

THE  
OTHER TRADITION

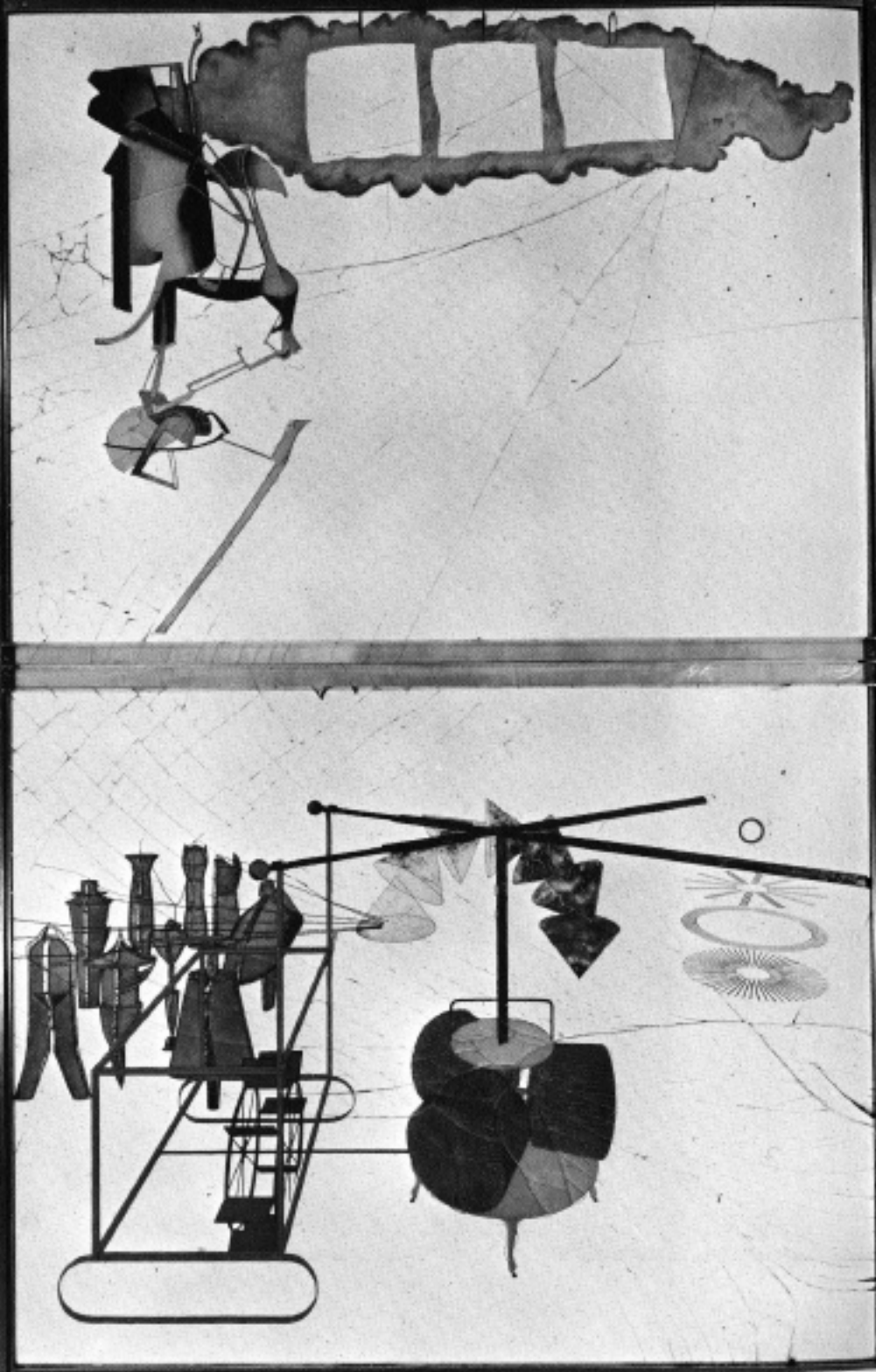
THE OTHER TRADITION

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author gladly confesses that his experiences in the interchange of ideas with artists in the course of writing about contemporary art have been the principal factors in encouraging him to the rash decision to make public his opinions on so complicated and rich a theme as the other tradition at this time, when he himself is neither a philosopher nor an artist.

I wish to thank the many people who have contributed to the ideas included in this essay, and particularly Thomas B. Hess for his always generous patience and encouragement over the years.

The reader should keep in mind that the following text has been written with an "ideal" exhibition in mind, clearly not possible under the limitations of time and space. But I wish to thank Samuel Adams Green, and the trustees of the Institute for Contemporary Art for the opportunity to publish this essay in its present form.

G.R.S.

New York  
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6.10.65

If a sanitary engineer draws up a first-class drainage plan for your house and sets about getting it installed and will not let the contractors fob off anything second-rate upon him, then he has high ideals of a drainage system. If, on the other hand, he tells you that the present drainage system of your house is sound, when in fact it is defective and is infecting your family with typhoid fever, then you do not say that he has high ideals about drainage systems. You say he is incompetent and culpably so, and ought to be dealt with accordingly.

Angus Sinclair

Acquiring information through sights and sounds is not the same as acquiring information through the printed word. The media of radio and television have affected us in ways so direct and often obvious that we are more than usually conscious of the fact. In transcript form, to take an obvious example, the Kennedy-Nixon debates were not only different emotionally but intellectually. In calling television a "truth machine", Walter Lippmann was referring to more than the emotional or even moral, metaphysical and esthetic qualities revealed about the man in front of the camera.

In the fine arts we have nevertheless gone through a post-war period of intensely abstract art. We have learned "habits of abstraction", not only from these painters but from painters of at least the last 100 years. Historians, critics and estheticians of this past century have devoted most of their attention toward the explication of style and form as the essential carrier of that content which distinguishes art from merely informational kinds of visual communication.

"Yet the contemporary critic seems to me like a gardener growing plants under cloches of varying shapes in order to make his shrubs grow in different shapes; people then concern themselves only with these different shapes, quite forgetting, in their interest in these differences, that they are dealing with plants with an inner growth and natural laws of their own."

This paraphrase of Adolf Hildebrand almost reverses his admonition, for the "problem of form" when he wrote a book of that name was that art historians and critics were ignoring formal analysis and esthetics. In many ways the wisdom of his position has been vindicated by time. Only the extravagance of the success of his position makes an essay such as this now possible; that is, we tend to give formal analysis blind allegiance, and need now and then to apply counter-measures. The essay itself has two positive goals in mind: 1) seeing certain twentieth century works of art which have been overlooked or neglected by art historians, and 2) suggesting alternative "intellectual" rather than formal ways of dealing with those works.

The text falls into four parts. The first, although not "scholarly" in the usual sense, is intended most of all for scholars. Painters and laymen have fewer pre-conceptions of the nature of Cubism; usually only scholars and critics need to be convinced that Cubism is not the beginning and end of modern art—since they are the only ones who have such ideas in the first place.

"The Problem With Form" attempts to make explicit some of the assumptions which have been made by contemporary critics and art



historians. This section attempts to clarify the nature of those assumptions, particularly those which have become most prominent in the sixties. There are many good reasons for these ideas developing in their present form; one of the background reasons, the hiatus in criticism caused by World War II and the shift of the world artistic center from Paris to New York, might be mentioned here. The result was a curious and persistent provincialism among critics. In part the single-mindedness and strident evangelism of some American criticism was at first necessary in defending post-war abstraction against nationalistic resistance by Europeans and violent attacks by know-nothing journalists and academics.

By 1965 most younger European critics acknowledged American equality if not supremacy in avant-garde painting. Most intelligent connoisseurs of modern art dismiss newspaper criticism as ludicrously obsolete. (Following the journalists' attitudes, one would condemn Rembrandt because *Nightwatch* did not follow the requirements of his commission but of the artist's too private fancies.) The academy has taken up modern art almost with a vengeance.

Certain esthetic habits, even when second hand, seem hard to shake. Even a few critics who are committed to the abstract-formal-Cubist tradition in modern art, however, have grown increasingly uneasy about the limits of formal criticism; certainly the art of this century which on the surface is most susceptible to understanding through formal analysis (abstraction) refuses to stay within limits which are increasingly academic.

The other tradition is non-formal. It is less easily appreciated with the familiar critical tool known as formal analysis. Its major importance lies outside or beyond "significant form", and its application is useful chiefly to non-abstract art: that is, in general it deals more with the movements known as Dada, Surrealism and Pop Art than with those known as Cubism, Early Abstraction (Mondrian and Kandinsky) and Abstract-Expressionism.

The third section attempts to clarify the nature of the information conveyed by the other tradition. "Feelings Are Things" begins with a discussion of the concept of "mechanical man" as expressed chiefly in certain Dada works; these works show a complex relationship between the animal desires which society has wrongly mechanized and the bodily mechanics which register and then organize sensory data into knowledge. The Surrealists tried to harden the dream and the unconscious until we could use it in our conscious life; they refused to accept the inferior position of art as esthetics (a subdivision of philosophy).

The nature of Pop Art is more difficult to define. Pop Artists have

once again taken up the challenges made by Dada and Surrealism and these younger artists are, in the words of James Rosenquist, trying to do more than "offer up something as a small gift." Few critics have taken them seriously, except as the butt of ill-reasoned attacks or fatuous praise. "Art as Exploration" attempts to see their public and "obvious" character as a possible intellectual achievement. Whether or not these artists lack formal originality as their detractors claim, they have challenged some of the most widespread critical and intellectual myths. New tools of critical praise and investigation are suggested: the new conservatism, non-chronological uses of time, identity through sexual consciousness, and the use of "nothingness" as a mirror of feelings.

This is an essay—a try. I have not tried to be comprehensive, however. Many issues and, more important, many artists are not discussed although a number of them are included in the exhibition. It is my hope that this material may provide the basis for further investigations. Only the uniformity of contradictory opinions has emboldened me to make public these views at this time, without waiting to develop them more completely.

## I. THE LIMITS OF CLASSICAL CUBISM

Cubism is not either a seed or a foetus . . .  
A mineral substance, having geometric formation, is not made so for transitory purposes, it is to remain what it is . . .

Pablo Picasso

It is improbable at this date that anyone should mount an attack on Cubism. One need not, however, attack Cubism to disagree about it. The really radical character of Cubism begins to appear, according to Alfred Barr in his pioneering book on Picasso, in the 1909 *Portrait of Braque*. "The beginning of Cubism" for Picasso's early champion, D.-H. Kahnweiler, is in the 1907 *Les Femmes d'Alger*. John Golding in *Cubism* says that the first Cubist paintings were done by Braque in 1908. Golding says that *Les Femmes* is full of "violence and unrest" and that Cubism is "an art of realism and . . . a classical art"—although in the same book he says that Cubism is "the most complete and radical artistic revolution since the Renaissance." Not only is Cubism all things to all men; in one case it is realistic, classical, radical and revolutionary to the same man.

All these ideas and many others have probably been useful and fruitful to painters as well as critics over the years. Painting in the fifties and sixties, however, is not underdeveloped or a poor cousin in need of a pedigree or a revolutionary big brother. The best reason for surrendering some of the myths of Cubism is that it may help us to see the unique qualities of Cubist painting.

On one subject there can be little dispute. Picasso's *Ma Jolie*, Braque's *Le Portugais* and a few other works of the period known as analytic Cubism (1910-1912) should be regarded as classic examples of Cubist style. At the same time there is a less fortunate tendency to treat "revolution" and "discovery" as if they were suffixes to the word "Cubist." Classical Cubism is in fact regarded by most people—though not Picasso—as the revolution which contained within it the seeds of everything from synthetic Cubism to Abstract-Expressionism and beyond; it is said to have set Mondrian, Miro, deKooning and even Rauschenberg on their way, no matter how little the work of these artists may actually look like *Ma Jolie* or *Le Portugais*.

One of the more interesting and useful questions in the history of criticism is why critics come to agreement on trends and movements. Around 1907 many people became aware of a great change in the arts. One of the first and most influential writers on Cubism, Apollinaire, proselytized for the new and the modern, and claimed that Cubism fitted this description. Just as certain changes in morals and politics tend to be associated with periods in the careers of Freud and Marx, so the change in art—with more precision if less reason—tends to be centered around the date Picasso painted the *Femmes*. Picasso was a young man of twenty-six at the time, and it was the real beginning of his career; the

*Demoiselles* seems, to Roland Penrose and most other critics, "the battlefield on which he won his liberty." Furthermore that picture was, and in many ways remains, a *succes de scandale*\*; it is greatly admired, and simultaneously, greatly disliked. It is possibly the only masterpiece in the history of art—and it is a masterpiece—which achieved its place of eminence as so direct a result of the artist's knowing so little about what he was doing, doing it so incompletely and doing it with so little attention to a sense of the whole. It contains the seed of much later theorizing; in addition, the force of Picasso's personality and the greatness of some of his pictures make him the outstanding if not dominant figure in twentieth century art. It is easy to understand why a shocking picture by such a figure at the beginning of his career should seem the beginning of twentieth century art.

The evolutionary theory of art—that artists do research and art develops—is an unconscious, but highly prejudicial assumption in most Cubist criticism. Late Cezanne is linear and faceted; Cubism is linear and faceted; therefore, goes the theory, Cezanne was *avant-garde*. Or the *Demoiselles* looked like a revolution: therefore, according to theory, what directly followed it must also be revolutionary. Consequently, if Metzinger is regarded as rather conservative and Mondrian advanced, then—according to the Cubist scholars—although the former looks more like a Cubist, Mondrian must have been the one who really understood Cubism.

"If Cubism is an art of transition I am sure that the only thing that will come out of it is another form of Cubism," Picasso has said. Metzinger looks like a Cubist; in this respect it would seem more difficult to say that he "misunderstood" Cubism than did those who drew revolutionary implications from it. The style of Cubism—the way it actually looks—does, however, share a certain linear and faceted character with the landscape style of late Cezanne. We might ask if the Cubist style is intrinsically "revolutionary" or not; in so doing we will have occasion to note some rather odd relationships between the work of Picasso and Cezanne, and some of the defects of the revolutionary theory.

Two of the most prominent formal or stylistic "discoveries" attributed to Cubism are (1) the rejection of illusion, supplanting perspective or three-dimensional effects with the conscious use of the picture plane, and (2) the turn to abstraction, displacing images as subject matter. Every painting of every period, of course, has some relationship to subject matter and the picture plane; but if classical Cubism treated subject matter and the picture plane in a unique way, it was not necessarily in

\*In a recent discussion with a painter in front of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. I was convinced momentarily that this was a beautiful and highly integrated painting dealing with folds moving back and forth in space and with giving pink and blue a sense of primacy. Certainly the painting gains coherency if we permit it a more traditional and less revolutionary sense of space and color—and in 1966 it is perhaps those qualities which are most "surprising" about the picture, to historians at least.

a manner that held revolutionary implications for the future of painting. This is not to say that much that has been said of Cubism is false, but rather that it is half-true and misleading.

There are several classical Cubist pictures which stand out as rather odd and disquieting. Although this is at that early period when it is difficult if not sometimes impossible to distinguish the work of Braque and Picasso, all of these disturbing pictures are by Braque, and the image represented in all of them is roof tops. These few canvases do not present "like the masterpieces of the past—whether by Masaccio, Rubens or Cezanne— . . . a tense and vital equilibrium between the reality of nature and the reality of art," as Robert Rosenblum says classical Cubist works should do. Rosenblum himself is particularly bothered by one of these pictures; he says of Braque's 1910 *Sacre-Coeur* that it is "a partial reprise of the Impressionists' characteristic window view, which paid full homage to particular data of vision." Rosenblum notes its similarities with an earlier Picasso, but refuses to draw any conclusion other than that the Braque may be *retarditaire*; we must assume that he did not notice the same *retarditaire* qualities in *Les Usines de Rio Tinto* of 1910 or *Les Toits de Paris* of 1911. These works are disappointing; they are heavy and relatively rigid. There is a conflict between style and image which does not produce "a tense and vital equilibrium." One does not know how realistically one should read the picture. We may grant the non-illusionistic aspect of most Braques and Picassos of 1910-1912—but not all.

With this deceptively simple qualification, doubts arise as to the implications of the style. The way these Cubist pictures look is irrelevant and, in some cases, contradictory to much that has been inferred from them. In other words there are pictures in the classical Cubist style which can be shown to be in direct conflict with the revolution they are presumed to start; later we shall see why it is possible—excepting the "roof top" Braques—to reconcile this style with the classical self-contained picture, that this reconciliation should confirm the limits of the style and the irrelevance of the concept of revolution, and show that any theoretical reconciliation of Cubism and revolution conflicts with our experience of the pictures.

We ought to note that Cezanne in the 90's had encountered the problem of a style inappropriate to an image; but he chose to move in a direction away from classical Cubism—although from the purely stylistic standpoint it brought him closer to Cubism. He applied a linear faceted style to objects such as rocks and landscapes which, like roof tops, are linear and faceted. When he paints a person or a still life, he seems to struggle. The best example of this struggle is the *Nude* of 1895, whose foot looks much like the foot of the left-hand figure in the *Demoiselles*. The geometric style, he soon found, did not suit all purposes of representation, and he tended more and more to choose appropriate subjects for his style; and in doing so he moved closer to the "realistic" look of things and farther from the principles of which he has been called the father. Although the logic of the evolutionary theory of art



demands that he be more avant-garde than the Impressionists, the interpretation that he moved toward abstraction when he applied geometry to Impressionism is less convincing than the possibility that he was re-doing nature, to reverse one of his most famous maxims, according to Poussin.

At this point we might once again ask why critics have come to think as they do. Sir Kenneth Clark writes that the *Demoiselles* "coincided with the first appreciative study of Negro sculpture; and there, at last, was a totally un-Hellenized stylization of the body . . ." In the same book, *The Nude*, Clark also writes that the Cezanne sketch for the 1895 *Nude* ". . . aims at the truth. It is appallingly sincere, and proves that Courbet for all his defiant trumpetings, continued to see the female body through memories of the antique." Aside from some skepticism that the Cezanne aims at the truth, we probably have to agree that the Cezanne takes us farther than Courbet—not from the antique so much as from the 19th century idea of the antique. Both the Cezanne sketch and the painting are certainly close to the non-Negro but "un-hellenized stylization" reflected in the left-hand figure of *Demoiselles*. In the painting Cezanne has simplified the face almost into a caricature and has flattened and disfigured the foot, effects one also finds in *Demoiselles*. The sketch that Clark mentioned defines rounded areas through a number of relatively straight lines; the outline of the leg of the woman on the left in the Picasso merely carries that process to an extreme. Cezanne, however, seems to have rejected tackling these problems and to have moved instead toward the relatively greater realism of a landscape used (not "developed") by Picasso and Braque in classical Cubism, perhaps the most successful attempt since the High Renaissance to achieve total balance and equilibrium.

The nature of influence in twentieth century painting has changed. No longer is it a matter of one artist influencing another by visible, formal means. In fact, particularly in the post-World War II period, formal influence is positively avoided when conscious. The formal influence of primitive art is thought by many to have been the decisive element in the so-called turn from tradition in the early phases of Cubism. The intellectual influence was, to my mind, far stronger and the formal influence was ultimately rejected by Picasso in his work. The following section of this chapter does not contribute directly to our attempt at understanding the nature of Cubism, but it does help us understand what Cubism is not and what kinds of originality and influence were brought to bear on painting by Picasso.

Negro sculpture played a negligible role at most in Braque's development—formally at least. The influence of primitive art on Picasso could not have been very strong from a stylistic point of view. Very few Picassos of the "Negro period" are dated beyond the narrow confines of the summer and fall of 1907. The following general discussion of primitive art and the subsequent analysis of the *Woman in Yellow* (Pulitzer collection, St. Louis) may nevertheless suggest what might be called the theoretical nature of Picasso's art from 1907 to 1912.

Although the most admired masks of the period were the most naturalistic, they nevertheless represented an alternative to contemporary painting; "la fausse tradition," as Braque called it, must suddenly have seemed tame and conventional. The sudden consciousness of change in the arts mentioned earlier coincided with a changed attitude toward primitive sculpture and a new awareness of it as an art form. But African masks are fetishistic, they are icons; basically they stand for something more than images in European painting ever did. In fact they represent a kind of absolutism which both traditional and avant-garde painting of the time was trying to avoid. If the Cubists found in primitive art the "directness of vision and formal simplicity, unperverted by the over-refinement and sophistication with which so much traditional art had become over-laid," as Golding says they did, then they quickly gave it up in favor of the refined and sophisticated style of classical Cubism. Primitive art attempts to do away with the subjective artistic personality; stylistic individuality is not merely unsought by the primitive artist but positively avoided. There is a contradiction in terms if an artist attempts to copy the style of primitive art outside the tradition in which that style has evolved.

The *Woman in Yellow* is a beautiful, subtly colored and formally integrated picture—all those things *Demoiselles* is not. It even appears to be more conventional than most other pictures said to have been painted in 1907; it has, for example, none of that "violent strength of Negro sculpture" which the Tate catalogue of 1960 correctly associates with the nearly contemporary *Vase of Flowers* (Colin collection, New York).

J. J. Sweeney has compared the face and the pose of the Pulitzer *Woman* with similar features of an archaic votive figure from Despenaperros; indeed the similarities between the way the hands are held is striking. John Richardson has reported that Picasso claims the picture was painted under the influence of Iberian and not African sculpture. The usual concept of "progress" during this period is that Picasso first used milder Iberian elements and then progressed to stronger African influences; but even with that concept there are several contradictions. The pinks and blues and the handling of paint in the Pulitzer picture are close to the still life in *Demoiselles*, very close indeed to the section just above and to the right of the still life; Kahnweiler somewhat cannily finds this section of *Demoiselles* the most challenging. The general mood and effect of the *Woman in Yellow* is much closer to the tubular works of a year later than it is to the mood and effect of the two "masks" in *Demoiselles*, usually cited as the most radical section of the picture. The violent color and striations of those masks, on the other hand, are close in mood and execution to the Colin *Vase of Flowers*.

John Golding ignores the *Woman in Yellow* but does mention some African masks which, he notes, were in the Paris collection of Frank Haviland (a friend of Derain, and an acquaintance of Picasso) during the period under discussion. Golding says these masks are "close to" the faces in Derain's *Baigneuses* and *Last Supper*. If anything, the masks and the Picasso *Woman in Yellow* are even more alike: large almond eyes,

a three-sided nose, an almost equal emphasis on frontality and simplicity. Given the literature I would not be surprised to read that Derain was under Iberian influence which he made look African; it seems more sensible to say that the face of *Woman in Yellow* is an almost straightforwardly painted version of an African mask.

The *Woman in Yellow* is in many respects a point of convergence between Picasso's art and tradition in 1907; it is a fair likeness of a mask, placed within a stylistically harmonious context (which gives warmth and personality to the figure), in a rather illusionistic space. As such it represents what might well be called the culmination of the artist's experiments with the stylistic aspects of primitive art. When he tried to adapt what he saw—that is, when he tried to use primitive art stylistically—he found himself going up a blind alley and making increasingly conventional pictures. This should not be too surprising, "convention" being at the base of primitive art. Consciously or not, he refused to take the path of Derain who went from avant-garde Fauvism through African sculpture to tradition. The "un-Hellenic" proved to be more self-contradictory than the Western tradition of illusion.

It is unlikely that Picasso exercised any great or conscious logic in working out the problem. Evidence is to the contrary, no matter how reasonable, as he put it, he thought African sculpture to be. The two masks in *Demaiselles* express violence and possibly even an attempted revolution in color and form, the qualities contemporary critics found in African art; it is as if Picasso were trying to evoke the concept attributed to primitive art no matter what he saw. Theories—as the history of criticism so often shows—are frequently more visible than the work of art.

These violent qualities he applied with rampant illogic in the *Colin Vase of Flowers* to one of the most traditional of Western subjects, the still life. One might perhaps infer that this was one step further toward "subject matter inappropriate to style." One might also, noting the cross currents and contradictions in his work, say that Picasso found the violence of that little revolution visually unpleasant and unsatisfying and abandoned it, as he had done with the attractive but conventional aspects of primitive art in the *Pulitzer Woman* (although the "African style" does reappear many years later in some of his worst paintings). At any rate these often ugly paintings have little if anything to do with classical Cubism in either style or mood.

Thus we can see that the nature of the influence of primitive art on Picasso was at least as much intellectual as formal. Cubism belongs more or less outside the other tradition, and Picasso's art—even his "surreal" period—does not respond as rapidly to the critical methods which are the subject of most of this essay. Yet it is, I hope, clear from this brief discussion that the "development" of Cubism is more than a matter of the life of forms.

Critics have long attributed a consciousness of the picture plane to the Cubists. The *Woman in Yellow* has a rather unusual compositional device, namely the fact that the top and bottom of the figure as painted

meet the edges of the canvas with almost no attempt to extend the figure or even give it a context laterally. The side edges are "bare," and the effect is as if a string had been made taut from top to bottom; then the artist tried a sculptural effect around the theme of this "string." The tension is not so much vertical as volumetric around a vertical, fading out to the sides. But it does not altogether refute Leo Stein's charge that "Picasso had no command of deep space" early or late in his career.

A slightly later picture, the *Fruit Dish* in the Museum of Modern Art (Lillie Bliss bequest) also extends the stem of the gourd rather self-consciously to the top edge and the base of the dish to the bottom edge. These paintings reveal far more consciousness of the picture surface and frame than the more "Cubist" landscapes of the same period (1908-1909).

The *Woman With Mandolin* of 1908 has wavy hair, like a sheet of metal (or a Leger, although here the wavy effect is produced by the alternation of squared color areas between undulating lines and not by gradations of light and dark). The curve of the arm neither flattens nor becomes an indication of depth, but instead is like an awkward unresolved pattern. The contours as defined by lines sit uneasily, at best, with the application of paint or with the chiaroscuro. It is a problem which comes up later, in the 1913 *Woman in an Armchair* (Pudelko Eichmann collection). Again current ways of understanding Cubism seem inadequate—including perhaps that put forth in this essay. These problems with Cubist theory come up so frequently and in so many forms throughout Picasso's work (particularly with regard to synthetic Cubism) that one can only say that Picasso did not understand them. Perhaps it might be better to abandon some of the concepts rather than the pictures. It is not that Cubist critics and scholars are all wrong, but rather that the application of their concepts is limited, even with pictures that supposedly lie within their area of special "knowledge." Cubism is more than a formal revolution.

The conceptual approach of the primitive artist meant that he avoided stylistic individuality in favor of absolute convention; the conceptual approach of many abstract painters today means that they find an individual style and avoid convention absolutely. Perhaps the latter is one of the things Robert Motherwell had in mind when he said that the Cubists "stumbled over the leading insight of the twentieth century, all thought and feeling is relative to man . . ." But in a more basic sense Cubism neither implies one attitude nor the other, but rather maintains a delicate balance between convention and individuality. If Picasso later became an advocate of originality, these early years were the ones during which he and Braque worked together and let their pictures look alike; in order to express what they called the anonymity of the painter, they often even refused to sign their work.

To understand the conceptual approach of classical Cubism we might turn for a moment to the Monet series of the Rouen Cathedral. In his Charlton Lectures in 1960, George Heard Hamilton pointed out that in these paintings, "The light like the architecture is only Monet's



subject, not his meaning. It is the carrier, but not the content of the work." He adds that the "ultimate meaning of these paintings is not to be found in what they represent to us but in what they do to us." This is the kind of approach one could very well deduce from a group of classical Cubist pictures whose images are inappropriate to the style in which they are painted, with the exception of Braque's roof tops; the style, like the image, is the subject of these works, not their meaning. Most Cubist pictures achieve greater poise and delicacy than the Monet series in this respect because, with the Picassos and Braques, not only is it unnecessary to explain that the subject matter is the carrier but not the content of the work but each work stands complete and self-sufficient in its own right. The difference is not that Cubism bunches up in one picture a number of different views, as anyone looking at Picasso's bronze *Head of 1909* or the recently acquired oil sketch of this head (Museum of Modern Art, New York) should have been able to tell. The finest Cubist pictures of 1910-1912 achieve a sense of classic poise.

One of the clichés of art history is that the High Renaissance occurred between the time Raphael began and the time he finished the *School of Athens*; it may be equally impossible to find any specific work that would fit a definition of classical Cubism. One of the mysteries and beauties of a great work of art is that it eludes categories. In many respects that has been the burden of this article: that pictures such as the *Portrait of Kahnweiler* are distorted and crushed when seen in terms of a "breakthrough," progress, or even the heroism of the artist. There are times when these or other ideas may be germane to a work of art; our interest in the *Colin Vase of Flowers* is at least as great in its relationships to other works of the period as it is in its visual qualities. The *Woman in Yellow* has been used only as an art historical document; but our chief interest in it is—it could not have been used as it was unless it had been seen as such—that it is a very beautiful picture.

The *Portrait of Kahnweiler* may not be the purest example of classical Cubism that we could choose; but it is an extraordinary picture. It is more personal than antique or Renaissance classicism; it is less heroic. Yet the *Portrait* is classical; with a great economy of means Picasso communicates that awareness which is at once simple and complex, rational and mysterious. We sense not conflict but the balancing of opposites. It is not a picture we would take to the barricades; we would sit before it, perhaps in the same position as Kahnweiler, and try to plumb its depths. It tells us not much about Kahnweiler, not much about style. It is a little like finding a simpler way to solve an equation; its point is not that we learn more or make progress, simply that it is beautiful.

Perhaps one of the reasons there has been so much confusion and disagreement over the degree of geometry and abstraction in a picture such as this *Portrait* is that, on the one hand one senses the same combination of lucidity and mystery in the picture that one can also find in a particularly beautiful mathematical demonstration, and yet on the other hand one has no clear sense of geometry or the lack of an image—

in fact, one's impression is almost the opposite. There need not be a conflict between these two impressions: one often hears mathematicians speak of the esthetic satisfaction they derive from their work, and one often hears "abstract" used to indicate a sense of detachment and clarity—especially when it is difficult to verbalize one's feelings although those feelings may be perfectly clear. The difficulty and disagreement would seem to be over what is irrelevant to the pictures themselves: to what degree were they more geometrical and abstract than the pictures which preceded them and less than what followed—that is, are they "advanced"?

From 1910 to 1912 Picasso and Braque shared the same modes, a self-contained and in one sense relaxed style; it was a style which did not so much seek or solve problems but used what had almost accidentally been discovered, through a process of trial and error, to make each picture complete, independent and unique. The look of this style was, as we have already pointed out, a limitation requiring the use of some images and the avoidance of others. Conceptually these works were neither highly original nor notably pace-setting. We experience in a painting such as *Kahnweiler* a mysterious calm and a classic poise. As Picasso said, "Cubism is not either a seed or a foetus." The *Portrait of Kahnweiler* is, in my judgment, a full flowering—art in the prime of life.

Change, variety, and the exaltation of individuality are more characteristic of twentieth century art than any evolution of formal values. Formal values—style, at least—reached a point of equilibrium with subject matter in classical Cubism. It is ironic that what in many ways might have been the beginning of the exaltation of individual style was shared so completely by two men. Given a more personal and less equivocal combination of elements, the Cubist way of painting—instead of the delightful variety of half-false ideas attributed to it—might have come to dominate the artists and critics of this century.

During the Eisenhower administration Dean Rusk was pressed by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge to answer whether the situation in French Indo-China was not "in fact" wrongly described as a colonial war. Mr. Rusk implied that the principle his questioner had advanced was irrelevant as long as the people fighting the war believed it to be colonial. The theory that classical Cubism was revolutionary may be mistaken, as I believe it to be; but the effect of that theory may have been revolutionary if nearly everyone believed it. It would certainly be difficult to understand what happened in twentieth century art without understanding that theory, no matter how little it has to do with classical Cubism. But now that even the newspaper reviewers have surrendered—or at least mis-taken Picasso to be part of their esthetic—those myths no longer seem really useful.

## II. THE PROBLEM WITH FORM

For everyone but art historians, the formal approach to value has been functioning very poorly for several decades.

Harold Rosenberg

It is hard to estimate the change an artist can force into our vision; when it happens it is as if the spectrum of colors and forms were not continuous, just as the "spectrum" of numbers is not. Unexpectedly someone will discover a new irrational color or a new formal equation; for those who see it at the time it happens, it seems not only exciting, but also potentially disruptive to ideas we had taken for granted. The new work forces a change in our approach to art, in our evaluations of the direction of art and the nature of the art of the recent past, and in other seemingly unrelated ideas we had simply taken for granted; in other words, our vision changes—even if we consciously cling to previous conceptions.

The artistic if not philosophical usefulness of abstraction, which challenged post-war American painters, has a particular relevance to the career of Philip Guston. The early abstract work (after his social realist or overtly subject-matter period of the late 40s) had strong overtones of landscapes; one still looks for a subject. Then, in the soft and tender beauty of the works of 1956 and 1957 such as *Voyage* and *Dial*, one is struck by the underlying and almost ferocious lack of subject matter; these great or near-great pictures have a completeness and lack of outside references which can practically stand the spectator on his ear. After that period, however, Guston turns back to suggestive forms and even clearly visible subjects; and his work suffers.

It might be noted that Mondrian and Kandinsky tended toward a geometric abstraction which could not be confused with non-abstraction; it is perhaps significant that one speaks of their work as non-objective but does not use this term for artists such as deKooning, Guston or Newman. In other words there seems to have been a qualitative change in the meaning of the word "abstraction" beginning with the rise of post-war American painting.

Thus, the habit of abstraction of which we spoke in the preface might be described as the ability to refrain from attributing to a picture non-existent subject matter. Rosenquist has said that he uses images to limit the possibilities of irrelevant reactions and associations; something like this probably occurs with the *accent grave* in Franz Kline's painting of that name. The "subject" in the Kline is almost non-existent; it refers to the almost coincidental or accidental visual relationship of one form in the painting with that to which the title refers. It is certainly not a painting about the French Academy or general semantics. Abstraction was one of the "irrationals" which forced a change in our outlook on painting in the fifties.

Twentieth century artists have taught us the usefulness of originality;

in the words of Harold Rosenberg we even have a "tradition of the new." In an age which sees society, politics and everyday life changing at the accelerated tempo predicted by Henry Adams, the acquisition of these habits of change assumes increasingly useful and noble proportions. Perhaps Montaigne put it best when he said,

These are the results of habit. Not only can it mold us into whatever shape it pleases—wherefore, say the wise, we must fix our minds on the best, and habit will soon make it easy for us—but it can also accustom us to change and variety; which is the noblest and most useful of its lessons.

To some it seemed around 1960 that certain artists later designated "Pop" had learned not the clichés but the useful lessons from the tradition of the new. Yet it is now 1966 and even those younger critics who first responded to Pop Art have reverted for the most part to critical traditions which relate to previous and not current circumstances.

After learning habits of abstraction, we often thought the subject matter of much painting of earlier centuries inappropriate to or incompatible with current interests and beliefs; if a Baroque crucifixion or an antique Athena impressed or moved us, we thought it desirable to separate formal elements from the subject matter in order to analyze what moved us in the work of art. It was the formal elements which seemed most closely related to our own feelings; we even began to experience and feel "abstractly." Then artists like James Rosenquist forced us to change our angle of vision; we began to reactivate our sense of the world around us. Advertising, to which we had deadened our senses in order to avoid kitsch-siren calls and conspicuous consumption, could be seen and looked at again. Suddenly it became necessary to re-examine even those paintings without apparent subject matter and, perhaps, find in them a different content. It was necessary to re-read the abstractionists' claims of subject matter, Mondrian's essay on New Realism, Jean Arp's claim that abstraction was Concrete Art. Unfortunately habits of change had insufficiently established themselves in the minds of most critics.

In a lecture in the fall of 1963 entitled "After Pop Art," Clement Greenberg argued that Pop Art belonged to the history of taste and not the history of art—that it hadn't caused us to change any of our esthetic habits but that it merely reflected those habits. He said that he had learned long ago the inadequacies of criticism based on subject matter, that is, criticism other than formal analysis. He said that high art changed taste and that Pop Art did not. It was a lesson we had all presumably learned in the period following the social realism of the thirties. Greenberg assumes that any but formal criticism is a return to what is rightly considered the out-moded "socially oriented" \*criticism in America during the thirties. He does not allow for the possibility that Pop Art is "tasteful" in his terms because the breaking of esthetic habits has become

*\*Are we more informed if we compare the woman leaning out the window in Picasso's Guernica with the woman leaning over the wall in Raphael's Burning of the Borgo, or if we see the painting Guernica after seeing films of the Luftwaffe bombing of that ancient Spanish shrine?*



such a habit that it is no longer truly viable for many younger painters. Why bother with "modernist" originality if it is so easily defined?

For the post-war generation there was on the one hand the avant-garde and on the other kitsch (which in its fancier forms included the works of people like Gilbert Highet). The former represented high art: it was difficult; it broke conventions; it was hated by the powers to that be; its proponents and exponents had to struggle, struggle, struggle. As Harold Rosenberg put it in 1952, "The test of any of the new paintings is its seriousness—and the test of its seriousness is the degree to which the act on the canvas is an extension of the artist's total effort to make over his experience." A few artists during the mid-fifties believed that they were somehow reaching a summit in artistic expression. One artist reportedly said, "Abstract art will last a thousand years."

The stresses under which these critics operated made it practically impossible for them to accept Pop Art. In fact, the advent of this new painting seemed to freeze their attitudes. Rosenberg's article of the late fifties, "Pop Culture: Kitsch Criticism," is a study in "engagement." His article of 1965, "Art and Work," includes the statement, "In that it seeks to change the quality of living, it is art that is political in the deepest sense—as contrasted with propaganda art which delivers preconceived messages through craftsman-like presentations." Because Pop Art is craftsman-like, he has said elsewhere, it cannot be good; but this is to dismiss Pop Art without engaging it.

The other and the formal traditions often intertwine; in some ways it is artificial to separate them. Yet it seems important to do so at a time when critics and historians—and often even painters—ignore and even deny the validity of the non-formal approach.

Examples of this bias are numerous and increasing. Recently an anthology called *Modern Artists on Art* included essays by minor artists like Henry Moore, Max Beckmann and Naum Gabo (the Malevich, Mondrian, Kandinsky and Corbusier selections often cover the same areas much better) but not one by or about artists associated with Dada and Surrealism; surely this is not what the anthologist claimed as "a representative expression of the different modern attitudes toward art." Robert Rosenblum's "history," *Cubism and Twentieth Century Art*, is also strangely blind to the non-formal tradition. Henry Geldzahler, in a review of Werner Haftmann's *Painting in the Twentieth Century*, did not mention the fact that no Picabias or Magrittes (and one 1912 Duchamp) are illustrated, but 14 Kirchners and ten Carras are. Dada and Surrealism are not given categories, but Orphism, Futurism and the Naifs are. In fact very few critics and historians—almost no Americans—outside the "literary" establishment view the history of twentieth century art as anything but the development and evolution of significant form. In 1961 a young art historian, David Rosand, wrote,

The concern with pure form was a key part of the twentieth-century movements in Europe—especially in the evolving styles of Cubism, in Constructivism and Suprematism. To formal considerations, Surrealism added an aesthetic of fantasy, poetic imagination, the spon-

taneous and automatic visions of the artist. The New Yorkers . . . turned the idea of spontaneity to a new end: they used it to further the development of the formal tradition.

Surrealism is treated as an adjunct to the history of art which added a little spice—after it was adapted into the formal tradition itself. The assumptions he made then in spite of the subsequent surfacing of Pop Art, are treated in 1965 even more as if they were facts.

Even William Rubin, almost the only American historian who has tried to deal seriously with the Surrealist influence on Abstract-Expressionism, in 1963 said that

It was precisely with Dadaism that real esthetic invention tended to become confused with *illusory originality* . . . the demand for novelty led many lesser painters into "literature", that is, beyond the legitimate poetry of imagery organically tied to plastic structures, and into an essentially extra-esthetic iconographic activity.

Mr. Rubin, in that passage, inveighs against that esthetic ("extra-esthetic iconography") which led to praise of Bougereau and dislike of Manet—but he applies it to a different art of a different time. More important, he does so at a time (1963) when the "correctives" which Heinrich Wofflin, Roger Fry and Henri Focillon used on the dogmas of their time have become the dogmas of our time.

This essay deals with paintings that have been ignored by younger critics, more than those which have been mistreated (if praised) by them. It deals with painters who, for their own reasons, the Abstract-Expressionists "exiled." Philip Pavia noted that for the "club," "Miro, Ernst, Arp and Breton had been supplanted, and in fact were almost extinct . . . in contrast to their being apotheosized in 'Studio 35,' an earlier 'club'-like school on Eighth Street." Lichtenstein was once asked if he were anti-experimental. He answered,

I think so, and anti-contemplative, anti-nuance, anti-getting-away-from-the-tyranny-of-the-rectangle, anti-movement-and-light, anti-mystery, anti-paint-quality, anti-Zen, and anti- all of those brilliant ideas of preceding movements which everyone understands so well.

Whether or not the Abstract—Expressionists understood the Surrealists, they thought they did. Pavia says the painters saw "the danger of succumbing in that watery grave prepared by the soft-minded Surrealists." Whether or not they understand Abstract—Expressionism (and I doubt that they do), the younger critics and most particularly the academicians are preparing a watery grave for those painters and their most vital theoreticians.

An interesting and illustrative example of the way the "formalists" ignore and downgrade Dada involves a "case of the mysterious disappearance" of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* from the *Section d'Or* of the 1912 *Salon des Independents*.

John Golding in his book *Cubism* is not clear, and the "mystery" can probably be traced to the ambiguous manner in which he handles or did not handle the episode. Robert Rosenblum's book mentions the incident in such a manner that the reader is likely to think that Duchamp himself

initiated the withdrawal. This, of course, does not make sense.

In a conversation with Francis Steegmuller, Duchamp said, "When the Cubists themselves asked me to remove the 'Nude Descending' . . . because they thought it would be considered a joke on Cubism, I said 'To hell with them,' and I wanted no more of them. I realized my aims were different from theirs . . ."

This throws a bad light on the Cubists (Picasso and Braque did not show publicly during this period). They become as stiff, pedantic and academic in 1912 as Miro says he found them in 1919.

There is perhaps no absolutely sure way to determine many of the things that happened, especially when participants disagree. History is often a reflection of the historian's prejudices. John Golding says that the pseudo-mathematician Maurice Princet was a friend of Duchamp who also knew Picasso; Golding implies that he introduced Duchamp to Picasso as a favor to the former. In Robert Lebel's version, Princet is an insurance clerk friend of Picasso, and Lebel maintains that the more mathematically knowledgeable Duchamp brothers looked down upon him.

Such mistakes, if they are mistakes, must not be simply explained as poor scholarship on the part of individuals. It is unfortunately symptomatic. Every textbook supplies further examples, if more are needed. Picabia, Duchamp, Ernst and Magritte are, according to those books, lesser artists because they are formally less inventive. It is so widely assumed that this is the criterion for judgment that Duchamp's own words and the attitudes of most of his defenders are considered without artistic and often without historical significance. (Lebel, it is charged, is "notoriously inaccurate.") Robert Goldwater put it for the majority when he said of Dada,

It is art which is against, but against the momentarily accepted (or supposedly accepted) canons of art . . . Fortunately the only way an artist can be against art is, like Rimbaud (but not like Duchamp), to cease being an artist.

Dada and Surrealism, in the minds of most historians, is a diversionary tactic healthy only insofar as it illuminates the "main" tradition.

The deficiencies of the exclusively formal approach, particularly in these late manifestations, grow increasingly obvious even as received opinion grows monolithic. It is hard for me to muster more than boredom in greeting that humorously ubiquitous subject, the picture plane. The formal approach, however, is not merely inadequate, but leads to distortions even with "formal" art. The assumptions these critics and historians make are probably not intentional; the younger ones have no reason to propagandize.

To repeat, one of the more interesting and useful questions in the history of criticism is why critics come to agreement on trends and movements—that is, why they think as they do. One of Berenson's most damaging ideas was that of the "objective" eye as opposed to historical intelligence. There is no "objective" technique of analyzing with an "objective" eye. The eye just as surely as the mind sees what it wants to see; it is no more innocent than the intelligence. The belief that formal

analysis in sensitive hands is "objective" has misled many.

Immediately after World War II, many painters and writers in New York felt surfeited with Surrealism. The outstanding painting which emerged gradually from the atmosphere was abstract; the allegiance of critics moved with the painters to abstraction. But it is not a commitment to Abstract-Expressionism that leads younger historians and critics, like Barbara Rose and Michael Fried, to follow those leaders' assumptions.

Art writing during the late forties and throughout the fifties was subject to violent attacks, both as a reflection on the paintings and on the writers for their "obscurity" and "incomprehensibility." In 1960 even Robert Goldwater, who had been a lukewarm defendant (more of the painter's right to paint as he chose, than of what he painted), joined the attack on the "sloppy" prose of the artists and presumably the *Art News* crowd which included Harold Rosenberg and Thomas B. Hess. In 1962 Clement Greenberg published his first open attack on this "non-historical" group of attitudes. Of course, many of Greenberg's favorite painters themselves during the late forties and early fifties attacked both the historical and formalist attitudes which Greenberg now advances.

In 1964 Greenberg wrote that the context of abstract art "still derived from Cubism—as does the context of every variety of sophisticated abstract art since Cubism, *despite all appearances to the contrary* [italics mine]." One wonders what a formalist does without appearance. Aside from being a curious confirmation of the fact that there is no "objective" eye, it unwittingly supported Harold Rosenberg's charge that the formal approach "derived primarily from the Cubist strain in twentieth-century esthetic theory . . . has been responsible for over-stressing Cubist objectives in abstract painting and sculpture." Rosenberg could have gone further, as we have seen in the preceding analysis of Cubism, and challenged objectives often wrongly attributed to Cubism.

In a recent curious analysis called "The Critical Reception of Abstract Expressionism," Max Kozloff writes,

Other critics have since appeared on the scene—William Rubin, Lawrence Alloway, William Seitz, Leo Steinberg, Sam Hunter, and Meyer Schapiro—who have done much to synthesize the various cross currents of response and bring to them welcome shades of cultural sophistication. *They have minimized some of the earlier mistakes* [italics mine].

"Cultural sophistication" is something which the painters sought positively to avoid, and the phrase in this context is even more misleading because it has overtones of the academy; one can only assume that its author agrees with the mistakes perpetrated by the academic writers he names. The younger generation of critics and historians have mis-read and misunderstood the Abstract-Expressionist "critics" and they have

*\*Harold Rosenberg and Thomas B. Hess were very close to the painters, and sat on many of the panels of the "club." Irving Sandler was co-ordinator of "club" functions for several years. The publication of Hess's book, Abstract Painting, brought about a series of seven important panel discussions.*

*Clement Greenberg was more removed from the painters themselves, and his*



adopted the worst and most "esthetic" strains of the late—not the early, more involved and open—Greenberg.

There has always been a great deal of talk about Cubism, but what were the painters (from whom even Greenberg got many ideas) talking about? The following lines occur in the first issue of the Abstract-Expressionists' own magazine, *It Is*.

Still another indirect or background influence on abstract art is Chinese Cubism. (The words Chinese Cubism are strictly an American invention.) The non-monolithic overall plane of a Chinese painting has pockets of space, contradictory to the overall light . . . "Cultural sophistication" may "minimize some of the earlier mistakes" by noting the foolishness of that *It Is* statement. Yet the very broadness of the use of the word Cubism indicates that the painters had very open ideas in mind when they used it; Cubism was a term of approbation, not of accurate historical designation. In trying to make of Cubism the latter, "culturally sophisticated" critics in fact distort and even create mistakes which the "obscure" and "incomprehensible" Abstract-Expressionists must find brutally funny.

*prose has always been more detached and "historical." His 1958 article, "The Pasted Paper Revolution," did not have a friendly reception from painters; and he drastically revised it when he re-published it as "Collage" in Art and Culture. In that article he set forth most of his principles of the picture plane. He found Juan Gris "lacked understanding" of many modernist principles—but it is much less a negative criticism in the revised version. Greenberg's most personal and perhaps one of his best articles discusses his reaction to early Netherlandish painting.*

*Greenberg has always been literal minded and somewhat inflexible. His attitude toward Cubism reflects this. The surprising thing is that so many younger critics and historians should have fallen for his Cubist line. Picasso was "king" for most of the "club" members, although they praised most his middle period, not the analytic or synthetic Cubist works.*

### III. FEELINGS AND THINGS

Perhaps we have to go back to the beginning and ask what is a feeling, and to identify it almost as an effect—according to the scientific meaning of the word—in relation to not only its protagonist but also its observer.

Michelangelo Antonioni

In 1961 Jasper Johns cast a sculpture called, "A Critic Sees." It is a pair of glasses with two mouths where the eyes should be. It is a fair imagistic summary of the detestation of words by most abstract painters. Is it altogether accurate? Is it not in a sense an extension of one of the myths given us by traditional philosophy?

May I remind the reader how important it is to distinguish between language and statement. The dictum that we think in words is erroneous as well as naive. Some of us do think in words—most philosophers and perhaps all logical positivists do. But others who use words, including certain writers, often think in visual terms, with images, symbols and gestures; this does not mean that one cannot translate, given a certain energy and persistence, what one thinks into words which will communicate those thoughts in words—or, for that matter, vice-versa.

The criticism of critics implicit in Johns's sculpture is valid only if we insist on the artificial dichotomy between words and images. If, on the other hand, we say that some who use words think by non-verbal processes while others who use images philosophize by verbal processes, then the mere distinction between words and images seem facile if not simple-minded. On this basis we can, I think, criticize this work of Jasper Johns. It is an intellectually lazy piece, and as such atypical of Johns's work.\*

The other tradition requires certain adjustments in our attitude toward literature, information and knowledge, as conveyed through painting. The meaning of images need not be understood as literary or in terms of visual poetry (the theory of *ut pictura poesis*; it need not be that kind of information which can also be conveyed by a camera. The importance of the visual aspect of Chinese characters is well-known; it affects not only Chinese grammar and rhetoric, but basic epistemology as well. The images of the other tradition possess artistic qualities beyond those which formalist critics have found in them—perceptual and psychical qualities.

To help dispel the traditional views of "literary" or "poetic" and to begin replacing them with something more in line with what happens when we look at certain pictures, let us compare what is even more literary than an image, on the surface at least—namely words themselves as used in painting.

*\*In fact one suspects that given a freer atmosphere for "literary" painting, Johns would be an even more important painter than he is at present; formal criticism has in a sense stunted his natural and considerable philosophic bent. If Johns is, as I suspect, an essentially verbal person, then the energy and persistence with which he has put the words he thinks into images is most remarkable.*

Magritte's *Reve* (or *Dream*) is "constructed" of heavy, weather-worn stones suggestive of an ancient archeological site; the stones suggest hidden primitive (but perhaps not forgotten) myths and rites. The *reve* has been made concrete, recalling Dali's phrase, the "hardened dream." And surely there is as well the aspect of the pun, more obvious in the painting of a pipe which bears the inscription, "This is not a pipe." It is a "soft" word which has been given a new existence—beyond literature, as it were.

Jim Dine's painting, *Torch*, is also a pun, though of a very different sort. Dine here mocks the meanings we conventionally invest in words and images (or, in this case, an object). Both the words and the object refer to something well-known; but in combining the two Dine has changed them both and revealed our arbitrary ideas of them. If the painting were about our traditional idea of the word and the object which it "designates," then the ground of the painting would undoubtedly have been painted red; instead it is painted a blue, which is the color the manufacturer painted the torch.

Jasper Johns' *No* seems all ground, so exquisitely painted that it could stand by itself. But Johns hangs a metal NO in front of it. He is not at all commenting on words, as to some extent is the case in the Magritte and the Dine, but on painting and on art itself. Often Johns is more complicated, as when he uses the word Red or Yellow or Blue in areas painted several colors or not the color named. In one painting, the 1962 *Out the Window*, he makes us realize that an image or an object holds its shape in a different way than an abstract form does. He uses two quarter-circles. By adding a ruler (equal in position and size to the radius) and the word Scrape (the quarter-circle is defined by scraped paint), he gives the upper quarter-circle solidity and distinguishes it more sharply as a formal unit from the rest of the painting; the lower one, appearing simply as an abstract form, relates to and blends more easily with other areas of abstract color and paint.

Rauschenberg has said of *Summer Rental I-IV*:

A friend of mine had tried to rent a place for the summer. He saw the desirability, the equal desirability, of all these places that were extremely different—yet the same for his purposes. There are four *Summer Rentals*. I painted them all at the same time. They are all made up of the same ingredients, say, approximately one brush load of yellow is used in all of them. I couldn't use anything, any material, I couldn't get four quantities of. I was interested to see what difference it would make.

When you finish a picture and someone likes it, they say it just couldn't be any different, or that it's just perfect, or that's the way a real artist sees it. I think that's a lot of bull, because it could, obviously it could be some other way. I mean that, for instance, a few minutes after it starts drying it's already some other way, it doesn't look the same. I thought four pictures would be a fair minimum.

It was an incentive. I consider that, to answer that other question,

I consider that a subject. I had to figure out a way to stop and that's the only difference in the pictures. I added one more color to each one progressively.

In those paintings where he uses words and photographs, Rauschenberg's words are not words about, and his photographs are not images of; the words are, rather, those "objects" which appear on front pages of newspapers or in magazine articles; the images, too, do not refer to other objects so much as being the object they are, in themselves. The works—the paintings—are not intermediaries; they do not relate or refer the viewer to a third thing or feeling—although they may relate back to the viewer's response in the sense of a mirror reflection. But here we are concerned to show that neither the objects, words nor entire paintings such as the *Summer Rentals* are abstract in the usual definition.

In that sense, Lichtenstein's *Brush Stroke*\* gives the lie to those who consider Pollock or Newman "abstract" and Rauschenberg "literary". Surely when Rauschenberg devised the composition of these perhaps literally abstract paintings, he was making the kinds of formal and esthetic judgments that, say, deKooning might make. The Lichtenstein points up, most wittily, the more than formal intent of much Abstract-Expressionism. The drip, the direction, the texture are all here revealed as being as full of subject matter as Lichtenstein's more familiar comic strip references.

There are great differences between abstract Rauschenbergs and abstract deKoonings. Certainly they have a different intent and indeed different subject matter. So do the "word" paintings of Magritte, Dine and Johns differ from one another. The conventional uses of terms like "literary," "formal," and "abstract" as practiced by most contemporary historians and critics simply do not make sense.

One of the "problems with form" is that form by itself does not tell the whole story. The successor to the university chair held by Heinrich Wölfflin was Adolf Goldschmidt. In the first seminar which he held in that position he put a slide of a Rembrandt on the screen and asked the class what they saw. One of Wölfflin's students said, "Two diagonals crossed by a vertical." Goldschmidt smiled and said, "Oh, I see more; I see a windmill."

Rembrandt and Rubens were very much in Wölfflin's mind when he formulated his principles of art history. It is little wonder they apply so badly to Duchamp and Rosenquist. The purpose of this essay, however, is not to suggest a complete set of alternative principles. Sections I and II examined key areas of current esthetic assumptions, and found those assumptions wanting. We can, at this stage in the history of criticism, only scratch the surface and suggest directions consistent with the new data presented to us by artists and the changing world we live in. I beg

\*The brush stroke originally came from a comic book story of a painter. The artist in the story had painted a figure so realistically that it came to life; not knowing what to do with his "creation," he destroyed the image by wiping a large brush stroke across the picture, killing the invented person as well. This is, of course, a classic (and classical) story.



the reader's patience as certain intuitive ideas are more thrown out than developed within a cohesive whole; I permit myself this indulgence only in the hope that these ideas will start further investigations, for myself as well as others.

There is no attempt to present an over-all coherent "explanation" of Dada or Surrealism. Rather I have limited myself to an investigation of one aspect of each movement. The suggestions about the Dada ideas of "mechanical man" deal basically with an epistemological situation; it is important, as philosophers are always telling us, to know more or less how we know. The assumptions we make about how we acquire knowledge are fundamental.

\* \* \*

"Feelings and Things" do not lie on the evolutionary scale of the life of forms. To those who use that yardstick Dada's interest in machine art is likely to appear an irrelevant lark; but that is to avoid a confrontation with Dada. Picabia's *Universal Prostitution* and Duchamp's *Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even* (also called *An Agricultural Machine*) take the aspect of man as machine and use it to illuminate men—though not humanist, introspective men. The Dada painters, in some ways naive, nevertheless were among the few at the time to recognize the exciting aspect of man, not as knower of what could be known, but a partially receptive receiver of light, sound, heat and other kinds of mass-energy wave lengths.

Certainly many of the artists of the Dada and Surrealist movements have had broader concerns than esthetic or form. Some of this attitude expressed itself, both directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously, in the Dada attacks on art. It is in part hindsight that allows us to make more explicit and "philosophical" these attacks on art which were often brutal, spontaneous, and even child-like. Yet must we treat "objective" events and political motives as if they were complete in themselves? It is with hindsight that we usually discover psychological motives.

A radar instrument registers a multitude of wave lengths which exist both in the atmosphere and the objects toward which it is turned (though not, by any means, all). An object, such as an airplane, both interrupts certain "established" wave lengths and often emits wave lengths of its own. It is these few on which an observer fixes his attention, and eventually determines by their nature what to think of the object. So is man such a receiving instrument.

The humor and satire of Picabia's *Universal Prostitution*, emphasized by its title, obscures the premises—perhaps the unconscious assumptions of the work; and they are important aspects of the work. Even while making fun of man as a machine for unloving sex, Picabia does not seem to take the idea of man as a machine lightly. He uses similar ideas in his portrait of Tristan Tzara.

We do not consider the dichotomy of knower and known in the instance of the radar machine. What is important for "knowledge" is the reception and reaction to a limited range of wave lengths, which are then

in turn "organized" and interpreted.

A poster at a 1919 Dada exhibition in Berlin read:

Die Kunst ist tot  
Es lebe die neue  
Maschinenkunst  
Tatlins

(Art is dead. Long live new machine-art. Tatlins.)

This is more than mere "anti-art" as the formalist critics are likely to charge. It is a threat to the entire formalist position of the esthetic "justification" of art (as useless commodity). So, too, *Universal Prostitution* is more than satire. Underlying its satire on the impersonality of sex is a recognition of impersonality not as a base, animal quality but a base, modern quality. It is a subtle variation of the widely recognized Dada reaction against the Western, humanist, esthetic culture which was responsible (or so some Dadas held) for World War I.

Picabia once said, "The problem of knowledge presents itself to us only when we begin to understand in how far we could dispense with understanding." It is a variation of Hegel's statement that "The Owl of Minerva take not its flight till the shades of night have fallen," or the later explication of the Hegel by Angus Sinclair, "Philosophical inquiry consists largely in finding out first what are the assumptions or pre-suppositions we have made, without being clearly aware of having done so . . ." The Dadas, with their "machine-art" were not simply ridiculing men who made war machines nor were they simply seeing how man is like a machine in a positive (preferable) sense, but they were intuitively investigating both sides of that coin.

Perhaps the most profound statement of the "nature" of man explicated by analogy with the machine (and one of the great paintings) is Duchamp's *Large Glass* which, of course, must include as part of it the *Green Box* with the notes Duchamp made for the *Large Glass* during his years of working on it.

Art and science are usually related in terms of art reflecting scientific notions. Thus for example time-space relativity is seen reflected in the so-called multiple but simultaneous Cubist views of the same subject. Very often this can be the result of misapplication as much as anything else, of a kind of "creative misunderstanding." Leo Stein's conversations with Picasso record both the foolishness of Picasso's philosophic position and its artistic fertility. Scientific ideas are often in the realm of the unseen, and probably affect theology more than everyday philosophy. Most of us, after all, still say that the sun rises; it does make a difference—and one not really socially permissible—if we say that we have turned to the sun once again.

Modern research into sensory perception and the biological causes for psychological patterns are probably more of a threat to everyday thinking than the theory of relativity—although once again applying what we know may require, like the sunrise, more application and perseverance than society is willing to make. The experiments made by Duchamp and other Dada painters are neither systematic—except in his work on the

*Large Glass*—nor scientific, but more in the realm of philosophy, of an investigation not only of art and what it does but the very way we know. One aspect of the ready-made is, Duchamp himself has said, a visual demonstration "of the futility of ever defining art." In a short but important essay on *The Green Box*, George Heard Hamilton says,

. . . the most important aspect of such objects as the 'Chocolate Grinder' [is] . . . the interruption of the conventional collaboration between cause and effect, whether physical, psychical, or artistic. For the Cubists . . . the effect or the appearance of a painting was the result of its cause—the artist's experience of the original object, situation, or whatever had provoked the visual image which subsequently appeared on canvas . . . Duchamp's machine is not represented [re-presented], interpreted, or even transformed . . .

Or, from *The Green Box* itself:

Kind of Sub-Title

Delay in Glass

Use "delay" instead of "picture" or "painting"; "picture on glass" becomes "delay in glass"—but "delay in/ glass" does not mean "picture on glass"—

It's merely a way/of succeeding in no longer thinking/that the thing in question is/a picture—to make a "delay" of it/in the most general way possible,/not so much in the different meanings/in which "delay" can be taken, but/rather in their indecisive reunion/"delay"—a "delay" in glass"/as you would say a "poem in prose"/or a spittoon in silver  
*The Green Box* is full of phrases indicating movement. The bride is run by love gasoline, the chariot or glider is pulled (it goes and comes), the entire "space" of the painting is determined by the standard stoppages, and one of the notes is about determining the conditions for the instantaneous State of Rest (or allegorical appearance) of a succession of various facts.

Of course Duchamp is very interested in the aspect of his "characters" as machines: "she furthers/her complete nudity by adding to/the 1st focus of sparks (electrical stripping)/the second focus of sparks of the desire-magneto." The more one studies *The Green Box* and *The Large Glass* together, the more Duchamp's bold and breathtaking accomplishment becomes evident. The psychological, philosophical, artistic and human scope of this work seem endless.

The notes in *The Green Box* were loose. Although one can make a sequential analysis of the way in which the Bride is stripped, it seems irrelevant so to describe the process not only because the notes are not and in fact cannot be ordered sequentially but because Duchamp himself has urged us to regard the *Bride* as a "delay in glass." What we have is a kind of orientation in an "instantaneous State of Rest" for a group of highly visual suggestions in words (the notes); the totality challenges assumptions which have been taken for granted indefinitely.

The Surrealists attempted to galvanize men against the unconscious, to make dreams "concrete" so that it would be possible to deal with them; this is particularly apparent in Dali's paranoiac-critical method.

Curiously related to Max Ernst's rubbings—his discovery of "hidden" images—are scientific experiments that show certain particles ordinarily at rest move when someone "merely" looks at them, interacting.

In the most recent volume of his biography, Dali writes:

Of all the hypersybaritic pleasures of my life, perhaps one of the most intense and most stimulating . . . is and will be to lie in the sun covered by flies. Thus I might say: "Suffer little flies to come unto me." In the same book Dali says that he regularly tells Coccyx Women (an "elegant, hence ordinarily pretty" society type) that he puts date-sugar on his moustache to make it stand up and also to attract flies. Coccyx Women respond, "How horrible." Progressively intimidated, however, they end by finding a marvelous, clean and irrelevant meaning in everything Dali says. They are not paranoiac, but socially adjusted. It is like the scene in *Naked Lunch* when the clients of Chez Robert meekly accept "piquant sauce of rotten egg yolks and crushed bed bugs."

George Orwell once wrote of Dali, "Clearly, such people are undesirable, and a society in which they can flourish has something wrong with it." Orwell refuses to give a "benefit of clergy" to art simply because it is art, high craftsmanship or cleanly painted; unlike the Coccyx Women, he does not accept clean flies. (Of course, Orwell was an optimist; he did not find man disgusting.) Andre Breton, in the preface to Dali's first Paris exhibition in 1929, said that Dali is "a true menace . . . with visibly bad intentions."

Dali ought to be taken more seriously than he has been—all of him. He has said, more than once, that "some day, because of me, someone will be forced to take an interest in my work." Only Orwell's short piece tries to take the measure of the man, and Orwell does not discuss Dali's esthetic merits or the challenge of his Paranoiac Critical method. Dali formulated Paranoiac Critical method relatively late, after many of the notions were already in the air. Perhaps this accounts for the relative clarity and lack of complexity of Dali's ideas; that is, the Owl of Minerva had already begun to stir on her perch.

Dali uses the term "paranoiac" less in its common psychiatric meaning than in its etymological sense, literally an alternate ("para-") mind. Dali's meaning is related to common usage, because the paranoiac is able to find concrete proof of persecution in the world of so-called reality. An object corresponds, becomes an alternate state of mind. At one point in *The Diary of a Genius*, Dali says that "my emotion is so definable that I could make a cast of it." Dali's aim is the "systematic association of subjective and objective phenomena," an attempt which must surely seem to traditional logicians like "irrational solicitations." Joshua Taylor once wrote of Magritte,

The basis of the surreal is the exact antithesis of the persistent popular tradition that describes all experience in terms of distinct 'objective' and 'subjective' worlds. In the art of the Surrealist the 'objective' world refuses to remain a separate realm but actively unites with our imagination to break down the confining walls of this simple rational deceit . . .



Explaining the purpose of his method in *Conquest of the Irrational*, Dali said that "only the violence and duration of your hardened dream can resist the hideous mechanical civilization that is your enemy . . ." In the same remarkable and strangely neglected book he said, "I believe the moment is at hand when by a paranoiac and active advance of the mind, it will be possible to systemize confusion and thus help discredit completely the world of reality." This highly Surrealist notion could supposedly revolutionize the world which had until then been considered "real" by, for one thing, putting into concrete form that which was more real, namely dreams, the subconscious and—particularly for Dali—the obsessive.

Dali stood apart from the other Surrealists almost from the moment he came to Paris; he insisted less on re-shaping the world through intuitive and Freudian processes, more on reshaping himself by hardening his obsessive identification with "phenomena and elements."

The Dada and Surrealist assault on bourgeois clichés had its own rules, as must all attacks on authority. Dali discovered them early, and flaunted them from the first. Thus he willingly took Breton's disparaging anagram of his name, *Avida Dollars*, as a kind of talisman. It became a concrete public symbol affecting his work and himself as well. Dali externalizes so much that, even if the object or image at first might not correspond with a psychological state, his willed obsession then reshapes his psyche.

Dali understood from the first that the inverted cliché is still a cliché. What he then did was to produce the first exverted cliché: Dali cast the anti-formula rules of the Surrealists into a formula. It was, after all, a simultaneously logical, paradoxical and satiric thing to do. He gave the anti-bourgeois cliché back to the bourgeoisie but with a vengeance.

One need not believe that Dali relishes the stench; it is often repeated, irrelevantly, that he is not personally a coprophiliac. But Dali supplies the stuff for coprophagy, whether it disgusts him or not, whether it satisfies him or not. He sees it and he paints it. Dali has said that "man exists amidst putrefaction. Like a worm he crawls through terrestrial existence." It is well-known that men find ways of evading unpleasant and difficult (not pre-conceived) ideas. This Paranoiac Critical method is neither pleasant nor easy.

The importance of Paranoiac Criticism, aside from the light it throws on Surrealism, lies in the suggestions it makes in the correspondence between feelings and things. This involves the viewer in a different relationship to "art" than previously. Paranoiac Criticism would be inadequate in dealing with more traditional art, and the ways objects or things are used traditionally. Dali's method, for example, would obscure the point of the objects (the military boots) in the Odessa steps scene in *Battleship Potemkin* or the old peasant shoes painted by van Gogh and discussed at length in Heidegger's essay on "The Work of Art." In those two examples, objects have been used to create feelings and emotions in the viewer; the "correspondence" between feelings and things is symbolic. Two sets of feelings (at least) are involved: between the viewer and the

victims of the boots, and between the viewer and the peasant owner. No identity of feelings, however, is intended. In a sense feelings are feelings (and each feeling is separate) and things are things. Things are invested with feelings through the mediation (transformation) of the artist; the artist's means of doing this are traditional, namely through the sensitive infusion of "significant form."

Andy Warhol's objects do not create emotions, as van Gogh's did, but Warhol gives you equivalents. The peasant shoes create a subjective situation; feelings are "created" in the viewer. Feelings, in a Warhol movie with its utterly impassive camera, are not differentiated from the object photographed; the emotion is the object the viewer sees, outside himself yet inside himself—like a mirror reflection. "Feeling" has been made concrete; old terms and ideas—"transformation," "evocation," "enrichment"—become destructive to what the artist is trying to do.

An American critic recently said to me that a young artist's work has "so limited an amount of transformation that one is not called upon to re-evaluate the object, which remains more rather than less in its original state; the pieces do not arouse an emotional response." One of the presuppositions underlying such a statement is what one might call the traditional view of internal and external. Emotions and feelings are, usually, understood as internal; thus an external object, such as a Proustian cup of tea or military boots marching down the Odessa steps can arouse so-called subjective states. Even as early as Proust, however, it began to seem as if certain sensations introspected with perseverance could become so acutely conscious that they would take on the aspect of concrete knowledge, the aspect of a thing. One arrives at a state of consciousness where the old categories of subjective and objective seem false.

The relationship between object and emotion in the other tradition is not traditional; the difference may be subtle, but it is as vital as knowing, for example, whether one is listening to the voice of the poet or of his speaker. "Emotions" have been objectified; perhaps some would say they have been mechanized. The author sees nothing necessarily sinister in this; in fact he finds in it an exciting variety of possibilities of human awareness. The distinction between object and sensation (generalized feeling-state) has been blurred if not obliterated.

An analogy for the unifying of object and sensation can be found in the "confusion" between object and sensation at certain points when one is coming out of anesthesia: Is the feeling of pressure the result of the condition of nerves in the arm, or is it an object lying on the arm? It is the difference said to exist between what I experience and my experience of it which seems artificial, arbitrary and perhaps confused. It is as if the art object which is hanging on the wall is the generalized feeling-state I am experiencing; feelings are things.

It is well-known that language influences what sorts of statements people of different cultures (and usually languages) make. The "logical" order, the syllogistic forms of Western (particularly latinate European) languages can, with some justice, be called "lineal." One proposition

follows another as in a line. Hieroglyphs and characters (such as the Chinese) have a more fluid aspect. In Japanese singular and plural are not distinguished. Therefore the line usually translated (it is inscribed on a painting which speaks for this manner of translation) as "crows sit on a branch" could have several variations. (The poem is an "image" of autumn.) That ambiguity which Western Philosophers have been known to mistake for a lack of logical precision is important exactly for its precision—that sense of coming and going (crow or crows) and a wider or narrower world (branch or branches) among others.

Duchamp's term "delay in glass" situates our thoughts in space, or rather takes the thought process out of its lineal rut. We begin to throw our ideas up into the air like a juggler (in a low gravitational field) instead of placing them on a logical line. The test of their validity has shifted, and becomes not part of a system of axioms, propositions, theorems, hypotheses and postulates but a visual gestalt\* or esthetic sense (to use a hapless phrase).

Andy Warhol was once asked if commercial art was more machine-like than the art work he was doing. He said,

No, it wasn't . . . I'd have to invent and now I don't . . . Those commercial drawings would have feelings, they would have a style . . . those who hired me had feeling . . . they knew what they wanted, they insisted; sometimes they got very emotional.

In a way much that has been called Pop Art suppresses certain symptoms of modern art, such as personality and creativity; they are words which have been sanctified to the point of blasphemy. Wallace Stevens, in "Sunday Morning" and *The Necessary Angel*, is almost sentimental about this aspect of art's "potential." Some concepts have been perverted until they become meaningless. As Erwin Panofsky once pointed out in a lecture, at first only God created; then artists who seemed like gods were said to create; and now Helena Rubenstein brings you her latest creation almost daily. In the prevalent formal criticism, art is supposedly not soup cans or billboard faces. According to those critics such subjects do not affect our innermost feelings, or at any rate not our higher esthetic feelings. According to many, the abstract patterns of our

*\*That visual gestalt is the unnamed and relatively unexplored sense which we find simultaneously praised and disparaged in the Phaedrus:*

*. . . since we came to earth we have found beauty shining most clearly through the clearest of our senses; for sight is the sharpest of the physical senses, though wisdom is not seen by it, for wisdom would arouse terrible love, if such a clear image of it were granted as would come through sight, and the same is true of the other lovely realities; but beauty alone has this privilege . . .*

*Never since this was written has that sense of sight been trusted in philosophy, but rather a system far more arbitrary, equally but less obviously dubious. Freud, in the first section of Civilization and its Discontents, echoes Socrates' mistrust of sight. The visual sense of "truth" and knowledge is more questionable, in the sense that we would probably disagree more and call it into question more often. Is this bad? With the Large Glass, perhaps unintentionally, Duchamp asks whether or not we should question basic assumptions more often than we do.*

inner life are the only things important for the artist. Art criticism in general refuses to say that an object can be equated with a meaningful or esthetic feeling, particularly if the object has a brand name.

To put our case another way, there are tears in things. Aeneas, looking on the murals in Carthage, was not moved by their art but their subject matter. Yet, in a way, abstract art tries to be an object which we can equate with the private feelings of the artist, the canvas being the arena on which these private feelings are acted out and made visible. Pop Art at its best presents objects which we can equate with public, communal feelings. Dr. Robert Coles, a Harvard psychiatrist, lately noted that

For decades now we have probed the deepest layers of man's mind, and we should continue such efforts. Recently, however, many analysts have realized that what distinguishes people is less what is in their unconscious than what they do with what is in it.

There is, in other words, a possible correspondence between feelings and things, and of a new psychology based on public attitudes and even clichés, a new definition of objectivity.

Corollary to this is art as a reflection of the viewer's world and personality, that which happens to a viewer when he can see the correspondence between what has been called subjective and objective. This might be called a Mirror of Art, though not in the sense of a mirror of society as Baudelaire more or less intended with the use of that phrase. This is connected with Paranoiac Criticism. Andre Breton, in an essay called "The Crisis of the Object," wrote that,

*A will to objectification without any precedent rules [this new way of thinking] . . . Poetic objects are objects just as much as are mathematical "objects" . . . they are objects whether or not they possess plastic qualities . . .*

In 1924 I proposed the manufacture and circulation of objects that appeared in dreams . . . the end I sought was nothing less than the objectification of the process of dreaming, its passage into reality.

A great if little known modern philosopher, Angus Sinclair, has more than touched on the subject. In his book *Conditions of Knowing*, Chapter 17 on "Sensations, Perceptions, Feelings, Emotions and Things" is particularly relevant. He writes,

It has often been remarked by poets and mystics, and by some psychologists, that if we concentrate our attention on any particular thing or object and succeed in doing so exclusively, then we have what can be described as the experience of being that object. This exclusive concentration is not a peak of achievement, as it is sometimes or always taken to be by mystics, but is rather a failure to be aware of the wider situation . . . Experiencing things and objects as things and objects is the outcome of holding certain attitudes, and to hold and apply these requires a constant effort.

Sinclair uses a metaphor of four discriminable sorts, namely 1) feelings (the most primitive and child-like, such as the feeling of heat), 2) emotions (such as fear, love and anxiety, which are less "localized"), 3) sensations



(which moves us into the more categorized realm where philosophy usually talks of the dichotomy between states of being and object, the sensations of color and form). Then he predicts a possible development. He writes,

This suggests an unpleasing speculation about the future of this development. If it continues—and we have no *prima facie* grounds for doubting that it will—then much that we now experience as general feeling-states may come to be experienced in a partially more localized way as emotions; much that we experience now as emotions may come to be experienced as sensations (as already happens to some extent when familiar emotions are introspected with perseverance); and much that we now experience as sensations may come to be experienced as things or objects. Men in the very remote future may therefore have experiences only of what we call things or objects and no experiences of what we call sensations, emotions and feelings. But the Ice Ages will have come again before any changes so extreme could take place in human beings.

Freud once made a similar, if smaller and more immediate prediction when he said, "Where id is, there also shall be ego." In some ways Freud's prediction has been realized.

\*Many people are disturbed by what they feel is the trend toward de-personalization in the arts, and Pop Art seems to epitomize this trend. These people fear mechanization. They fear the implications of a technological society. The paintings of the other tradition are not, however, mirrors of society. They are mirrors of what happens to us without our knowing or realizing it. In a way they might be said to objectify experience, to turn feelings into things so that we can deal with them.

\*Josef Albers has said, "I oppose a belief that the handmade is better than the machine made." For his incised plastic "drawings" Albers completes a plan and sends a copy of it, including directions for the gauge of the line, to a New Jersey company where the work is completed by machine.

Willem deKooning has in his own way agreed that there is a correspondence between feelings and things. He has said, "Forms ought to have the emotion of a concrete experience".

#### IV. ART AS EXPLORATION

A man's conscious reasons, the causes he thinks lie behind his acts, are not without importance, and I don't mean symptomatic importance.

*The Floating Opera*

The other tradition ought not to be identified with the usual drives and claims for originality. The new approaches of this tradition have been called, not without reason, classicizing. Lichtenstein has painted Greek temples; Robert Morris has used an Erwin Panofsky text in one of his theater pieces; Peter Weiss's play, "Marat/Sade," has echoes not only of Brecht but also of Aristophanes.

Jean-Luc Godard's film *Alphaville* (or *Tarzan vs. IBM*) combines the clichés and even the characters of slick, "machine-made" movie melodramas with pleas for human qualities. In the film, Alpha 60 is a huge ultimate computer in a half-mythical country which is about to take over from human beings. The hero of the film is the successor in this particular mission to Dick Tracy and Buck Rogers. The mission is to "program" a kind of mental breakdown of the computer. The hero's name is Lemmy Caution, also the name of a character in French B gangster films. But the hero's name, Caution, is probably not so easily explained; the name surely \*refers as well to cautiousness—although the film is rather avant-garde and experimental in its use of audience "programmed" clichés (they are not used to produce conventional responses).

This hero rescues a girl from the clutches of this brain washing machine. Alpha 60 programs personalities, ideas and words out of existence. (IBM machines do have buttons labeled "Erase Memory.") The hero makes the heroine remember the word Love. This fellow, Caution, rescues Love from the computer. This would sound more fantastic to me if I had not recently heard an intelligent programmer from a missile site define, in the course of a conversation about modern spiritual values, the word Soul as being Drive and Ambition.

\*Andre Breton's illuminating essay of 1920 on Max Ernst begins with a reference to automatic writing as the photographic camera, the blind instrument, of poetry, which records a landscape to which no human effort can add a single new element. Breton says, "Dada does not pretend to be modern." Breton sees "infinite possibilities" in the work—the landscape—of Max Ernst, but after establishing that the originality for which earlier artists seemed to strive before then had failed. Here, too, we have an example of both a kind of conservatism, a deep interest in human but not humanistic qualities, coupled with an insistence on understanding and using (but not being used by) the machine. Breton suggests a crisis in terminology which we are still experiencing, one more than semantic or formalistic. Fine arts terminology has used "originality," "invention," and "modernism" so much as terms of high approbation that they have lost their power to convince. One begins to feel that even the word conservative might be revived, or rather used well for the first time in American history.

If this objectivity is more classical (in a large traditional sense) than modern, it is as well apart from the slogans of modernism. In *La Peau Douce* there are few obvious technical or formal innovations for those who judge originality in the tried and true formulas or forms; its exceptional and deeply original qualities do not fit any of the current definitions of originality.

Usually the characters, the plot, the techniques, the movie itself are directed toward the same end, namely audience response (and plot development); the end is to create a certain type of emotion in members of the audience, but it is not to fix or produce an objectified feeling on the screen. Technique is used to comment on characters and their situation.

Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie* has been criticized because, it is said, the director has accepted "canned" emotions. It has often been pointed out that Hollywood directors can make an entire movie by simply splicing together known techniques which produce known reactions on known audiences; the results are huge clichés, which are rightly deplored. But this criticism of Godard shows surprisingly little sensitivity to that director's almost revolutionary uses of these standard techniques. In a way Godard's *Nana* is the victim of canned emotions. She wants to be a movie star, and her entire life is oriented around the pathetic fiction (the role) she invents for herself; she is the obverse of Pierre (in *La Peau Douce*), who cannot find or invent a role for himself in spite of his increasing need for one in his altering circumstances.

Some viewers seem to have difficulties with these films; these viewers are, I suggest, often frustrated because they cannot find traditional Freudian psychological motivations for the plot. But that is one of the exciting innovations, particularly of Godard's and Truffaut's films. Those directors don't seem to think that inner psychology is very interesting or applicable in telling stories of later twentieth century people. Psychologizing is not a proper viewer attitude toward the characters in the film. They are already more likely to know why they are doing something than what they are doing.

We are not dealing with a "psychological" situation in its usual sense at all; it is, in a way, the reverse—as if one probed the psyche through the present rather than the past, through politics and business and culture rather than sexuality.

In a panel at the Loeb Student Center (N.Y.U.) in New York a few years ago, Robert Rauschenberg said that a painting is one thing when you finish it, another thing when you turn your back on it and then look at it again—not to speak of it being different things to different people. (He was not talking, as deKooning has done, of the difference wet and dry paint makes in ending a painting.) In 1962 I asked Rauschenberg, "Is the experience of a picture what it is whenever it is?" He said,

I think that when you finish a painting that, no matter how open you may have tried to be, it never can relate to what's about to happen to you, those experiences. So it lacks that kind of richness. It can't move with you.

It disturbed Rauschenberg that painting "as a technique deals in fixing images." He said,

If I were interested in making beds, I would want people to sleep in them. Chairs are to sit in; I would want to do chairs that people would sit in well. One of the least popular uses for painting is to look at it. People are always hanging pictures.

Rauschenberg was trying, as it were, to un-fix the image.

One thinks of furniture as something you assume will be there. I think that's the way a person's paintings get to be to him even, too quickly. Then that's really all the use there is for it. That's not the case when you're working because it's still a real threat. That's why painting isn't the best thing to do because it really is fixed; it is arbitrarily the beginning again and the stopping of something and the delay in starting something else.

Recently Rauschenberg has become more and more involved with the dance and "happenings." In one of his theater pieces, a laundry cart was wheeled to the far center of a large floor (which was without scenery). For five minutes (it seemed a long time) a "dancer" took turtles out of the cart and placed them about the floor. Each turtle had a flashlight attached to its back. Then the lights in the room were turned out, and all about one saw small but bright lights which moved. They were almost as stars: that is, not seeing the turtles or the floor, first the floor and then the entire space became unhinged and indefinable; the slow, deliberate and measured movements (as well as the license the anonymity of darkness gives the unsanctioned parts of our minds) negated the usual "flow" of time.

Often Rauschenberg's happenings are episodic ("a developed situation that is integral to but separate from a continuous narrative," Webster's *Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*). The parts need not appear in "lineal" or sequential order, but could be re-arranged. Jean Genet's *Querelles de Brest* and *Pompes Funebres* do not arrange incidents chronologically, nor does Genet's arrangement make temporal order clear as is the case with film flashbacks. "Time passes." But is one's usual and everyday sense of time passing the result of pure experience or is it as much the result of preconceptions? Robert Morris is very involved with this "problem of time." He recently wrote in the *Tulane Drama Review*,

Time, insofar as considerations of length are concerned, has seemed irrelevant. Since the movement situations were primarily those of either demonstration or exposition, time was not an element of usage but a necessary condition; less a focus than a context. Only at those points where there was no movement did time function as an isolated, observable focus—i.e. durations of stillness were not used as punctuations for the movement but in the attempt to make duration itself palpable.

Space, like time, was reduced to context, necessity; at most a way of anchoring the work, riveting it to a maximum frontality.

George Brecht has done a theater piece which consists of opening and closing the stage curtains (neither slowly nor quickly) like a camera



shutter. He placed—rather, a white kitchen chair “stood” on the stage (with, one spectator observed, more presence than any actress he knew could muster). One could miss seeing the event if one turned away; such a person would have a stronger impression of time than one who had watched. The event had the aspect of a time-stop.

There are those who believe painting different from theater because time is not a factor in the former. For Rauschenberg, however, it is as if a painting could change before your eyes; in many of the happenings or new “theater pieces” time does not flow and rise and fall but becomes relatively measurable. The film *L'Eclisse* is built “symmetrically” with a central episode (at night with the “singing” flag poles), “idylls” on either side of it (Vittoria as a “native”, the airplane ride), stock exchange episodes on each further side, etc. (Note that it might be possible to reconstruct much of *Battleship Potemkin* from the Odessa steps sequence, but that, as “logical” as the last abstract sequence from *L'Eclisse* might be in context, no similar reconstruction would be possible.)

Another vital problem which artists have begun investigating in a new light is sex. The sexual act is the traditional and even classic metaphor for the loss of self and momentary re-birth in the total identification with the “object” of desire. After reading the reviews of the latest Kinsey report and noting recent actions of the New York and Massachusetts state legislatures, however, one realizes the complexity of making public common sense attitudes.

“Post-Freudian” sex has little if anything to do with the advocacy of free love or exhibitionism. The surprising aspect of the new sexuality is that once its assumptions are accepted, then it tends to produce not anarchy but responsibility. It is when laws are irrational that men are most likely to act irresponsibly. The repeal of Prohibition was not the advocacy of alcoholism.

There will be those who will cry that this is not new and that love has always been a part of sex and vice-versa, as Lionel Trilling did in his review of the first Kinsey report. They miss the point. Perhaps, in one sense, it is as wrong to say that “sex” in its limited and Victorian definition is the subject of this discussion as it would be to say that promiscuity is advocated by the Kinsey reports. It is used here as a fulcrum. Sexuality is the basic ingredient of much Freudian theory, and we have to start someplace. (The other tradition throws a different light on what Freud is reported to have said in front of Salvador Dali's paintings: “What interests me is not his subconscious but his conscious.”)

There is an unusual and generally well-hidden resistance to change in the intellectual community. Several reviews of “sex” books (e.g., *Last Exit to Brooklyn*) have recently taken the tack that the reader is “bored with sex.” The reviewers may well be, but they give no indication of an awareness that, like colors and rhythms, there are thousands of varieties of sex and an equal number of ways of using it. Guilt was a psychological problem for the Victorians and, as D. H. Lawrence realized, very destructive; today guilt is a shamefully legalistic technicality (except for its “offending” victims). Perhaps as a result of the laws, there is a sado-

masochistic flavor to much post-Freudian art: didn't Prohibition add a gangster flavor to many of F. Scott Fitzgerald's heroes?

Three young artists, Joe Raffaele, Paul Thek and Mike Todd might be called post-Freudian. They are not, however, sexually obsessed nor are they pornographers; but sex is a more important and conscious part of their content than is usually the case. As in pornography, the erotic and sensual are not a sub-class of love or tragedy; unlike pornography, there is an integration of sexual with poetic and even moral feelings. The erotic is turned toward a wider range of human possibilities.

These works (and those of Lucas Samaras, Allen Jones, and several other younger artists) can and perhaps should, if successful, arouse the viewer sensually and sexually. Like Genet they use this quality to suppress what is ordinarily called style: is one conscious of style when one is “hot and bothered”? We are apt, in the later twentieth century, to know more about why we do something than what we do—we resist “hot” conscious involvement. We still psycholalyze ourselves in a Freudian manner although we may not be the least bit suppressed with Victorian “secrets”. The general, liberal intellectual community seems hardly aware of the deep and basic revolution now taking place in the realm of sexual awareness; they tend not to distinguish between the old and the new.

Enough has been said of the three artists for one to fear the worst; both publicly and privately there are evasions of the impact of the work. One critic wrote that Paul Thek was the finest\* craftsman working in encaustics today; I cannot imagine a more irrelevant comment. One fears, in others words, the same reaction to these works which the informed intellectual has shown to the Kinsey reports and much recent “sex” literature: a cold and Victorian prissiness hidden beneath assurances of jaundiced boredom, a shocked resistance beneath florid cries of acceptance, monumental evasiveness.

In an area as thick with abstract and purely formal considerations as the fine arts, the danger is increased. Michael Benedict, in a review of Raffaele's work which is an almost classic example of formalist misunderstanding, criticizes the paintings for being “inert in design” and the choice of images which “themselves seldom bear much scrutiny.” These seem to me less defects than part of the artist's admirable intentions, minimizing design and formal considerations which “bear scrutiny”. Raffaele places painting—in the words of Marcel Duchamp—“once again in the service of the mind.”

Mike Todd's work, of course, can be related to assemblage; he says that Arshile Gorky's biomorphic forms helped him see some of the materials he chose. Todd makes some of the disturbing but abstract qualities of fetishism and sexuality in Yves Tanguy's work explicit. Todd

\*The viewer should not over-estimate subject-matter to the exclusion of formal considerations. Paul Thek insists that the real subject of his constructions is formal, the contrast between the hard and shiny glass case and the soft and even slimy character of the wax-flesh. His insistence on their formal qualities may be a reaction to people who cannot see the work at all—lacking, as we all do to one degree or another, an “objective” eye.



himself sees the connection, although he became aware of it after the fact. This is not an unusual instance of Dada or Surrealism being more important in opening intellectual possibilities for younger artists than as formal "influence" used for ends other than those intended by the "influencing" artists.

Perhaps one might apply the term Black Romantic to the sculptures of Alik Cavaliere and the paintings of Ann Wilson. They both have a romantic relationship to the land, one to gardens and the other to the great plains; but the land is to someone living in Milan or New York only half-valid. During the northeastern electrical blackout, New York was bathed in a moonlight which might have seemed like that experienced in a rural place; but the moonlight sprinkled the city with a knowledge of radio-activity, and the moon itself looked like a potential rocket-launching pad. "Nature" was not plants and animals but the idea that the solar system has a limited life span, the knowledge that the universe was imploding; and in that sense it appeared that not the bomb but nature might have the last word after all. Cavaliere's grimly metallic and spiky flowers are not the kind "found" by a creative eye in a junk pile, but are as natural as science-fiction realized. Ann Wilson's decaying quilts, fixed with glue and paint, harden the distance between us and the land which is remembered through fiction (and even, for some of us, anachronistically remembered); television, the giant city-based farmer, the machine have not only depersonalized those patches of land and their furrows (which are strangely close to quilt patterns), but it has also removed from our country and relegated to limbo that morality based on contact with the land which Jefferson said was the basis of our democracy.

In 1961 James Rosenquist said,

The newspapers in Cuba, or really all over, when there is an assassination the papers have a big picture on the front page with all the blood and guts running out of the guy so his friends will know he's really dead. Well, that happens every day, people get used to it, they get cool. That's what Americans are—cool, dulled. What I try to find in my paintings is that mysterious quality, even more mysterious than death.

Death and violence have little terror or sting left in them. If that is so, Rosenquist worried, how can the artist make any imprint?

Warhol's repetitions of car crashes, suicides and electric chairs are not like the repetitions of similar and yet different terrible scenes day in and day out in the tabloids. These paintings mute what is present in the single front page each day, and emphasize what is present persistently day after day in slightly different variations. Looking at the papers, we do not consciously make the connection between today's, yesterday's, and tomorrow's "repetitions" which are not repetitions.

In another series, Warhol put a blank canvas next to a silk-screened canvas of the same color. As reported in the *Herald Tribune* (the columnist seemed to think of it as an expose) Warhol when asked why he used the empty canvas replied that he could then charge twice as much. The

story recalled an earlier scene to me. A well-known collector and an important museum curator were there, discussing with brilliance and obscurity the esthetic and formal necessity for the empty canvas. (They might as well have been talking about color abstraction.)

The Brillo boxes are also close to nothing. They aren't the real thing; Warhol had the basic wooden boxes made by an anonymous commercial cabinet maker, he ordered silk screens for reproducing the labels and he used assistants even for the painting and silk-screening of the boxes. They are not very interesting as art, and might look best in an artificial museum-like plastic case with a little brass plate that reads, "Brillo Box, Souvenir of an Exhibition by Andy Warhol, 1964."

Let us suppose for just a moment that some of these works—the boxes and pictures with blank canvases—were so very little, so close to nothing. Then also suppose that we had on record all that anyone had ever said about them, pro and con. It would be another kind of *Green Box*: a possibly incredible and certainly dramatic document of the truth about people as revealed by their attitudes toward "nothing." Warhol has pared some of these works down to the point where they become a mirror such as we rarely have a chance to use. In this case, perhaps, the mirror reflects too much for comfort.

Warhol's silk-screened electric chairs, suicides, and gangster funerals are processed images. Warhol has said that he wants to suppress the personality and become a machine, to make pictures which might as well be made by someone else. Some of us doubt that the pictures could be made by anyone else; nevertheless it is possible to see the artist's intention in this respect—no matter how good or artistic these pictures may seem for many of us. It is of interest to recall the Hugo von Hoffmannsthal character Lord Chandos, who proclaimed that he wanted to learn to speak the "language in which inanimate things speak." He was not talking about speaking as Edward Lear's table and chairs speak to one another; he wouldn't need a new language to do that.

The idea of art as souvenir also came up recently with Rosenquist's *F-111*. The painting is in 51 panels, each of which could have been sold separately. Several of the panels were simply plain aluminum. Rosenquist said of them,

With one of them on your wall, you could feel something of a nostalgia, that it was incomplete and therefore romantic. That has to do with the idea of the man now collecting, the person buying a recording of the time or history. He could collect it like a fragment of architecture; the fragment even now or at least in the near future may be just a vacant aluminum panel whereas in an earlier period it might have been a fancy cornice or something seemingly more human . . . One piece of this painting would have been a fragment of a machine the collector was already mixed up with, involved in whether he knew it or not. The person has already bought these airplanes by paying income taxes or being part of the community and the economy . . . Then anyone interested in buying a blank part of this, then knowingly or unknowingly, he would think he is buying

art and after all he would just be buying a thing that paralleled part of the life he lives.

Rosenquist has a philosophical attitude which is quite consciously social. Warhol's attitude is more direct, less monumental.

*One, Two, Three, Out* is a deceptively simple and lyric painting by Rosenquist. The blue and pink sections, although recognizable as a car fender and satin dress, could almost stand by themselves as an abstract painting. The third section, formed by the two extensions of the frame and a wire between them, adds another and presumably white "abstract" element of the wall. What might have been a fourth section moves the painting out into the room. There is such a "missing" panel in *F-111*. Of the latter Rosenquist has said,

At first the missing panel was just to expose nature, that is, the wall wherever it was hung; and from there of course would be extended the rest of the space wherever it was exhibited . . .

"Nature" is not a term of approbation in Rosenquist's vocabulary, at least when applied to painting.

. . . as soon as I do something . . . nature comes along and lays some dust on it . . . A painter searches for a brutality that hasn't been assimilated by nature . . . My studio floor could be, some people would say that is part of me and part of my painting because that is the way I arranged it, the way things are. But it's not, because it's an accidental arrangement; it is nature . . .

At another time Rosenquist has said that,

The idea—the artist's art—is on the wall; the junk or stuff of paint on the floor is nature, and something else. The artist is like a samurai; he selects something, and his art is what the artist says it is, it is not something else.

James Rosenquist may be the most difficult and challenging of the Pop Artists. He has, for example, sliced a young tree down the middle, inserted a paint-dripped plastic rectangle with a piece of neon in it (in another "tree" he has inserted a blatantly colored soap ad), and spliced the tree back together again. The work looks almost too simple. Yet to then walk down a city street, a similar tree suddenly looks naked; the work of art is the more logical in this environment. One begins to recognize the enormity of its propriety and the boldness of its concept. The artist has revealed a necessary visual fact of which we would have been ignorant if we had not seen the artist's tree; it is not enough to read of the concept for the idea is, in fact, an escapable "subjective" vision. There seems to be no assumption too well established for Rosenquist not to challenge. He has thrown himself at art and everything that might be connected with it; daring to make expendable art, he has made some of the most inexhaustible works of our time.

Several years ago I received a letter from an American writer which included the following lines:

Art needs to be put in perspective. To me it often seems that the non-Communist world has two alternatives: war and surrender. Both involve the destruction of Western culture. The sentimental pacifist

does not seem to realize that, if Western culture has any claim, it is one of human dignity in the face of threats; he would cling to the culture and by so doing destroy its value and its claims at the same time.

Yet it may be necessary that we go beyond sentimentalities (morals, religion, culture, values) and move toward human subversion. In the comic and ridiculous situation in which we face both atomic war and affluence, in which we are all about to die physically or spiritually, individual suicide—individuality itself—has become presumptuous and not at all amusing. The traitor, acting toward political and psychological conformity, lacking outmoded and un-regimented ways of thought, is the only hero. Only he is unsentimental.

There is, as has been charged, something profoundly negative in Pop Art and the other tradition, and the sense of reality which they express. They express a revolt, and the revolt is negative. It is not, however, against regimentation; that is the order of things—mass-media, the city, the dogmas of democracy. At present we tend to emphasize inner "stylistic" considerations, positive aspects of art, the Wallace Stevens position—perhaps the least desirable aspects for our age. Religion ceased to be viable in the eighteenth century; why try to revive it under the name of art? We attempt to interpret art as if we belonged to some future generation, as if the future cared whether we were "right" or "wrong". We tend to justify art in terms of imagined (but unimaginable) art historians of the future.

There may not be a future, especially if we pay undue homage to it. We and our works are and must be involved with the time and the world we live in; our world is too dangerous and violent for us to be anything else. "The woods change their leaves at the years decline, and the first leaves fall first, so our works will perish with old age . . . We and our works are doomed to die . . ."\* And so we should be ready to let our ideas perish with old age, for otherwise we may come to believe that the future will or—worse—should preserve us as our museums preserve the past.

\*The quotation is from Horace. Kurt Schwitters wrote a poem on a similar theme, "My House."

. . . The greatness of my art melts,  
All melts, and nobody knows then,  
Of all this.

But other people build other houses of ice.



## AFTERWORD

The epigraph to this essay is about a drainage system. Perhaps the theoretical approach to art cannot rise above that level. But, to follow the metaphor, a bad drainage system can infect our bodies and affect our mind and sight. This essay does not attempt to sketch out a "first-class drainage plan." Rather it is a preliminary survey of the landscape, with notes on particular difficulties and suggested solutions.

There is, especially among younger—and disturbingly academic—critics, little excuse for this stagnation. This bourgeoisie infection, self-satisfied estheticism, is particularly annoying in a century when the best artists have revealed an important dissatisfaction with "defective" or at least outmoded ways of seeing and thinking.

Once, in teaching a course on modern art, I devised a debate for the students after having lectured on both the abstract and intellectual traditions. I had assigned as texts for that hour both Breton's attack on abstraction, "The Crisis of the Object," and Mondrian's attack on figuration, "The New Realism." The resolution ran to the effect that figuration was an outmoded and old way of thinking based on "illusion". Gradually it became apparent that both ways had a great deal to offer that was thought-provoking. (Somewhat to my surprise, for I had tried to keep my prejudices out of my lectures, the class eventually decided that Mondrian's was the warmer and more humanistic position.) None of the current "histories" and no current criticism would have been able to set the stage for that kind of debate.

Art as esthetic is unimportant. It is not "faithful speech" which has made the Bible or Milton endure, no matter how tenaciously critics and poets and artists cling to the nineteenth century notion that art can somehow take the place of religion. God may be dead, but it is not art which killed Him, and it is not art which will replace Him. Art itself is to a large extent useless; it is not very effective in changing people's lives. That is, our neighbors are probably not affected by art; until recently our Presidents have expressed simple contempt for it. But art need not be useless for us. Our critics have accustomed us to talking about the most innocuous if not inane aspects of the art of this century. Perhaps criticism to be good must be called "obscure" and "confused" when it is written—by a certain type of mind which cares less. Art certainly ought not to be reduced to cultural sophistication.

If it is slightly artificial to set up two opposed traditions, perhaps it will be permitted in the interest of a debate. Perhaps the suggestions made here will not produce a first-class drainage plan. But boredom, the typhoid fever of art, is raging in practically every intellectual and artistic community, in the universities, in galleries, in art publications. The exceptions are the studios of painters like Picasso, Miro, deKooning, Rauschenberg and Rosenquist. Yet this fever seems even to have begun infecting the studios of highly talented painters.

How much longer will we rest content with our defective and infectious critical tools and our academic standards? How many more times can we see the words "picture plane", "modernism", "crisis", "new" and "literary" without flushing?

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Author's note: It is my belief that even Cubism is not altogether ready for scholarly "objectivity" and that modern art has a doubtful place at best as part of the regular academic curriculum—although a degree of exposure to contemporary art and criticism is most desirable for both student and teacher. I have found that the greater the degree of opposition set up between the "two traditions", the greater debate will be. I firmly believe that the conflict of ideas is the greatest contribution modern subjects can make in a university. I do not intend to avoid "objectivity"; but it is for this very reason that I do not include books which are scholarly, objective and non-controversial for in my opinion they are neither scholarly nor objective (Alfred Barr's books are a rare exception). Controversial opinions on art are to my mind far more helpful in gaining a perspective on the aims of artists and insights into their works. It is hoped that the reader will not seek for truth in the following bibliography, but will participate in the adventure of ideas which these books, like many of the paintings in the exhibition, have in the darkness of their heart. "The Owl of Minerva takes not its flight till the shades of night have fallen."

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14x10-3/8" gouache  
Courtesy of the Richard Feigen Gallery, New York
- Thek, Paul *Hippopotamus* 1965  
11x9x25"  
Courtesy of the Pace Gallery, New York
- Todd, Mike *The Strange Case of Anne Wilson* 1966  
14" high assemblage  
Collection of the artist
- 291 No. 5-6 edited by Alfred Stieglitz, New York 1915  
cover montage by Francis Picabia  
Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- Warhol, Andy *Still Life with Fruit* 1962  
54x72" oil on canvas  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, New York
- Warhol, Andy *Sleep* 1965  
65x36" silkscreen on plexiglass  
Courtesy of the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
- Wesselmann, Tom *Still Life #52* 1965  
5'x6'3" acrylic on canvas  
Courtesy of the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York
- Wesselmann, Tom *3-Dimensional Drawing for Still Life* 1964  
60x48" mixed media  
Courtesy of the James A. Michener Foundation Collection,  
Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, Pa.
- Wilson, Anne *untitled drawing* 1966  
16x16" drawing  
Collection of the artist



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