But there is another alternative, less dramatic but simple as a Zen monk's realization that problems exist only because anxious people invent them: to recognize that the isolation of the artist from society has ended, and that the current obsession with novelty is a neurosis brought about by a vulgarized theory of perpetual revolution deduced from the art history of the last century. The content of the arts, like that of human experience, is timeless. Art is still a means of examining a leaf, smelling the air, and renewing one's contact with the infinite. Unlike science and technology, art does not progress. Braque can not be superior to Cézanne, nor Cézanne to Rembrandt, in the way that Niels Bohr's physics is an advance over Newton's, modern plumbing over that of the Romans, or a Boeing 707 over the "Spirit of St. Louis." Rapid obsolescence is not necessary for creative expression. Freed from the style-of-the-month mechanism, the artist, critic, and curator could turn their sensitized hands, eyes, and minds more completely to meaning, beauty, profundity—even to amusement and play in art—rather than expending so much energy on problems that need not exist.

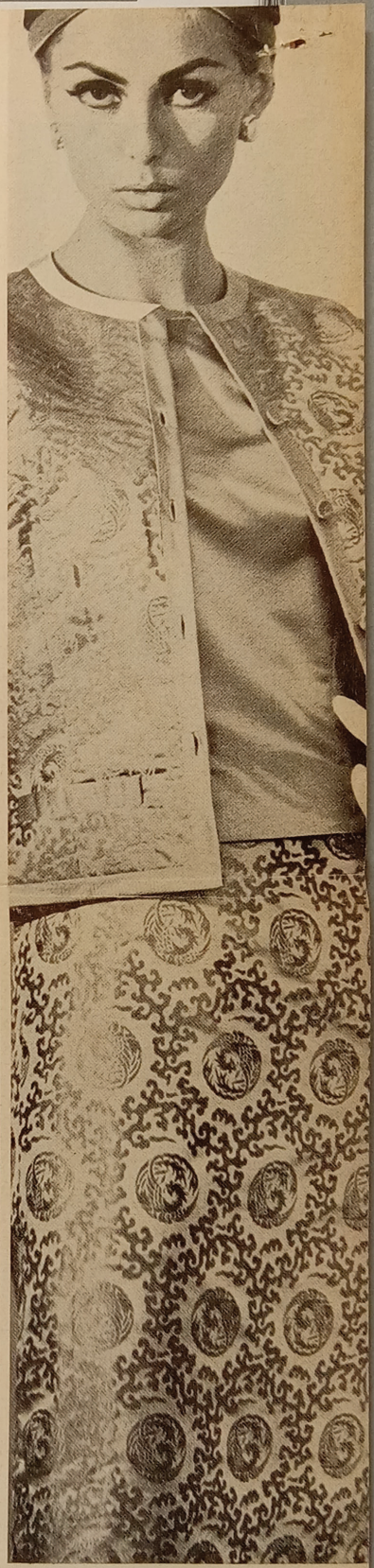
To observe, encourage, and criticize artists and works of art in terms that are aesthetic, technical, philosophical, and qualitative is not to ignore history, but to avoid rushing it forward toward nowhere by coercion, artificial stimulants, and groundless claims. We are faced with a new situation and a rising tide of production: we must have the acuity and courage to distinguish significant originality from puerile novelty, real changes in spirit from promotion schemes, deep ideological loyalties from cliques of pals, good or great art from bad or fraudulent art. And the collector should recognize that individual taste is not operating fully when the enthusiasms of a given brotherhood, from Montauk Point to Santa Monica, switch from one *dernier cri* to another as if a referee had blown a whistle.

There are a number of promising tendencies in American art today, but the groups we once characterized as the "avant-garde" have been dissolved by acceptance. Perhaps truly visionary artists must remain, as Duchamp suggests, "underground." Perhaps, they can take refuge on the campus—but this scholastic haven can also be a prison. Perhaps, also, the surest protection of art would be an epidemic of personal integrity.



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From The London Times History of Our Times (Marcus Cunliffe, ed.)
1970

MASS PLEASURES:

"Throughout the last fifteen years the various phases of the pop revolution have offered the most consistent opposition to the general drift towards bland uniformity in the field of mass pleasures and yet, in terms of numbers on a world-wide scale, pop, whether considered as a life-style or a means of expression, is big enough to qualify as a mass pleasure."

THE ARTS: REDUCTIONISM AND PLURALISM:

Ottavio Paz says Duchamp's inactivity "has been as fruitful for our century as Picasso's incessant activity. 'Our time is one which affirms itself only by negating itself, and which negates itself only to invent and transcend itself.'"

Exact analogy to the via negativa of the painters in the work of the Black Mountain poets who refused to impose order on a poem. Charles Olson's Projective Verse "is a manifesto for 'field composition' by which the poet 'can go by no track other than the one the poem under hand declares, for itself.'"

"Meanwhile, nature was disappearing from literature." Camus' L'Etranger a major turning point - complete absence of causality; Meursault's non-involvement in the killing.

Lucio Fontana's all-white paintings of 1956 and Yves Klein's all-blue paintings of 1957.

"One of the factors that have made reductionism necessary has been the sheer profusion of postwar art."

"The influence that overshadowed them all, of course, was Mondrian..."

"Reductionism in the theater emerged in its purest form in Poland through Jerzy Grotowski's work... The only essential, he discovered, was a living relationship between actors and audience."

In architecture, the "New Brutalism" in England, the "anti-design" movement.

But alongside the via negativa, there have been many other more traditional artists at work in many different styles.
"Disappointingly this new freedom, which ought to have been invigorating, was negative in its effects. Even a big talent like Jasper Johns's did not develop as it might have done in a more critical climate

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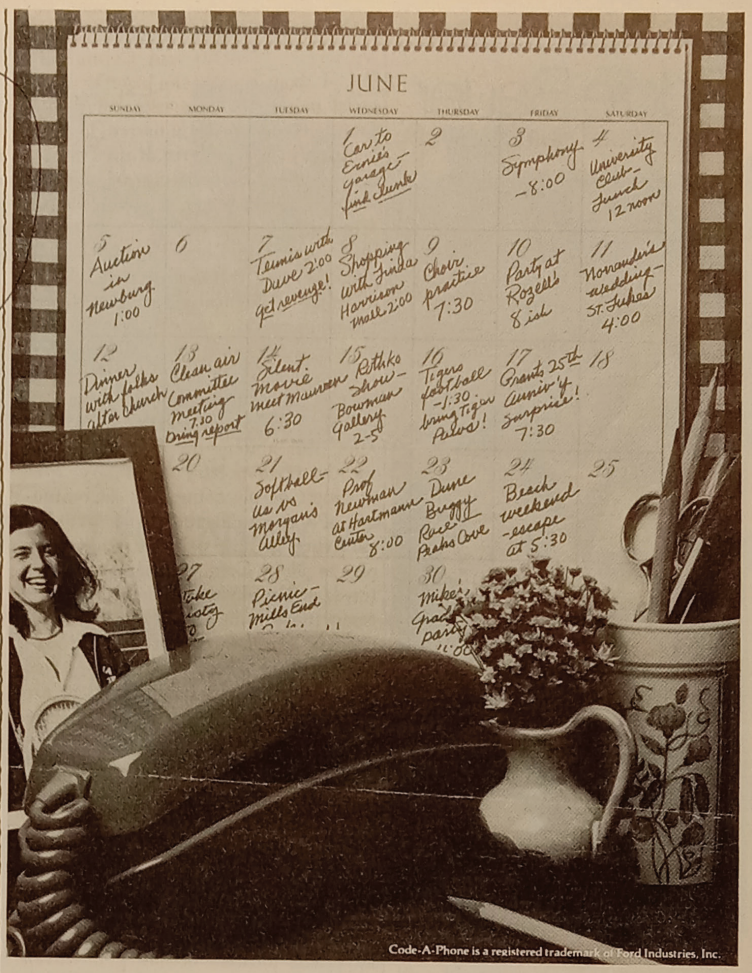
mantic, even poetic, challenge to conventional society, but the recruits briefly won by the student revolutionaries proved to be not the workers but the students' own middle-class parents. What happened in 1968 was a passionate and exhausting evocation by members of the prosperous middle classes in French society of the beauty and the possibility of a society without bounds or coercion or cruelty—a vision of a transformed society which was perhaps only imaginable to members of a privileged class still shielded from some of life's darker realities.

The myth persists today that 1968 was a workers' rebellion. It was not. Ten million workers and their unions took instant and astute advantage of the situation that the students had created in order to win practical concessions from the government and from their employers. As disorders in Paris's Latin Quarter spread, the unions made demands concerning wages, hours, and working conditions. The workers mainly ignored those proselytizing student revolutionaries who came to the factories and assembly lines calling for a general strike meant to bring "imagination to power." The unions and the Communist Party eventually collaborated with the government in putting an end to the disorders and getting the country back to work. The ideology of 1968, a lyrical and heterodox ideology of human freedom, was unable to enlist mass support, or even the support of the majority of France's least privileged, hardest-working, most heavily exploited classes. What the French voters actually did, in the legislative election later in 1968, was give a big majority to the government parties, campaigning on a law-and-order platform.

The European generation that followed the First World War, and described itself as feeling like the last link in a broken chain, had by 1940 turned desperately to ideological politics—to Fascism and Communism. Fascism offered strength, mastery, the triumph of the will. Communism purported to be a science of history able to bring to power a classless class, ending human exploitation. Of course, both ideologies fed on hatred as well as idealism. Hatred was an inheritance of that generation, for its members were unlucky enough to have discovered in their own lives the bleak reality the generation of 1914 had died to bring about.

> Submerge us in filth,
> And embrace the executioner,
> But transform the world!

Thus Bertolt Brecht in 1930. Relatively few were untouched by the need




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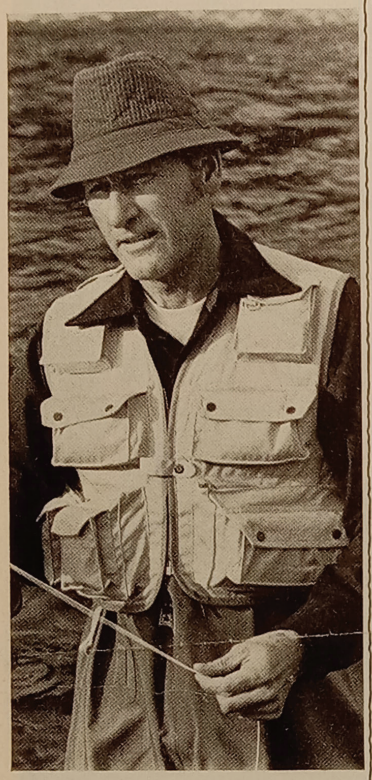
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to take ideological sides. Arthur Koestler wrote, "Fascists and Communists shared about equally the benefits of the social migration. The remainder, who found no consolation in hatred, lived on pointlessly 'like a swarm of tired winter flies crawling over the dim windows of Europe, members of a class displaced by History.' "

But today in Europe hardly anyone remains who can seriously believe in doctrines of political redemption. Revolutionary rhetoric persists. It is the conventional language, especially in Latin Europe, just as globalist and Wilsonian rhetoric is the conventional language of official American discourse on world affairs. But among the Europeans who use the revolutionary vocabulary, even the most deeply committed—Communist Party intellectuals and activists, surviving members of the movements of the New Left, anarchists and latter-day Trotskyites—all have private reservations, like Catholics since Vatican II. The Communist Parties themselves—as in France and Italy—avoid such language. Increasingly, they are in competition with Socialists and centrists to see which of them are most devoted to civil liberties and the economic development of the Third World, most aware of the risks of nuclear power and dangers to the environment: theirs is the agenda of an Aspen Institute, a Club of Rome, a seminar of conscience-stricken businessmen. On left and right, there is an inadvertent alliance of the guilt-driven middle class.

Revolution once meant something desperate and dangerous, action taken because the conditions of life were no longer humanly tolerable. That is not the situation today. Life is not bad for the mass of Europeans, and political action starts with that reality. Most people in the major countries of Western Europe are better off by material standards than they have been at any time in the past. They also undoubtedly are made anxious by this new condition of life—"consumerist," materialistic, possessions-oriented, in important respects cut off from the custom and discipline of the past. There is an anxiety born of this generation's own historical memory—the fear that peace and security cannot last, the fear of inflation and renewed recession, or depression.

The overall record in Europe since 1945 is one of a search for security. This record dramatically contrasts with the adventurism and struggle that followed the First World War: in Italy's liberal republic, doomed by 1922; in the Weimar Republic; in France's troubled Third Republic; in Britain, where Sir Oswald Mosley's "New Party" of 1931 and then his Fascists represented one version of the national attempt to come to terms with an economic decline and with social tensions that have still not been resolved in that country. Another version, of course, was the vast movement of intellectual defections to the Communist left—the literary conversions, afterward repudiated, of the Day-Lewises and Spenders and Audens, but also the devastatingly revealing defections by the Burgesses, Macleans, and Philbys.

In part, what has changed since then is a matter of banal economics. People no longer are desperately poor. And this economic change has naturally had social consequences. There has been a social levelling. Class barriers are not as savage as before. Aristocracies have been killed off. The old haute bourgeoisie, of which Proust and Mann wrote, has been weakened drastically. The working classes have claimed the place before denied them. With universal suffrage, the removal of the property qualification, and the granting of the vote to women, the Socialist and labor parties were able to take over political power. The left succeeded. The crucial but widely unrealized fact of modern Europe is simply that the democratic left has succeeded everywhere.

The European right is all but extinguished. The revolutionary left is a residue, now mostly a middle-class and intellectual movement. The claims it makes are nominally dialectical and materialistic but actually moral. It protests the moral scandal of soulless New Towns, the moral alienation of the new suburbs, the lack of purpose among young workers. It protests the vulgarity of prosperity, the destruction of community which accompanies the razing of ancient slums. It calls for solidarity, justice; it claims to occupy the terrain of imagination. But it is not a mass movement of the brutalized poor, demanding the right to life and breath. This is what has changed, and it is supremely important.

—William Pfaff

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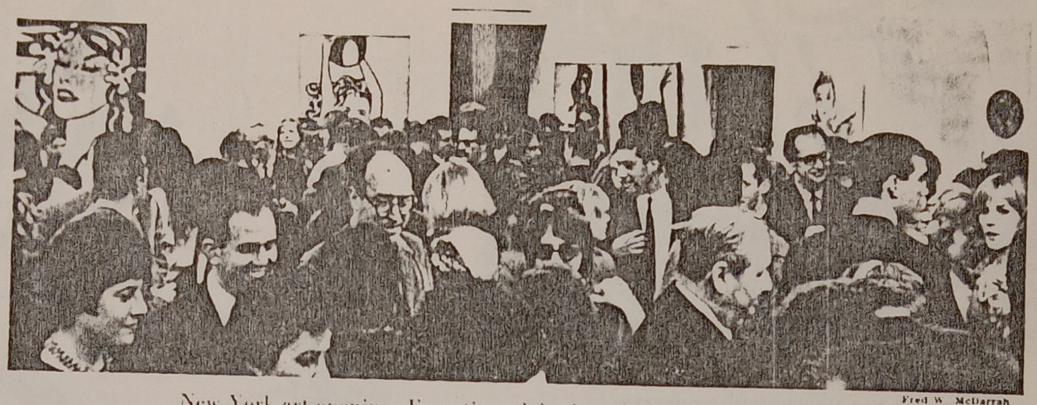
There's been a recent change in the Leisure Section of the New York Times. Bernard Gladstone, editor, reports that "for the moment we're not buying or running any leisure articles." Gladstone said he couldn't be any more specific and indicated he doesn't expect to be buying leisure pieces in the foreseeable future.
*—Writer's Digest.*

Too busy, probably.

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Fred W. McDarrah

New York art opening: Frenetic activity in a model of free enterprise

# VANITY FAIR: THE NEW YORK ART SCENE

If a vast hand descended from the sky over Manhattan—calling halt to the frenetic activity of the new art scene—the resulting tableaux would make up a model of free enterprise in a wealthy society. One could see a host of underground workers (artists) producing a commodity—the commodity shipped in the 300-plus galleries around the great axis of Madison Avenue and 57th Street—the commodity being purchased by private consumers (collectors), and the consumers consuming and increasingly by something between fun and guess).

The commodity model thus stalled in action is subject to laws of supply and demand, to whims of fashion, speculation, and laws of the genuine article, to sales and resales of the commodity in which prices can rise in huge arbitrary jumps. A black map of the U.S. by Jasper Johns can go for $15,000; an abstraction by the late Jackson Pollock can reach six figures. But the turnover on the scene each year is measured in millions. Like television or advertising, the art business is a character case. But more important it rests on a basic cultural activity, a fact that has crucial consequences for everyone concerned.

**New Capital:** New York, now, is the focal point of the complex equation that holds the cockpit of aesthetic crisis and the buzzing center for money men. Paris, the "cultural Klondike" of the early twentieth century, is no longer where the action is. "How can you be an art critic in Paris?" French critic Michel Ragon was asked recently, "when there are no more masters in France?" After generating like a great aesthetic generator for 100 years, Paris has now run down, wound up like a mummy to its great past. But art has become global—with London, Düsseldorf, Warsaw, Rome, Madrid, Tokyo, and Osaka as the new city-states in which the artist is becoming a chief burgher. It is in this sense that New York has become *the* scene. It is the capital of the far-flung but swiftly communicating city-states.

Physically, the boundaries of the scene are elastic. Eastward the scene gathers traffic from its main cultural suburb, Europe. Westward it stretches into the hinterlands (where many of its gods and heroes—Clyfford Still, Robert Rauschenberg, Jackson Pollock—were born), like a vast pinball machine of culture, until at the West Coast the board lights up again. But the core of the action is the small rooms behind the New York galleries where the dealers deal, and each name is surrounded by a buzzing envelope of gossip.

**The Word:** What's the Word? Pop is chic, thus going out. Op is in. Hard edge? Doubtful. Abstract Expressionism? Big names in, the rest—out. And a nifty little revolution for sideshow purposes: "Object" art. Coming attractions: Kinetic art. (Tune up on the Poetry of Technology.) The Word on the words? Commitment is out. So are Accident, Chance, Happening, and other deities. Alienation is still in, but badly shopworn. The big word is Cool, which won out over Deadpan. And oh by the way, Sex is out too. What's in? Well, you can call it neuter. Is this chaos or creation? Even the dealers are divided. Says Eleanor Ward of the Stable Gallery, "I don't think it's ever been as great in interest, vitality, quality of work." But for John Bernard Myers of the Tibor De Nagy Gallery the scene resembles Goethe's chaotic "Junkshop Fair." "There are no rallying cries, no esthetic polemics, no discussion clubs; there is at best internecine art warfare."

Ominous rain down from all sides. For pioneer avant-garde dealer Betty Parsons the scene is "a hodgepodge with no intrinsic new seed." For Sidney Janis, to many a Machiavelli imperturbably water-skiing behind every new wave, "the important new ideas are being expressed by the pop artists," and Leo Castelli, the original Svengali of pop, finds the scene "a vital continuation and diversification of the great days of Pollock, et al." Grace Borgenicht stands on middle ground. "Things come and go now with increasing frequency, like records getting used up. I think pop is being pushed for commercial reasons—by the dealers, by the artists, and the critics who like to have something to write about. There is dignity to painting and sculpture that is going to emerge in spite of the commercialization of certain aspects."

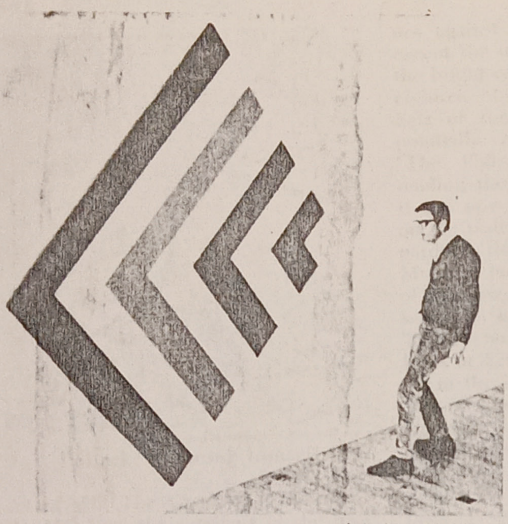
The commercialization has been increasing since the big money hit the scene in the mid-'50s. And as fashion and success demand their heroes, the mass media move in to spotlight the stunned androgynous faces of the elected—pop artist Andy Warhol, maker of soup-can icons, looking like a happy test-tube baby behind his dark glasses; Jasper Johns, with his cowboy-cool hauteur; happy montage-maker Robert Rauschenberg, fresh from international victory at the Venice Biennale.

**Success:** "Last year," said one artist, "they were ten deep around Bob Rauschenberg. Now they're ten deep around Andy Warhol. Next year I hope it'll be me." It is the age of the artist as celebrity. "If Jackson Pollock were around now," said a cynic, "he'd be asked for opinions on integration and the bomb, solutions for South Vietnam."

It was the late Jackson Pollock who, in Willem de Kooning's phrase, "broke the ice" back in the '40s for American painting and the New York School. He became the Artist as Hero, "becoming," as critic Thomas B. Hess put it, "by an

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Op: Kenneth Noland with his seductive chevrons of naked color



Fred W. McDarrah

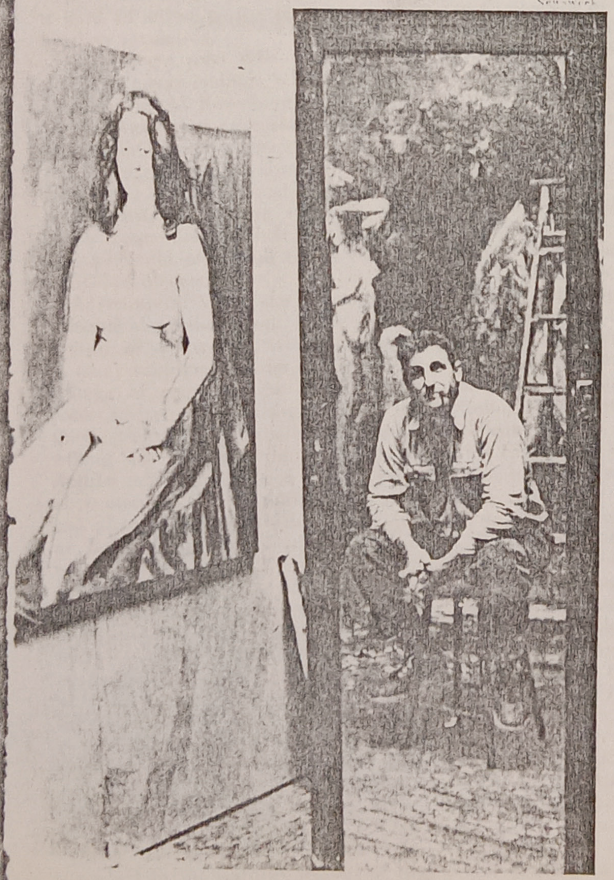
Pop: James Rosenquist making icons out of everything from combs to Continentals



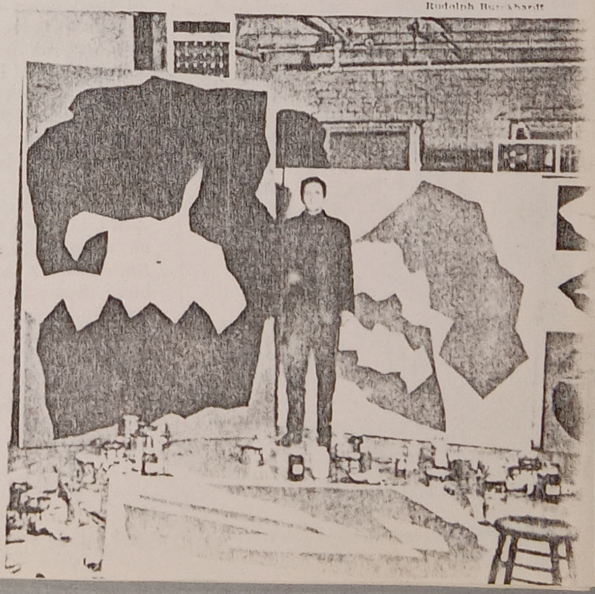
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Abstract expressionism: Put-up-your-dukes action by Norman Bluhm

Figure: A pipe-and-slippers dishevelling of domesticity by Paul Georges



Hard edge: Jack Youngerman with his war-bonnet shapes and colors



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Hans Namuth, courtesy Hudson Press

Pollock: Divining himself

act of will The Greatest Artist in the World." Now the survivors of the band who made that revolution—de Kooning (see box), Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, tread the new scene warily, shaking their heads over the Vanity Fair that has sprung up on the old battlefield, bedeviled by their own myth, like guerrilla fighters finding it hard to adjust to the city conquered by their revolution.

These were men who painted with their own nerve endings, who conceived, as critic Harold Rosenberg pointed out, "the canvas . . . as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, redesign, analyze, or 'express' an object . . ." The abstract expressionists were artists of intense response who finally responded in their work to the over-all world of stimuli rather than to individual objects.

**Adventurers:** What was precious and valuable about their work, in the general context of modern art which jettisoned so many traditional values, was just this voltage of response, the sense of the paint surface as a cartography of the spirit, projected by esthetic adventurers willing to risk everything. As Mark Rothko said: "Freed from a false sense of community and security, the artist can abandon his plastic bankbook, just as he has abandoned other forms of security."

These men had to wait until comparatively late in life for any sort of financial reward—the late Franz Kline had only a few years of relative prosperity before he died. Paradoxically, it was only when a new generation of artists reacted against the overweening power and authority of the abstract expressionist way of doing things, that the resulting detonation and proliferation of styles created the big carnival of art success for both old and young.

Now all values are up for grabs. Coached by art history's lessons of neglect, everyone anxiously juggles his values against the new—everyone that is, except the new collectors who buy with the bright eagerness of suddenly affluent children at a candy store. Says Peter Selz of the Museum of Modern Art, pointedly referring to the pop art: "The Philistine who always enjoyed reading the comics but never admitted it can now have enlargements of them on the wall and be considered as avant-garde as the first de Kooning collector." Museum men stir uneasily at the scent of the new, aware that to miss out is to buy high up on a steeply rising curve. Those who missed out on Jackson Pollocks at $500 in 1950 now have to pay up in the hundreds of thousands. Some idea of the vast increases can be had from the fact that Eleanor Ward's first annual exhibition—including Kline, Pollock, and de Kooning—in the old Stable Gallery in January, 1953, could have been bought out at about $10,000. Nothing sold. Now it would cost the best part of $1 million.

**Crisis:** Beneath all this is something more important that should never be forgotten: the artist's questions that fundamentally give the scene its impetus—questions about the nature of art, the artist's concept of reality, his relation to his society, his attitude to self, emotion, to freedom and fashion. And these add up to a crisis that accompanies pivotal moments in the history of art. Yet only a few decades ago the American artist stood on his native shore, nursing an inferiority complex, awaiting the carrier pigeons from Paris, the center of the world. How did New York become the magic city?

"The Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact," wrote William Seitz of the Museum of Modern Art, "signed in August 1939, turned out to be the Magna Carta of the American abstract artist." To New York in one miraculous swoop came Paris in microcosm—the surrealist avant-garde, including its Pope, André Breton, the Chilean Matta, and old Dada master Max Ernst, who married Peggy Guggenheim in New York in 1941. She, more than any other person, midwifed the new scene singlehanded through her gallery on 57th Street.

**Catalysts:** The influx of the surrealists—those charming fantasts and ideologues from every cultural center in the world—catalyzed the American art scene. The Americans learned, said Thomas Hess, that the legendary Europeans were "human beings . . . with pores and hairs; and furthermore, they acted as though art were a distinguished profession . . ." Esthetically the surrealists enabled the Americans to realize that behind art there lurked the quirky stuff of human personality.

So that, as dealer Sam Kootz says, "the feeling of the men in the early '40s was a highly subjective thing. They

# DE KOONING: GRAND STYLE

As he walks away one sees a smallish man with radiant hair, a loose striped jacket flopping over black corduroy pants—and the rear view has some of the pathos of a Harpo Marx. Then he turns to present the shockingly perfect classic head and the direct blue gaze in which wisdom is a sort of mobile innocence. If he never painted a picture he would be extraordinary—for one is always aware of the fluctuations of his identity, the ebb and flow of tensions and possibilities.

But he has painted—and his pictures have opened up a new territory other artists have colonized. Some have fenced off small plots in Willem de Kooning's majestic acreage. Others have moved off from it to new country of their own. His impact on the scene has been enormous, his financial success complete. For most people his achievement and reputation make him *the* American painter.

De Kooning exists very much in the present moment, between the pull of the contradictions he feels fan out from every decision. The tension of their drag keeps him teetering—almost dancing—with a high nervosity, as if life consisted of some act of balance, like walking a high wire—or in an image he provides himself, riding a bicycle, as he pedals the roads around Springs, near East Hampton in Long Island. He has lived there since 1961, not in his new house, which is still building, but around it—in other artists' places.

The contradictions come up in everything. "Someone asked me to sign for the release of Siqueiros"—the



De Kooning: Elaine (1940)

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Hans Namuth, courtesy Rizzoli Press

Mexican artist once accused of trying to kill Trotsky, later jailed for "social dissolution," and now released. "I didn't. But I wouldn't sign against him either. I didn't have the details. It's like Trotsky. To one he's a hero. To another he's an assassin." The wish to keep the whole field of experience moving and shifting manifests itself in everyday things. He won't pin down the future by making an appointment, refuses to allow the modern oracle, the telephone, to interrupt his day.

**Action:** This life style is reflected in de Kooning's work, as it was in the other painters of his generation such as Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline. Their problem was how to *live* a picture, rather than merely painting it safely, how to take *action* (critic Harold Rosenberg called abstract expressionism *action painting*) when all the powerful solutions of art history pluck at every stroke. Unprotected by the past, each stroke becomes a positive action among dangerous alternatives. Like any man of action, de Kooning is fond of sport, especially boxing. ("Are you a painter?" asked Gene Tunney. "Yes," said de Kooning humbly.) Talking or painting de Kooning adjusts to the possibilities like an athlete, shifting his balance, jerking his head around, lunging like a fencer to make or explain a stroke.

From the city to East Hampton de Kooning has transported a monad of the abstract expressionist ethos—himself, his model, his pad. And the pad is the apotheosis of the loft generation's dream. "It's really like a large loft," he says, "the best studio you'd find if you were looking for it. It's *found*." The roof sinks down to meet the upthrust of metal Y-beams, walls are suddenly interrupted by glassy space, the internal structure is full of catwalks and balconies, beams hurtle abruptly down, elegance is often forced into awkward corners. The huge rectangle of the studio is tilted into a rhomboid, a memory imprint from his old studio on Tenth Street, because "you get the light better."

"I haven't any illusions about being an architect," says de Kooning, "but I always wanted to build a house." Bets have been placed that he will never finish it. For the loft-mansion, as expensive and as lavish as the most ornate example of East Hampton style, turned out to be subject to the crises of testing, just as a de Kooning painting. "If you don't like a painting," says de Kooning, "you can wipe it out. This overhang—over the front door—took five days to build. Now it has to go." The house already contains a history of additions, and erasures—like a painting. De Kooning's inability to decide a work is finished, to separate himself from it, is one of the art scene's prime myths—so there has been total fascination with the idea of de Kooning painting inside a de Kooning house, inside a mobile metaphor of his own dilemmas.

**Elysium:** Now he is painting again, on a door (he recently bought six to paint on) standing in a slot on the studio floor, into which it can be lowered "so you can get to the right spot without a ladder." What is on the canvas has changed and changed—but the basic image has ridden the current of change like a bather: a levitated pink jelly-baby, the impastos like frayed silk, her eyes bobbling foolishly in the rococo Elysium he is trying to get into. Last year he sketched her ancestors, dozens of them, two by two in balletic free-fall, "very cozy together," he says, "not very avant-garde for me." And then he adds—the king announcing his abdication—"I don't want to be new anymore," which, in a typical contradictory backlash is a new attitude indeed.

De Kooning has always failed to step into the blueprint for his future. So going backward through his art is as surprising as watching it unfold from the beginning. "Art never seems to make me peaceful or pure," he said once, "I always seem to be wrapped in the melodrama of vulgarity." Going backward (paintings below) one encounters the hurtling pastel pinks and blues of his abstract landscapes (late '50s), the ferocious "Women" wearing the banal all-American smile (early '50s), and in 1948, the year he burst on the scene at the Egan Gallery, those electric paintings of white lines swerving and rebounding in the darkness.

**Beginnings:** To go back beyond 1948 is to follow him into the Underground, where his talents made him a marked man before the public ever heard of him. Here lie the heroic days of American art, struggling for mere survival—for de Kooning the days of WPA, housepainting and commercial art. In 1926 he is snatched from the scene to reappear, younger, in Rotterdam, where he was trained thoroughly, and going back to the ultimate point, 1904, born.

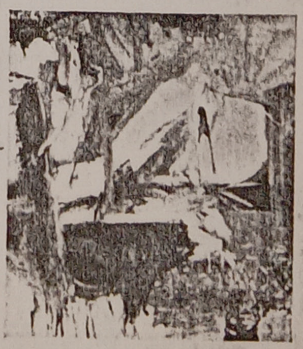
Running the movie forward again is to discover in all the de Koonings the sense of crisis projected into the labyrinth of contradictions through which he has zigzagged like a bright planet, holding to small certainties of identity. "I have this sort of feeling that I'm all there now," he says, his sentences typically seeming clipped and pasted abruptly together from some continuum. "As to the painting being finished, I always have a miserable time over that. But it's getting better now. I just stop."



'Painting' (1948)



'Women II' (1952-53)



'February' (1957)

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were more interested in themselves than in solving Picasso's problems. In that sort of self-revelatory mood the guys had to back up into themselves. Their paintings had to go off into fantastic tangents." Betty Parsons remembers her artists and their art in symbols of self-revelation: Clyfford Still with "his El Greco face" was the "eagle and the stallion riding over the prairies"; Barnett Newman's vertical horizons in awesomely empty space made him "the great statesman of up and down." Rothko symbolized for her "the endless horizons of the Midwest." Pollock's work was for her the "endless electronic nervosity that went on forever."

This collision of style with life detonated the great idea of art as a process identified with life, through which the artist discovered himself, a process fraught with risk and difficulty. "Jackson," said Franz Kline of Jackson Pollock, "*divined* himself." And this, in effect, was the American discovery.

**Culture as Yogurt:** The most powerful figure in modern art, Willem de Kooning, is still very aware of the charge of personality that is the real impetus for his kind of art. "You've developed a little culture for yourself, like yogurt," he says. "As long as you keep some of the original microbes, the original thing in it will grow out." In this sense the young artists who followed abstract expressionism were microbe hunters.

In a symbolic moment in 1959, Robert Rauschenberg asked de Kooning for a drawing that he erased and exhibited as "Erased de Kooning." Rauschenberg rejected the abstract expressionist's agony of entry into himself. For this he substituted the flow of all the dissociated experiences that everyone has during an ordinary day. Rauschenberg's work brings together the buzzing fragments of news photos, the debris of daily living. He became the stage designer of the comedy of acceptance.

Another innovation—and attitude—was introduced by Jasper Johns, who took the most banal everyday symbols—numbers, letters, targets—and in an exquisite bit of surgical separation—detached them from their functional meanings. Such a loaded subject as the American flag—which nobody ever really *sees*—became, when Johns carefully painted its banal *gestalt*, an object, hauled out of the world of symbol into a piece of esthetic furniture one is forced to bump into.

**New Armies:** Rauschenberg and Johns are the youthful old masters, the Picasso and Braque, of the new age. Their example, amongst others such as the late Morris Louis, helped create the free-for-all atmosphere through which legions of new artists negotiate their work—the pop-men, like James Rosenquist, who make icons out of everything from nickel combs to Lincoln Continentals; the parodists of the past, like Larry Rivers, kidding old styles and nudging old masters such as Ingres and Rembrandt in the ribs; the younger abstract expressionists like Norman Bluhm and his put-up-your-dukes action painting; the makers of elegantly useless objects, vacuum-packing their work in a fury of suppressed nihilism; the stainers and spillers, like Kenneth Noland with his seductive chevrons of naked color; the hard-edge hewers like Jack Youngerman with his vigorous war-bonnet shapes and colors; the figure painters like Paul Georges with his pipe-and-slippers disheveling of domesticity.

Out of all this comes the crucial question of the age—the content and meaning of art now. Much of the new art is mindlessly blank, the art of an age when the artist seems to be looking ahead to the robotized future. Much optical art simply bombards the eye, keeps the cortex sorting out signals and circuits; sensations are experienced, but they do not progress to feeling. Much pop art seems to pass through happily depersonalized artists. The crucial struggle is appearing just now, as both pop and op artists aspire to a new mode of defeeling, to new styles within the cool context of their new age.

Richard Bellamy, a quiet, unassuming dealer, whose Green Gallery has been an important seminal force among the newest of the new art, admits there is a cool, anti-emotional attitude among most young artists. "It's a reaction to the emotional excess of abstract expressionism. I guess since I am 37 years old and have gone to a head shrinker and a body shrinker I should be aghast at the development, but I have no moral attitude about it."

**Breakdown:** The abstract expressionists, coming along after most esthetic options had seemed exhausted, had tried to reintegrate personality in the very act of putting paint on a surface—the purest and guttiest kind of art for people's sake. For many of the new generation the mystique of the creative act has largely dissolved. "When I first came to painting," says pop artist Tom Wesselmann, "there was only de Kooning—that was what I wanted to be, with all its self-dramatization. But it didn't work for me . . . I had a kind of artistic nervous breakdown. I couldn't stand the insecurity and frustration . . ."

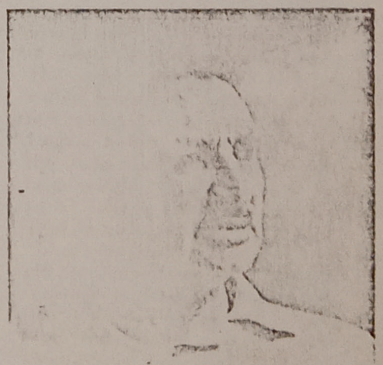
The new move toward acceptance, whether pop acceptance of mass culture, or op acceptance of physiological sensitivity, is therefore in large part a movement toward security. At the end of this road, of course, stands the ultimate security—dehumanization. "I think everybody should be like everybody," says Andy Warhol, "I think everybody should be a machine." To Peter Selz



HESS: "Serious American art continues to be the most important cultural tradition in the world today. However, a growing kind of faddist promotion based on sales and gimmicks want to push serious works off the map."



JUDD: "There is a breakdown in universal and general values. I don't think the artist believes in them. I think they are happy to help break down general values like any great statement you can make about the way people should live."



ROSENBERG: "By the measure of the twentieth century context, to establish the value of the new art offers no extraordinary difficulties. It can be stated once terms are found to relate it to the novelty of the art that preceded it."

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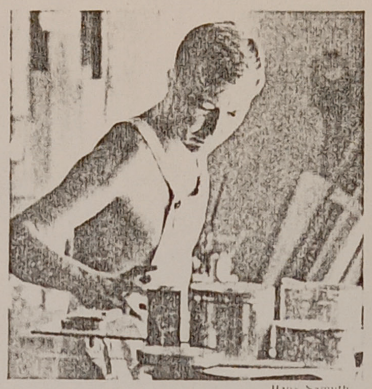


this is "profound cowardice." "We often wondered [in the '50s]," he wrote, "what sort of art would later be produced by these young men and women, who preferred saying, 'Great, man!' to 'Why?' or possibly even, 'No!' "

"Great, man!" is the happy euphoria of the new artist as membrane, blandly accepting the world in transit through him. Says the Metropolitan Museum's Henry Geldzahler, one of the new breed of curators who are involved with artists at the working level, "I think the new artist has become sweeter and less hairy. My image of the artist of the '50s is a guy with a mustache holding a brandy bottle over his head and belting it down. Now he would sip. It's more polite." This is part caricature, but it leads easily to a 1984 vision of the artist as a smooth, highly creative neuter, the perfect selective membrane through which is consolingly expressed the alienation of a society of specialized drones. It is the pure vision of pop as what a German critic called "capitalist realism" as distinct from socialist realism with its banal idealization of the whole human form.

**No Sweat:** Thus the present scene conceals its real crisis. It was obvious that the stormy, hard-living abstract expressionists, with their idea of art as a way of life, were trying to obtain a leverage on their own experience. The no-sweat attitude of the new generation is an indication that it has become even harder to cope with a society that is even more overwhelming in its seeming acceptance of the formerly suspect activity of art. This new bear hug is no less lethal than the former cold shoulder. But it demands a whole new strategy to evade extinction.

The new generation is not less serious than the old, it simply hasn't decided what to be serious about or how to do it.



Hans Namuth

Johns: Detached from function



Hans Namuth, courtesy Ridge Press

Rauschenberg: Agony rejected

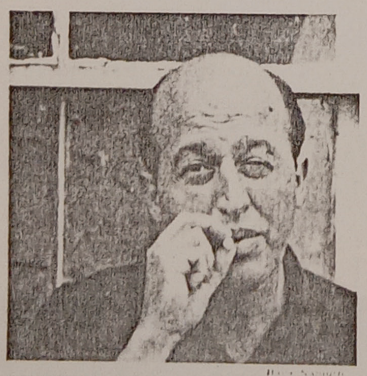
The old idea of art retained some vestiges of the sense of a heroic or triumphant activity. Says critic Clement Greenberg of de Kooning: "The dream of a grand style hovers over all . . . the dream of an obviously grand and obviously heroic style." The new artists cannot think of themselves as heroes, striding the blast and speaking trumpet-tongued. Like the new novelists who mitigate anxiety with comedy, sleight-of-hand satire, and a strong sense of the absurdity even of tragedy, young artists today are high-level gamesters, neurologists rather than philosophers.

"Sensitivity," one young critic has said, "is a bore." The new art is one of "calm, profound observation, and humorous wonderment . . . It does not criticize. It only records. The attitude . . . is whimsical and slightly ironical. The environment is overwhelming, and thus [the artist] observes it." Artist-critic Donald Judd thinks young artists simply don't worry about the sins of society the way they used to: "This doesn't mean they're more gullible, but the position of isolation and purity that abstract expressionism had is not very believable to younger artists."

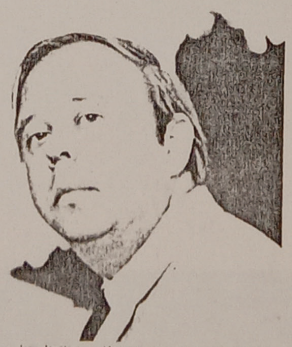
The trouble is that this new toleration is not a happy one—the artist has not really come to terms with society—he seems to be conning the monster the way the sharp little gangster kidded the big moron killer in old gangster movies. An art that waits too long to assert the primacy of human beings over objects and assembly lines is heading toward quick decadence. If abstract expressionism has lost its punch, it is the honorable demise of a proud, strong organism. The sharp gamesmanship of pop, and the benign judo of optical painters must in the end lead to a new assertion of how the human consciousness can change the world, not simply how nicely that consciousness can react under the world's pressure.

**Whither Utopia?** For the artist's struggle is now involuntarily identified with that of his society. Some of the pop-mens' struggles with the fetishistic images of the alienated self, some optical attempts to transcend aggressive sensation, aspire to a new image or idea of man in his new context—glimpses of new *styles* rather than non-styles. The artist's struggle to form a style within his society becomes a more direct social act, a pragmatic vision of Utopia, a hope for man whole. Since the Industrial Revolution it has only been possible to glimpse him in transposed metaphors and despairing, heroic abstract visions.

Now the newest backlash from that old revolution—art as a commodity—threatens to defuse spiritual values. This danger cannot be evaded by assigning hip, sophisticated spiritual values to commodities themselves. In the end, the artist as tycoon, the artist as entertainer, the artist as celebrity, will all have to phase out into the artist as artist, or be absorbed into a giant cultural homogenization.



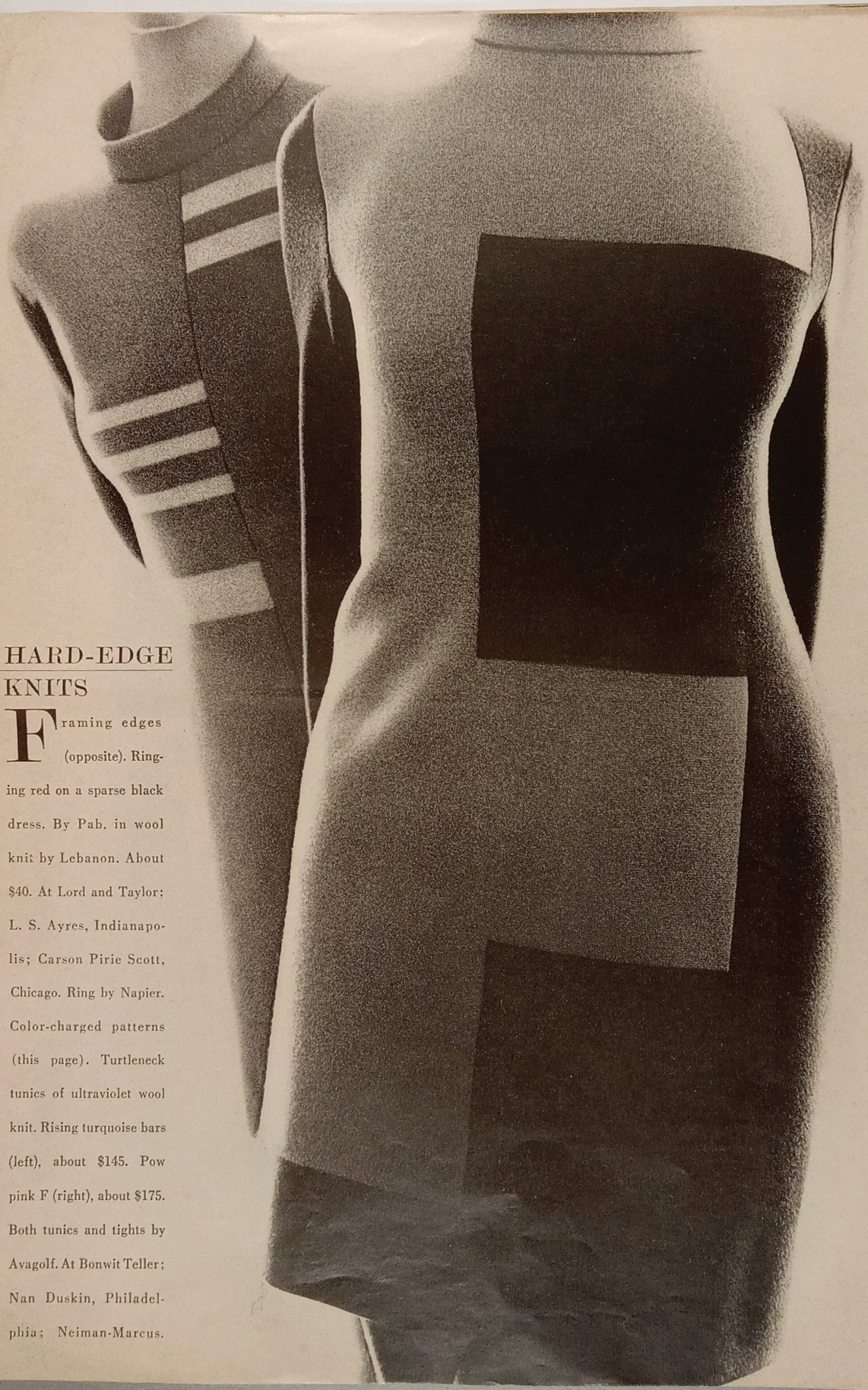
GREENBERG: "There is a crisis . . . of form and quality, not of art and non-art . . . Newer abstract painting suggests possibilities of color for which there are no precedents . . . An unexplored realm of picture making is being opened up."



GELDZAHLER: "As art is exposed more quickly the public's appetite may be growing more voracious . . . mass media, increasing the fine-arts coverage, help to create an audience more concerned with the new than the good."

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## HARD-EDGE KNITS

Framing edges (opposite). Ringing red on a sparse black dress. By Pab, in wool knit by Lebanon. About $40. At Lord and Taylor; L. S. Ayres, Indianapolis; Carson Pirie Scott, Chicago. Ring by Napier. Color-charged patterns (this page). Turtleneck tunics of ultraviolet wool knit. Rising turquoise bars (left), about $145. Pow pink F (right), about $175. Both tunics and tights by Avagolf. At Bonwit Teller; Nan Duskin, Philadelphia; Neiman-Marcus.

HORVAT

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HORVAT

## HARD-EDGE KNITS

Huge areas on a slant (opposite, above). Black and white, singing across the figure, swinging out in a ribbed wool sweater and kidskin skirt. Sweater by Jantzen. About $17. Skirt by Albert Alfus. About $45. Both at Bloomingdale's; Woodward and Lothrop, Washington. Mittens by Hansen. Quick splits of black and white (opposite, below). Double-decker dress of wool knit. About $65. Black wool knit dress with skinny white sleeves. About $50. Both by Goldworm. At Saks Fifth Avenue; Neiman-Marcus; Neusteters, Denver. Symmetrical tension (left). White lines running impact through a black wool knit dress. By Cadillac Imports. About $50. At Best's; Joseph Horne, Pittsburgh; Joseph Magnin. Both pages: Belle-Sharmeer tights.

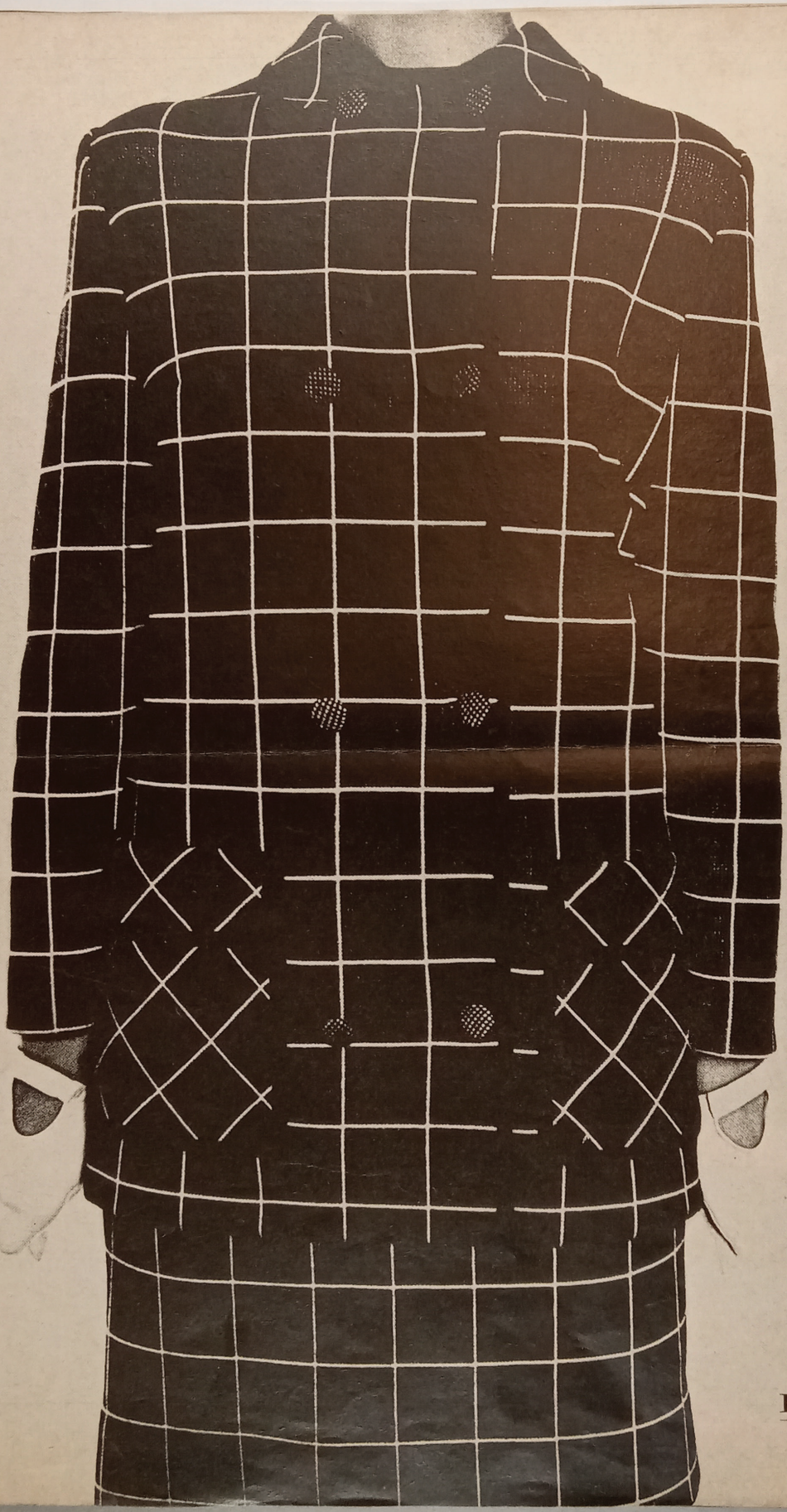
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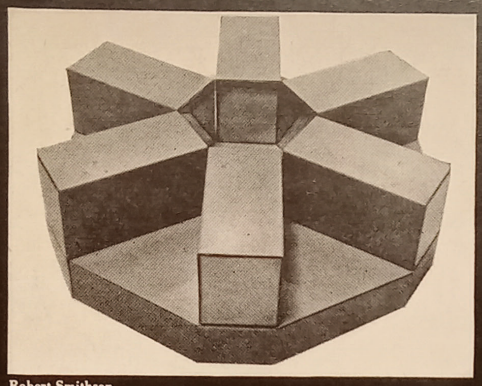
Shooting stripes (opposite), broken by a broken arrow band. Black and white double-knit wool suit. By Gino Paoli. About $140. At Bonwit Teller; Gus Mayer. White gloves with black stripes by Hansen. Spiral earrings (in the hand) by Mimi di N. Enlarged graphs (left), etching excitement. White on black wool knit. The coat-jacket pulled three-quarter length over a black blouse and straight, short skirt. By Damon. About $150. At Jacobson's, Michigan; Joseph Magnin. Gloves by Grandoe.

HORVAT

## HARD-EDGE KNITS

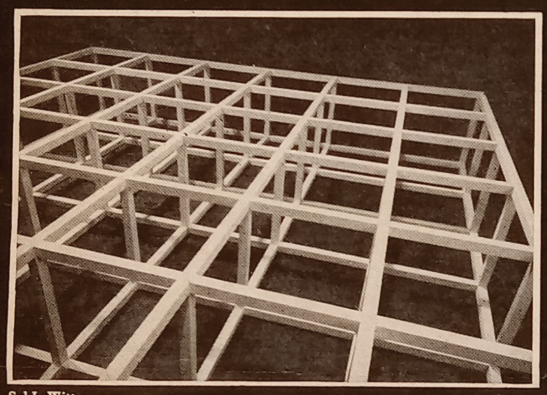
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Robert Smithson

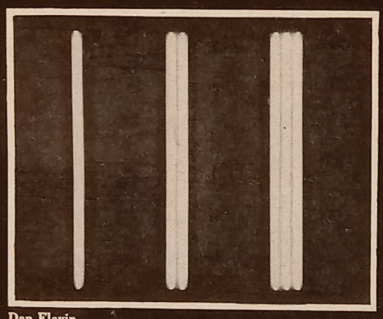
The new art is alien and distant, yet it is reflected in the familiar and common things of this planet. It shares with the new math the ability to manifest number relationships. The artist embodies in his work not only the facts of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, but also the structure of the numbers system in terms of modules and units. Concepts such as mathematical crystal structure, set theory, clock math, and the Cuisenaire rod method, disclose to the new artist uncharted, abstract territories of the mind that he explores in terms of concrete structure.—*Robert Smithson*



Sol LeWitt

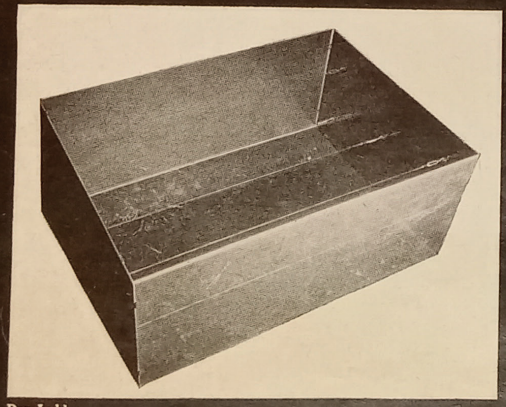
"ABSTRACT PAINTING, 1960", 60 x 60 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

A SQUARE (NEUTRAL, SHAPELESS) CANVAS, FIVE FEET WIDE, FIVE FEET HIGH, AS HIGH AS A MAN, AS WIDE AS A MAN'S OUTSTRETCHED ARMS (NOT LARGE, NOT SMALL, SIZELESS), TRISECTED (NO COMPOSITION), ONE HORIZONTAL FORM NEGATING ONE VERTICAL FORM (FORMLESS, NO TOP, NO BOTTOM, DIRECTIONLESS), THREE (MORE OR LESS) DARK (LIGHTLESS) NON-CONTRASTING (COLORLESS) COLORS, BRUSHWORK BRUSHED OUT TO REMOVE BRUSHWORK, A MAT, FLAT, FREE-HAND PAINTED SURFACE (GLOSSLESS, TEXTURELESS, NON-LINEAR, NO HARD EDGE, NO SOFT EDGE) WHICH DOES NOT REFLECT ITS SURROUNDINGS — A PURE, ABSTRACT, NON-OBJECTIVE, TIMELESS, SPACELESS, CHANGELESS, RELATIONLESS, DISINTERESTED PAINTING — AN OBJECT THAT IS SELF-CONSCIOUS (NO UNCONSCIOUSNESS), IDEAL, TRANSCENDENT, AWARE OF NO THING BUT ART (ABSOLUTELY NO ANTI-ART). Ad Reinhardt, 1960.



Dan Flavin

With the nominal three, I will exult primary figures and their dimensions. Here will be the basic counting marks (primitive abstractions) restated long in the daylight glow of common fluorescent tubes. Such an elemental system becomes possible (ironic) in the context of my previous work.—*Dan Flavin*



Don Judd

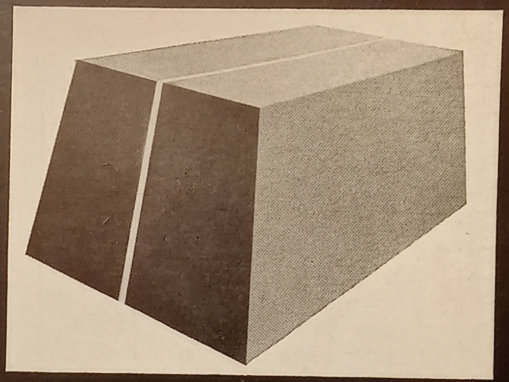
The 'unconscious' has no place in Don Judd's art. His crystalline state of mind is far removed from the organic floods of action painting. He translates his concepts into artifices of fact. Space in Judd's art seems to belong to an order of increasing hardness, not unlike geological formations. He has put space down in the form of deposits. Such deposits come from his mind rather than nature. Judd has brought space down into an abstract world of mineral forms.—*Robert Smithson*

What comes into appearance must segregate in order to appear.—*Goethe*

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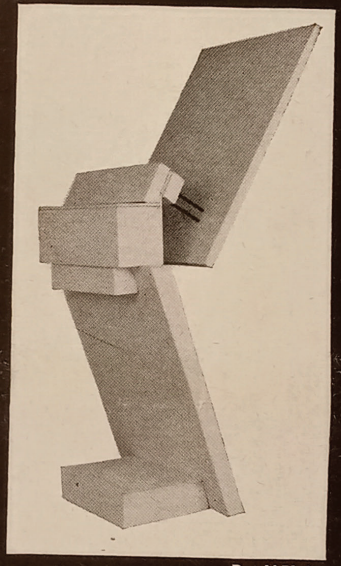
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Simplicity of shape does not necessarily equate with simplicity of experience. Unitary forms do not reduce relationships. They order them. If the predominant hieratic nature of the unitary form functions as a constant, all those particularizing relations of scale, proportion, et cetera, are not thereby canceled. Rather they are bound more cohesively and indivisibly together. The magnification of this single most important sculptural value, shape, together with greater unification and integration of every other essential sculptural value... establishes both a new limit and freedom for sculpture.—*Robert Morris*



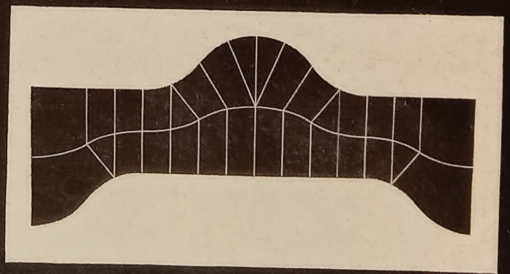
Robert Morris

# THE X FACTOR IN ART



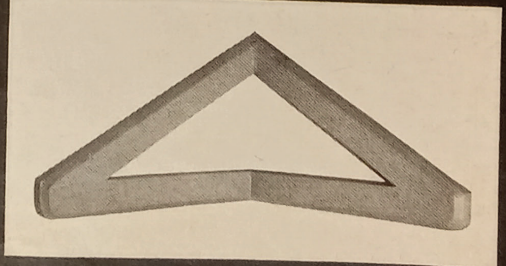
Ronald Bladen

In the film *Planet of the Vampires*, we see an enormous spaceship, the construction of which includes no right angles. The metal interior compartments have sloping walls, rounded corners, and are symmetrical after geometric figures other than the rectangle. As the film progresses, we enter yet another alien spaceship, long abandoned on an airless planet. Even more enormous, this ship takes us a step further: the huge corridors are circular and segmented, the segments being divided into bivalves. A magnetic property activates the ship's mechanisms when living bodies enter a section. Triangular plastic forms, pale orange and opaquely fluorescent, rhythmically pulsate. Electronic mechanisms—without wires, moving parts or obvious power source—activate the atmosphere locks... electronic tapes begin to speak an indecipherable tongue in the subjective time sequence of an alien race.—*Peter Hutchinson*



Will Insley

The time of our minds is no longer that of the clocks.—*Alain Robbe-Grillet*



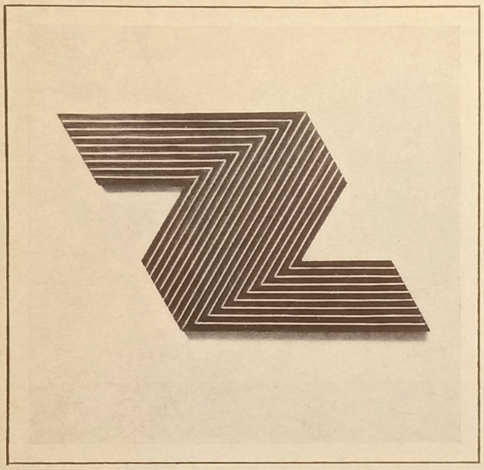
Peter Hutchinson

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DIANE ARBUS



# NOT TO BE MISSED

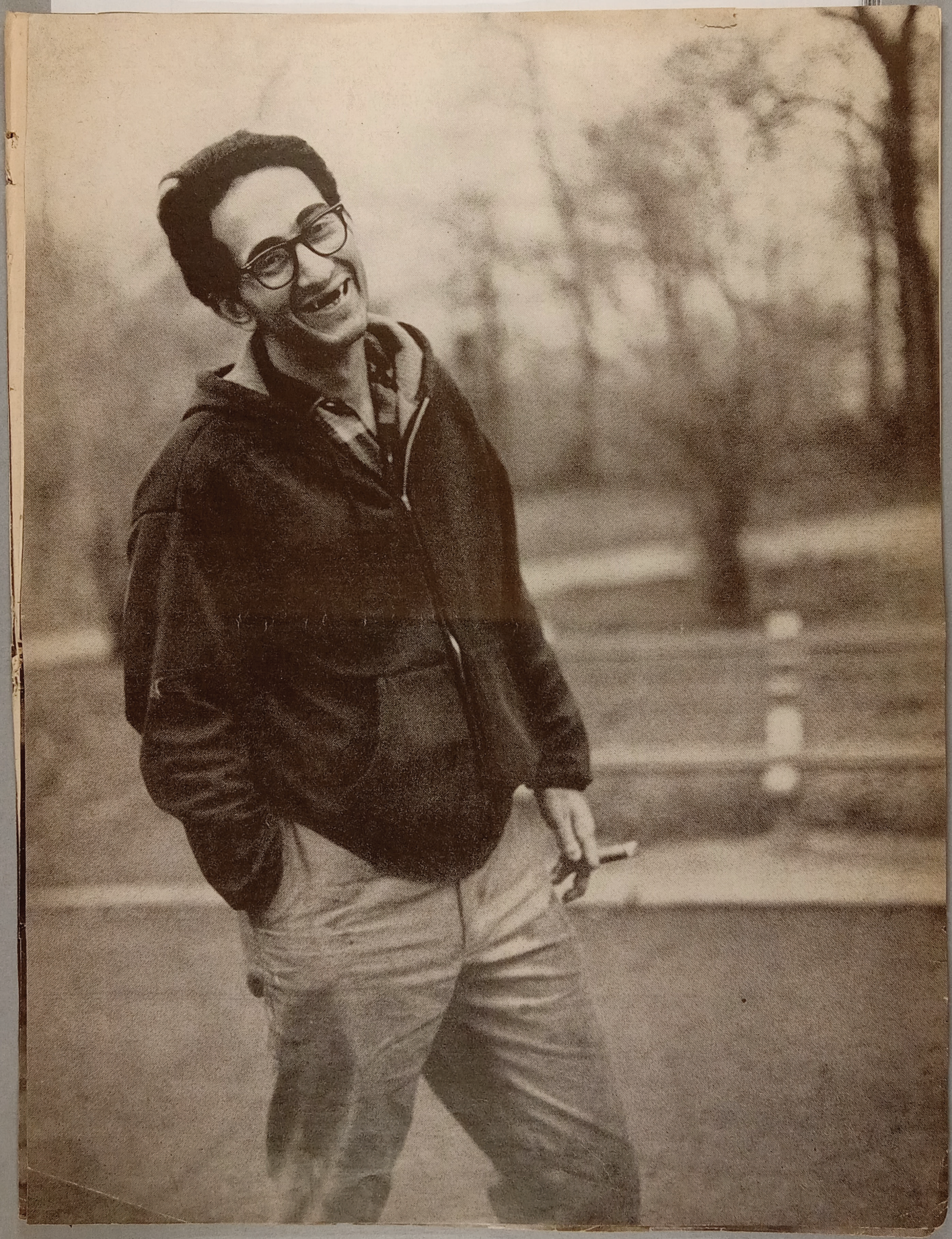
## THE AMERICAN ART SCENE

BY GERI TROTTA

In the last twenty-five years, the creative center of the art world has shifted from Paris to New York. Art is now, for better or worse, big business, a commodity, and as much a part of the American scene as the refrigerator. But these facts wouldn't matter a whit if art hadn't also burst its boundaries to become livelier, more provocative, more original and more fetter-shattering than ever before. The very basic concept of painting was first challenged and altered by Mondrian and abstract expressionists like Jackson Pollack. They changed its classic aim from illusion (*i.e.*, representing three dimensions in two) to being a reality in itself. Then, pop artists like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein returned to representation and used the secondary image as a primary source of inspiration by painting not from life, but from soup can advertisements, comic strips and the commercialized symbols of life. Op artists like Anuszkiewicz chose geometrics to beguile and dazzle the eye. Simultaneously, painters like Frank Stella (opposite) began to eschew the traditional rectangular or square-shaped canvas in favor of their own free outline (above). Other men like Salvatore Scarpitta bandaged the canvas to make two dimensions bulge into three, and Jasper Johns piled three American flags onto each other in receding layers like a cake, bringing painting closer to bas-relief or sculpture. Conversely, sculptors like Lee Bontecou invented strong, three-dimensional compositions to be mounted on walls. *(Continued on the next page)*

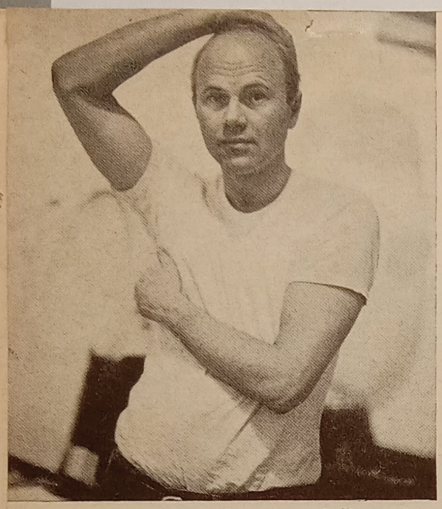
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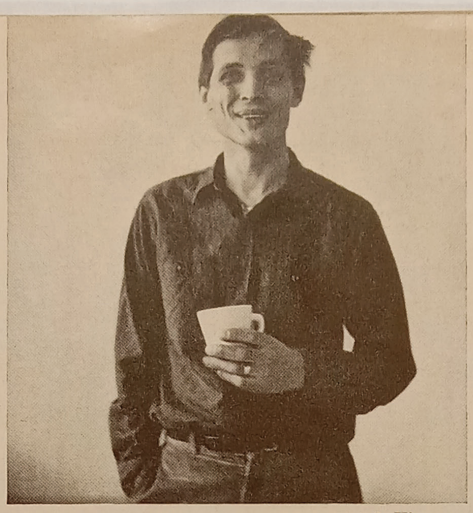



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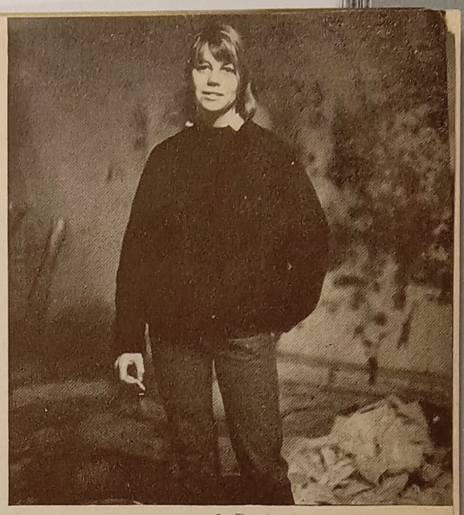
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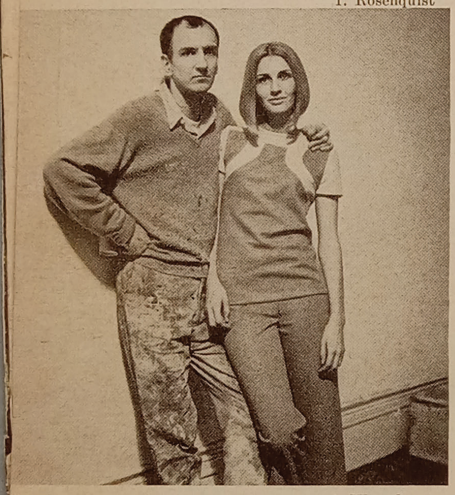
1. Rosenquist



2. Hinman



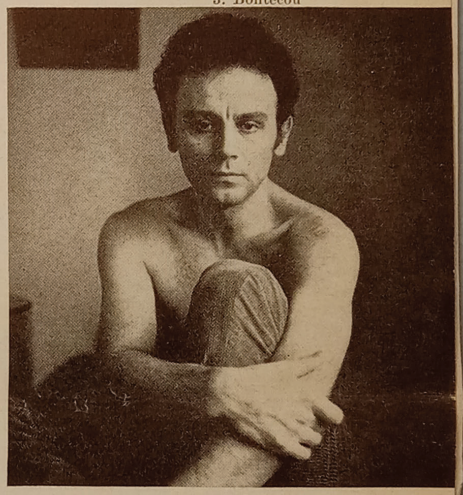
3. Bontecou



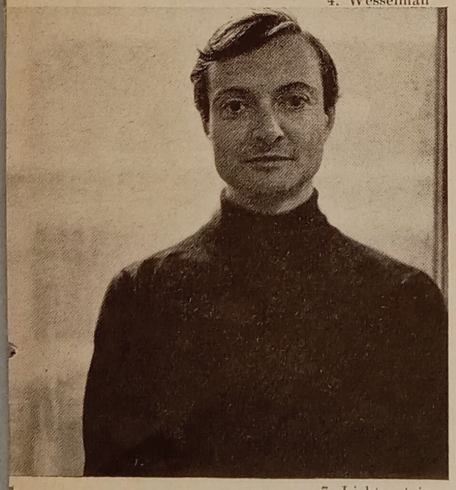
4. Wesselman



5. Bell



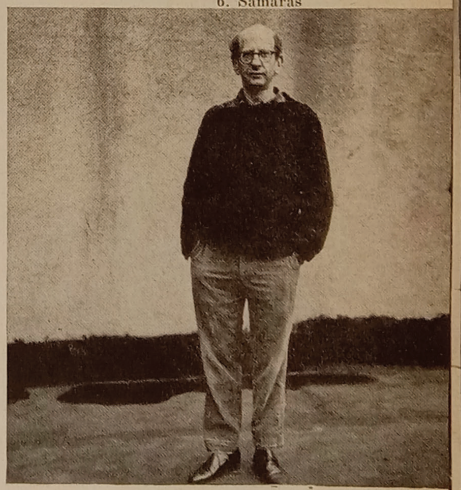
6. Samaras



7. Lichtenstein



8. Noland



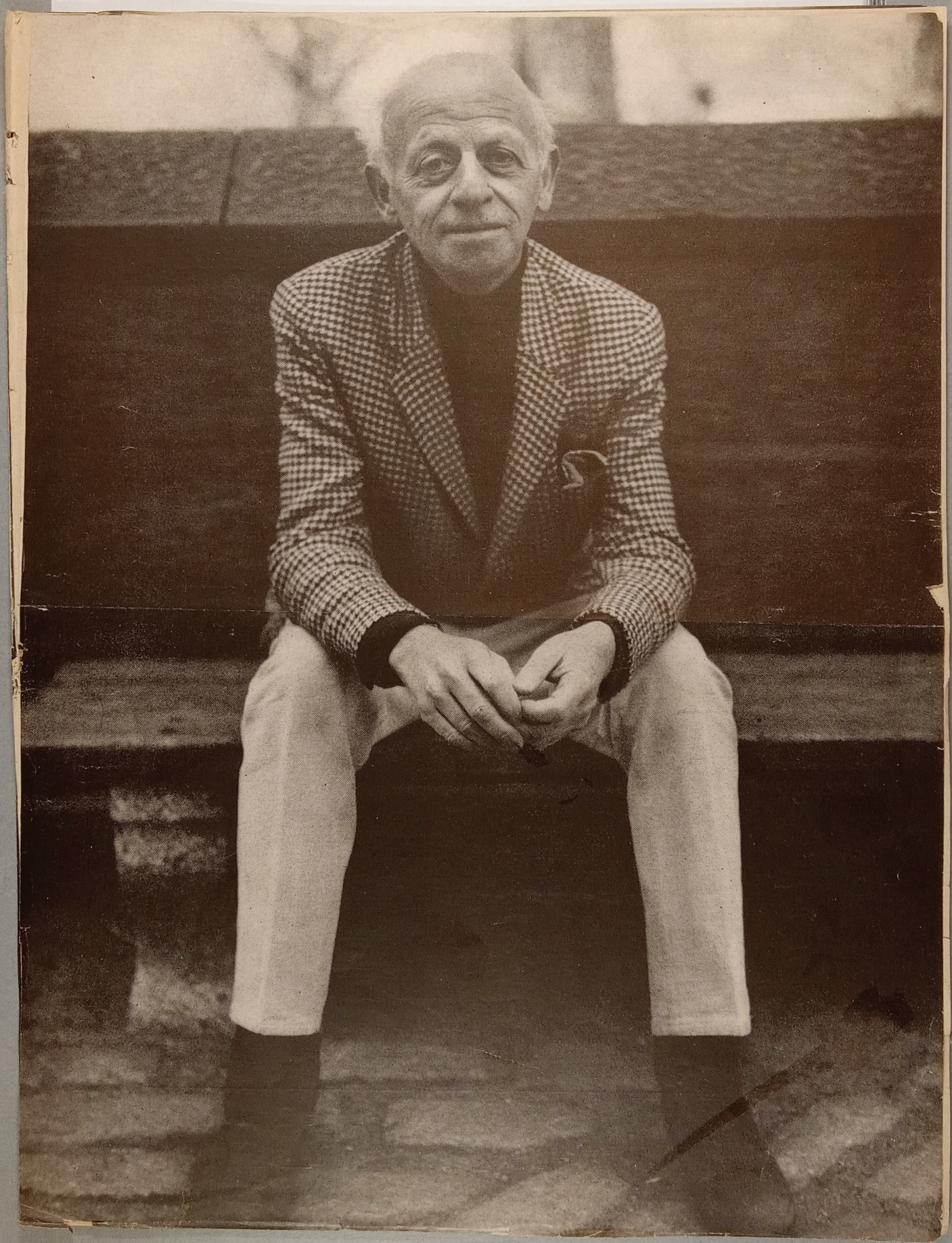
9. Israel

American Art Scene (continued). Here are some artists representing current trends, with an example of the work of each: 1. James Rosenquist pioneers environmental painting, aiming to engulf the viewer. 2. Charles Hinman stretches colored canvas onto free-shaped wooden armatures to create three-dimensional objects, bridging the gap between painting and sculpture. 3. Lee Bontecou, a daring innovator, constructs monumental wall-hanging sculpture—as mesmerizing as the lens of a monstrous camera. 4. Tom Wesselman uses supersized canvases, often shaped to female body outline which are as unsexy as plastic flesh. 5. Larry Bells primary structures are cubes of mineral-plated glass

PORTRAITS BY DIANE ARBUS

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# SUMMER'S BEST DIET

Summer's best diet (from the triple-barreled point of view of loss in weight, gain in health *and* joy in eating) has its cool, fresh source in the sea around us, the sweet-water rivers, the mountain lakes. No foods known to man are as low in fat content (ounce for ounce, seafood contains about half the calories of meat), as high in fat-fighting protein or as rich in energy building nutrients, vitamins and minerals, as those from underwater.

Prepared with a little bit of love and a little bit of care, my menus and recipes for Saturday dinner and Sunday brunch will, I think, delight every figure-conscious weekend guest (are there any other kind?) you entertain this summer. (Editor's note: Mr. Rubinstein's recipes appear at the end of this article.)

What better moment than now, in July, to explore the whole delectable world of fish-and-so-forth—and to experience, for once, the bliss of dieting with no sense of deprivation?

Consider the oyster—as M. F. K. Fisher, a famous food fancier, once brightly suggested. Six raw oysters contain only sixty calories—less than those in one slice of bread. Like the clam, the mussel, the scallop, the squid and the snail, the oyster consists of eight to eleven percent proteins, four to ten percent carbohydrates, one to two-and-one-half percent fat, one to three percent minerals and two-fifths to ten percent glycogen (a reserve carbohydrate supply). The rest of the oyster is water! Have no fear about eating these delicacies in the summer months (those without an 'r'). They merely become more watery and their glycogen content decreases. But this is an added virtue if you're on a low carbohydrate diet.

The crustaceans include crabs, lobsters, crayfish, prawns, shrimps. The freshwater crayfish, in particular, is a delicate and delicious crustacean which is far more available all over the United States than most people realize.

Some of my fondest memories of childhood are the crayfish fishing expeditions *en toute famille* that we used to enjoy in California. We got up before dawn and loaded the car with buckets, ordinary kitchen sieves tied to four-foot-long sticks, a ball of twine, and a plentiful supply of large cubes of beef or horse liver packed in crushed ice. Then we drove off to the Los Angeles River—a narrow, sluggish stream, perfect for finding crayfish. Our system was to tie a piece of liver to a six-foot length of twine and dangle this bait in the water near the burrow entrances or under overhanging rocks. The crayfish would come out and try to claw away the meat. Now the trick was to gently sneak up behind it with a sieve, and scoop it quickly out of the water and into the nearby bucket. The most frequent champion was my father. With great dignity, Cuban cigar clamped firmly in his mouth, white Panama fluttering in the morning breeze, he hauled out one crayfish after another from the same place, while we children ran vainly back and forth on the shore in search of more productive crayfish hideaways. (Editor's note: The author's father is Artur Rubinstein, the world-famous pianist.)

Almost every nook and cranny of the country has some excellent local fresh varieties to supplement the frozen fish shipped from both coasts. Although fish, as a class, is not quite so low in calories as mollusks and shellfish, most fish do remain at the bottom of the 'fattening foods' list. Also, the small amount of fat in fish is the very soft, non-cholesterol kind, as opposed to the hard prime cholesterol-producing fat of beef, butter, milk and cheese. Finally, fish is an abundant source of copper, iron, iodine salts, phosphorus, magnesium, calcium . . . as well as vitamins A, B and D.

I have a pet peeve about American fish preparation. Except in the best French, Italian and Oriental restaurants in major cities, American fish cookery seems to take one major, too-popular form: breaded, fried fish. The disadvantages are several. The frying fat quadruples the calories; the breading adds some more; subtle taste is destroyed; and if you fry fish at home, it produces the most unseemly odors! All these problems can be overcome by *poaching*. Poaching adds no calories, preserves the delicate flavors and con-

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| | TOMKINS | IV.C.56 |



sistencies, and lends itself to sauces (both rich and lean), as well as to the use of herbs, wines, clam juice and fish *fumet*. For the devoted fish cook, a *fumet* is indispensable in the freezer or refrigerator. It is simply a stock made by boiling down fish trimmings and bones. This produces a concentrate which becomes both a poaching liquid and the base for any sauce, thick or thin.

The simple poaching process requires one basic piece of equipment, a poaching pan. It is oblong, covered, and about four inches deep. It has a removable, perforated, slightly raised platform which covers the entire bottom of the pan and two handles, one at each end. The purpose of this platform is to allow removal of the poached fish after cooking without breaking it. You can lift the fish out and slide it gently onto a serving platter without risking a kitchen disaster.

To poach a fish, simply place it on the platform in the pan, cover with your poaching liquid, add a few chopped shallots and other vegetables such as carrots and celery, cover, and bake for a few minutes at 350°. The exact time depends on the size of the fish. After you remove the fish, the remaining juices have a variety of uses—as sauce base, soup base or poaching liquid for another fish. (A final word on poaching: if you can't find a poaching pan, the alternative is to wrap the fish in cheesecloth and poach it in any covered saucepan big enough to hold it. When poached, pick it up with two pairs of tongs, grasping the cloth at either end. Cut away the cloth after the fish is on the serving platter.)

Consider, now, my Saturday dinner and Sunday brunch menus for twelve. Although some of the recipes include butter, flour and cream, remember that each recipe serves twelve people. The 'extra calories' that each guest consumes are quiet inconsequential. Some of the dishes, like the poached salmon with egg sauce, or the coconut-raspberry ring, are easy enough for a child to prepare. But, given the proper equipment, none of them are too difficult for a truly dedicated part-time cook to master with ease. One word of caution: follow my directions *exactly*.

*The Menu for Saturday Dinner*

Crayfish Bisque Polonaise (or Crayfish in Sauce over rice. You may substitute lobster if crayfish is not available in your region.)

Quenelles of Pike with Mussel Sauce

Coconut-Raspberry Ring (gelatin dessert)

Wine: Pouilly-Fumé, La Doucette, 1964

*The Menu for Sunday Brunch*

Jellied Madrilene Surprise (with Red Caviar)

Poached Salmon with Egg Sauce

Sole Mousse

Fruits Rafraîchis

Wine: Musigny Blanc, 1962—estate bottled by the Count of Vogue

*The Recipes for Saturday Dinner*

*CRAYFISH BISQUE POLONAISE* (Serves 12)

8 dozen medium to small crayfish

6 large stalks fresh dill

2 stalks celery

salt

pepper

thyme

1. Soak crayfish in bucket of cold water, agitating bucket occasionally to remove any dirt or sediment. If necessary, place crayfish in sink under cold running water.

2. In large stock pot (15 quarts or larger) place crayfish, 3 dill stalks, celery, 1 tbsp. salt, 1 tbsp. thyme, and enough cold water to cover crayfish by 3 inches. Bring to a boil. Boil for 10 minutes. Remove crayfish, reserving the cooking liquid.

3. Allow cooked crayfish to cool. When cool, twist off each tail, peel shell from meat (in same manner as peeling shrimps) and devein. Cooked, peeled and deveined tails should now be refrigerated. Keep all the shells—both from the *(Continued on page 123)*

BY PAUL RUBINSTEIN

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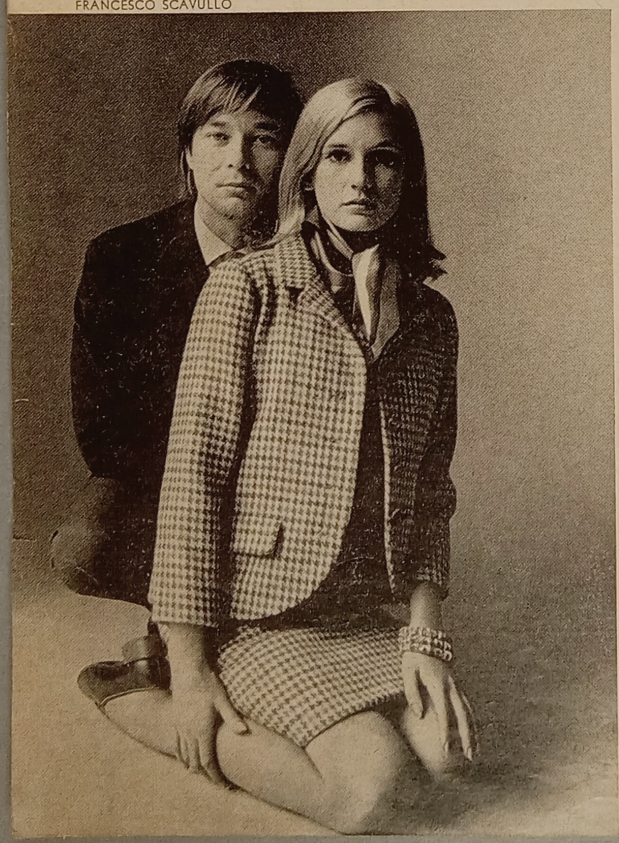


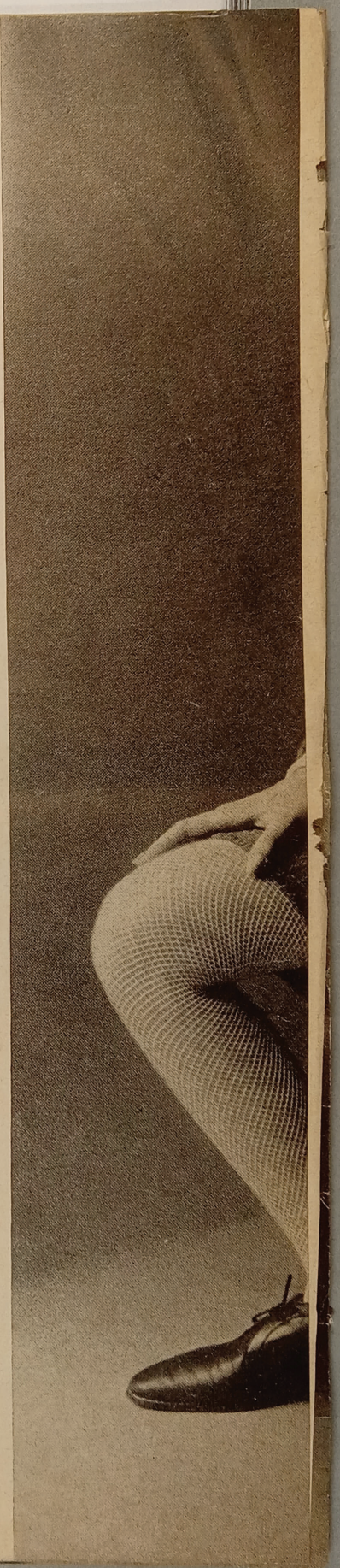

# ON THE NEW YORK ART SCENE

JULY '61

What excites one about the large shaped canvases of Sven Lukin (below) is their seemingly endless ability to grow. Half paintings, half sculptures, these hybrids leap from the canvas, crawl on the floor with a physical—almost living—presence and voracity for the room space at the Pace Gallery. What devastates women about Sven Lukin are his slivered blue eyes and a slight Latvian accent investing him with the mysterious appeal of the film hero who speaks from the American screen with a foreign sound. He is with Miss Jessie Sanders, who wears a mauve checked riding jacket and dress by Geoffrey Beene, in Orceyre wool. About $290. At Saks Fifth Avenue; Dayton's; Neiman-Marcus. Scarf also by Geoffrey Beene. Kenneth Lane bracelets. The extraordinarily potent sculptures of Paul Thek (opposite)—raw-torn pounds of what may be human flesh, residing in the clinical cool of glossy glass cases—hurt the viewer into extending his sensibilities. In his seemingly impersonal, inhuman treatment of an emotionally explosive subject, he challenges one to go beyond the initial shock, to an intellectual acceptance, and then to a rejoicing in the naked vulnerability of the flesh. A thorough original, Paul Thek is warm, direct; vibrantly discusses the tactile pleasure of working in wax. "Why flesh?" He erupts: "The same people who scream at my work will run six blocks for a juicy accident. The changed human animal of a self-deceiving, psychedelic civilization needs watching. We don't need an old cage for a new species." His work is at the Pace Gallery. With him, Miss Laura Morse, in a brown and rust wool pants suit and white sweater by Bill Blass for Maurice Rentner. Later at Bonwit Teller; Gidding-Jenny, Cincinnati; Dayton's. Pin by Yves Saint Laurent. Golo shoes.

FRANCESCO SCAVULLO





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# ON THE NEW YORK ART SCENE

A Frenchman of Mephistophelian elegance, Guy de Rougemont (left) produces huge, slow-tension paintings (at the Byron Gallery). Miss Benedetta Barzini, in a beige trouser-suit by Ginala, in Forstmann wool gabardine, loomed in America. About $110. At Bonwit Teller; Julius Garfinckel, Washington; I. Magnin. Trifari earrings. Herbert Levine shoes. Robert Watts (opposite) takes the familiar into the synthetics of commercial culture. The object in its new locus is startling: chairs that light up with neon (shown), a strobe-lit room in which one has the feeling of being alone in space with a man-made sun. With him: Miss Dorothy Herzka of the Bianchini Gallery (where Watts' work is shown) in a blue checked wool trouser-suit by Christian Dior-New York. At Bergdorf Goodman; Julius Garfinckel, Washington; Neiman-Marcus. Yves Saint Laurent earrings. Capezio shoes.

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FRANCESCO SCAVULLO

# ON THE NEW YORK ART SCENE

The sometimes pleasure-giving, sometimes frightening unpredictability of what happens when the machine takes on a personality is spelled out by Enrique Castro-Cid (above). His works can be outrageously lovable, as the brightly colored, electrically powered plastic balls chasing each other capriciously in a white case. Others, with anthropomorphic imagery, play on the nerves with clicking sounds and register man's eerie lack of control today. Castro-Cid—who speaks with roisterous zest about Vesalius, Leibnitz, cybernetics—and his wife Sylvia are an enchanting Chilean couple. His work is at the Richard Feigen Gallery. Her white, brown-spliced dress is by Chester Weinberg, in Staron wool crepe. About $125. At Lord and Taylor; Stix, Baer and Fuller, St. Louis. Corfam shoes by Galitzine. The drugging sensation of speed is the sculptural theme of Salvatore Scarpitta (opposite). His irrepressible racing cars gain aesthetic momentum from their very isolation in Leo Castelli's gallery space, and from their tug of war with the walls. Scarpitta, a Californian of dynamic presence, says the first thing people ask him is "How fast can it go?" He considers himself a "square artist, as opposed to Pop, hip, cool." In his marvelous rasping voice, he shouts: "I'm hot about these cars! I make them because I *want* them." His racer friends consider him odd and think he wants to detune them. Nevertheless he is a fiery follower: "A racetrack is like a woman. The more beautiful, the more dangerous. You know that somewhere along the way, a man can meet the greatest or the most painful moment of his life." Photographed with him, Miss Susan Porter in a softly belted white wool crepe dress by Adele Simpson. About $155. At Saks Fifth Avenue; Hutzler's, Baltimore; Dayton's. Shoes by Customcraft.

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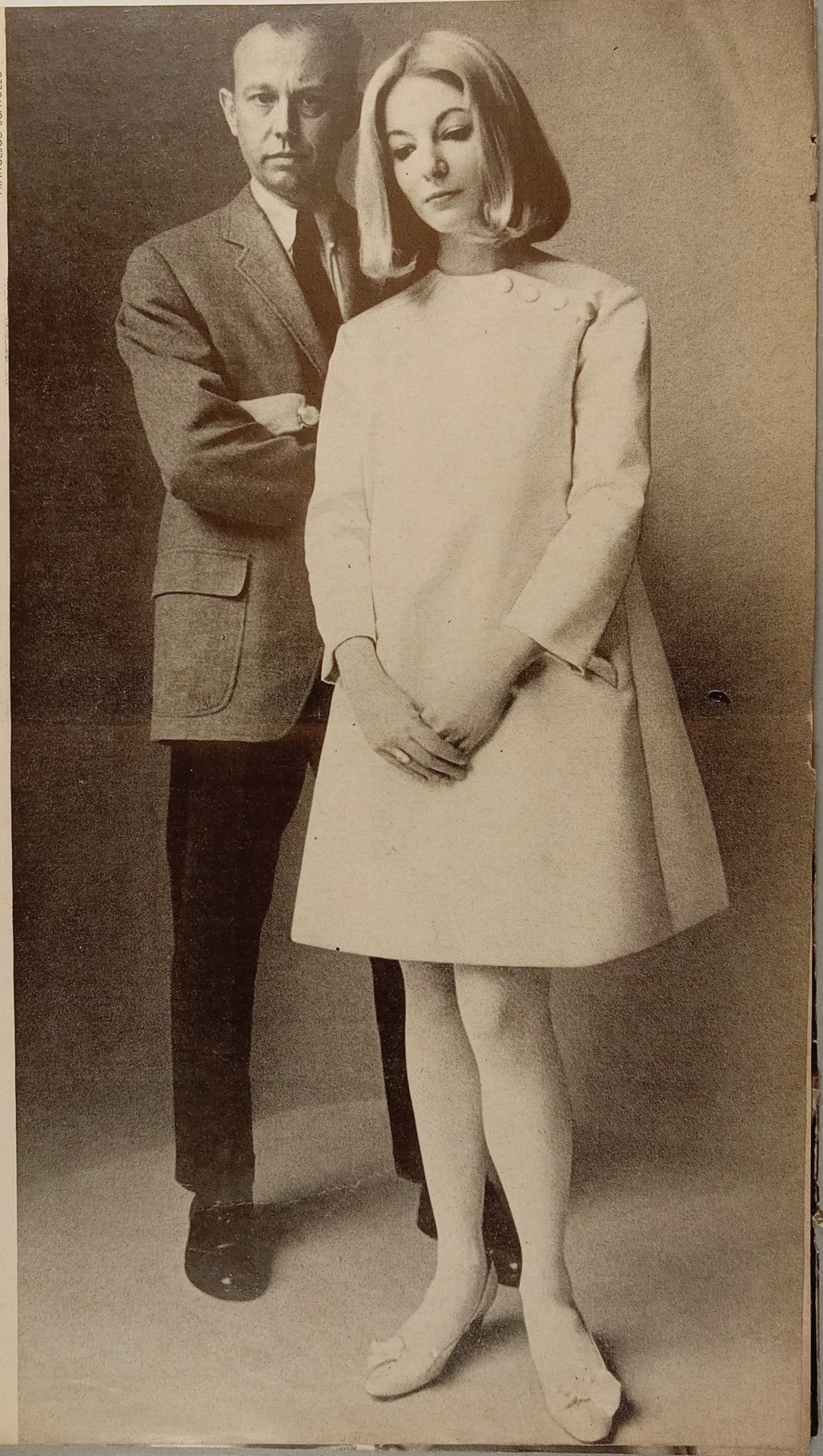
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FRANCESCO SCAVULLO

# ON THE NEW YORK ART SCENE

The formal, frontal, next-to-godliness clean painting that he pioneered in the 1940's established Ellsworth Kelly (right) as the artist's artist of today. A modest, privacy-seeking man, he is one of four Americans represented at this summer's Venice Biennale. Miss Judith Heidler, of the Sidney Janis Gallery that shows his work, wears a carved white silk satin dress by Mollie Parnis. About $235. At Bonwit Teller; Julius Garfinckel, Washington; Montaldo's. Charles Jourdan shoes. Spearheading the structuralist movement in sculpture is Don Judd (opposite). His sleek, dry, assertive boxes at the Castelli Gallery transcend geometric clichés and allusions to other objects. His wife Julie wears a pink dinner tent by Teal Traina, in Staron silk. About $145. At Altman's; Woodward and Lothrop, Washington; I. Magnin. Kenneth Lane earrings.



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# ON THE NEW YORK ART SCENE

In the expansive color paintings of Edward Avedesian (below), the single giant circle—striped in blushing yellows and oranges, voltage-packed purples and blues—recurs with a deliberateness that enthralls anew each time. Though they are perfect circles and even stripes, their soft edges give the impression that they're swelling and shrinking as they bounce, dance and sometimes float off the canvas. An articulate Bostonian, Avedesian sparks with wit. About being photographed for the magazine, he said: "I guess this is my Hi-Mom picture." Photographed with him is Miss Linda Perlman of the Elkon Gallery—where his works are shown—wearing a filmy, black marquisette tunic dress by Oscar de la Renta for Jane Derby. About $245. At Bergdorf Goodman; Hutzler's, Baltimore; I. Magnin. The sandals by Herbert Levine. The diverse gifts of Jane Wilson and John Gruen (opposite) are beautifully chimed in marriage. She paints exquisite landscapes: fields in a rich tangle of color; still, anti-dramatic city scenes in which smog becomes a poetry of soft cubes as it descends into fenced-off planes of a neighborhood playground. Her paintings can be seen at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery. He, as she describes him in her serene, womanly way has "the beat on everything." He is the chief art critic of the new *World Journal*. His vivid book, *The New Bohemia*, is just off the press. Her pitch brown dress is by Chuck Howard of Townley, in Enka rayon and Celanese acetate crepe by William Rose. About $125. At Lord and Taylor; Carson Pirie Scott, Chicago; I. Magnin. Both pages: Kenneth Lane jewelry.



FRANCESCO SCAVULLO

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# POST MORTEM ON POP CULTURE

Dirge: I dunno. Whadda you wanna do? . . . I dunno. . . . Do you wanna see a film? . . . No. . . . How about a movie? . . . No. . . . There's a multiple-total-psychedelic-plastic-cum-sensibility at the neighborhood loft. . . . I said no. . . . Let's go dancing. . . . If you mean discothèque, forget it. . . . We could hunt up costumes at a thrift shop. . . . Next thing, you'll suggest an acid/orgy. . . . Well, we can't sit here telling Batjokes all night. . . . What's on Environmental Telstar? . . . A Foreign Policy Trivia Test. . . . We took that last year. . . . I'll call up Henry, Andy, Jane, Marshall, Ivan, Murray, Jonas, Diana, or Tom or Susan. . . . But not Dwight, for heaven's sake, he's such a pussycat.

* * *

Now in this scene I want all the hipsters, grooves, gurus, beards, heads, cineasts, A & R men, pacifists, pariahs, beautiful people, medianalysts, auto mechanics and adepts to recall the following letter, datelined Brooklyn, which appeared last spring in *Newsweek:*

> I was saddened, to say the least, by the passing of Trigger (Newsmakers, April 11). Like millions of others, I enjoyed his roles on television and in the movies and was horror-struck to learn of Roy Rogers' plans for Trigger's remains. Stuffing and mounting such a beloved creature is an example of the most distasteful commercialism possible. . . .

Pop culture was a way of coping. It was a ready-made wrap-up—a definition that pretended to encompass the whole contemporary scene. In a world bewildered by variety and complexity, Pop assured us neither existed; that the range of what matters extends no further than a tight little island bounded roughly by underground movies, rock music and Henry Geldzahler. Pop prescribed a total, self-contained, self-defining, accessible, substitute world. The Scene, where the action was, did not so much illuminate life as offer its own limited version of it: a complete supergame with simple rules, static people-counters and no goal beyond making—the scene.

Pop believed in culture by take-over. That is, the fine arts embraced the commercial, comic and billboard arts. In a gross assimilation that asserted there was no inherent clash of values. The Pop artist escaped automation by declaring he *was* a machine and by working in the Factory. If Pollock climbed into his canvas-world and spat at it (the abstract expressionist alienation), the Pop artist manufactured a real world and played in it: the Super-Market, where he acted like a product to be advertised, consumed and discarded.

Pop culture, for a while, made 'living' fun. It wiped out all the critical distinctions between art and life. Something was happening, in full view, available to all. There was nothing, until Pop, for urban people with money, time and a sense of culture who wanted a clean-cut, pre-mixed kick. Something contemporary, understandable and not in the least dangerous. Something to do after hours and on Saturday afternoons, in costume.

The discothèque was the Noah's Ark of the Pop program. Being inside meant instant salvation. The rest of the world might be going to hell, but you were go-going. To NOW. All together now. The discothèque was masscult, the great society consensus. Yeah yeah yeah. Stamping ground for levis and Saint Laurents, for commoners and Courrègeses. And its attitude toward normal life was, work it out, baby.

The Rolling Stones asked: Do you feel it? And the Stones—whose name implies the a-historical, no moss-gathering essence of Pop—asserted by that question, as well as by their name, that no experience can be accrued, no point of view gained, no common understanding developed. At best, a

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BY HOWARD JUNKER

massive, momentous, all right *feeling*. When the music starts, you get switched on. When it's over, well, there is life out there to go-go back to. The discothèque did provide an opportunity for letting go. While not actually involving sex, it looked as if it did. And high-strung swingers could exclaim that frugging was very uninhibited-making. Yet the look associated with the frenzy was one of glazed insouciance; the structure, 'alternate periods of stupor and activity.' Ô homage to Catatonia.

There is, anyway, nothing to be said in the Pop world, unless to repeat a litany of Pop clichés: snap, crackle, pop. There is no becoming, no working up to—therefore nothing to remark. Pop said: the surface, the static image, life-as-comic-strip, life which proceeds in single, grossly detached frames. Sybil Burton uptown. SNAP. Sybil Burton downtown. SNAP. Sybil Burton in hermaster's chamber. SNAP.

Any evaluation of Pop culture, any dismissal from above, became meaningless. Pop aesthetics brooked no irony. The Obvious had no need for critical certification. Beyond that, Pop people made no defense against pious disapproval. They simply allowed that there was no scene but The Scene, no look but The Look, no time but NOW. If you didn't subscribe, if you had some other way of dealing with contemporary experience, all right. Pop was Pop.

The Pop intellectual took up the name game: this is unintentional camp; that is summer camp. The Pop synthesis necessitated an enormous inventory, since the manufactured environment had emerged from a cultural nowhere; it became the intellectual's job to found the canon.

By that time Pop culture had become our collective past and present, our collective imagination and our collective experience. Pop images became short-cuts to readily shared meaning—clichés communicating the monolithic imagination. The Vinyl Solution. What resulted was an inner tension, an anxiety that the Zeitgeist—all our dreams—had been exhausted and that no renewal was possible. The only thing was to escalate the obsolesence. In 1967, the Girl of the Year would last six months.

Just what authority Pop possessed as a point of view for contemporary life is questionable. The rush of events which followed the Second World War made any coherent approach *(Continued on page 134)*

Elegy: We will have no more reviving, retrieving, rehashing, retreading, rerunning. No more researching the past. No more archetypes, attitudes, adaptations from other media. No more put-ons. Definitely nothing commercially inspired, or imported or uplifted from the proles or tweenagers. Further, there will be no more double-standard, culture-classifying. No more In/Out, hip/square, High/Low, serious/frivolous, good/bad. There will be no more status in picking up on the new thing first. No one will abandon their island because the tourists check in.

* * *

There will be no more lamentations. Of any kind. Especially none about alienation or recognition. Careerism will vanish. Artists will lose their labels, and once again be misunderstood and unsold. Poor little rich girls, and, by extension, all Pop characters, will be granted the divine gift of non-publicity, that is, Privacy. Patrons of the arts—especially *arriviste*, insincere collectors—will be thanked for their generosity and interest.

* * *

Everyone will get a haircut. And look back on these good old days when we shouted hooray for the paper dress and hooray for instant, homogenized culture, united and equal for all, hinterland and megalopolis together, aesthete and boor and prig. Pacem in terris.

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# SURREALISM

## OR "THE WHITE-HAIRED REVOLVER"

BY ANNETTE MICHELSON

Surrealism is tenacious, perennial; it does not quit us, and our thinking, our art, continue largely to sustain themselves upon its insights, promises and ambiguities. Neither style nor period nor repertory of works and techniques, Surrealism is one of the central pivots of contemporary sensibility, of our sense of identity and dissociation. The tenacity has been commensurate with the scale of an ambition, dedicated to the reconciling or transcending of the contradictions between freedom and order, dream and reality, the personal and the political, to the liberation of human consciousness through the act of poetic creation. This revolutionary aspiration was articulated by a generation of men enchanted and possessed; one thinks of them walking the streets of Paris in that state of exacerbated awareness, of voracious attentiveness, which constitute forms of beatitude. The energy and fervor of these painters, poets and polemicists spilled out, unable wholly to spend itself in the manifestos, fights, festivities, in the rituals, games and acts of provocation.

Surrealist art was an art of redemption. Its doctrine and the majesty underlying the vivacity, insolence, wildness and freshness of its best poetry and painting, derive from a rejection of the utopian tradition of nineteenth-century rationalism for the splendor of an eschatology. To be a means of salvation, art had to become, not an object, limited and self-contained, but a window opening upon an ultimate reality inherent in daily experience. Every strategy that could free the psyche, that could dissolve the frontiers separating intellect from sensibility, consciousness from the unconscious, was to be used. Dream and reality were, for André Breton, "intercommunicating vases"; their intercommunication *was* reality and every technique that could help to disclose that reality, articulate it, make it palpable, was to be explored. Of these techniques and strategies, the freshest and most fruitful, in this period close to the first excitement of the Freudian discoveries, were undoubtedly those of automatic creation.

Painting and poetry alike gained strength and spontaneity from the disciplined and loving submissiveness which the automatic technique required. From freely associative play came the perpetually disconcerting inventiveness of Surrealist poetry, the power and beauty of its art. This beauty was to be, as Breton had demanded, "convulsive or nothing." The enthusiastic adoption of the automatic process derived largely from the conviction that painter and poet thereby recorded, with seismographic precision, intimations of a larger, cosmic order in which individual human consciousness had its place of election. For like all revolutionary movements, Surrealism embodied a dream of order, but an order which could accommodate and use the irrepressible anarchy at the core of our existence. Play, therefore, the dream, and a grave and all-pervading eroticism characterize surrealist art and feeling. These men and their women cultivated chance, gave a new primacy to wit and humor, to games, to romantic love; they hoped and worked for a society in which life would have the innocence of play and ecstatic necessity of ritual. A spirit and a tactic of rebellion and provocation had therefore to be created and maintained, directed, when necessary against the laws of Nature herself.

Consider the objects in Surrealist painting. They are heavy, as with the density of their own existence. They are weighed down, literally portentous; they are released into movement

René Magritte

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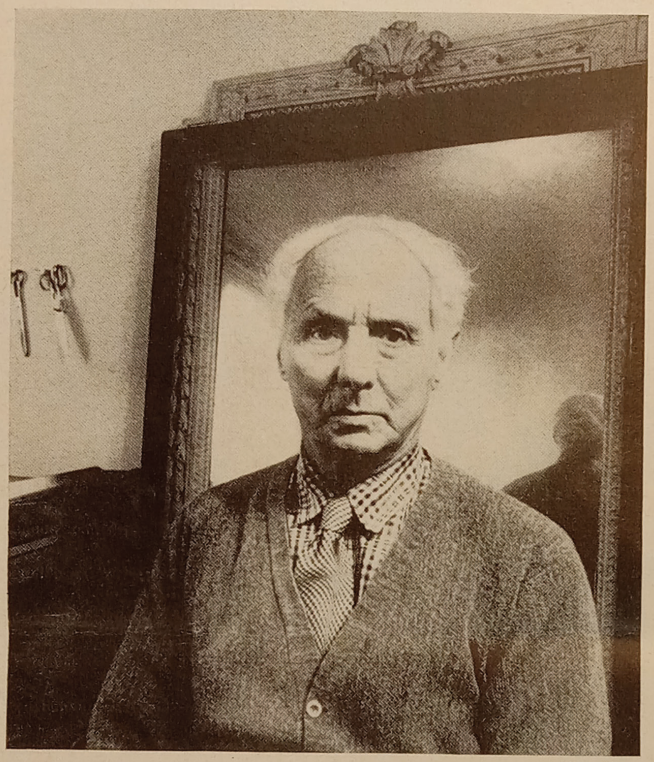



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BILL BRANDT



Max Ernst

only through our attentiveness, through an act of imaginative understanding. In this liberating process, natural laws are suspended. Thus, in Max Ernst's paintings, as in Magritte's, creatures and objects move through space with the freedom of that suspension. The magic involved is not the power of divinity (the Surrealists have no gods, merely heroes); it is the logic of the dream-life in which time and space are distended, contracted, multiplied, abolished or reversed. Stones float through crystalline skies, a walnut swells to fill a window frame. Revolutionary irreverence is extended, fills and transforms the physical universe into an annex of Alice's Wonderland.

So, too, in poetry, rational, conventional order is disrupted, subverted, and the result is the complex of shock images, puns, conundrums and Orphic ambiguities: a world in which "elephants are contagious," "the air is rose-shaped," and in which the poet himself is a "soluble fish."

Image and language have not, will not, recover from this insurrection. Surrealism, like a "white-haired revolver," retains, in the ripeness of its forty years, the explosive force, the danger potential of our youth.

de Chirico

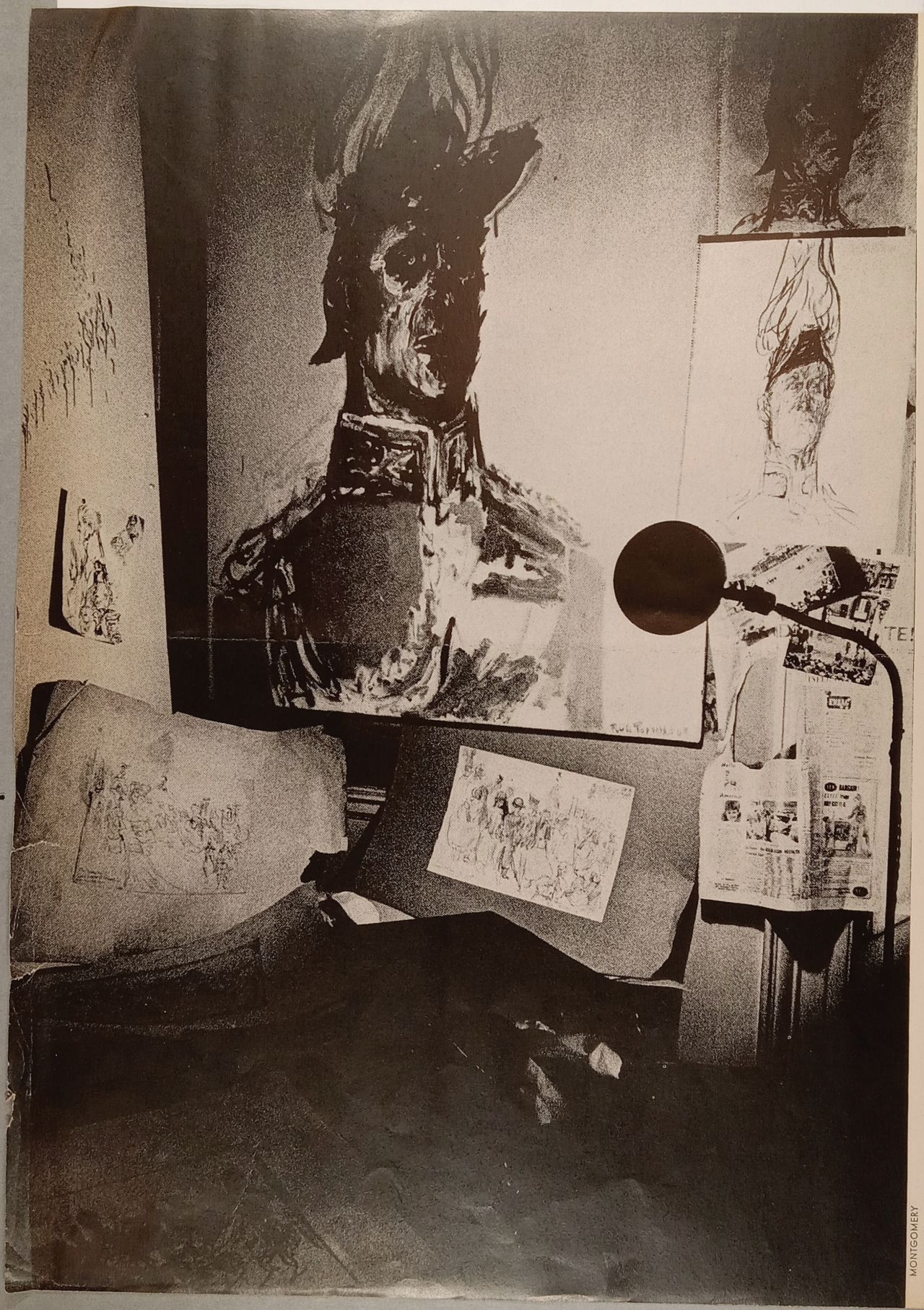
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MONTGOMERY

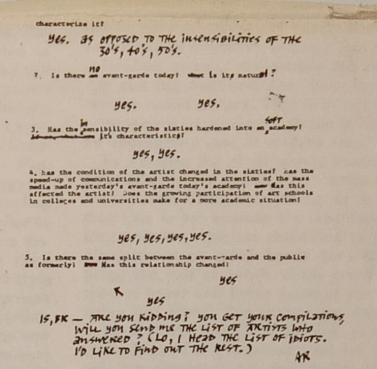
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# SENSIBILITY OF THE SIXTIES

*Using the questionnaire, a popular information-gathering tool of our time, two critics have polled a large number of artists on such issues as: Is there a sensibility of the sixties? If so, what is it? Is there an avant garde? An academy? What is the artist's condition today? The answers, published here, can be read individually as personal statements by each artist, and collectively they stand as an important document on the state of American art in the present decade of our century*

Barbara Rose and Irving Sandler



characterize it?
yes. as opposed to the insensibilities of the 30's, 40's, 50's.

7. Is there an avant-garde today? What is its nature?
no
yes. yes.
yes.

8. Has the sensibility of the sixties hardened into an academy? If so, what are its characteristics?
yes, yes.

9. Has the condition of the artist changed in the sixties? Has the speed-up of communications and the increased attention of the mass media made yesterday's avant-garde today's academy? How has this affected the artist? Does the growing participation of art schools in colleges and universities make for a more academic situation?
yes, yes, yes, yes.

5. Is there the same split between the avant-garde and the public as formerly? How has this relationship changed?
yes
yes
is, RK — are you kidding? you get your compilations will you send me the list of artists who answered? (Lo, I head the list of idiots. I'd like to find out the rest.) RK

*The critics' questions—and answers by Ad Reinhardt: "Lo, I head the list of idiots."*

Today it seems difficult for artists to talk to each other in any spot more public than the studio (except for out-of-town panels). There are no more places where art-conscious people meet regularly, like the old Club, the Cedar Street Tavern, such uptown galleries as Parsons, Kootz, Egan, Stable or the Tenth Street cooperatives downtown. The art world has grown too large and too fragmented for artists to maintain personal contacts in all sectors. And there just isn't the time.

Yet the need to exchange ideas persists. Perhaps a public form of communication is the only remaining way in the sixties to discover what a broad cross-section of artists think privately. With this in mind, we recently sent the following questionnaire to a large number of artists:

1) *Is there a "sensibility of the sixties"? If so, how would you characterize it?*
2) *Is there an avant garde today? What is its nature?*
3) *Has the sensibility of the sixties hardened into an academy? If so, what are its characteristics?*
4) *Has the condition of the artist changed in the sixties? Has the speed-up of communications and the increased attention of the mass media made yesterday's avant garde today's academy? How has this affected the artist? Does the growing participation of art schools in colleges and universities make for a more academic situation?*
5) *Is there the same split between the avant garde and the public as formerly? How has this relationship changed?*

We asked specific questions only to make it easier for artists to get into the subject, aware that a number would answer in part, re-phrase the questions or throw them away and write us about issues uppermost in their minds—and many did. We also knew that, on the whole, our questionnaire was loaded—oriented to a sociological approach—which would be strongly protested; and it was, so we were not surprised at the many negative reactions. Jasper Johns refused to answer because the questions were "illogical and out of the forties." Robert Morris' answer, "I didn't think most of what was asked amounted to any kind of issue," was typical of those critical of the sociological bias. Claes Oldenburg felt that the questions were "critics' and historians' questions," which should not have been directed to artists. Others refused on the grounds that they were qualified only to talk about their own work. We understood that there would be many valid objections to such a project: we aimed to provoke, and the provocation undoubtedly contributed to the pertinence and liveliness of the responses.

Most of the artists answered our questionnaire point by point, and when all the comments were strung together, they added up to a coherent position. We chose to print the replies as statements, without the questions, to avoid repetition.

Although the questionnaire was sent to artists working in a wide variety of styles, there was a surprising degree of unanimity in the answers. Many characterized the sensibility of the sixties as slick, hard-edge and impersonal. Few thought there was a new academy, because there was too much stylistic diversity for any one style to dominate. On the other hand, the majority replied that there is no avant garde today, since the concept of an avant garde implies an underground, and today nothing can get far enough underground to escape the glare of publicity and the appetites of the newly awakened art public. (It is generally agreed that nothing can shock today's shock-proof middle class.)

The artist is now, in Allan Kaprow's words, "a man of the world." Many of those questioned expressed the same sentiment; some appeared surprised but grateful that society allowed them to rear children and to own property. Money is appreciated to the degree that it makes time, space and materials for work possible. The traditional alienation of an avant garde from society, however, does not seem diminished by the artist's new affluence. Beneath the relative optimism runs an undertone of discontent. Although the artist is now being feted, there is the suspicion that his works are being consumed rather than understood. Many resent their works being used as a form of entertainment or titillation.

There emerges a collective portrait of the artist in the sixties as an individual enjoying relative physical comfort but subject to continued emotional uneasiness. Wary, harassed or disenchanted, the artists seem to be asking, "Is there anybody out here but me?" Often the statements sound as if they are coming from echo chambers or solitary confinement. Despite the fantastic amount of activity generated in and around the art world, despite the fact that artists are (often literally) pursued by an over-eager public and sought after as never before, as Paul Brach summed it up succinctly, "It's still lonely in the studio."

We who write about, exhibit, program, teach, and buy and sell art might do well to accept the artist's caution against labels, "theme" shows, snap judgments and "instant" history. If the artists have a collective message, it is that each work of art should be judged independently on its own merits.

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Barbara Rose, *Contributing Editor, is author of "American Art Since 1900," to be published in June by Praeger;* Irving Sandler *is currently completing a book on abstract expressionism.*

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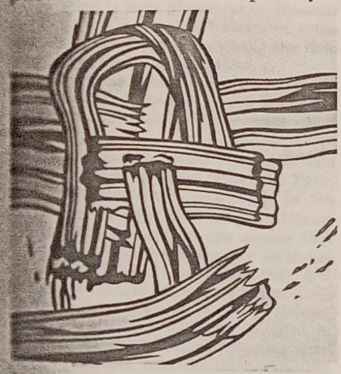
The sensibility of the sixties: Meanings other than formal (abstruse meanings); apparent impersonality; predetermined end-product; and factory surfaces.

There is no avant garde today.

To a great extent the sensibility of the sixties has hardened into an academy. It takes the form of repetition of, rather than creation of, the already understood sensibilities.

The condition of the artist has changed. There is a friendlier climate for adventurous work. Mass media, etc., do not change avant garde into academy, but, through their attentions, obviate the "underground" necessary for an avant garde. The universities have followed current activity, not affected it.

There has always been a small group—with varying degrees of insight—interested in art. There may now be a greater and more sophisticated art audience than before, but this audience is very small; and the great public for art probably compares in number with the public for chemistry. The popular press has given great publicity to some artists but it has not added much to enlightenment. The art press has tried to counteract the publicity.

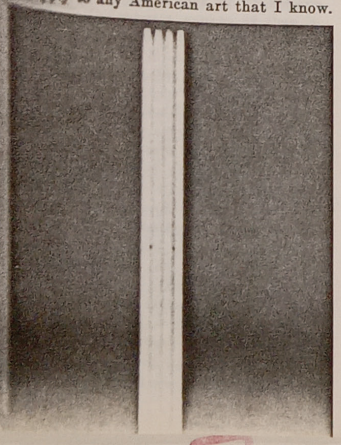


*Lichtenstein: Red Painting, oil and magna, 96". Coll. Mr. and Mrs. William Copley. Courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery, N.Y.*

**Dan Flavin:** My dictionary does not connect "sensibility" to "art."

I cannot make a particular response about the assumed existence of such an indefinite notion as "a sensibility of the sixties." My Webster's Collegiate Dictionary does not connect "sensibility" to "art." Its closest reference seems to me to be: " . . . refined sensitiveness in emotion and taste with especial responsiveness to the pathetic."

The term "avant garde" ought to be restored to the French Army, where its manic sense of futility propitiously belongs. It does not apply to any American art that I know.



Yes, there is a sensibility of the sixties. The last half-dozen years has been a period of cool detachment, irony and what we may call the flip-hip. "Object's" blank, empty expanses and silences were hyped up in the psychedelic dissolves of op, with both sharing in a quasi-technological sensibility that excluded handwork and individualized personality. Pop, while parodying the "faulty" technology of cheap commercial reproduction and revealing a faint nostalgia for the past whose styles or themes it used, also kept the artist at a distance by shifting the emphasis away from *engagement* and urgent commitment, to style and high camp. Most of the other modes such as color field painting, hard-edge, the various clean forms of assemblage, as well as the new music and dance, also tended to eliminate emotionalism and crisis in favor of craft, technical exploration, wit, or "classical realization."

Yes, there is an avant garde today. Although there is good work being done in the conventional arts—painting, sculpture, music, dance, poetry, etc.—the newest energies are gathering in the cross-overs, the areas of impurity, the *blurs* which remain after the usual boundaries have been erased. This zone is increasingly referred to as the "intermedia" (Dick Higgins' term for the media between media). And within this zone, I see the most critical point of oscillation occurring between the intermedia and life. Here, the identity of "art" becomes uncertain and the artist can no longer take refuge in its superiority to life, as he was once accustomed to do. This is where, suddenly, decisions regarding *human* values become imperative.

If the media between intermedia and life indicate an involvement in everyday reality, it may follow that a new ethics and social commitment will emerge as integral to the new arts. (To judge from the remarks of younger artists, it will be a tough-minded and utterly unsentimental world view, devoid of the slogans and utopian dreams of the past.)

Such a development is most likely a consequence of the speed-up of the communications systems, which have caused great quantities of information about past and present culture to be instantly available to every artist. Maintaining a single line of development within a medium whose origins lie in relatively isolated and stable cultures, is increasingly difficult, if for no other reason than that there are countless alternatives at the artist's elbow at every moment, distracting and seducing his attention.

Although the importance of human values rather than esthetics may be an indirect effect of "art" losing its definition, an equally strong impulse to such considerations comes from world affairs. As the "cool" outlook of artists in the late fifties and early sixties seemed to be in accord with the philosophies of passive resistance in Civil Rights movements, and even the strategies of the cold war on the international level (a relief after the hysteria of the McCarthy era), the temperature began to rise with the Black Muslim movement, the assassinations of J. F. Kennedy and Malcolm X, with the removal of Khrushchev and the escalation of the Vietnam war, with the weakening of NATO and the growing threat of Red China. These are conditions with which everybody lives every day. Artists do not have to illustrate current events to respond to their pressures. If the sensibility of the mid-sixties is warming, I suspect it will get even warmer.

Yes, the sensibility of the sixties has hardened into an academy. As the movements of in countless exhibitions of nearly similar material, and in repetitive, over-stylized work by individual artists, was simply the ritual of rise and fall built into the "movement" concept by recent history. That is to say that the achievement of academic status is ironically an appropriate goal of modern art.

In America the ritual is only hastened and intensified in its pathos; here artists die in absurd martyrdom very young. It is natural that this is so, because the American economy and life style are dedicated to planned obsolescence on many levels (not the least being the cult of youth which grants prime time to fewer and fewer years of our lengthening life span). The changeover from style to style, from fashion to fashion, is just another form of a widespread need for continuous "movements." Art movements are only the more intensely personal examples. But, if in addition to being interpreted as a death ritual, this process is seen as symptomatic of a search for a regenerative principle.

Art movements, conceived by one or at most a few individuals, have always been parallels to the one-man, or family, shop. Just as the small grocery and neighborhood atmosphere have given way to the supermarket and shopping center, I would guess that in order to beat the game of dying for a brief hour of life in art, the artist may have to begin thinking in modern, i.e., corporate terms. He may have to explore not only the nature of technological processes, but the effect these have upon human life.

Participating in and even initiating many movements would then become almost a formula for continuous self-renewal. Diversification and efficient distribution—characteristics of a successful economy—would become operations leading to freedom, rather than to the stigma of commercialism and sell-out. I am beginning to suspect that on the level of self, most modern artists have become men of the past.



*Kaprow: Household, happening at Cornell University, '64.*

*Flavin: Untitled, fluorescent, '64. Courtesy Dwan Gallery, N.Y.*

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ing.

Your questions & my answers will not add up to a sensibility of the sixties. Less than ten yrs ago the Ford Motor Co. with the help of market research hoped to pluck out of the minds of thousands of people a sensibility as it related to automobiles. I'm sure you haven't forgotten the result. An egg called Edsel.

Did you mean to ask "Who & What's In" & hope to characterize the sixties with this list? How do you feel about the words romantic or classical or existentialism?

Why do you imagine after sixty or seventy years that the use of "avant garde" is any more descriptive of anything? Your assumptions give me the feeling of being in the hands of two collegiate gallery guides. Please don't plead the necessity of distinguishing between an "avant garde" & the Pennsylvania Academy. You are talking to contemporary artists.

Is there an avant garde? Is there anything else? Its original image and the string of heroes that have emerged or been resurrected on its various platforms, plus its strength at Parke-Bernet, has given it the power of the Church. What is more glamorous or Glamour magazine more in search of? Name an artist below thirty who hopes for anything else than some place in this esthetic Vatican.

Let me ask the question you meant to ask. What members of the A-G church are better set up to become part of history than other members???

Where iss das Bauhaus? This Churmin School saw art in terms of "Plastiche Problema." Since the school goes back to the twenties and thirties and its practitioners are either bent or dead, we can assume that the artist or art of the laboratory ambiance is old hat or O-H. But lots of work with A-G labels can be thought of in those terms. Good or bad, it can be observed in Kelly, Guston, Marca-Relli, Hinman, Williams, Gottlieb, & most of New York & Vermont. Dealing with essentials (surface considerations, primary colors, one or two simple shapes, etc.) establishes the superiority of its esthetic position and fills the work from border to border with a pious glow.

Every two yrs another O-H that at one time had an A-G label is dragged on stage, the magazines museums galleries, etc., as part of a paternity suit. He is pointed out as the father of a lot of A-G work. I'm sure Barnet Neuman sees himself as having slept with a bevy of ideas. Who does Franz Stella think his father is? We know his credentials are perfect. He is the interesting son of an older member. We recognize the "We Have Been Duped by Art—This Is What It Is REALLY About" twinkle of Father Adolphe Rheinhardt. Is Jozef Albers the grandfather or brother? The non-life look of "Plastiche Problema" of the thirties, spoken of then in industrious and socially responsible terms, remains but now it is accompanied by a cooler, more comfortable dialogue. "Miss Jones . . . take a painting." Its practitioners range from twenty to eighty, and they accept with obvious relish the reverence inspired by the purity of their efforts but remain bitter about the popularity of artists whose work is a little like starlets who show their tits.

"Assorted Materials & Their Relatively New Use in Art" is another entrance to the Vatican. Neon, plexiglas, polyester, mirrors, metals, combinations, etc., have been the staples of industry for a number of decades. By the middle thirties Gabo and others were A-G accredited and had firmly established this "New Material–New Art" tradition. Gonzales gave it a shove but his A-G rating was withheld for awhile due to the reluctance




*Rivers: Don't Fall, oil and collage, '66.*
*Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, N.Y.*

on the part of the A-G admittance board (the collective unconscious) to accept the offerings of a skilled assistant of an older and illustrious member. Mack, Chryssa, Flavin, etc.

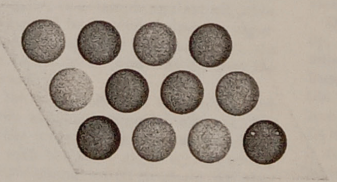
There is a dog-eared door with a long sign over it. "Reduced Means . . . Testing the Commitment of Your Audience." The styles offered the front office for entrance considerations have changed in seventy yrs and so have the audiences but all those who have entered through this particular orifice have had three character traits in common: honesty, strength of purpose & a wonderful sense of humor. Honesty & strength of purpose is measured by the extent of the frontal lobotomies they perform on their audiences and humor by the discomfort they observe in those to whom they have offered their wares. Some mean it. They are concious of their intentions. Others are unaware and at most can be considered enthusiastic.

Enough.

**Tom Downing: Work is being produced which has an unexpected and unpredictable look about it.**

Yes, there is an avant garde. Work is being produced which has an unexpected and unpredictable look about it. Work is being produced which in one way or another extends the limits of experience—opens up an area heretofore not accessible.

A sensibility, if it refers to more than current taste, develops over a longer period of time than six years. The past twenty years or more has seen the emergence of a sensibility which responds to a space that is more dynamically open and to a manner of experiencing it that is at once more immediate and more personal. The question of what extent increased interest in the efforts of the avant garde will have remains open. Neither the position of avant garde nor the position of increased interest has become fixed or defined.



*Downing: Red's Escalator, acrylic, '66.*
*Allan Stone Gallery, N.Y.*

cally objective, formal, cerebral.

The sensibility of the sixties at its worst can be designated as the "Slick Sixties." At its best, it is characterized by the true monumentality of Stella. It is work exact in form and profound in concept. When it will be comprehended beyond its absolute frontality, its repetitive forms, and seen as a particular spirituality of structure, a tough clarity—and not as a proponent of "boredom"—a truer picture of the sixties will emerge.

The new sensibility is basically objective, formal, cerebral. It has been a sensibility that has revived the American tradition of "illustration" (Wyeth, Benton, Homer) as opposed to the profound tradition of realism (Eakins, sometimes Hopper). Warhol is in the tradition of "illustration." The almost mystical mathematics of Poons is important in itself but it can open up whole areas of ideas deeper than the surface sheen of much of the present sculpture and painting.

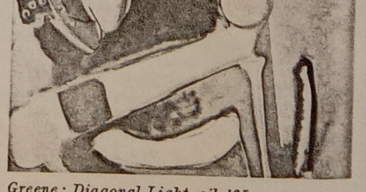
There is no avant garde today. When Dick Bellamy closed the Green gallery, it signaled an end to an avant-garde period. There are no avant-garde critics, galleries or museums.

The sensibility of the sixties has hardened into an academy. For example, 1) The deification of an older academy: Ad Reinhardt, the academic mystic of the past twenty years. Good painter that he is. 2) The vacuous slickness of surface and spirit of Ellsworth Kelly and followers. 3) Most of the Museum of Modern Art's "recent acquisitions": slick, manufactured goods in many styles. These are the works of the Bougereaus and Meissoniers of the sixties. 4) The post-Stella stripe painters. 5) The taking of very early ideas of the early sixties literally, too literally —minimal forms, destruction of the autobiographical brush stroke, boredom, nada-ness.

The condition of the artist has changed in the sixties. For the first time a number of artists are being supported by the galleries in a manner previously impossible. This is a form of speculation on the dealers' part, of course. This investment creates a new relation between the artist and the art world and the artist has less claim to his "aloneness."

Give "mass media" back to Marshall McLuhan, give "camp" back to Susan Sontag. Mass media is a side issue. As far as colleges and universities are concerned, too many young artists make or attempt to make their compromises early, wanting to teach a little, exhibit a little; make a little money and tend to make little art, however, the size is large.

There is not the same split between the avant garde and the public as formerly, but which public do you mean? At the time of the Museum of Modern Art exhibition in which Stella had a room (December 1959), I cannot remember being able to convince a single artist that it was work of any importance or that it was even "painting." At the very time it was being ridiculed, it had been accepted by both the Museum and Leo Castelli as work of importance. Guston still ridicules the work, as did Motherwell as recently as a year ago.



*Greene: Diagonal Light, oil, '65.*
*Staempfli Gallery, N.Y.*

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James Wines: Today the establishment, art public and avant garde are one congenial alliance.

Terms which occur to me in relation to this sensibility of the sixties are: 1) The object; 2) the environment; 3) the sense of the absurd; 4) the climate of science; 5) the aspiration to a state of architecture. Of course, the numerous hybrid sources of our time have created an overlapping of ideas which makes any sort of breakdown a confusing and unrewarding pursuit.

I submit the following possibilities: If the fifties were concerned with the limits of expression, the sixties are concerned with the limits of art. If the fifties drew upon the irrational seeking an order, the sixties revel in the irrational as a kind of order in itself. If the art of the fifties was characterized by optimism, action, and sweat, the art of the sixties is irony, attitude, and man-tan.

If, by avant garde, we assume the definition to be a breakthrough of enormous importance unrewarded by an indifferent and hostile public, then surely there is no avant garde today. Public acceptance must also be defined, since the lack of same determines just what is avant garde. The public at large has always been indifferent to art. Therefore, the public which must react to and reject advanced art is an art-public. Today's art-public is one of instant acceptance. New York scene's mettlesome firebrand is fortunate if his work is controversial for more than a winter season.

We are in a period of refining definitions, of extending existing vocabularies, a kind of Renaissance (if energy, re-birth, and reward are characteristic of the word). Painting has concerned itself with rephrasing, shifting scale, aspiring toward sculpture, adding and subtracting, toying with subject matter to avoid plastic challenges, and tiptoeing around cubism. Sculpture has been somewhat more creative. Taking its cue from science it has extended its vocabulary with new materials and methods—a blessing which has expanded the articulation of space and provided enormous variety. Still, sculpture seems more in a state of great promise than fulfillment.

There is no academy in the monolithic sense of the word, no presiding body to stand as a united front against the subversion of the avant garde. Instead, there is a climate of great diversion, innumerable camps and varied leaderships. The half-dozen bandwagons and those artists who hop on for the ride might be classified as constituting an academy. Possibly more than the actual creative product, the classification "academic" should apply to various attitudes and aspirations within the art-world superstructure. These would include the hasty assumption of an esthetic persuasion to fit one season and be discarded for the next; "making the scene" in the fashion-conscious sense; and the rather degrading position the artist holds as a public entertainer.

The universal climate of "instant change" might also be labeled academic. In fact, any sensibility generally regarded by the art establishment to be thoroughly acceptable must, of necessity, be on its way to hardening into an academy. The peculiar aspect of today's academic process is the speed with which it operates. Because of the museum structure, the bright, young, curator on his way up must assume the responsibility for coining a title for and defining a movement. Movements are often artificially created and the definitive cap put on a direction by an overly comprehensive museum exhibition before even the leading artists have had the opportunity to reach full creative flower. The result, of course, is to discourage further exhibition of a direction and to immediately cast about for the next group style.

The condition of the artist in the sixties has changed radically. The anti-bourgeois hostility of the action-painting generation, apprehensive of popular acclaim and financial reward, has given way to what Allan Kaprow appropriately defines as "the artist as a man of the world." Instant success, wealth and wide audience affections have been embraced with enthusiasm by the artist of the new scene.

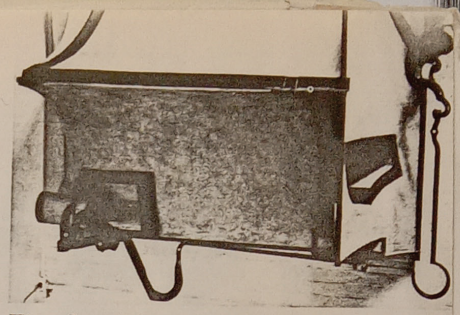
This acclaim has not been achieved without considerable debt to mass media and all the commercial machinery traditionally frowned upon in art circles. The negative effects upon painter, sculptor and public have been nothing short of devastating. The artist has become a public entertainer for the titillation of the go-go circuit; he has assumed the anxieties and ulcers of a Madison Avenue executive pressed into performance long after his initial aims have been misplaced; he is encouraged toward the slick and sensational, toward instant blue-chip, instant history, instant in, and instant out.

The more optimistic side of the coin is that the artist, without dependence upon supplementary income, is provided by his art with the security to continue his creative work. In spite of the pressures of the environment there are, naturally, many artists who can deal with the situation and maintain the isolation necessary for advanced art. The encouragement of a wide audience provides him with the satisfaction of communication and applause so often lacking in past generations.

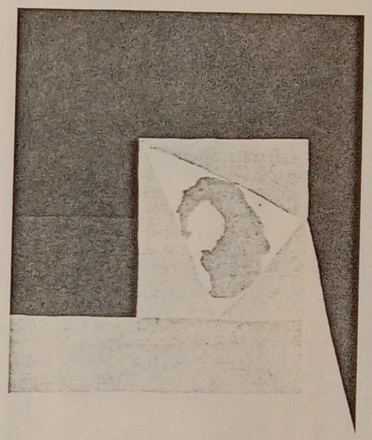
The position of the art school and university is an interesting one. Instant avant garde and instant establishment become blended by being transplanted to provincial centers and seem to dissipate into a bland esthetic euphoria wherein strong reaction is impossible. Nothing jolts the student from his complacency, no extension of the absurd is absurd enough, and docile acceptance of all phenomena in a kind of cool limbo has knocked the vitality out of academic centers. This lack of ferment can be traced to overexposure and mass media; but, there also just seems to be a general disinterest. Some social causes such as free speech generate enthusiastic response; yet, one wonders exactly where the censorship lies and, once the goal of total free speech has been attained, what these students would talk about.

In the past the challenge of the avant garde was to work against the establishment, incur the printed wrath of the conservative critic, endure rejection from official salons and, eventually, to triumph against all odds. The public could be depended upon to vigorously attack or applaud advanced art. In short, the battle to be won was against the establishment.

Today the establishment, art public and avant garde are one congenial alliance. Innovation, the more outrageous the better, is welcomed with the same vigor once reserved for the conventional salon product. All this leads one to suspect that the climate of innovation and newness is indeed an academy in itself. Some sinister questions are raised. If the pursuit of novelty is academic then what is the true character of today's avant garde? Has the public become so jaded and overexposed that an avant garde is no longer possible? Having an avant garde has always reassurred the restless intellectual of his salvation from bourgeois conformity; but, where can he direct his faith in the absence of an actively reactionary art-public?



*Wines: Lenox I, iron and cement, '65. Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, N.Y.*



*Motherwell: The Forge, oil, '66. Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, N.Y.*

**Robert Motherwell: The art world is much younger, like the population as a whole.**

The questions are really about change and the changeless—as Holinshed said, "Times change, and we change in them." The avant garde will exist as long as there is an individualistic society. As I see it, the chief changes in the sixties are: The art world is much younger, like the population as a whole (half of the American population will be under twenty-five in a year or two). Most of their preoccupations seem to be what to do if you do not accept painting and sculpture as clearly limited media of a specific nature.

Of the "new" things that have come along, op, pop, gadgets, mobiles, environments, noises, etc., I expect most from what Barbara Rose called "ABC" and Kynaston McShine, the "primary" esthetic. The "older" sculpture seems to me in a bad state, the death of David Smith an immeasurable loss. But there is no reason not to expect further major work from the remaining half-dozen of the abstract expressionist Old Guard, or from brilliant individuals between the "old" and the "new," such as Frankenthaler, Johns, Kelly, Noland, Stella and others.

If Johnson remains in office (I am personally against the Vietnam war), the Federal support of art will be unparalleled in the Americas, to the good, I think (thinking of the Renaissance). A strong and lovely Anglo-American artistic alliance has grown up, and ought to be cherished. It would help the future if, in all this talk, one substituted "old world" for European and "new world" for American. This way one can be against chauvinism and national politics and still make necessary distinctions.

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**This month: New York Today, pages 3,4,5,6,7 ... Chicago Art Awards Ballots, p. 22**

# The New Art examiner

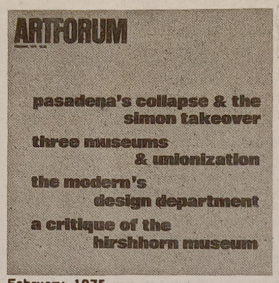
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# TEN YEARS BEFORE THE ARTFORUM MASTHEAD

SAMPLE COPY

by Jack Burnham

*Editors note:*

*Although the following article was assigned and written before the December firing of* Artforum*'s editor, John Coplans, and the subsequent resignation of executive editor, Max Kozloff, these events make the essay particularly timely as an overview of New York criticism during the last decade. According to Grace Glueck (New York Times, Dec. 31, 1977) reasons for the firing included publisher, Charles Cowles, dissatisfaction with the magazine's current direction and his distress over a lawsuit against the magazine "engendered by an article written by Mr. Coplans two years ago on the now defunct Pasadena Museum of Modern Art."*

*Informed sources add that Cowles was even more disturbed by the withdrawal of certain major advertising accounts (Emmerich and Marlborough, for example) ostensibly because of the magazine's recent but pronounced lack of enthusiasm for their shows. Nancy Foote, interim managing editor, says simply that Cowles thought the magazine was not sufficiently concerned with contemporary art. At any rate word has it that Emmerich Gallery took out a large contract a few days after Coplans' departure.*

*A protest statement concerning the firing has been circulated by prominent New York artists and critics including Vito Acconci, Lucy Lippard, Hans Haacke, Sol Lewitt, Douglas Davis and Linda Rochlin. J. A.*

During the 1950's I was an art student on the East Coast. I remember the mystique that *Art News* acquired while Tom Hess was editor. Articles on young artists were rare indeed, therefore much of the necessary art world infighting and social climbing took place in the review section of *Art News*. A good paragraph or two could make or break a New York artist. A favorable lead-off review made a reputation, while artists would be tempted to kill if it would insure a tiny black and white photo of their work. It's not just money that's been subject to vast inflation since the '50's.

Art criticism tends to be promotion, even when strongly negative. And as Mae West would say, honey it's better to be looked over than overlooked! Still there is little doubt in my mind that *Artforum* made at least two quantum jumps in the devaluation of magazine space when it began to print page-size, color photos of relative unknowns in the mid 1960's. Take the June, 1965 issue. *Artforum* pushed some of the American entries to the Sao Paulo Bienal in Brazil for that year, including feature articles on Barnett Newman, Frank Stella, Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, Larry Poons, Billy Al Bengston, and Donald Judd—not bad for a 1965 "commitment" as *Artforum* preferred to the word 'promotion."

In hindsight it is a little difficult to understand just how gutsy and opinionated that was for the times. But gradually California Funk and Pop gave way to a NYC-Bennington-Cambridge axis devoted to formalist field painting and sculpture. By the time *Artforum* moved its headquarters from L.A. to Madison Avenue during the summer of 1966, it had much of the East Coast art establishment eating out of its hand. Some predicted that *Artforum* would lose its West Coast freshness and "turn commercial"—which was, after all, precisely the idea. Maurice Tuchman felt that Los Angeles' ambition of becoming the "art capitol of the world"sank like a rejected souffle with that one decision.

By 1967 the rather odd but inspired horizontal, rectangular format of *Artforum's* pages became a model of sorts for American art publications. I'm thinking in particular of their November and December covers for that year, featuring one of the better of the "new" Noland stripe paintings and one of the "new" protractor series by Stella respectively. Those evoked incredible authority at the time. Gradually by the 1970's it became clear to many of us that color-field was invented to be seen orthogonally, *flatly*, without aid of strip frame on the covers of high-powered art magazines, as much as it was meant to be seen in board rooms and quarter million dollar East Side town houses. Jane Harrison Cone brought a lot of hip, gut-reaction, eye witness criticism to those Nolands and Stellas—slightly dewy-eyed and breathless like a 19th century ingenue writing a diary—each month promised a new "breakthrough." There was occasional comedy relief with Dan Flavin's tirades against the greater and lesser evils of the art world, including all "inferior artists" which according to Flavin were legion. But comedy was never the purpose of *Artforum*.

By then one could see distinctly the hydra-headed critical monster that guided the magazine—the *Artforum* mafia included Jane Harrison, Michael Fried, Max Kozloff, Annette Michaelson, and Barbara Rose—Barbara being at that time at the apex of her power. Like Lawrence Alloway who early dropped from the magazine but returned to the fold when John Coplans became chief editor in late 1971, Barbara Rose had a tendency to chastise wayward critics for assorted sins, on the surface always philosophical. Alloway could and occasionally does hurt through bitchy broadsides, similar to Hilton Kramer's. Barbara Rose always got you with short, nearly invisible, dagger thrusts in the abdominal region, *in her footnotes*. Personally, I always preferred Barbara's because at least you knew you were getting to her, and she wasn't knifing you for having an idea that you would see in her future articles.

I published my first article with *Artforum* late in 1967. Several of my earlier pieces had been rejected, one a rather decent monograph on Bridget Riley the English optical painter. Phil Leider, *Artforum's* editor for its first ten years, wrote back to me that the magazine had a "commitment" to promote American artists, so why not try *Art International* since it looked like their "sort of thing?"

I should say that I never grew fond of Phil Leider while he was editor of *Artforum*, but I had tremendous respect for his honesty, his candor, and his imperviousness to all kinds of New York art world temptations. He liked gossip and loved to be in on what was happening, but he avoided most openings and parties and art-scene bullshit like the plague. He took the idea seriously that *Artforum* was a *forum* for the best in American art journalism. But the real paradox of the magazine was that the more powerful it became the more it was accused of being a tiny coterie of powerbrokers interested in maintaining the inflated economic credibility of a select handful of artists connected to an international cartel of galleries. One had at times, the feeling that *Artforum* was a breeding ground for squads of neophyte Clement Greenbergs running around pontificating, if not exactly the same line as the pope's at least with the idea in the back of their minds that being pope had its earthly rewards.

Leider always complained that there were few interesting art writers. He tended to choose from a relatively small field an even smaller handful of manuscripts. Some art editors love to hold on to manuscripts, hundreds of them as if they were about to print all of them, maybe as a kind of vestigial hoarding instinct. Leider often sent manuscripts back the day after they were received with a few nasty, pointed, but usually accurate remarks. By the time Leider left New York City in 1971 it was said that he had alienated more than half the writers, critics, curators, artists, and museum personnel on the East Coast. John Coplans spent the next two years mending fences, wounded feelings, and the reputation of the magazine. But with Leider I found that one had to stand one's ground, shout with him, and if you lasted through all the ranting and nasty letter writing a strange sort of mutual respect gradually accumulated. Leider had a mortal fear of being either ass-kissed or used.

There is something infectious and almost inevitable about journalistic power in the art world. Critics can sense when it's coming their way because they begin to get contracts from publishers to edit critical anthologies; prestigious museums ask them to guest curate shows. Artists, especially the ones that they've helped, begin to take their advice seriously, even involving them in their personal problems and financial dealings. At its most diabolical and manipulative, the critic begins to "anticipate" the artist's next sequence, pushing the work in this or that direction, as was notoriously the case with several of the better known formalist painters and sculptors. Not all critics are closet artists, but a string of commercial successes tends to sow the illusion of omniscience in even the most cautious.

Middle and late 1960's writing in *Artforum* was a strange journalistic hybrid. At one end were the Thoreau-like soliloquies of Bob Smithson on anything from a vast dam in Northern California, to the beaches off the Yucatan, to the filthy old Passaic river passing through Eastern New Jersey. It was said that Smithson worked harder on his prose than his art, and I can believe it. With all of its rambling, there was deliberation in his writing; he was always "pointing" towards an infinite expanse that no one could quite grasp. He hypostatized Earth Art in a way similar to Don Judd's handling of the minimalist prose of "specific objects." I suspect that much of Judd's early 1960's critical style rubbed off on Bob Morris. Morris's "Notes on Sculpture" series in *Artforum* possibly remains the best evidence of the Post-formalist esthetic; I remember looking forward to their perverse asensuality; they always had a kind of numbing, flat-footed, precision. He would intone about "the work," about its "syntax," its "symmetry," its "lack of traces of process," its "non-anthropomorphic orientations"—like a 15th century German mystic talking about the incorporal prop-

*(continued on page 6)*

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ARTICLES
1 Ten Years Before the Artforum Masthead by Jack Burnham.
3 *Alfred Leslie* and American Realism by Devonna Pieszak.
4 *Moving to SoHo*—a practical guide and other hot tips by Mary Beth Edelson.
5 Architecture/Letter from New York by Rob Cuscaden.
8 Film/Kid Stuff: Christmas in England by Michael Rabiger.
9 Photography/A Double Tribute at the Museum of Contemporary Art by Gretchen Garner.
10 Notes on Modern and Post Modern Graphics by Joshua Kind.
11 March to an Aesthetic of Revolution by Raye Bemis MItchell.
11 CETA on Chopping Block—Protest Group Formed.
12 Thick Tongue/Opening Gambit by Joshua Kind.
12 1% For the Arts.

FEATURES
2 Editorial, Letters.
3 Exhibitions Calendar.
13 Book Reviews by Michael Bonesteel, Gretchen Garner and James Jensen.
14- Reviews by Andrew Allegretti, Jane Allen & Derek Guthrie, Laurence Booth, Holly T. Day, John Forwalter, Joanna Frueh, Gretchen Garner, Joshua Kind, Raye Bemis Mitchell, Helen Neafsey, Corey Postiglione, Kate Selan, Anna Swieboda, Christine Tamblyn, Terry Tepper.
22 Chicago Art Awards.
23 Newsbriefs.
24 Classifieds, Jobs, Competitions.

The Chicago New Art Association is a not for profit organization whose purpose it is to examine the definition and transmission of culture in our society; the decision-making processes within museums and schools and the agencies of patronage which determine the manner in which culture shall be transmitted; the value systems which presently influence the making of art as well as its study in exhibitions and books; and in particular the interaction of these factors with the visual art milieu in Chicago and adjacent areas.

This publication is supported in part by Grants from the Illinois Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts

# editorial

1977 could be the year which makes or breaks Chicago's art community. We could end the year with our value to the city reaffirmed, our economic prospects improved, our ranks united and strong. Or we could end the year in disarray, our members out of work and discouraged, our community organizations weakened and factionalized.

Two issues call for our united effort:

Chicago plans to phase out C.E.T.A. jobs for the arts. It is not that federal funds are unavailable. It is that the arts are a low priority item. The city's argument is that the economy has improved to the point where arts organizations no longer need assistance.

We know this to be untrue. Unemployment in Chicago remains extremely high and the arts are still a depressed sector. We have no where else to go. Chicago foundations have yet to discover that cultural organizations can contribute as much to the future prospects of individuals and communities as social agencies.

We all stand to benefit from a refunded C.E.T.A. for the arts program. Over 60 organizations working in the visual arts, film, dance, theatre and music have been able to contribute to the cultural life of Chicago through C.E.T.A. assistance. Don't let the program die. Turn to page 11 and find out what you can do to help.

The passage of the 1% ordinance would make funds available for the commissioning of public works of art in Chicago. Surely by now Chicagoans realize that works of public art contribute enormously to the vitality of the city and to our sense of community.

The 1% would not only assure Chicago of continued enhancement, it would provide substantial funds for the commissioning of resident artists and would give the arts community a voice in how the money is to be spent. On page 12 is a description of how the ordinance would work and what you can do to support it.

Could 1977 be the year which breaks Chicago's art community and seriously undermines our growing reputation as a cultural center? Don't let it happen. Support C.E.T.A. and public funding for the arts.

# letters

### OPPORTUNITIES FAIR GAME

Upon receiving and reading the latest *New Art Examiner*, I noticed among other things, a rather significant job opportunity, a number of leads to follow up for possible shows and some interesting grant opportunities.

In other words, you are removing some of the "politics" which I could never get a handle on. These opportunities at least have the appearance of being fair game, for those who care to try. This is largely because your paper has taken on the responsibility of being a clearing house for this information.

I thank you for this support, in you have given me a keen sense that this city is beginning to move—and that one had better be ready to take advantage of the many opportunities that are beginning to come along.

Phyllis Bramson

### CORRECTION CENTER FINDS NAE INTERESTING

I would like to thank you for the 20 free copies of *N.A.E.* which you sent me for Stateville Correctional Center. Artistic involvement is a very important facet of prison life, as a means of expression and as a creative pastime.

I have distributed these to individuals heavily into art through the prison library (the library also has one subscription to *N.A.E.* through my recommendation). I'd like to express to you the avid enthusiasm with which the inmates here read the *New Art Examiner*—it's very refreshing.

We all agree that the current issue (vol. 4 No. 4)) is very well put together and contains much interesting information for the art initiate. We would all like to see you continue these objective and informative articles. I can only regret that your publication cannot be 20 or 30 pages larger.

Bruce Thorn
Art Instructor, Stateville Correctional Center

### SUPPORT FOR CRITIC

Hurray for Wendy Hoffman's rebuttal to Joy Poe's cry concerning alleged mistreatment of her work. It is good to see a critic point out to an artist that she can't possibly view the artist's precious child with the same eyes the artist does, a fact which most artists forget (if they ever stopped to think of it in the first place); and that the viewer should not, indeed *must not* be required to have a 'love affair' (as Ms. Hoffman so aptly put it) with a piece in order to review it, criticize it, or even simply *view* it.

A piece of art should be able to be apprehended without strenuous seeking on the part of the viewer, without the viewer having to know 1) the artist herself; 2) details of the artist's life; 3) the artist's psychological or medical background; or 4) specific detailed information about either the media (technique) or "school" of the work. All these things and more should help to illuminate after first viewing, but *should not* be a prerequisite to viewing. Those artists who feel wounded by reviews of their work by persons of so-called "boundless shallow ignorance" because the reviewer did not immerse herself in the work to the degree deemed proper by the mother-hen artist are only displaying their blindness, which is all the more painful for us in the community, as artists are supposedly those who see more clearly than the rest of us.

Come on, let's get rid of this stupid attitude that the critic's sole purpose is to cut down and destroy artists ("Ah, new work. Let's see how it can best be ridiculed.") and realize that if a reviewer ignores certain aspects of a work, it may well be as much the fault of the artist in execution and presentation as anything else.

Lynne Warren
Chicago

### FILM FESTIVAL REVISITED

It was gratifying to us at the Chicago International Film Festival, that your publication printed the long and extremely thoughtful article on documentary filmmaking by Michael Rabiger. In our effort to build film audiences, it is especially important that all films be considered, not just the more highly visible feature films. As a jury member, Mr. Rabiger was in an especially good position to see the sorts of documentaries which are being made and entered in festivals all over the world.

This year's Documentary Film jury was an excellent one, and as the article indicates, one which took its job seriously. This jury also helped in programming two documentary film showings at the Chicago Historical Society (total 3 hr., 45 mins.), one at Fermilab, (4 hr., 15 mins.), and the Chicago International Film Festival screening at the Biograph Theatre on November 16, (4 hr., 45 mins., out of a 5 1/2 hr. program.) Far from being a "relatively unpublicized showing," the Biograph screening was prominently displayed on our Festival schedule, of which 350,000 were distributed. Publicity, unfortunately, is where you find it . . . and if the members of the press do not choose to cover certain events extensively, there is little our organization can do about it. The program at the Biograph was attended by 345 people, an improvement over the 1975 Festival.

Mr. Rabiger criticizes the Festival for announcing three films on the schedule which had not been selected for that program. In fact, the printing deadline was October 10, well before the jury results were known, and rather than print nothing, we chose to mention three films which had already won numerous major international awards, and seemed likely to be chosen by the jury for screening. After studying the jury recommendations, only one of those three listed on the schedule was actually shown, and that one was, in fact, on the program suggested by the jury.

One last, and rather serious, question raised by Mr. Rabiger has to do with the entry fees charged by the Festival for the competition. The Chicago International Film Festival is a year-round organization which is non-profit and tax exempt. The administrative costs of running the November competition could never be met by box office alone. Among the expenses are normal office overhead, insurance, staff salaries, theatre costs, film shipment, advertising, publicity, and printing and postage costs involved in informing producers and educational institutions about the Festival. Money for the yearly operation of the organization and the running of the November Festival must come from a combination of entry fees, box office, memberships, grants and contributions, and as has been widely publicized, we still operate with a yearly deficit of over $40,000.

Attendance at the Documentary Film screening improved this year, and since the public is finally becoming aware of this category of film, it is likely that an additional screening will be added to the 1977 schedule. It is our hope that festivals such as ours will help to break the stagnation in documentary filmmaking of which Mr. Rabiger complains. Any suggestions which Mr. Rabiger has to offer in terms of our encouragement of documentary filmmaking will be very much appreciated.

Suzanne McCormick
Programming and Media Director

*I don't accept that publicity is where one finds it—it's where someone makes it, as the Chicago International Film Festival knows better than anyone, to judge by their successful adblitz. The cure for the situation you describe is obvious; have the jury selection date earlier so that you can publicize the jury selections in a way that interests the press and thus the public. As it was, the cart-before-the-horse process produced 350,000 pieces of wrong information—hardly a situation designed to reverse the Festival's reputation for offhandedness over non-fiction films. If the Festival treats documentary as potentially important, and let's a genuine concern for the form be known, then filmmakers may send in material that they aren't sending now. This in turn would create press interest and a public following. My feeling is that the categories are at present too vague, and the films are grouped wrongly by subject instead of by form. I would be glad to meet up with yourself and any other interested parties to try and thrash out some new approaches.*

*—Michael Rabiger*

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# Ten Years Before the Artforum Masthead

*(continued from page 1)*

erties of God. In some ways it was atrocious writing, as Morris tends to concede now, but at the time it was a potent foil to formalist academic jargon and to art journalese in general.

The "Special Issue" of *Artforum* for the summer of 1967 is probably the most focused and high-powered that they ever published; it covered the spectrum of American van-gardist sculpture in a way that is still surprisingly valid, with articles on Oldenburg's "soft machines," Larry Bell, Mark di Suvero, George Segal, Ellsworth Kelly, David Smith, and pieces by Bob Morris, Smithson and Sol LeWitt, the last being his "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art." The second article is a long Miltonian tract on the dangers of Minimal Art, "Art and Objecthood," by Michael Fried. Here is a prime example of the formalists' invocation of "presence," "instantaneousness," and "quality" in the face of "Literalism," and the evils of theatricality. Given the confidence of a young Harvard art historian imbued with a perfect understanding of "authentic art" Fried is telling us, "Watch out, Baby, you're gonna blow it for all of us, drag it back inside the ropes so that we can judge it, savor it, and sell it!" In terms of literary niceties there was always more style to Fried's scoldings than in anything put forth by the Post-formalists. For instance Fried introduced the scholarly instrument of the extended foot-note to popular art magazines in paragraph after paragraph of miniscule type so that the poor rubes in graduate painting departments in Iowa City and Madison would have absolutely no doubts about the supreme authority and inevitability of the formalist position.

The quest for a propitious sensuality through "serious painting" was a *sine qua non* for formalist writers. After looking at full page color reproductions of Olitski's or Noland's painting one was supposed to engage the accompanying prose on a level of pure delectation just as one savors a perfectly ripened Camembert cheese. It worked for lots of people and it was only in 1972 that such formalists as Walter Darby Bannard began to concede that "quality" and the historical succession of styles in high art were in for bad times–sold down the river by the more opportunistic and destructive forces of avant-gardism (see "Quality, Style and Olitski" in the October, 1972 *Artforum*). There is at the end of this article a quite blatent *ad hominem* argument appealing to one's sense of natural order in the world, to the fundamental indestructibility of breeding, to the quiet propriety of wealth, and to hierarchical stations in art as well as life. One may question these values, the implication goes, but only at the risk of admitting that not only does one not have the vaguest chance of profiting by them, one is even incapable of discerning their inherent "rightness."

*"That odd authority with the conservative flavor that hit me so hard when I walked into the Rubin Gallery last May was simply the tough conservatism of absolute high quality, of the highest standards in art, of the baffling, sustaining innovation which sets its pace only by the deliberate schedule of good art, less revolution than consolidation, less far out than dead center, less declared, self-conscious invention than the ripened, ready fruit of invention. Olitski kept to the tough central line undistracted. Now, to borrow a phrase from Greenberg, he has pre-empted serious new painting. He is, for the time being, our best painter."*

After 1966 the sphere of significant art-making for *Artforum* gradually withdrew from the West Coast and settled heavily in New York City. Even with the pained outcries of the formalists who began to sense that their leading journal was in danger of being infected by the hooligan element from the left in the guise of Kineticism, Anti-form, Environmentalism, Conceptualism, and other variations of, to use Greenberg's sobriquet, "novelty art," *Artforum* itself presented a monolithic front, and the message was clear, *Artforum's* where it's at–ergo *Artforum* represents the New York Art Establishment.

I can remember having a running argument with Phil Leider through our correspondence in which I attacked him for turning *Artforum* into a house organ for various formalist critics. And in turn he rightfully pointed out that he published me, Robert Mallery, and others gladly, even though he did not specificially agree with us. In 1969 I sent Leider a long essay on "Art in the Marcusean Analysis" which he seemed to like, but flatly stated that "it is not for us."

One has to remember that in the 1960's the injection of politics into "high art," particularly the contemporary visual arts was still pretty much an observed taboo. I've often wondered how much John Coplan's decision to "go political" in 1974-75 contributed to the public disassociation between the magazine and its publisher Charlie Cowles. In years to come I think Coplans will receive credit for that decision, although how much the appearance of such magazines as *The Fox* contributed to it is a valid question.

In 1970 I suggested to Leider that I would like to do a piece on the Art Workers' Coalition. He balked at that, as much because I was geographically out of touch with the Coalition as the fact that it represented a step that he was not ready to make. Leider said something then that I have often pondered, namely, "an editor can define or point to the direction in which art is moving, but he can't and shouldn't create a direction for artists to take." Or was Leider really saying that one could reinforce the stylistic commitments of artists, but that there was a fundamental danger to underwriting their political sentiments? Aesthetically, there very definitely was a "left" and "right" to *Artforum* during those years.

One of the things that impressed me in the late 1960's was the amount of inherent hatred much of the non-New York art world felt for *Artforum*. I had seen a bit of that in the late 1950's. I remember Tom Hess being grilled and backed into a corner by both faculty and students at the Yale Art School because of his commitment to Abstract Expressionism. Given the Alberian direction of the School at the time that was understandable. Nevertheless, it was an incredible shock during those years to visit art schools and to confront a monolithic wall of hostility. Here I had written a handful of articles aimed directly against the prevailing editorial trends of *Artforum*, but the essence of the situation, in the eyes of those students and younger faculty members, was that I represented *Artforum*. And what did *Artforum* represent to them?

*Artforum* vis-a-vis academia personified the perfect example of a Freudian love-hate relationship between parents and children. First, it symbolized an almost omnipotent *authority*. It had taken a few dozen relatively young East Coast artists and had devoted incredible amounts of space and color reproductions to their work–something no other art magazine had done with the same eclat. It implied that New York City in the 1960's was the seat of an artistic revolution of considerable proportions. *Artforum* lionized the youthful artist in a way that dug at the core of each young artist's fantasies for approval and love. And in the midst of all this youth-oriented egalitarianism *Artforum* generated a clannish in-group atmosphere of suffocating proportions. For the art student *Artforum* was the gate to Nirvana, one that seemed incredibly inaccessible, if for no better reason than that it rarely conceded that artists outside the New York area were even worth reviewing.

Thus any visiting writer or editor from *Artforum* became the focal point for years of bottled-up frustration and resentment, and in doing so I suppose *Artforum* achieved what must be the covert goal of every successful magazine, namely to generate intense desire in its readers while providing only the slimmest voyeuristic outlets for that desire; *Artforum* was the *Playboy* of the American art world. I was constantly barraged and challenged to get out of New York (where I didn't live to begin with) and see grass-roots art, or more often than not, to inspect art which was a carbon copy of things appearing in recent *Artforums*.

Good magazines know when to die, that is die gracefully or radically shift their editorial focus. I began to sense such undercurrents in *Artforum* as early as the spring of 1969 when Phil Leider ended a note to me with the statement: "Ah, Jack. I've just written a position paper calling for the total abolition of the art world. That('s) where *my* mind is." I suspected that Leider had slipped a cog or two after I had read his September, 1970 piece, "How I spent My Summer Vacation or, Art and Politics in Nevada, Berkeley, San Francisco and Utah (Read about it in *Artforum*!)" It was an incredibly jovial yet weary culling of notes over several months' period, ambivalent because he seemed to be thumbing his nose at the New York critical apparatus and opening his mind to the possibility that all kinds of things like acts of agression against the Vietnam War, Earth Art in the West, obituaries for artists, squatter dwelling in the Bay Area, and David Gilhooly's ceramics might be as good as anything else being called art. Yet concurrently Leider could write, "I argued for Michael Fried's idea that the conventional nature of art was its very essence, that the great danger was the delusion that one was making art when in fact you were doing something else, something of certain value but not the value of art." Then I knew that something had changed or snapped in Phil's mind when the October *Artforum* came out with a cover devoted to Nancy Graves' studio of camels and prehistoric bones, the least Artforumesque cover ever.

I can't say much about John Coplans because I know him mainly by reputation. Just before Leider resigned from *Artforum* he told me that Coplans, one of the magazine's founders and its West Coast editor, was taking over. Not being up on West Coast personalities, I asked Leider to tell me a little about John. Phil was cagey and simply said, "Well, John has an enormous love of art!" Oh, oh, I thought to myself, that spells trouble for me, and it did. During Coplans' first year in New York, I was one of the magazine's contributing editors, but never published an article under his editorship. Coplans came to New York with an incredibly inflated sense of *Artforum's* status as he thought it appeared in the design of the Universe. He tended to dismiss artists, foreign or domestic, who for one reason or another, had never appeared between the covers of *Artforum*. For those outside the power orbit of New York, John personified the conceit which they felt lay behind the *Artforum* mystique. Though from what I have heard recently, Coplans has become more modest as the magazine has been forced to change tack.

The time-span of 1972-74 was, I think, very much a transitional one for art magazines in New York in general. The first real art world slump came during the winter of 1972. Until then dealers had been riding on their '60's high. Suddenly there was an enormous amount of talk about art magazines being sold, liquidated, or simply being rethought. *Artforum* devoted several issues (September, 1971 and January, 1973) to film coverage, and increasing space to various important directors. For *Artforum* in particular there was less and less writing about "new" talent in the visual arts, but considerable attention to summing up various overlooked talents: Agnes Martin, Burgoyne Diller, Mark di Suvero, Eva Hesse, and Bruce Nauman. For the last two names the amount of space devoted to their work came as close as an art magazine can to secular canonization. Many artists were hurting for money as well as ideas. In January of '72 an artist, a friend also, wrote: "New York has an air of impending death about it. The art world, at the moment, seems to realize that its number is up and so its inhabitants are busy telling one another that things were never better." Was it just another phase of "sweating cubism out" as Ad Reinhardt would say, or were the underlying issues much more fundamental? I felt this forced euphoria to be an evasion of the problem of creative exhaustion and in January of '72 sent a letter to Coplans in New York (which he never answered). In part it read:

*Look, I can't blame you and your editors for wanting to protect your positions, but sooner or later you're going to have to face the same realizations that I've been facing for the past two years. John baby, it's over (spelled o-v-e-r), you can do the old* Art News *two step: more rehashes of the fading wallflowers of the 1960's (Stella, Noland, Olitsky, etc.), become more "art historical," write more diatribes against the Philistines, do more articles devoted to cinema, dance, architecture (although that isn't* Art New's *bag exactly), and have more undergraduates writing glowing tributes to other 22-year-old artists–but the fact remains, John, where's the new art?*

I had my own ideas about the radical drop-off of innovative art in the 1970's. For the most part these are hypotheses having to do with Marcel Duchamp's position vis-a-vis the art world. I felt that Duchamp told us something with his Ready-mades about the dynamics of Modernism. Duchamp has predicted among other things that the future artist would "go underground." There are several possible interpretations for this, one being literal in that he was predicting the collapse of the commercial gallery system, another could be construed as mystical or allegorical, having to do with the more profound functions of art, or quite possibly Duchamp was being his usual factitious self. In the 1960's *Artforum*, of all the art magazines in New York, had made a solid commitment to the van-garde in America. But then suddenly in the 1970's it began to develop a curious case of amnesia. In the same letter quoted I suggested that *Artforum* was becoming the *Art News* of the 1970's. I often thought to myself: *Phil Leider got out just in time.*

Recently I was told by one of the occasional writers for *Artforum* that it had more or less given up the practice of printing monographs on up-and-coming talent because artists previously had not shown sufficient gratefulness to the magazine for exposure! Wow! I did a mental double-take on that one. If that's really the reason then *Artforum* had bigger problems than I had imagined. Could it be that exhibitions around New York had become incredibly stale, that the work of many of the super-stars of the '60's (Warhol, Stella, Noland, Judd, Lichtenstein, and Rauschenberg to name a few) had become embarrassingly nowhere and punch-drunk? Well it could be. But if a magazine in order to sustain all that monthly advertising has to fill 30 or more pages an issue with *something*, than what is that something going to be?

Perhaps the waning of faith, or call it the diminishment of momentum, at *Artforum* can best be summed up in the career of Max Kozloff, one of the New York founders and presently executive editor of the magazine. I first read Kozloff when he was a young critic writing for *The Nation*. Max if nothing else is eternally articulate; his early columns in *The Nation* bubble with liberal reasonableness and a sensuous love of words. But even then he saw little that was good and much to be condemned in contemporary art. Kozloff is what you might call a "latent formalist," he is not so much interested in proving theories of historical succession or a concern with formal motifs as such, as he is in dredging up the verbal experience perceived in the formal elements of a work. As a contemporary critic he has one momentous failing: this is an inability to see innovation in art beyond Jasper Johns'. Yet ironically, Kozloff's major writings on Johns seem atypically muddy and foot-sliding, as if Johns were just too big to handle. Early on Max was burned for his attack on Pop Art, and I suspect that this has made him cautious, in that when he picks targets they tend to be fat easy ones such as Conceptualism and Kinetic Art.

Looking at Kozloff's writing since 1972, two interesting trends have developed. Possibly his best writing has been in the area of art and politics. His "American Painting During the Cold War" in the May, 1973 *Art-*

*Michael VerMeulen, whose column, "Politics of Art" usually appears in these pages will reappear in March with a major investigative article.*

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*forum* is a brilliant rendition of American attitudes towards art during the decades of the 1940's, '50's, and early '60's. His account of American quasi-official support for various over-seas traveling exhibitions is very illuminating.

One gets the feeling that Kozloff's real beef with Conceptualism is that artists are horning in on his act as a critic while posing as artists (see "The Trouble With Art-As Idea" in the October, 1972 *Artforum*). His true colors as an anti-modernist come out in "The Authoritarian Personality in Modern Art" in the May, 1974 *Artforum*. If Kozloff's writing has a spiritual father possibly it resides in Baudelaire's salon essays, or in the literary critiques of Sainte-Beuve. But where does a 19th century intellect go today except back to the virgin territory, relatively speaking, of 19th century photography? (See "The Box in the Wilderness" in the October, 1975 issue and "Nadar and the Republic of Mind" in the September, 1976 *Artforum*). Kozloff, as with some of the other editors of *Artforum*, has found a temporary solution to the crisis of modernism through photography and socio-political analysis. That pays the bills while, ironically, it gradually undermines the imperious hegemony of *Artforum's* position.

Last year during the 1975-76 season in New York I found it a trifle sad that the best show of the year was an exhibition of photographs of artists at Sidney Janis. It was powerful, intriguing, and mobbed, almost like Old Home Week. Perhaps the counterpart to the artists' portraits exhibition the season before was the Linda Benglis advertisement, a once in a life-time opportunity, and a perfect example of '70's art where the advertising of the artist is far superior to his or her "art product." It kept tongues wagging and typewriters humming for several months in and around New York. Benglis and John Coplans alike agonized for months over printing it. There were certainly intelligent responses, and then there was the undersigned letter in the December *Artforum*, a disclaimer by five of the editors of *Artforum* attacking the dildo and oiled artist with charges of "extreme vulgarity," making a "shabby mockery" of the women's movement, and last but not least commercial "exploitation." If Manet had covertly paid Louis-Napoleon to attack his *Olympia* in public, he couldn't not have asked for more than that received by Linda Benglis. But to the more perceptive, it revealed the "age" of the thinking that now goes into creating *Artforum*.

One of the more intriguing sins of *Artforum* is one that I've often been accused of committing with my own semiological writings. Around 1970 stylistic paralysis began to numb the pages of *Artforum*. The '60's voyeuristic delectation of the card-carrying formalists was *nothing to the "new writing,"* the various academic and "little magazine" pyrotechnics of Rosalind Krauss, Annette Michelson, Joseph Masheck, and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe to name a few. Complexity of film time, a need to find supporting philosophical texts, a love of classical psychoanalytic theory, the flaunting of multilingual art scholarship all contributed to this etymologized hall of mirrors. As the prose became denser the pictures and photographs took on a simple, home-spun appeal. Perhaps the most succinct answer to this appeared in the "Letters" section of the December, 1974 *Artforum*.

*To the Editor:*

*"Theatricality may be put in tension with this received epistomology because the temporality of the theatrical is the logical corollary of the stability of sculptural space, as the undifferentiated space of the world at large is the collary of the differentiated space of the painting."* Artforum, *September, 1974.*

*Come on folks, who do you think you're writing for, mere carhops? Where's the heavy stuff?*

*Offhand, I would say (this is simple speculation, mind you) that Gilbert-Rolfe spent more than just his formative years in school.*

Once in a while I've wondered to myself what I would do if I were in John Coplan's place, saddled with the American art world's most high-powered magazine, but with little worthwhile contemporary art to write about. The decision to penetrate the social infrastructure of the art world, and its corporate and financial ties, is probably the one I would have made (given a good, full-time team of lawyers, legal researchers and an endless supply of funds to fight suits). Nevertheless, Alloway's "Network: The Art World Described as a System" in the 1971 Tenth Anniversary issue of *Artforum* and various pieces by Kozloff set in motion something that only came to full fruition with Coplans' major essay in the February, 1975 issue, "Pasadena's Collapse and the Simon Takeover, Diary of a Disaster"–a gutsy and valuable expose, which I suspect, is still in the depths of litigation.

One wonders why this sort of thing hadn't happened five or ten years earlier, or before the critical edge of the magazine found truth through photography and Marxism. What gives Coplans' piece its shock value and added dimension is that it is not written by an outsider, a Sophie Burnham spilling the beans on the power structure of New York museums, but it is written by an "insider," a former director of the Pasadena Museum. All secular and nonmilitary power structures tolerate a degree of external criticism, but here is Coplans documenting the history of the museum's past directors, the nuances of social relations within the Board of Trustees, reported conversations with trustees, the purposes behind various real estate decisions, budget decisions, the flagging civic-mindedness of some involved, speculative and exploitative manoeuvers by collectors–it's all there and one can only surmise what would happen if someone had done as thorough and intimate a documentation on one of the museums in say, Chicago. Power structures tend not to forgive those who betray their trust.

The climax of *Artforum's* muck-raking came later that year with their December, 1975 issue devoted to critiques of Steichen's World War I aerial photographs, an exhibition of French painting between 1774-1830, an exhibition of Nazi art sponsored by a Neo-Marxist group in West Germany, and political posters from the People's Republic of China. Any one of the above pieces by itself would not have elicited particularly strong response, but the fact that they were printed together, coupled with an unusual editorial forward by Max Kozloff was enough to set Hilton Kramer in motion in a long piece of sarcastic invective on the art page of the Sunday *New York Times* in December of 1975.

Kramer accused the editors and writers of *Artforum* of opportunistically finding their political conscience at the same moment holding on to all their bourgeois privileges. While Kramer's attack is fraught with numerous cheap-shots it contains an element of truth. He even passively suggests that the magazine's advertisers might find space elsewhere. And with that not being enough, he reports that three of the magazine's associate editors, Annette Michelson, Rosalind Krauss, and Joseph Masheck, have protested the magazine's shift of policy and have begun a new Journal, *October*. There is some confusion here because the splintering of the *Artforum* editorial staff was more personal and power-oriented than ideological. The irony of *October* is that in its two issues, Spring and Summer of 1976, it has merely been another "serious" cultural magazine. Its Marxist quotent is calculated not to offend the most vigilant editors of *The Readers' Digest* or *American Opinion*. Generally the art world rose to the defense of *Artforum* while nicely exposing the innuendos and distortions of Hilton Kramer.

If the infrastructure of the art world as a series of symbiotic feed-back systems is the new and possibly ultimate subject for art, then it is not surprising that in the '70's, as dull as art magazines are, such magazines as *The Fox* are far more interesting than most of the art being made. In fact, let's admit it, since their editors often imply it, parasociological art writing *is* the only avant-garde art of the 1970's. And quite possibly the demise of the critical apparatus of *Artforum* comes with the realization by artists that being an artist-critic or critic-artist no longer carries the least social onus, in fact, it implies real advantages. As a spin-off of the English *Art-Language*, *The Fox* has dropped much of the Cambridge philosophy-linguistic camping that made *Art-Language* the art world's version of the *Harvard Lampoon*. *The Fox's* writing tends to be more mature and specifically directed towards many of the issues which seem a bit silly and strained in a slick format like *Artforum's*. But at this writing the continued existence of *The Fox* is problematic if not doubtful. As with the all-over trend of magazine journalism, the general reader magazine is out and the specific interest magazine is in. Increasingly art magazines fall into four or five categories; those aimed at the general reader on the national level, those directed towards collectors and galleries, those focusing on the socio-political aspects of the art world, those concerned with groupie activities and art-living, and finally an increasingly important category, the local art newspaper. I consider the many feminist art journals, which seem to grow in number each month like gerbils, to be socio-political. To paraphrase Warhol, I can see the day coming when it will be the god-given right of every young artist to publish, write, and edit his or her own art magazine, solely devoted to his or her own art work.

During the early '70's *Avalanche* played a valuable role in formulating vangarde sensibility. For a while Willoughby Sharp managed to stay one or two steps ahead of the better established art magazines; his forays into Body, Video, Ecological, and Conceptual Art revealed high caliber insight as did his interview techniques. As a newspaper *Avalanche* is so-so, once in a while something worth reading, but with a trend towards Soho navel peering, the campy faggotry of *File* magazine, and a growing impulse to interview and photograph anything that moves, makes noises, or even breathes.

Having written for *Arts* magazine for four years, and having broken the habit, I can look on it now with some dispassion. Against all odds, including the publisher, its editor of the early '70's, Gregoire Muller, tried to make it a serious if not successful magazine–or rather I should say that he attempted to make New York take *Arts* seriously, which it didn't. Its interim editor, Gregory Battcock, was a total disaster–but not an uninteresting one. Gregory's own ego and sense of uptown chic always provided at least a giggle or two per issue.

His successor Richard Martin is shrewd and ambitious. Over the past three years he has cleaned up the format of *Arts*. It will never have the visual distinction of *Artforum*, but at the moment it looks more professional than ever before, including the proofreading which used to be atrocious. If Martin has a failing as an editor, it is the fact that he suffers from an unarrested case of *deja vu*. Having acquired the services of several of *Artforum's* former editors, Robert Pincus-Witten and Joseph Masheck, he has the illusion that he is producing the *Artforum* of the '70's. Still, one intelligent decision is that Martin prints eight to twelve mini-articles per issue in the form of extended reviews. This makes sense if only because it gets the art magazine back into the gallery. But in spite of that he seems to have acquired some of the vices of *Artforum* with few of its virtues. His feature articles tend to be separate short monographs on a variety of artists, more color photographs than previously and decently written. Once in a while Martin gives into sodden, academic, long windedness as in the case of Joseph Masheck's "The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness," with 172 footnotes (see *Arts* magazine for September, 1976). But one can begin to comprehend why *Artforum* has moved away from the single artist monograph if *Arts* is used as an example of pursuing that policy. The net result is that there is a deadly sameness to orthodox art magazine prose, which tends to be compounded when one sees the names of the same artists coming back over and over again. Each issue has all drama and relevancy of a new outfit for Ken and Barbie.

Some would like to believe that contemporary art is a feast-famine phenomenon and that in the '70's we're sweating out the '30's and early '40's all over again, just waiting for those golden, exciting '50's and '60's. In the meantime, the newsprint "artists" magazines seem to be filling all the marginal ecological niches allotted to it by urban artist enclaves throughout the country. Neither galleries nor art works *per se* are their focus, but rather art-living, or more specifically the daily routines of art students and artist hopefuls. As mantra-like repetition dissolves art content into numbing stupidity, in-joke posters, chain postcards, and the hassles of daily existence are all that's left. With *Art-Rite* the *dilemma* of wondering what to write about becomes content (see "Social Realism: or Living the Artistic Life" in *Art-Rite*, Nov.-Dec., 1976); the issues are reduced to going down to Canal St. to buy lighting fixtures, finding somebody whose knowledge of plumbing can pass the City's inspectors, or whether it's worth the time to protest the Whitney's latest. Some of it is adolescent chit-chat and pink quilted diary writing, the kind that made Warhol adorably cool in the '60's. It's the neighborhood circular–Duchamp's underground art with a vengeance–put out on newsprint as a national periodical.

Very much a part of this phenomena is *Artforum's* recent decision to devote two covers and two feature articles to what are essentially para-art events on a local level. (See Nancy Foote's piece "The Apotheosis of the Crummy Space" in the October, 1976 *Artforum* with its insights on the rehabilitation of Brooklyn's P.S. 1 as an art gallery; also look at Barbara Barracks' "Artpark: The New Esthetic Playground" in the November, 1976 *Artforum*). In essence both are local neighborhood situations where unused or underused space, with the aid of local and Federal grants, have been put into service by substantial groups of artists, many relatively unknown. Without much effort one can think of dozens of examples of communal art projects across the United States within the last ten years. But rarely have they ever commanded even a whisper from *Artforum*, much less a cover and lead article. It appears as if the notion that *Artforum* is a "national" art magazine of international stature is beginning to evaporate because no one with any sense of proportion or perspective is going to take *Artpark* or the exhibition at *P.S.1* seriously as national phenomena when they have their own *Artparks* next door. And the conclusion is, why should they consider the artists of *Artpark* anything more than New York provincials? Who are the Ken Nolands of *Artpark* anyway?

With the exception of *Artforum* and assorted marginal and semi-underground art newspapers in New York, there is no longer any van-garde or artistic leading-edge to New York art journalism. For the other national art publications it is very much a "business as usual" attitude, with considerable deference given to important museum purchases, policy, and changes of executive personnel. The tendency grows to concentrate on blue-chip Modernist art and the more spectacular sales at gallery auctions. Art historicism in writing has very much regained the ground that it lost in the 1960's with the contemporary boom. It is no secret that within the past five years the budgets for contemporary shows in New York's major museums have been decimated. As the post-formalist tendencies towards urban environmentalism, video, and performance are sustained by younger artists, their efforts tend to be shunted off in the direction of cooperative artists' spaces and the more venturesome commercial galleries.

Within the financial sector of the American art world there seems to be a very definite trend towards a consolidation of "solid" aesthetic values, and within art magazines a "normalization" of Modernist innovative tendencies. Obviously this represents a rending internal contradiction within the modernist tradition. The editorial decisions now being formulated by the present owner of *Artforum* will go a long way towards indicating the future of van-garde art journalism in the United States.

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"We ... give ou... of customers because they prefer not to let the tax collector know what they can afford to spend on paintings," says a Geneva dealer. "There are big men who hate publicity. Some cannot afford publicity.

"For example, if it is publicized that an industrialist spends $500,000 on a painting, in his next labor-contract negotiation the union might point out that if he spends so much on paintings he can afford to give his workers more. Also, in some countries, taxes are collected on the money you spend. Therefore, these people keep quiet.

"I went to see a Greek in London recently. He's the most secretive man you'll ever meet. He won't let anybody in his place. You never read about him, but he buys all the time."

Another dealer says, "One reason for the secrecy is that you have import taxes in Europe—8, 10, 15 or 20 per cent of the cost of the painting. The United States has no such tax.

**A Museum Shuns Auctions**

A Rothschild recently dropped a dealer from whom he had been buying for years because the dealer had boasted of a sale. Many private collectors and museums, seeking anonymity, use agents.

"Ever since we bought Rembrandt's 'Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer' for $2.3-million in 1961, we don't purchase at auctions," says the Metropolitan's Mr. Rorimer. "I think sitting ducks are apt to pay more."

A who's who of the important collectors—the most consistent buyers of the most expensive paintings—would begin with Mr. Mellon. In the last decade he has bought, in addition to French works, hundreds of English paintings—by Gainsborough, Turner, Constable and others—as well as works of other schools. Singlehandedly, he was responsible for a substantial rise in prices now being paid for these paintings.

The National Gallery in Washington was established in 1941 when Mr. Mellon's father, the late Andrew W. Mellon, gave the nation his collection of 115 old masters and a $15-million building to house it. The collection included works by Raphael, Rembrandt, Titian, Velasquez, Hals and Botticelli.

**The Notable Collectors**

According to dealers and museum officials, the list of top collectors in addition to Mr. Mellon and his sister—who was Ailsa Mellon and is the former wife of David Bruce, American Ambassador to Britain—should include:

¶Norton Simon, the West Coast industrialist who last March paid $2.2-million for Rembrandt's "Titus" at a London auction.

¶Stavros Niarchos, the Greek shipping executive who reportedly was the underbidder on "Titus."

¶Gianni Agnelli of the family that controls the Fiat motor enterprise in Italy.

¶Baron Heinrich von Thyssen, a German steel magnate whose collection is housed in Lugano, Switzerland.

¶Two other Greek shipping operators, Basil Goulandris and George Embiricos, who live in Europe.

¶The Rockefeller brothers, especially David, Nelson and John D. 3d.

¶John Hay Whitney, publisher of The New York Herald Tribune, and his sister, Mrs. Charles Shipman Payson, owner of the New York Mets.

¶Charles B. Wrightsman, oilman, who in 1961 bought Goya's "Duke of Wellington" for $392,000 at a London auction. (To keep the painting in Britain, it was purchased from Mr. Wrightsman by London's National Gallery. The Goya was subsequently stolen and recovered.)

Other major collectors are Leigh Block, a vice president of Inland Steel in Chicago; Henry Ford of the automobile family; Jean Paul Getty, whom some have called the world's richest man; Paul R. Haas of Corpus Christi, Tex., who has oil, copper and banking interests, and Charles Clore, a British financier.

Major collectors also include Joseph H. Hirshhorn, chairman of the board of the Callahan Mining Company of New York, and Dr. Heinrich Sprengel, a chocolate manufacturer in Hanover, West Germany, who owns one of Europe's outstanding collections. Another chocolate manufacturer, the Ludwig family of Aachen, also has one of West Germany's most important collections.

Other collectors are William S. Paley, chairman of the Columbia Broadcasting System; Robert Lehman, New York investment banker, and members of the Annenberg publishing family, including Walter H. Annenberg, president of Triangle Publications, Inc., which publishes The Philadelphia Inquirer, TV Guide and other publications, and his sister, Mrs. Enid A. Haupt, editor and publisher of Seventeen magazine.

Still other collectors are Henry Ittleson Jr., chairman of the C. I. T. Financial Corporation, Max Rayne, a British financier; Nathan Cummings, chairman of the Consolidated Foods Corporation, and Charles W. Englehard Jr., chairman of Englehard Industries, Inc., of Newark.

**Buying Pace Slow in France**

"There seem to be few persons in France buying on a great scale," says one dealer. "As for the Rothschild family, they may buy an isolated object but are not buying to any great extent."

Some collectors who had been buying for 20 years have dropped out of the market or are not active because, says a dealer, "they see no sense in buying now."

He continued: "They were clever to buy at modest prices and don't want to or can't buy at current prices. I sold a Monet to one man for $20,000 in the nineteen-forties. Today that picture is worth $180,000. If I tried to sell him a Monet today for $180,000 he'd look at me as if I were a crook."

Today's collectors are considered much more sophisticated than their predecessors in the early part of the century.

"The new collectors have a kind of personal involvement the old collectors didn't have," one New York dealer says. "They go into the galleries. They know exactly what to buy and when to buy. In addition, in some cases they don't have loyalty to a particular gallery."

He recalled that Lord Duveen, who died in 1939 after becoming the most famous art dealer of his time, "had a stable of customers and Knoedler's had its own." "Duveen customers," he said, "wouldn't buy from Knoedler, and Knoedler customers wouldn't buy from Duveen. Today this is not true." There are still some, however, who buy mainly from one dealer.

**The Prices Some Will Pay**

Louis Goldenberg, vice president of Wildenstein's who is in charge of its New York gallery, estimates that there are perhaps 10,000 persons, 50 per cent of them in the United States, who will pay up to $250,000 for a painting. "There are about 1,000 who will pay $250,000 to $500,000," he declared. "At least 500 people will buy a picture for over $500,000."

There are all kinds of collectors. "There are the ones who collect because they deeply love art," says a dealer. "Of the most significant collectors, this type is in the majority. They have a tremendous interest in art. There are more of them each year.

"Then there are people who take it up as a hobby. This leads to meeting people, going to museum openings and having something to do on Saturday afternoons, just like playing golf."

Many, of course, buy art because it is a status symbol.

"Then there are those," the dealer said, "who buy on strict speculation—with the hope that they will buy at a low price and make a big capital gain. Some buy over a period of two years, find their walls decorated and stop after spending $2-million or $3-million. Then you couldn't sell them a $100 drawing."

"There was a time when people would outdo one another in building mansions right out of Versailles. This is all over—there's the problem of getting servants and so on. Now, the more sophisticated approach is an art collection."

**And Some Simply Love Art**

Dealers observe, however, that the collector who truly loves art rarely stops collecting. "He is always seeking to upgrade his collection. Perhaps he might replace a painting with something better. The larger the collection, the more important selectivity becomes."

Another dealer, exploring the ethos of the collector, said:

"Some are attracted to collecting because they eventually give to museums so that they can have their names perpetuated. Publicity is a powerful incentive. The gift of pictures to museums can be quite pure in its motives. There are, of course, a lot of favorable tax aspects and this is used and abused to an incredible degree.

"Some collectors become impassioned and they can drive you crazy. I had a guy who said: 'I'll pay you a fee. I want you to spend three hours a day with me for the next three months.' He wanted me to go to museums with him, to auctions, and to look over catalogues. I told him I was too busy."

**Foibles of Certain Buyers**

Collectors have all sorts of foibles, although one dealer insists that "they're no different from the people who buy lingerie at Bloomingdale's." For example, he said, "up to the nineteen-fifties nudes wouldn't sell at all, and even now nudes are not overwhelming favorites. Also, you can't sell paintings representing dead animals. They're worth a great deal less than another painting of similar quality by the same painter."

One of the classic stories is of the art patron who turned down one of the most famous Cézannes, "The Card Players," which depicts workmen playing cards. "I don't want any peasants in my living room," he explained.

One type of collector who does not rate highly with dealers is the one who drops in and says: "I have a mantelpiece 6 feet wide. What have you got?" One dealer's standard reply is, "All my pictures are guaranteed to work over the mantelpiece."

Museums, too, are not devoid of quirks. One United States museum will not buy a work unless the artist has been dead for at least 30 years.

Notwithstanding motives, the major collectors are forming what are regarded as outstanding collections. Most of these will eventually go to museums, will enhance the reputations of the institutions and will give pleasure to millions.

David Rockefeller is considered one of the most discerning collectors. Why does he collect art?

"I suppose you do it because you enjoy it primarily," he said in his office recently. In the office hangs works by Okada, Wyeth, Signac, Cézanne, Rothko and Vasarely. There are also, among other things, some fifth-century Greek vases and a Chinese lacquered chest.

"My interest in art goes back, to a considerable extent, to my parental background," Mr. Rockefeller said. "My mother liked beautiful things. I was surrounded by them." Mrs. Rockefeller's mother, the late Mrs. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, was one of the founders of the Museum of Modern Art.

**How Homes Are Stocked**

He said, "My wife and I don't buy unless we both like the works and unless we have a place we think we can use it."

They have a home on St. Bart's Island in the West Indies and it is decorated with contemporary works. In their East Side home and at one in Pocantico Hills, N. Y., the paintings are primarily by the French impressionists—Renoir, Manet, Pissarro and others.

"The home in the West Indies is a contemporary building," Mr. Rockefeller said. "The other two are Georgian in feeling and impressionists look better there."

Mr. Rockefeller said he did not have a favorite painter. "I like a great many. I think probably I get more enjoyment from the impressionists than from any other school. It's more in tune with our way of life. The subsequent schools go well with modern architecture."

He smiled and added, "My brother Nelson doesn't agree with that." (Governor Rockefeller is one of the most important collectors of contemporary art. His recent purchases have included works by Picasso and Alexei von Jawlensky, a Russian-born member of the German expressionist school. "Nelson," said one museum curator, "is the anchor to which the whole structure of abstract impressionism is holding.")

**Quibbling on Price Is Rare**

Dealers agree that their wealthy clients seldom argue about price.

"Some people who pay a lot for a picture will bargain quite a bit for $1,000—it's part of the game," Alexandre Rosenberg, a New York dealer, said. "My father had a customer and part of his pleasure as a collector was the long sessions about price. My father decided to give him a lesson. Dad knew he wanted a certain picture that was scarce. Dad called him and told him to come to the gallery. Meanwhile, Dad put in his pocket a piece of paper with $80,000 marked on it.

"The man came in and asked the price. He was told it was $125,000. 'Impossible,' he said. 'I'll give you $60,000.' The gap narrowed. After about an hour they made a deal at $90,000. Dad said: 'Now I'll show you something. This is what I wanted for the picture.' He took out the paper. The man never bargained again."

*Tomorrow: dealers in the international art market.*

## Cabaret Tonight

ROYAL BOX, Americana Hotel, Seventh Avenue and 52d Street. Ella Fitzgerald, singer.

HOUSE OF VIENNA, 320 East 79th Street. Margaret Baxter and Paulette Le Rouzes, singers. Held over: Toni Kones, cimbalon player; Tony Bujak, violinist; Carlos Hatvary, singer.

LA CHANSONNETTE, Second Avenue and 48th Street. Rita Dimitri, singer; Stanley Brilliant, balladeer; La Chansonnette Trio.

HAWAII KAI, Broadway and 50th Street. "Hawaiian Hula-Day," a revue.

## 2d Playwright Conference Set

The second annual National Playwrights Conference will be held July 17 to Aug. 7 in Waterford, Conn., under the auspices of the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theater Foundation. Four plays will be tested in a renovated barn for theater-in-the-round presentations. The foundation has established a local office at 699 Madison Avenue.

## Theater Preview

"POUSSE-CAFE," tonight through Thursday, at 8:30, at the 46th Street Theater. The musical, starring Thedore Bikel and Lilo, opens Friday.

Rush for Art ? 3/19/1960

38 L

# ART RUSH TURNING INTO A STAMPEDE

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

museums have little money," says a museum director, "but nearly all are surrounded by people of enormous wealth."

Museums have become such important buyers that Daniel Wildenstein, a New York dealer, has for the first time in his firm's history conducted special exhibitions solely for museum directors and trustees.

More than ever, the art market is a seller's market. "There isn't anything movable that at least a half dozen persons don't want," says James J. Rorimer, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

As the competition for distinguished paintings intensifies, finding such works is becoming more difficult. "Money is easier to find than good pictures," says Sir Philip Hendy, director of Britain's National Gallery.

An intelligence network, expert knowledge and the jet airplane are the tools of today's art dealer.

Not long ago, Mr. Rorimer and another museum's director were after the same painting. "I found out when his plane was going and I went faster," Mr. Rorimer said.

Meanwhile, price records are constantly being established. Alfred H. Barr Jr., director of collections of the Museum of Modern Art, says, "Prices go up so fast that we have to phone dealers several times a week for current appraisals."

**Many Prefer Anonymity**

The auctions at major houses like Sotheby's and Christie's in London and Parke-Bernet here are public, so their important sales receive wide publicity. However, total annual auction sales, according to Peregrine Pollen, head of Parke-Bernet, "are less than 1 per cent of the general turnover in the art market."

... do not name ...

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# Turning Into a Stampede

By MILTON ESTEROW

Last October a New York art dealer set a world auction record for a painting by Cézanne when he paid $800,000 for a landscape entitled "Houses in Provence" on behalf of an anonymous buyer.

The record had been held since 1958 by Cézanne's "Boy in a Red Vest," which was sold at Sotheby's in London for $616,000 to an agent who refused to disclose its ultimate destination.

The man who bought both Cézannes is Paul Mellon, regarded as probably the world's leading art collector. The Cézannes are part of a collection of 250 19th-century and 20th-century French paintings, water-colors and drawings belonging to Mr. Mellon and his sister, Mrs. Mellon Bruce, that is the highlight of the 25th anniversary exhibition opening Thursday at the National Gallery of Art.

Mr. Mellon and Mrs. Bruce are only two of the active buyers in the international art market, which is experiencing a record boom. Never before have so many individuals and institutions been spending so many millions for great art.

Traveling throughout the world and buying the old masters, the impressionists, the post-impressionists and the moderns such as Picasso, Matisse, Braque and Dufy on a scale unsurpassed in history are hundreds of Greek shipping nabobs, Canadian mine-owners and American and European millionaires.

"I sold $2-million worth of pictures to a family in three months," says a New York dealer. "Four months ago they weren't collectors."

In the last decade West German museums, replenishing their stocks depleted by World War II, have been "roaming the world, their pockets stuffed with cash," says a French dealer.

Last year, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, perhaps the world's most affluent museum, spent about $2-million for new works.

In the United States 130 museums have been built since 1950. Scores have been opened across Europe.

"Some American museums have little money," says a

Continued on Page 38, Column 1

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# Art Collectors Wooing Dealers in Turnabout of Market

## *Worthy Merchandise Harder to Find as Buyers Multiply*

By MILTON ESTEROW

For ten days an art dealer had tried to see William Randolph Hearst, who was spending a fortune for works of art. The dealer could not pass a Hearst receptionist. Deciding on something dramatic, the dealer cut his wrists, only slightly, in front of the receptionist. Mr. Hearst rushed out. Eventually, the dealer made a sale.

"The market has changed," one of the world's leading dealers said last week. "Now the collector cuts his wrists."

"We are in the privileged position of not being in a hurry to sell," says a leading London art dealer.

"Years ago," says one of New York's most prominent dealers, "I'd go through the financial magazines, read about a rich man, bombard him with letters, put him on my mailing list. But today, you don't have time to bother with those fellows. There are too many dyed-in-the-wool collectors breaking their necks to buy paintings."

### 20 Dominate Market

Of the hundreds of dealers in the key markets—New York, London and Paris—perhaps 20 are involved to a large extent in the great international art market.

In New York, they are isituated on the East Side from 57th to 79th Street.

They include:

¶Wildenstein, which occupies a 5-story mansion of French Renaissance design at 19 East 64th Street, and has galleries in London and Buenos Aires. Founded in Paris by Nathan Wildenstein in 1875, it is now headed by his grandson, Daniel Wildenstein.

¶The Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, part of an empire founded in 1947 by 54-year-old, Vienna-born Frank Lloyd. Marlborough-Gerson, with white plaster walls and translucent off-white curtains along the walls, occupies 12,500 square feet of space on two floors of an office building at 41 East 57th Street. Mr. Lloyd formed Marlborough Fine Art, Ltd., which now has two branches in London. The firm has working arrangements with Marlborough-Gerson and with the Marlborough Galleria d'Arte in Rome.

¶Sam Salz, Inc., which occupies a town house at 7 East 76th Street.

¶Alexandre Rosenberg, who operates Paul Rosenberg Inc., which was founded by his grandfather in Paris in 1878. The firm occupies a five-story town house at 20 East 79th Street that was once the home of the late Chester Dale, a noted art collector.

¶Rosenberg & Stiebel of 32 East 57th Street. Saemy Rosenberg, who is in his seventies, heads the firm.

¶M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., which occupies a six-story building at 14 East 57th Street. Founded in 1846, it has 60 employes, an office in London and a gallery in Paris. Its chairman is Roland Balsy, a grandson of the founder, Michael Knoedler. Its president is E. Coe Kerr.

### London Gallery Area Small

There are all kinds of dealers—from a colossus like Wildenstein's, which employs 70 persons, to Sam Salz, a 71-year-old, white-haired, distinguished-looking man who conducts a more or less one-man operation so exclusive that there are dealers who don't know about him. Mr. Salz deals only in the impressionists and post-impressionists, some of whom he knew, and has a clientele that includes Paul Mellon and the Rockefellers.

Wildenstein's has perhaps the largest inventory of paintings, sculpture and objects of art of any dealers, covering the 12th to the 20th centuries. In its basement vaults are about 2,000 paintings, including works by Cézanne, Renoir, Monet, Pissarro, Goya, El Greco, Corot, Courbet, Botticelli, Watteau and Tintoretto. Elsewhere are sculptures by Carpeaux and Rodin.

In London, in a small area roughly from Berkeley Square to St. James's Square in the fashionable West End, are clustered the renowned auction houses and major firms like these:



Louis Goldenberg takes a Renoir from a storage rack at Wildenstein, gallery with a vast inventory of paintings.



The New York Times

Sam Salz in town-house gallery, 7 East 76th Street.

Honore, not far from the Elysée Palace. Opened in 1863, it is now headed by Gilbart Gruet.

The major efforts at both firms, which are no longer as influential as they once were, are directed toward finding important impressionist works for those who can afford them.

Another well-known dealer in Paris is Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, now 81, the only dealer through whom Picasso sells his works.

In Switzerland, the Ernst Beyeler Gallery has a solid international reputation. A native of Basel, Mr. Beyeler took over an ancient bookshop in the center of that city in 1945 and expanded into paintings five years later. The gallery is small.

"I can hang about 60 works in all," says Mr. Beyeler. However, it has bought and sold major collections.

In West Germany, Lempertz of Cologne, 200 years old, is the country's biggest art dealer, selling not only to collectors but to major United States museums. Lempertz opened a New York office last year.

### Supply Always Shrinking

Each day the supply of fine paintings dwindles. As a result, dealers in the international market are relying more and more on their intelligence networks — scouts, agents and friends who let the dealers know what paintings are or may be available.

"Time is of the essence in making decisions to buy," Louis Goldenberg of Wildenstein said. "The first thing we do each morning is to check the mail, telegrams and cables from our representatives throughout the world. This is one of the most important elements in the business. An hour is frequently the difference between success and failure. In this morning's mail came an offer to sell a catalogue of old documents on art. We'll buy it."

Wildenstein's has thousands of photographs of paintings, classified and filed in over 100 cabinets. With each painting is a dossier—a history, a bibliography, notes and articles about it. If an agent or anyone else writes about a Rubens, Wildenstein can probably produce a documented opinion in a few minutes.

"Sometimes it seems our staff spends more time on documentation than on selling—but that is our strength," Mr. Goldenberg said.

Reinforcing the actual scarcity of fine paintings are the regulations governing the export of art that have been passed in the last few years in many European countries to prevent or impede the departure of what are considered national treasures.

"Laws are becoming more precise," says one museum curator. "The National Gallery in Britain has a list of 150 paintings belonging to private collectors, which they will not permit to leave England.

"Take the case of Spain. It used to be that you'd buy a painting, get a permit and that was that. Now, if you buy something that the Minister of Arts declares to be a national treasure, the seller has a period of six months in which must advertise the work internationally. Then, if a foreigner does buy it, the Spanish government has six months to decide whether it wants to buy it. So you have to wait at least a year before it gets out."

### Agents Are Everywhere

One dealer says there is "a whole army of agents all over the world." The agents are not necessarily behaving like James Bond. Some are known to be in the employ of dealers. Others are not.

The agents include everyone from art historians and writers to retired museum directors and mistresses of millionaires.

"There are many people floating around the art market who appear to be party goers —you read about them in the columns—who in fact are in the employ of dealers," one dealer said.

"They get a commission that varies. If it involves traveling they get more—anywhere from 2 to 10 per cent of the sale.

"In Paris, you have many 'courtiers'—runners—who make it a profession. They'll know one particular section of the city and where all the pictures are.

"Art scholars have a wonderful entree to collectors. If they know you own a Gainsborough, they can come in and say they want to study it. Once they get in they can sound out the owner as to whether he wants to sell it."

A good dealer, says Mr. Goldenberg, directs his agents. "We give our representatives a list of specific things we want to buy. In addition, they send us information or photos of works that turns up." Wildenstein's has 18 to 20 full-time and 50 part-time agents all over the world.

Some of the major dealers employ lesser dealers, who can't afford to put up large amounts of capital to buy paintings, as agents.

Some agents work for more than one dealer.

"It's dangerous but it's done," says one dealer. An adviser to one of the most important private collections in Europe is known to tip off dealers when he feels his employer may be in the mood to sell. In return for the information, the dealer pays a commission to the adviser. Not infrequently, the adviser will advise his employer to sell.

A full-time agent usually is on a salary plus commission. He can earn $25,000 to $50,000 a year.

### Divorce Can Mean a Sale

There are many other methods of obtaining paintings.

"You read about a divorce, a couple splitting up, and you figure they're going to sell their collection," a dealer said.

"Sometimes you find that a millionaire's losing money fast and his principal capital turns out to be his pictures, so you approach him. You read the obituary columns. The estate may want to sell."

"Usually," said one dealer, "in a family of collectors—this is almost a rule—the children don't collect the same type of paintings that the parents did. If parents collected Dutch paintings, the children don't want them. They might want French works or something else, and so they will sell."

Perhaps the most sought-after private collections are in England. Austerity and taxes forced the British artistocracy to break up ancestral collections.

"Today, they don't often sell," says one dealer. Among the finest collections in Britain are those belonging to the Duke of Bedford, the Earl of Ellesmere and the Duke of Devonshire.

Klaus Perls, of 1016 Madison Avenue, one of the leading dealers in 20th-century art, told of another way in which important paintings come on the market.

"Very often, it's a matter of price levels. There are people who paid perhaps $1,000 for a painting. If the artist's work goes up to the $10,000 level, a number of people will sell.

"We used to sell Utrillos for $200 to $500 apiece between 1936 and 1940. Some of these people, when the pictures go up to $10,000, will say: 'I enjoyed the painting very much but I am not in a monetary situation where I can afford to have $10,000 pictures on my walls. So I will sell.'

"If the painting should go to $50,000 or $100,000, the person who bought for $10,000 will sell, saying his way of life does not enable him to have a $100,000 picture on his walls."

Dealers sometimes form rings or consortiums, pooling capital to buy a painting. Recently a 15th-century painting was purchased by a European dealer. He sold half a share in the painting, at a profit, to another dealer. The latter sold his share to one of the prominent dealers in the United States, who in turn sold the painting to one of the most important American museums.

One reason for the wheeling and dealing was that the first dealer who bought the painting did not have the reputation, the prestige to sell to the museum directly. Museums prefer to buy from big established dealers.

### Price Rise to Continue

Occasionally, dealers buy for different reasons. "It may be important for me to buy even if I have to lose money," says one dealer, "so as not to let another dealer make a contact with the man who's selling the picture."

The demand for paintings has also resulted in the emergence of poor paintings. "The hunt for Old Masters is so intense," says one dealer, "that they're digging up the cadavers, the old bastards, the 16th and 17th-century paintings which have been painted over many times. The paintings are sick. With some, there is a question about their authenticity."

Almost everyone involved in the international art market agrees that prices for quality paintings will continue to rise, and that the paintings will become scarcer. One note of caution comes from Mr. Barr.

"There are certain patterns in art," he said. "There are times when many people want pictures by a particular painter.

## *Agents Over World Alert for Owners Ready to Sell*

As a result, so little are available. Then, because of this, people lose interest and time moves on.

"Consider the academic painters who were contemporaries of the impressionists — Adolphe Bouguerau and Ernest Meissonier. Both were sold for enormous sums. They were much sought after by the new collectors of Europe and the United States. But the demand lessened."

Meissonier was the most popular painter on the international market in the eighteen-eighties and nineties. Perhaps no painter has ever seen his work sell for as much in his own lifetime as did Meissonier, who died in 1891.

Cornelius Vanderbilt paid $67,500 — today's equivalent would be about $225,000—in 1887 for Meissonier's "Friedland." The painting now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A good Meissonier today sells for about $15,000.

Another artist whose prices have declined is the French painter Theodore Rousseau (1812-1867). One of his works, bought by a banker in 1905 for $200,000, is worth $5,000 today.

Mr. Lloyd is optimistic. He said:

"Hundreds of corporations—International Business Machines, Pfizer, Chase Manhattan—are buying art. More are buying every day. American Telephone & Telegraph is getting interested in art. Colleges and universities are now buying art. New towns are buying art. This is something that never existed before."

Last December Mayor Wagner signed an order directing that at least 1-200th of construction costs of new city buildings be allocated to art. The order, continued by Mayor Lindsay in January, is in effect a mandate that new public buildings include a quota of sculpture, murals, stained glass. Boston and Philadelphia have similar laws. Other cities are studying the laws, which mean that millions of dollars will be devoted to art for new courthouses, schools, libraries, hospitals, welfare centers.

In addition, a bill before Congress would require the spending of 1 per cent of the construction costs of Federal buildings on art. Roger L. Stevens, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, said that since average annual costs of government building ranged from $600 million to $1 billion, the bill would create a market of $6 million to $10 million annually for the purchase of art.

"We've only scratched the surface," Mr. Lloyd said.

## *Pewter Dollar of 1776 Brings $812 in London*

Special to The New York Times

LONDON, March 14 — A rare American Revolution dollar dated 1776, made of pewter, was sold here today for the equivalent of $812.

The coin, part of a collection started in the 17th century by Dr. John Sharp, Archbishop of York, was sold at Sotheby's auction house to A. H. Baldwin, a London coin dealer.

Daniel Fearon, numismatic expert at Sotheby's said the coin was probably a "pattern [experimental] issue" that was never put into general circulation. It apparently was minted in Philadelphia.

On one side of the coin are two rings of inscriptions. The outer reads: "Continental Currency 1776." The inner reads: "Fugio" (I pass swiftly).

On the other side of the coin is an outer ring of 13 linked circles, each enclosing the abbreviated name of one of the 13 Colonies.

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tele that includes Paul Mellon and the Rockefellers.

Wildenstein's has perhaps the largest inventory or paintings, sculpture and objects of art of any dealers, covering the 12th to the 20th centuries. In its basement vaults are about 2,000 paintings, including works by Cézanne, Renoir, Monet, Pissarro, Goya, El Greco, Corot, Courbet, Botticelli, Watteau and Tintoretto. Elsewhere are sculptures by Carpeaux and Rodin.

In London, in a small area roughly from Berkeley Square to St. James's Square in the fashionable West End, are clustered the renowned auction houses and major firms like these:

¶Thomas Agnew & Sons, Ltd., founded in 1817. It employs about 30 persons and its board of directors is headed by Geoffrey Agnew, sometimes irreverently described as the "Pope of London art."

¶P. and D. Colnaghi & Co., Ltd., London's oldest art dealer, founded in 1760. Headed by Byam Shaw, its staff totals 25.

¶Arthur Tooth & Sons, Ltd., founded in 1842. It is headed by Dudley Tooth and has 15 employes. Unlike Agnew's and Colnaghi's, which specialize in Old Masters, Tooth deals principally in impressionists and contemporary art.

¶Edward Speelman, a dealer in his rifties, who operates quietly out of a London office, is also an important figure.

**Dealer Aided Impressionists**

Art exports from Britain were worth $75-million in 1964, and imports totaled $64.4.-million. In 1950, exports totaled $10.3-million and imports $4.6-million.

In Paris, prominent dealers are these:

¶The Durand-Ruel Gallery, founded in 1803, and now in a stone building on the Avenue de Friedland. In the middle and late 19th century, Paul Durand-Ruel encouraged, supported and promoted the impressionists. The present head is Charles Durand-Ruel, a grandson of Paul, who directs a staff of seven.

¶Bernheim-Jeune, which has two galleries in Paris, one on the Rue du Faubourg Saint-

mentation than on selling—but that is our strength," Mr. Goldenberg said.

Reinforcing the actual scarcity of fine paintings are the regulations governing the export of art that have been

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paintings that the parents did. If parents collected Dutch paintings, the children don't want them. They might want French works or something else, and so they will sell."

Perhaps the most sought-

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*Saturday Review* | A SPECIAL SECTION

# ART IN AMERICA IN 1962

## A BALANCE SHEET

By KATHARINE KUH

RECENTLY an American painter forced automobile tires to substitute for his brush, resolutely driving back and forth over his canvas. More disheartening than this contrived act was the prominence given to it by a popular magazine that prides itself on cultural awareness. Another painter who presumably values expediency over privacy has been widely publicized for an equally novel, if less mechanical, technique. He covers a nude woman with paint and, this time, it is her body —not an automobile—that rolls over the canvas.

Innovations catch on overnight. There is now a sudden enthusiasm for so-called comic-strip paintings. Usually devoid of invention, these overlarge copies (and *copies* they are) literally reproduce and enlarge familiar comic-strip scenes. Touted as the new American folk art, they are selling with breathless speed. When one thinks of Léger's authentic use of folk art, his ability to transform it into new, often bold and witty compositions, one realizes that without deliberate translation art cannot exist.

Somewhat less exhibitionistic than these chic novelties, but no less tedious are the innumerable empty canvases covered with only one color. More than forty years ago the Russian, Kasimir Malevich, painted his famous "Suprematist Composition: White on White," proving that much can be done with little and making the current "one-color men" seem awkwardly dated; for as yet they have added little or nothing to his definitive statement.

Today, any technique accented by a single easily labeled characteristic is apt to be speedily and enthusiastically acclaimed. Why seasoned collectors are so willingly snared is a provocative question. Surely they must realize that great discoveries scarcely spring full-blown from every hopeful neophyte. However, it is not experimentation I am deploring; it is the *lack* of it, the shallow imitation of invention.

The influence of publicity became exceptionally clear recently when a reputable national art organization admitted that its top executive job demanded promotional experience more than a knowledge of art. Also symptomatic is the number of private collectors who maintain personal public relations counsels. One might expect that those whose fortunes do not depend on popularity polls would be the last to expose themselves to public glare. But now, as the

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possession of art becomes a more and more reliable passport to social success, it is only the very innocent who fail to recognize its power. Our museums and even the White House tend to encourage this situation in their zeal for private support.

Press releases from commercial art galleries and public institutions pour over the reviewer's desk, the prose sometimes more lurid than lucid. A few random samples of modern publicity are revealing: "[This exhibit] presents an artist, not yet thirty, who has found an individual and highly sophisticated style. . . . The 'sergeant's stripe' is his *leit motif*. . . ." "Also included in the exhibition is [an artist] highly regarded for his experimental work using a virtuoso technique that combines plastics with such extraneous materials as old tuxedos, cardboard, sand, steel, and wood." "The use of a new set of tools was employed: wide smearing slashing tools, squeegees, licence plates, saws, hand and arm up to the elbow, a unique collection of brushes, spatulas, shovels, balloons, snow, etc. Painting in the dark for greater subconscious action was also employed." And one last example: "[The artist] creates 'spacial worlds' using unusual materials such as drinking straws, calendar tubes, and pipe cleaners. 'The essence of creation is inevitability' states this artist. . . ." If these quotations do nothing else, they at least underline our present-day emphasis on methods and materials to the near exclusion of content and meaning.

There was a time early in this century when it was valid to startle the observer into recognizing unexpected beauty in humble discarded objects. Then it was chiefly an antimaterialistic attitude, a rebellion against accepted external values that drove artists to find meaning in the most modest human experiences. Now it is more often the reverse, any gimmick or gadget becoming an end in itself and not necessarily a means to new insights.

As for purple prose, even the most ebullient press releases cannot hope to compete with the magazine *Art News*, where an entrenched obscurantism buries the simplest ideas under a barrage of occult words. To understand what some of these writers are saying demands a "pony" that doesn't exist. Very clear, however, are the words of a new art publication which pays unabashed homage to commercialism in the arts.

Called *The Art Market Guide & Forecaster*, this monthly letter frankly reduces artists to the status of stocks and bonds, rating them only as viable financial commodities. In one of its first communications, the *Guide* observed that "the art market as a whole has gained 975 per cent since the war—versus only 241 per cent for the stock market! The coming market year




"The Engagement Ring," by Roy Lichtenstein. —*Leo Castelli Gallery.*

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"The Three Musicians," by Fernand Léger. —*Museum of Modern Art.*

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should see the breaking of many standing records, such as the 19,000,000 per cent gain thus far computed for—not Rembrandt but Vermeer!" It might be well to recall here that Vermeer's known works add up to no more than forty paintings, none of which, to my knowledge, is likely to appear on the open market, a fact blithely omitted by *The Art Market Guide & Forecaster*.

OTHER statements are equally ambiguous. "The Art Market Guide Averages provide for the Art Market a continuing price-trend as indispensable as the Dow-Jones Averages are to the stock market. . . . *[The Guide]* will include clear guidance on which art investments are gilt edge, blue chip, speculative." And yet this omniscient sheet, in listing artists in terms of percentage gains or losses, overlooks the fact that incorrect attributions at auction sales and elsewhere are sometimes the reason for unexpectedly low prices. An artist's reputation has not necessarily plunged because wary buyers avoid bidding on doubtful labels. Physical condition likewise determines price, the degree to which a work has been damaged or restored affecting its value.

Notwithstanding all the subtle factors that contribute to an understanding of art, *The Guide* promises that "an investor or collector who dispassionately combines LOGIC with FACTS can make profits of fantastic size," a statement open to wide divergence of opinion. It is precisely because logic and facts are meaningless in art without intuition, passion, long experience, knowledge, and that most elusive of all qualities, a sensitive eye, that *The Art Guide* becomes not merely a cynical oddity but a dangerously misleading cicerone.

The fact is, however, that no discussion of the fine arts is possible today without mention of the fantastic prices that paintings and sculpture are bringing at auction—and without equal mention of the fantastic antics surrounding these events. We seem to have read more about Mr. James Rorimer's slight twitch of the eyebrow, when as director of the Metropolitan Museum he acquired Rembrandt's "Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer" (see cover) at the Parke-Bernet sale, than we have read about the picture itself. No one denies that this is a splendid painting, but the publicity accompanying its purchase focused on price almost to the exclusion of art. The gigantic figure of $2,300,000 was used, it would seem, as bait to lure thousands of curious visitors. If one assumes that mere exposure to a work of art is enough, then these methods are less open to debate, but I question whether the throngs pouring into the Metropolitan for a hectic look at a costly painting have taken much of value away with them.

The majority, I am sure, did not know that for many years two equally distinguished, possibly more distinguished, examples of Rembrandt's work have been hanging only a few blocks away at the Frick Collection. These, the brilliant "Polish Rider" (see page G) and the moving "Self-Portrait," (see page I) make one doubt whether New York needed another masterpiece by this artist as much as did the underbidder, Cleveland's Museum of Art (particularly since the Metropolitan already has some thirty examples). The entire transaction brings up any number of questions. Should American public-service institutions be pitted against one another in ruthless competition? Isn't the final loser the public? For even though most of our museums are privately endowed, they presumably serve public needs and constantly appeal to this same public for financial help.

A further sign of the capitulation of museums to price-glamor publicity appeared recently in a newspaper item about a rare Tiepolo painting. This time the story came from that stronghold of conservatism, Boston. To quote. "The most expensive painting ever bought by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts went on display today in the museum's Rotunda. . . . Perry T. Rathbone, museum director, said the museum had insured the work for about $250,000. He did not reveal the purchase price, but said it was the highest ever paid by the museum."

In the past, museums were proud of acquiring great masterpieces for little money; it took knowledge, a nimble eye, and a poker face. But now, bowing to the press, museum eyes seem more geared to Wall Street than to esthetics. It is scarcely surprising that art thefts are frequent and prices steeply inflated.

Willem Sandberg, Director of the Stedlijk Museum in Amsterdam, may have hit the nail on the head when he recently expressed the opinion that "all American museums suffer from the trustee system. Once you have confidence in a director, you must give him freedom. And confidence naturally implies that a director is a specialist in art." But this unfortunately is what many top museum men are not; they are more and more being chosen for their administrative ability, their financial acumen, their charm, their agreeable willingness to rubber-stamp trustee decisions. In addition, art museum trustees are thinking increasingly of their institutions as business enterprises, and of themselves as art specialists, a hazardous and ironic inversion that leads to incompetent behavior on both levels.

TAKE, for example, the problem engendered by trustee and layman committees acting as final arbiters on art acquisitions. I know of an occasion when such a group actually flipped a coin to decide between two purchases. These committees, unless firmly steered by wise professional advice (a situation becoming less frequent), are apt to turn down works by little known but potentially important artists from both past and present, only to wait several years for public demand to raise prices enough to guarantee popular approval. It would make an interesting story to list the number of outstanding works lost to our public institutions because of amateur interference. And for that matter, why should one expect successful business men (since most trustees are drawn from this unduly limited group) to double as art scholars?

Dr. Harold W. Dodds, in his 1962 Carnegie Corporation report on the problems besetting college presidents, strongly recommended that public re-

## *Auction Sales*

THE BALLYHOO surrounding modern art auctions has led to inevitable abuses. Recently it was charged that certain dealers were putting up paintings at auction only to buy them back through "front men" at greatly increased prices, thus establishing new artificial values. The day of picking up bargains at art auctions is a misty memory. These affairs at their peaks often relegate specialists to the back stairs but find front-row seats for movie stars and other photogenic personalities. Perhaps the most flagrant example of "name-buying" occurred not long ago at an auction in New York where a dealer paid $70,000 for a greatly repainted Picasso canvas, its condition having openly been denounced by the artist himself. Willem Sandberg, Director of the Stedlijk Museum in Amsterdam, wisely observed recently that "people who choose with their ears . . . and forget to look, buy names instead of flames."

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—Chinese National Palace Museum.

"Emperor Ming Huang's Journey to Shu" (detail).

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lations and fund raising not be their sole functions. He cautioned against identifying universities with business enterprises and advised trustees to avoid the too familiar pitfalls of behaving either as indifferent figureheads or "domineering busy-bodies."

Dr. Dodds' words are no less appropriate for art museums than for universities. The fact is that the turnover in top art museum personnel is shocking, its frequency recalling the haphazard fortunes of musical chairs. Joseph A. Patterson, Director of the American Association of Museums, said recently, "There is an acute shortage of museum personnel, and the profession stands at a lower salary level, with fewer benefits and far less recognition, than any comparable group." When one realizes that a nation-wide survey by a monthly newsletter called *Arts Management* indicates that public and business support of the arts in America has vastly increased lately, one questions why at least some of these benefits have not sifted down to museum staffs. I personally feel that much of the trouble stems not from trustee action alone but from the timid individualistic behavior of staff members themselves. As a group, directors and curators have never organized intelligently on a national level, nor have they stood together vocally. Lack of loyalty in the profession is distressing. No sooner is one director dropped or eased out of a museum berth than his good friend from a neighboring institution takes over.

IT IS no wonder that gifted young art historians are looking elsewhere for work. By this time they realize that in a field where expediency is often valued above integrity and courage, the future is not too encouraging. There is, of course, an organization called the American Association of Art Museum Directors that meets annually and establishes various committees to "look into" certain matters. But, as far as I can see, if crucial problems are discussed they are rarely effectively implemented. What has this organization or any art museum organization done about equitable employment practices, about salaries, contracts, or tenure? What have they done about training younger personnel? What have they done about training their own trustees? What have they done about unethical tax practices? What have they done about anti-Semitism in their museums? It is well known that, though substantial numbers of American art donors and patrons are Jewish, too often they are not given a proportionate voice in the policy making of their museums. Obviously this is scarcely the direct responsibility of professional staffs, but firm joint pressure could add up to more positive national action.

Perhaps we can look to the recently organized Art Dealers Association of America for help in at least one of these predicaments. Already some fifty commercial galleries both in New York and elsewhere have joined this group. According to its first president, Alexandre Rosenberg, "The art market was one of the few trade groups without a representative association. We felt the need of introducing some standards of ethics to protect the public and to correct certain tax abuses. We have already sent a delegation to Washington offering the government our help in the appraisal field."

Represented by an experienced lawyer, this group is in a position to effect some much-needed reforms that the museum world has been inclined to overlook. For example, gifts of art have long been partly tax deductible, a fact that is at once responsible for enriching museums and inflating art prices, the latter due sometimes to artificially high evaluations that have even resulted in tax profits for donors. A classic story concerns a customer who early one December visited a gallery, looking specifically for a work priced at $20,000. His only stipulation was that the sale be accompanied by a signed letter valuing the object at exactly twice what he was prepared to pay for it.

The urgent necessity for cracking down on such abuses does not, however, condone the government's practice of sending abysmally uninformed agents to check on art evaluations. One I recently encountered did not know the difference between bronze and marble, between etchings and lithographs, between oil and tempera, or Dürer and Cranach. For a busy donor to waste time with this type of official naïveté is enough to discourage him from ever giving another work of art to an institution (and it is well to remember that all donors are *not* trying to evade tax regulations). The new Art Dealers Association could prove most helpful in advising the government on realistic appraisals, and on protecting the rights of honest donors and the needs of public institutions.

Though many of art's present difficulties result from gigantism—from bigger and bigger prices, bigger and bigger museums, bigger and bigger exhibitions, bigger and bigger works of art, yet I must confess that during the last year some of the largest exhibits were the best, some of the largest paintings the most rewarding. And it is only fair to note that certain momentous exhibitions were sponsored by our largest museums. Indeed, often what we most deplore paradoxically turns up in the credit column.

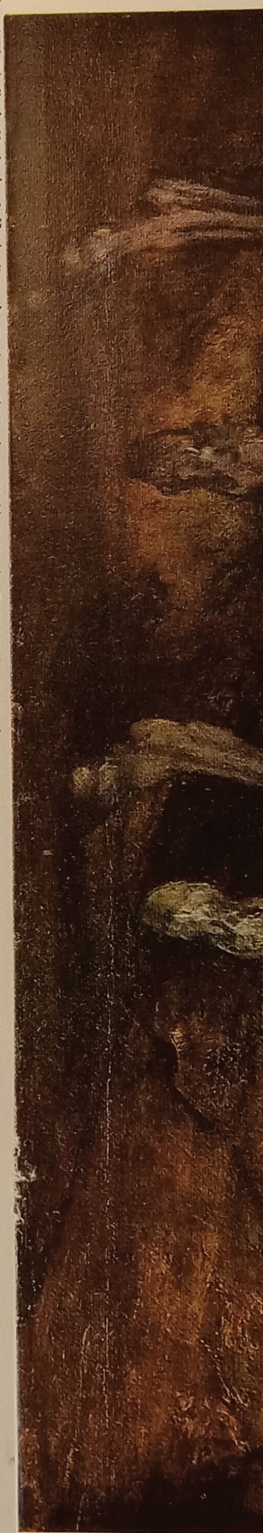
One thinks immediately of the superb Chinese Art Treasures lent by the Republic of China (see page E), a comprehensive and unforgettable survey that traveled to several major American museums. In this show the early scroll paintings, among the most civilized works of art ever produced, were mute reminders of Oriental profundity. Nature, depicted as all pervasive, is endowed in these paintings with supernatural grandeur, revealing man appropriately dwarfed by the elements. Fortunate were the many Americans who experienced this extraordinary exhibition, where flawless technique served an art of unparalleled wisdom.

Fortunate, also, were those who saw a small show of monumental collages by Henri Matisse. If the Chinese paintings were a supreme expression of man's mastery over the flesh, so also, in a more personal way, were Matisse's joyous mural-like cut-and-pasted gouaches. When the artist made these compositions toward the end of his life, he was ill and unable to work at his easel, but his inventive vision, his feeling for explosive line and color were not to be quenched. Triumphing over his infirmities, Matisse created a group of large painted, cutout, and pasted gouaches of such brilliance, gaiety, and economy as to rank with his greatest works (see page J).

FOR American artists, critics and laymen, the Matisse show was a revelation. Not one wasted line, not one hint of hesitation burdened these compositions, which were virtually conceived with the two edges of a scissors. It is difficult to identify such consummate control and dazzling color, such optimism and vitality, with a man well over eighty. Surpassing even Renoir, who in his late years tied brushes to his wrists and painted from a wheel chair, Matisse, likewise confined to a wheel chair, proved once again that for artists old age is not a handicap.

And two other octogenarians, this time Americans, confirm the same judgment. Hans Hofmann and Edward Hopper, diametrically opposed as painters, both seem at the peak of their power today. In the section devoted to American art at the Seattle Fair, Hofmann is by far the oldest exhibitor; yet his two canvases sing out with such luminous vibrancy that they make the adjacent works of younger followers appear tepid. One of these canvases called "Olive Grove" (see page L) was painted in 1961 after a trip to Italy. Characteristically, it evokes the artist's feelings in the presence of nature, but in no way documents a specific scene.

On the other hand, Edward Hopper's "Second-Story Sunlight" (see page M), recently acquired by the Whitney Museum of American Art, is based on more easily recognizable elements, though it



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"Polish Rider," by Rembrandt. —*The Frick Collection.*

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also is an imaginary scene. The deliberate spontaneity and exuberance of Hofmann is here replaced by calculated restraint. Every window shade, every shadow is almost mathematically determined. In Hopper's words, there is "a sort of elation about sunlight on the upper part of a house." Though one composition blazes with color and erupts with pigment, the other, stressing contrasts of light, denies all surface texture; though one composition is nonobjective and the other naturalistic, they are both basically abstract. Hopper is less interested in his figures and house than in the way light transforms them, and Hofmann's color surprises suggest but do not describe his personal emotions. Both men are authentic pioneers of modern American painting.

One other traveling exhibition made history this season. The Thomas Eakins show may have failed for certain modern eyes because of its solid solemnity and stolid color, but, for me, this painter towers above his nineteenth-century American contemporaries, not because of his uncompromising honesty (true, also, sometimes of them), but because of his uncanny ability to interpret his own times and his own country. This was the era when Europe called the plays; yet Eakins called his own. If his interest was more in the particular than the general, he was nonetheless able to project with searching perception the dry, unpretentious, forthright quality of the America he knew—an America fast disappearing. Eakins is remembered for his portraits, sport scenes, and realistic paintings of surgical operations, and for the unvarnished insight he brought to these often prosaic subjects (see page K).

THERE have been other fine exhibitions—Calder, Henry Moore, Gonzalez, Dubuffet, Léger—all accepted modern "old masters." When it comes to recent large group shows, the emphasis has been almost exclusively on painters and sculptors backed by New York galleries—many of whom too often seem unseasoned, untested, and immature. No one can accuse the present art market of ignoring the young. However, there are any number of able painters and sculptors not living within reach of the East Coast who are seldom featured in official shows. One cannot help wondering why exhibition directors travel extensively to Europe and even to Asia, while yet neglecting some of the largest art centers in their own country.

During occasional trips I have come on interesting painters and sculptors, artists like Bryan Wilson and Richard Bowman of California, Evelyn Statsinger of Chicago, James Fitzgerald of Seattle, Joseph Goto (particularly his monumental metal sculpture) of Ann Arbor, none of whom is represented as a rule in large national exhibitions. And rest assured—there are many others. In Michigan, for example, an excellent group of watercolorists is well worth watching. That the New York school has produced certain formidable men of great stature does not justify the neglect of promising American artists living elsewhere.

Still the wealth of art galleries and museums in and near New York City is a prodigious, not to say healthy, indication of public interest. One Sunday last May, I counted in the *New York Times* no less than seventeen public institutions featuring art shows, some of major importance.

Moreover, the high performance of certain smaller specialized institutions like Asia House and the Museum of Primitive Art in New York, the peerless Phillips Collection in Washington, and the George Eastman House in Rochester are, let us hope, clues to the future. University and college art museums also, as a rule, are comfortably limited in size and ambition. With them scholarship often compensates for modest funds, acquisitions reflecting knowledge more than public pressure. And, in addition, many colleges and universities are organizing excellent art festivals designed to serve not only the student body but the entire surrounding community. These festivals are now spreading even to high schools and grammar schools. One of the best I have seen takes place annually at the New Canaan, Connecticut, Public High School. This lively show, covering only the work of students, includes prints, paintings, ceramics, drawings, collages, sculpture, and design. Here one senses the influence of perceptive teachers who have obviously stressed content above technique. The work throughout shows a touching freshness and genuine intensity rarely found in the average self-conscious teen-ager.

Speaking of students, another promising omen occurred this spring at Columbia University. There, and also at Princeton University and Trinity College, students have organized against what they consider bad architectural designs planned for their respective campuses. The Columbia group was particularly incensed over a projected new School of Business to be called Uris Hall. The designs, extremely dull and pedestrian, recall dreary fascist architecture from Mussolini's day. One student wisely observed: "The building should have some image relating to the students who work in it. This building looks no different than a post office or a branch office of an insurance company." William Platt, a member of the University's Advisory Committee on Architecture and Planning, was quoted in the *Times* as having replied: "It should not be the kind of building the architecture students have in mind. Rather, it should be a nonentity, an efficient building that fits in." Somehow $7 million seems a lot to spend on a nonentity.

One need only compare the small, wonderfully inventive Roofless Church of New Harmony, Indiana, to appreciate why architecture must relate visually and emotionally as well as functionally to the purpose it serves. Philip Johnson, who designed the church, and Jacques Lipchitz, who made the sculpture for it, obviously worked in close harmony to produce a chapel reflecting both the religious freedom and the Utopian philosophy that have distinguished New Harmony's history. To be sure, sympathetic church sponsorship of art and architecture is not new. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, it was standard practice, but during the past two decades in both Europe and the United States, a rebirth of the same interest has produced a body of notable modern church architecture. Only recently Marcel Breuer's Abbey Church in Collegeville, Minnesota, was dedicated. Here this architect designed a whole complex of buildings highly modern in character, but nonetheless reflecting the religious life and needs of the Benedictine brothers for whom it was built.

WE ALSO have big business to thank for other evidences of present-day progressive cooperation in the arts. The Chase Manhattan Bank, the Inland Steel Company in Chicago, the Seagram Building, the Airport in St. Louis—these and many other business organizations are imaginatively combining modern architecture and art. Today even factories are commissioning painters and sculptors, as industry fast becomes one of art's most liberal patrons. And the best architects, too, are increasingly collaborating with contemporary sculptors to introduce works of art into the daily lives of our communities.

In addition, New York State under the leadership of art-conscious Governor Nelson Rockefeller has established an exemplary Council of the Arts, the first of its kind in the country. With the sole aim of promoting cultural welfare, this organization has an enviable record and may, let us hope, act as a spur to other states and to the federal government. Because it has concentrated heavily on the needs of smaller institutions, implementing their art programs with exhibitions and services specifically adapted to their communities, the council has already proved invaluable. Not limited to the fine arts, this group likewise sponsors statewide theatre, music, ballet, and opera pro-

*(Continued on page N)*

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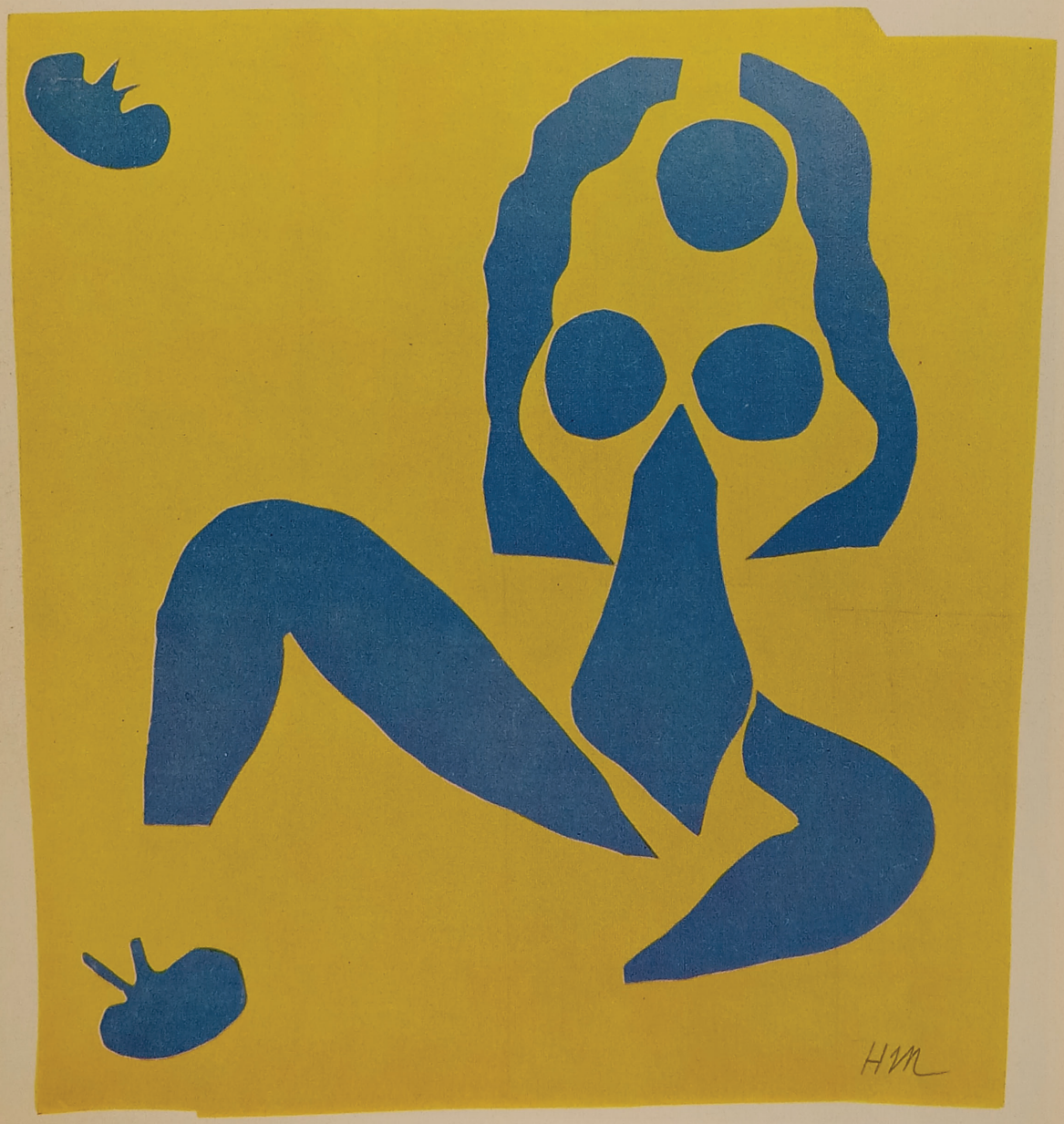
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"Self Portrait," by Rembrandt. —*The Frick Collection.*

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"Blue Nude, The Frog," by Henri Matisse. —*Private Collection.*

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—National Gallery of Art, Washington. Presented by Mr. & Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney.

"The Biglen Brothers Racing," by Thomas Eakins (detail).

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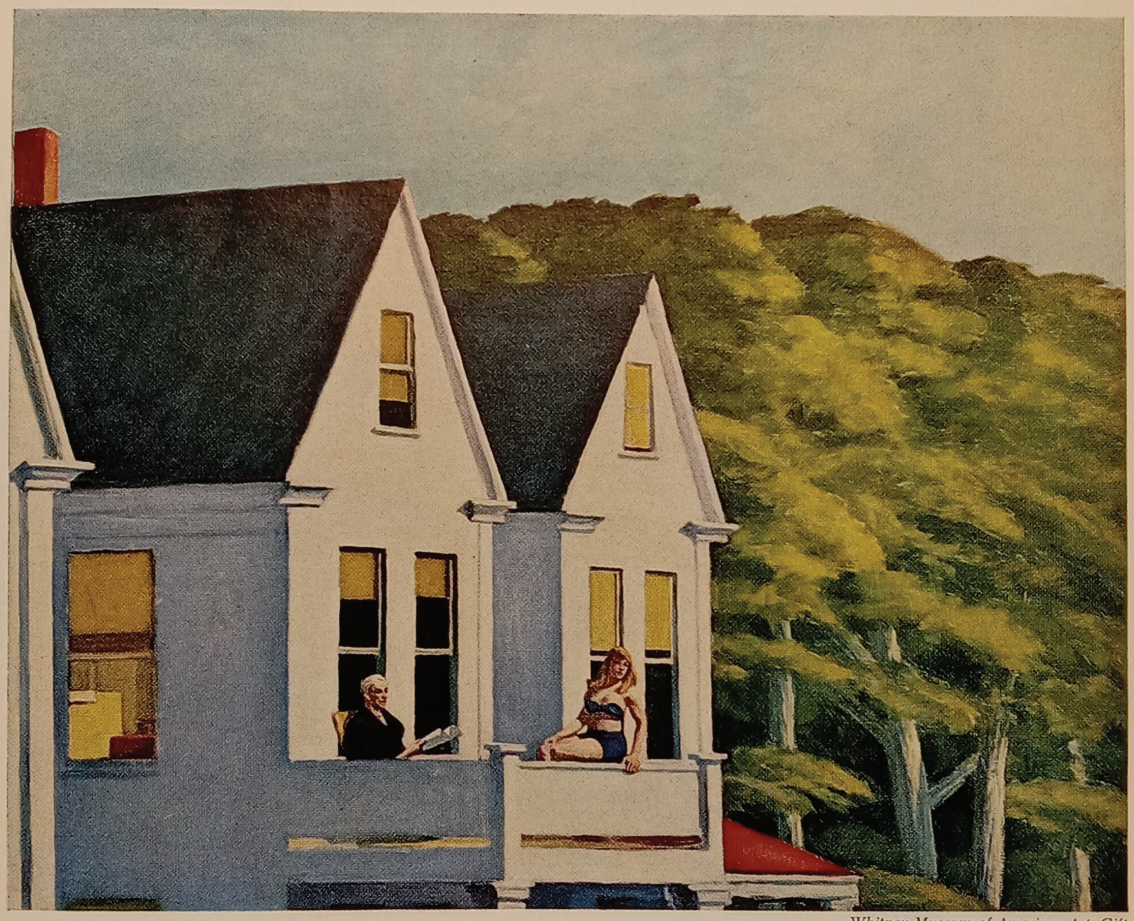



—Kootz Gallery.

"Olive Grove," by Hans Hofmann.

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—Whitney Museum of American Art, Gift of the Friends of the Whitney Museum.

"Second-Story Sunlight," by Edward Hopper.

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grams often experimental in character.

Another refreshing development is the increasing number of modest and informative art publications. Those many costly coffee-table art books that prize jazzed-up color reproductions above thoughtful texts are at last being challenged by a group of smaller, well-edited volumes (usually in connected series), where words are not merely perfunctory space fillers.

Priced within comfortable reach of students and the general public, these books are also frequently well illustrated. I particularly recommend a compact series called The Complete Library of World Art, each volume devoted to a single celebrated master. Reproductions of the artist's entire *oeuvre* are followed by excellent enlarged details and accurate, intelligent information. Though somewhat more routine, the Student Series of Great Artists is also notable for its color reproductions and its clear, sympathetic language. Nor is architecture overlooked. A series called the Great Ages of World Architecture publishes condensed volumes devoted to individual periods in the history of architecture. Again the books are written by specialists who are concerned with authentic, concise interpretations, a happy relief from the plethora of phony words that envelop art today.

An encouraging harbinger has also appeared lately in the form of a small mimeographed folder called *Scrap*. Edited by two young New York artists, Sidney Geist and Anita Ventura, this modest sheet at first glance is deceiving. Written with verve, integrity, and independence, *Scrap* takes pokes at sacrosanct institutions and pompous opinions. Unfortunately it appears only sporadically and in small numbers, but as a stimulating debunking agent it brings a breath of fresh air to the perfumed art world.

And, finally, one cannot draw up a balance sheet on the arts in America today without saluting the White House, if only for Mrs. Kennedy's serious concern with restoring authentic furniture, sculpture, and paintings to this historic landmark. Already several fine colonial canvases by such distinguished artists as Rembrandt Peale and John Trumbull have been acquired. One of the noblest acquisitions, however, is not by an American but of an important American. A "Portrait of Benjamin Franklin" painted from life by the Scotch artist David Martin shows the sitter at sixty years of age. This uncompromising likeness has none of the frothy artificiality sometimes associated with the eighteenth century. It is memorable for a frank integrity that echoes the personality of its renowned subject (see page P).

From a long-range view, American taste does indeed seem to be slowly coming of age as its sights veer from "Grand Rapids modern" to Charles Eames, from neo-Gothic to Eero Saarinen, from Rockwell Kent to Mark Tobey. But in order fully to come of age, the art profession as a whole must face up to its own peculiar brand of "juvenile delinquency."



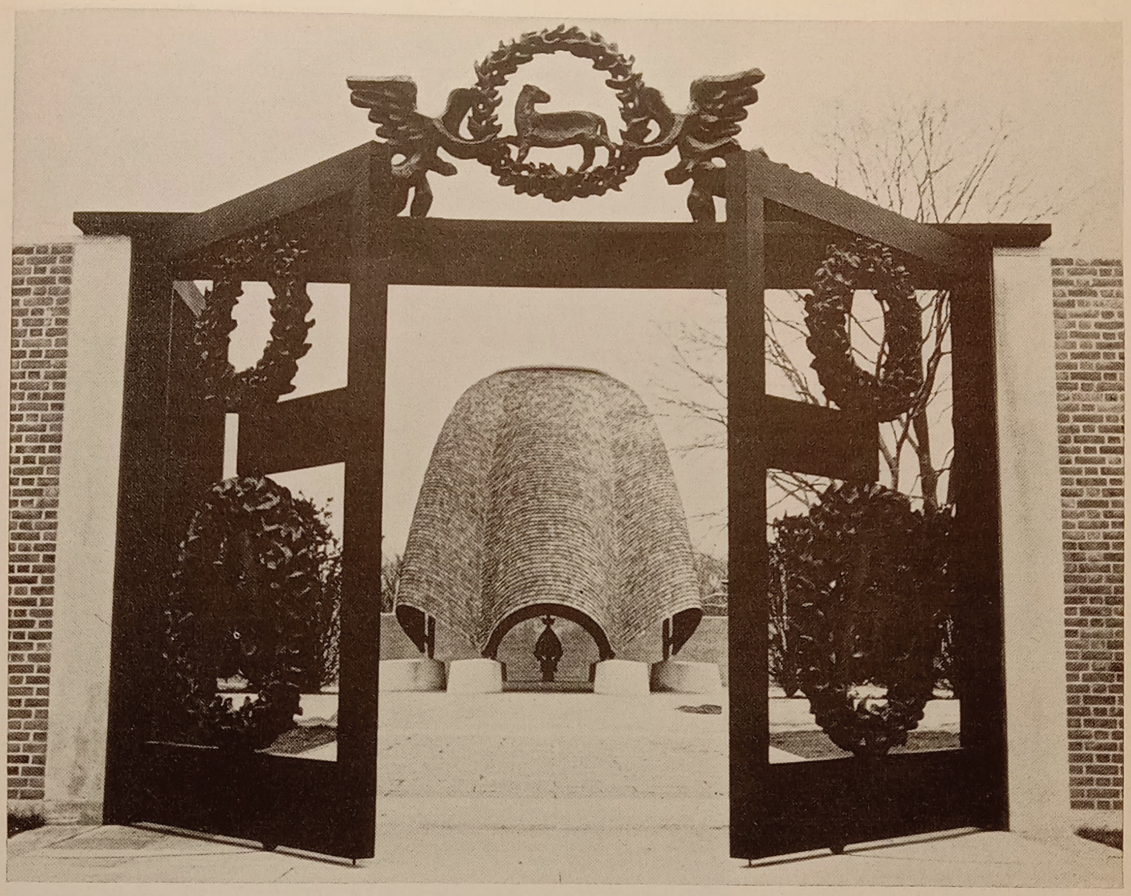
St. John's Abbey Church, Collegeville, Minnesota, designed by Marcel Breuer.

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Roofless Church, by Philip Johnson; Sculpture, by Jacques Lipchitz, New Harmony, Indiana.

Projected Graduate School of Business, Columbia University.



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"Portrait of Benjamin Franklin," by David Martin.

—Courtesy The White House.

# *A Note on Government and Art*

THE PROBLEM of government in art, with the familiar specter of political interference offset by the possibility of much-needed financial and moral support, has been often discussed but never solved. Europeans have long felt that government supervision of the arts is preferable to private patronage. For this to be true in America, Congressional submission to professional know-how becomes a prerequisite—an unlikely situation where art is concerned, unless certain excellent architectural designs for recent American embassies can be taken as good omens.

There is no doubt that *intelligent* government administration of art is, by and large, preferable to the American trustee system where too often personal vagaries assume frightening proportions. But one should not underestimate the word "intelligent."

At the moment there is not much cause for jubilation. Despite the fact that President Kennedy has supported the idea of a Federal Advisory Council on the Arts, the bill backing this measure was blocked in the House Rules Committee during May and for the moment seems all but dead. Considering that this bill asks for only $100,000, little more than a pittance in our national economy, its future is scarcely promising. And even were such a council established, its value would depend on the courage and knowledge of those men and women appointed to its membership. If merely well-known noncontroversial names were invited to serve, creative art in America could well degenerate into little more than stuffed-shirt compliance.

Nor are we reassured by the budget cuts that have recently crippled some of our most valuable federal art programs overseas. In our zeal to serve underprivileged African and Asian countries we tend to overlook Europe. There, in the most important and urbane capitals, we have lately slashed already modest budgets to paralyze what were often exemplary art programs projecting a positive picture of this country. Despite the downgrading of these highly effective, top-quality government-sponsored exhibitions, I now read that "Government officials have agreed to support where possible in Europe" a show of fifty amateur paintings by American business and professional men, a procedure in direct opposition to a recent statement by August Heckscher, newly appointed cultural advisor to President Kennedy, who said, "I worry about art being made a hobby or a therapeutic process." According to a press release issued by "Manpower, Inc.": "It was felt a display of art work of this kind (by amateur businessmen) might help dispel the stereotype of the uncultured American. . . ."

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# Sixties Literature

Writers at Work, Third Series: after Ginsberg intro

Thomas Bergen's "Vital Parts" – preface the sixties.

Don McNeil, "Moving Through Here" (1970) – UV pieces

Mailer, "Armies of the Night"; "Siege of Chicago"; "Ads for Self"

Robt. Brustein, "Revolution as Theatre" (1971 - anti)

Richard Poirier, "The Performing Self" (NY, 1971 - Bruckstein says best)

Bruce Cook, "The Beat Generation" (NY, 1971)

Harold Rosenberg, "Tradition of the New" (1959)

Stefan Kanfer, "A Journal of the Plague Years" (McCarthy period)

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "A Thousand Days" (JFK – see also Halberstam's "The Best & the Brightest")

Tom Wolfe, "The Painted Word" (1975 – see attacks by Alan Trachtenberg in Partisan Review, No. 2, 1974; & Wilbur Phillips in P.R., no. 2, 1975

Martin Duberman, "Black Mountain" (1972)

The New Left Reader, ed. by Carl Oglesby (NY, Grove, 1969)