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**CARL ANDRE  
HOLLIS FRAMPTON  
12 DIALOGUES  
1962-1963**

Photographs by Hollis Frampton

Edited and annotated by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

When I received the manuscript of the 12 Dialogues several years ago, it seemed to be an astonishing document on the formation of avantgarde aesthetic thought in the beginning of the sixties, more precisely, in the formation of the work of one of the most radical and significant sculptors and one of the most consequential filmmakers of that period. By now, after a substantial delay of the publication was necessary for several reasons, the perspective on the text has changed considerably. The historical nature of the dialogues has become more apparent and their eclectic features (the selection and appropriation of the various threads of information) protrude, whereas, the original radicality and the polemics of the avantgarde stance of its authors seems to recede temporarily into the background, to an extent perhaps where it might become unfathomable for some.

Yet the publication of the 12 Dialogues seemed crucial at this point, in spite of their authors reluctance to release these "juvenilia". Not only do these writings offer an unusually detailed access to the development of aesthetic ideas, artistic motivations and historical knowledge of their particular authors at the beginning of their development as artists, but they testify adequately the constitution of artistic learning and thought of a whole generation whose work emerged in the early to mid-sixties. If a historic formula was needed, then its key ingredients can be found in the reoccurring topics of these dialogues: the confrontation with the legacy of New York School painting, the discovery of the ramifications of Duchamp's work and thoughts and the reception of Constructivist aesthetics and its newly discovered impact. All these elements – among many others – had to be synthesized and it is no accident, that Frank Stella who had done this in his paintings around 1959 most successfully, and was a close friend of both Andre and Frampton at the time, serves as a point of reference in these dialogues most frequently.

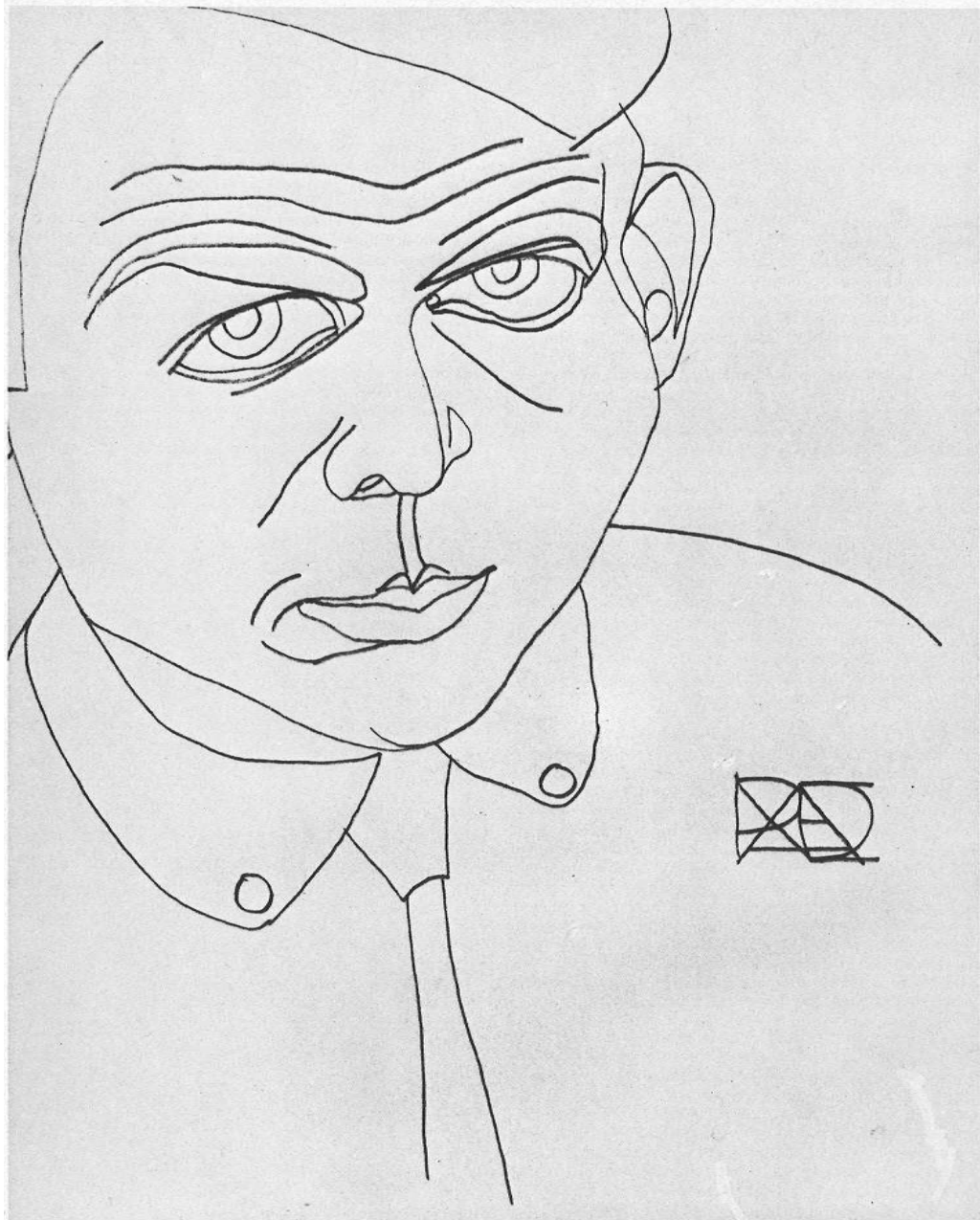
As for their specific form – that of the written dialogue, as opposed to the recorded spoken dialogue or the written fictitious dialogue – these writings constitute a peculiar hybrid of spoken and written language and are of particular interest for that fact alone. Given Frampton's erudition in matters of classical philosophy and literature, we have to assume that the dialogue in classical philosophy served as a model. As for their actual production, the anecdote of the circumstances seems to be worth mentioning. Carl Andre was living in 1962 – 1963 with the painter Rosemarie Castoro in a small one-room brownstone apartment in Brooklyn, N.Y. Hollis Frampton used to visit them, mostly on weekends, coming over by subway from Manhattan. During a period of more than a year the dialogues were written on these evenings, often more than one on the same evening. According to Carl Andre the set-up was comparable to that of a chess-game. While one participant was typing, the other was sitting on the bed, reading, waiting for his turn to reply.

Several of the dialogues were subsequently lost or discarded by the authors. Several others remain as fragments, where only one writer's contribution has been conserved. These have not been included in this publication. Equally two complete dialogues were withdrawn from the manuscript upon Carl Andre's request. In both these dialogues the authors discuss in detail the work of their contemporaries and peers as exhibited in two exhibitions organized by Dorothy Miller at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The critical aggression and humourous annihilation performed in these dialogues on works by lesser and well known artists of the period, was considered inappropriate for publication at this time. A decision by one of the authors that the editor had to respect, however, with regrets.

As for the actual presentation of the 12 Dialogues in this volume, the reader should know the following. Since my first reading of the manuscript, I considered it to be possibly one of the most pertinent and complex introductions into the ideas and problems of the arts of the sixties and their broader background in twentieth century art history that a student of that particular period could find. The selection of annotations and illustrations has been made with this particular audience in mind. If some of these may seem obvious or redundant to the scholars of that period, they should disregard notes and illustrations and focus on the pleasures of the dialogues and the unpublished photographs by Hollis Frampton.

I would like to thank both Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton for their agreement to see the dialogues and the photographs published at this point and in their present form. I would also like to thank Robert Feldman, New York, for having brought the manuscript to my attention originally and for supporting its publication in a most idealistic fashion.

B.H.D. Buchloh  
*Halifax, 1980*

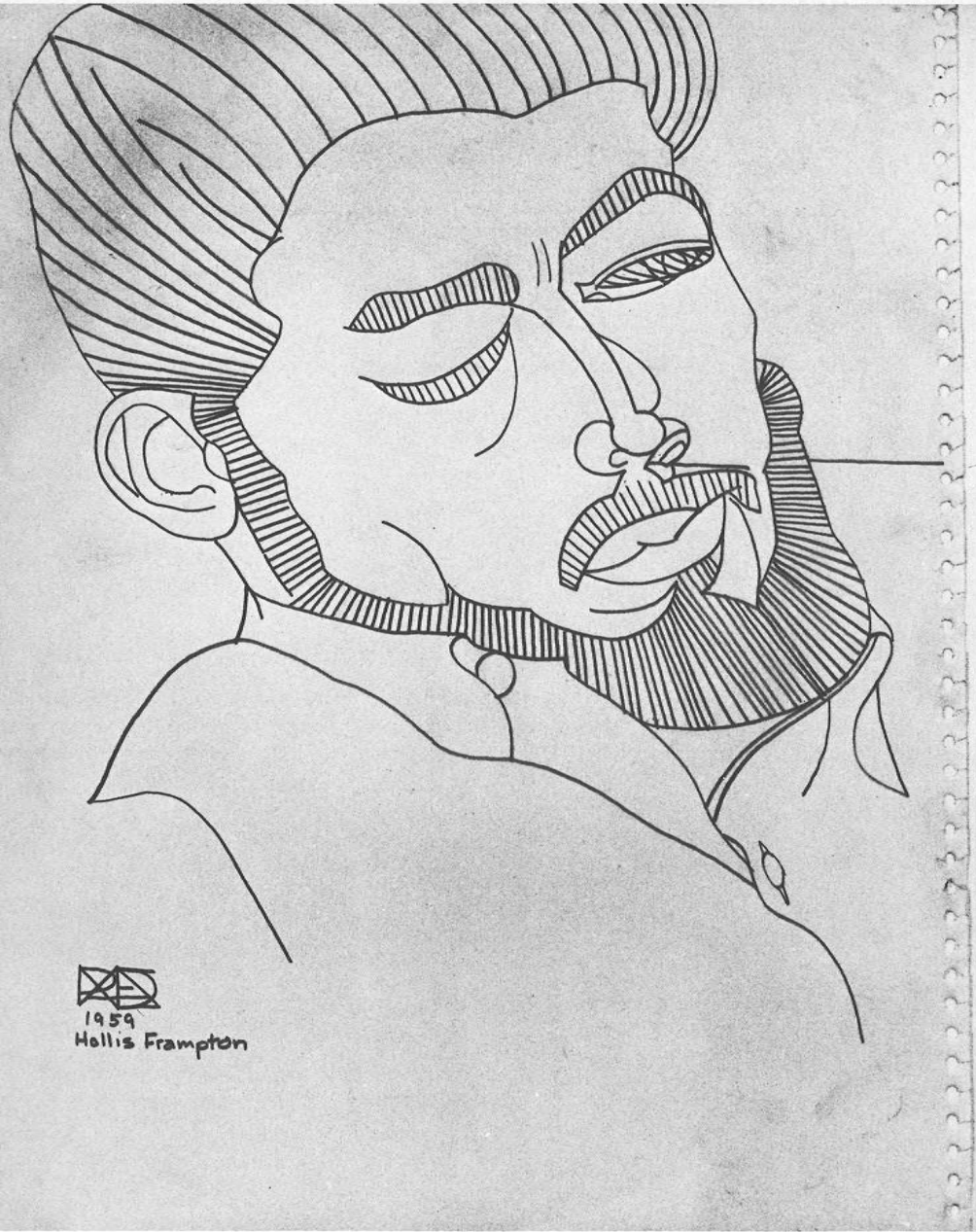


Carl Andre, *Self Portrait*, Drawing on paper, 1959.

## PREFACE

Except to delete two sentences of personal reference, I have not altered my share of these dialogues. That is not to say that my opinions have remained unchanged. Quite the opposite is true. In fact most of my opinions have just dropped away over the course of years. It is a good thing, in principle, to declare your interests and these were the interests of Carl Andre at the age of 24. Friedel Dzugas once remarked that as he grew older he became more demanding and more tolerant at the same time. I think the same is happening to me.

C.A. New York 1979



Carl Andre, *Portrait of Hollis Frampton*, Drawing on paper, 1959.

## PREFACE

Midnight, Central Standard Time, 11/6/79 Gregorian, -38 Celsius at 37,000 feet and northbound, over Arkansas: once again, in these pages, Carl Andre's trajectory intersects with mine; and again, as it has happened so often in the 27 years since we first met (a conversation about physics, and a physicist,) in a space that we have both traversed, but in our own times and ways, on errands of separate devising. Neither of us is there any longer.

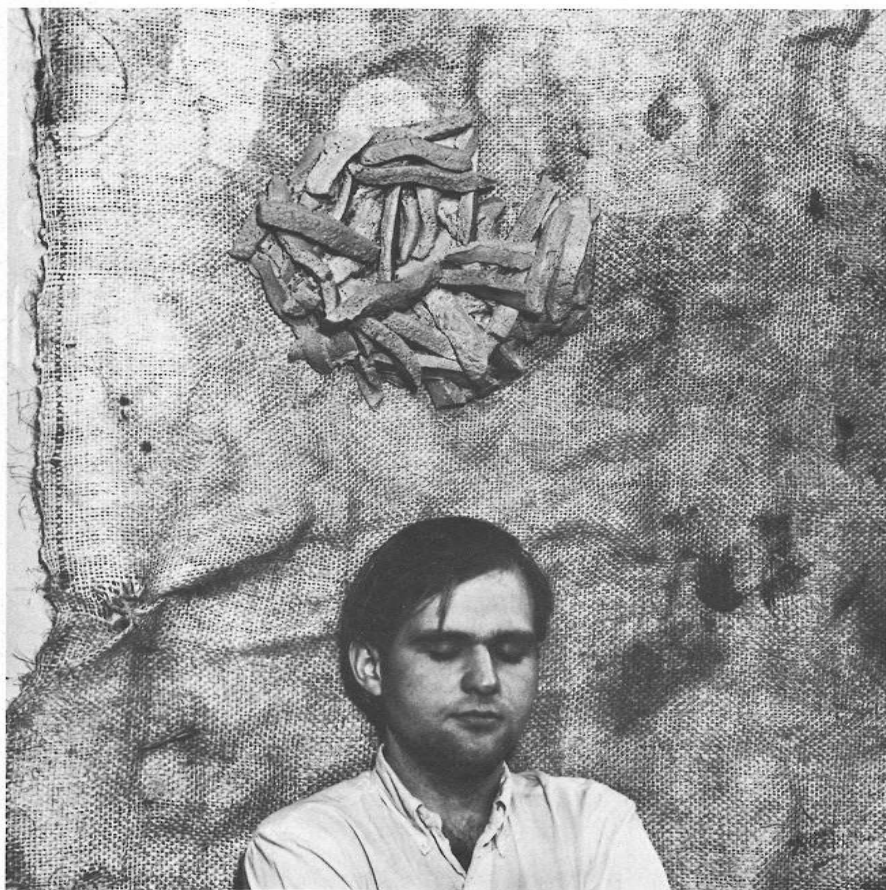
Briefly, though, we were, both of us: in the arena of language, which is that of power. So, first, I would urge that these dialogues be read, if they are to be read, as anthropological evidence pertaining to a rite of passage and to the nature of friendship.

If our rhetoric is that of an aesthetic Cotton Mather downshouting himself in an imported mirror, there is still something to enjoy, a little: the next remains permeable to certain ragged discontents: it accepts, or admits, as I read it now, the paralyzing scarlet of oilcloth on a kitchen table in Brooklyn . . . diacritics, between paragraphs, of walks to the corner after Ringness Beer . . . or a slip of the tongue upon which I shall always regret having acted too cautiously.

Making my way to a subway station, after what was to have been the last of these dialogues (and that one is not here, was lost) I saw and heard, in soft snow, a man improvising music in Fort Green Park: 15 years later I understood him to be Sonny Rollins, and that that audition may have been one convergence secretly prepared by the evenings Carl Andre and I spent at the typewriter.

This distant one, with an illusionist still (it appears) in flight, and of a different mind, is another.

H. F. Nov. 6, 1979



Carl Andre in His Studio, October 6, 1962.

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

ON SCULPTURE AND CONSECUTIVE MATTERS.  
October 14, 1962.

The collection was publicly exhibited in a major show (444 sculptures) at the Guggenheim Museum for the first time in 1962. Herbert Read noted at the time: "I have seen many (sculpture) collections, but never one that can rival yours in completeness, in quality, and in display. It is a great achievement and I hope it will remain intact, for the enjoyment of generations to come."

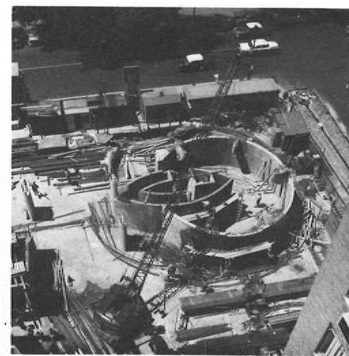
See: *Modern Sculpture from the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Collection*, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1962. *The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden*, edited and with an introduction by Abram Lerner, New York, 1974.

*The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*  
Solomon R. Guggenheim commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design a building for his collection in 1943. The Guggenheim Museum was almost finished when Wright died in April, 1959.

Wright commented on the Guggenheim Museum: "They're going to try and figure this one out for years to come." Peter Blake commented on Wright: "It is probably untrue to say, as one ex-Taliesin man suggested, that Wright hated the paintings in the Guggenheim collection and built a building to destroy them. He *did* dislike most modern art and had very little knowledge of, or interest in it."

(quoted from: *The Master Builders: Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright* by Peter Blake, New York, 1976, p. 399.)

See: *The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Architect Frank Lloyd Wright*, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and Horizon-Press, New York, 1960.



The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum by Frank Lloyd Wright under construction in 1958.

HF: Let me remind you that I have here a nearly complete photographic record of your work over the past four years. This may keep us from talking exclusively about our own words. If you want to own them, you're entirely welcome to disregard my suggestion that [sculpture is a willfully generated activity of certain persons who invent, discover and transmit knowledge concerning masses in space. That leaves you a little room, I hope.]

CA: Definition accepted. We saw Mr. Hirshhorn's collection today at the Guggenheim Museum. I would like to talk about some of the pieces on display of course. But first: is Mr. Wright's building an element in your system of transmitted knowledge about masses? Is architecture inhabited sculpture?

HF: Systems are for old men, angels and Germans; I suppose no millipedal system could afford to leave out architecture, but Mr. Hirshhorn's acquisitions are so many microscope slides under clear glass there. The building interferes little with my view of the pieces, and gives me an ordered vacant space to refresh myself in between peering stints. But whether that structure comes under the heading "inhabited" confuses me also.

CA: I didn't intend that question to be a red herring. Wright's building just seems to me a much clearer demonstration of mass than almost any piece of sculpture contained in it. We take shelter in architecture and in this age we seem to need some shelter from sculpture. [Sculpture is for living around, not in, I suppose.]

HF: For that matter the Guggenheim Museum is a clearer demonstration of mass than almost anything outside it as well. All visible Fifth Avenue seems crystallized around that building. But we leave Fifth Ave and go inside. Sculpture has no inside.

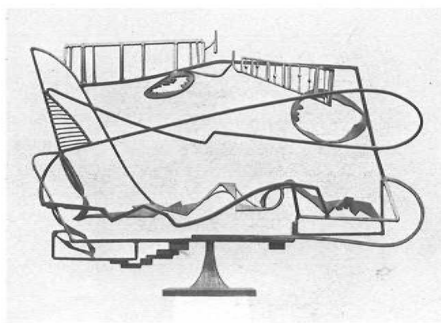
CA: Rodin, Degas, Rosso, Lipshitz, Boccioni, Brancusi, Moore, David Smith, Chamberlain. I propose this as a casual list for quick bites and casual delectations, as each demands. Would you try a few raids and skirmishes against these reputations?

HF: You leave me something more like a casualty list. These names collide with one another. A quick test would bring their work into similar and physical collision. I propose a hierarchy less destructive to Hirshhorn's property: a grouping by intensities. Brancusi, Rodin, David Smith, have produced work of the first intensity. By "first intensity" I would imply qualities as clear as the most directly sensual: cold, sweet, white etc. . . for which we need no labels because we have the works themselves.

CA: Or hot, sour, black. I get befogged writing about art works. Not with your comments, but with my own prejudices. Art is not only the investment of creative energy, but the sharpening of the critical faculties. Superficially, Brancusi's polished brass should exclude Chamberlain's hemmed and hawed sheet metal, but it doesn't. Nor does Brancusi's brightness exclude his own great hewn wood pieces. Hierarchies are not sufficient because you have sculptors doing many differ-



Constantin Brancusi: *The Blonde Negress*, 1933. Polished bronze and stone, head 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ " high. Two bases, each 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high. The Lydia and Harry Lewis Winston Collection. Dr. and Mrs. Barnett Malbin.



David Smith: *Hudson River Landscape*, 1951. Steel, 49 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  $\times$  75"  $\times$  16 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, N.Y.

*The Blonde Negress*, according to Sidney Geist, "is one of two after The Art Institute of Chicago's marble *White Negress II* of 1928. Although the artist said 1926 was its date, Geist, based on stylistic analysis and studies of Brancusi's casting procedures, dates it 1933. Brancusi sometimes gave all versions of one sculpture the same date, using the earliest date to represent the conception of the idea.

See: *Futurism, A Modern Focus*, S.R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1973, p. 74; Janel Jianou, *Brancusi*, New York, 1963, p. 169; Sidney Geist, *Constantin Brancusi 1876-1957*, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1969.

Cardan's solution, referring to the Italian mathematician and inventor, Geronimo Cardano (Jerome Cardano - died in 1576) and his invention of the cardan shaft, that has a universal joint at one or both ends enabling it to rotate freely when in varying angular relation to another shaft or shafts to which it is joined. Cardan's second most important invention was his suspension system, in which a support is provided for an instrument (like a chronometer) which is hung on gimbals.



John Chamberlain: *Johnny Bird*, 1959. Enameled metal, 59"  $\times$  53". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Lewis, Richmond, Va.

ent kinds of things with many different kinds of materials. All demonstrations in space, I grant you. But I think art is truly an open set. There are no ideal forms to strive for nor hierarchies to obtain to. Things have qualities. Perceive the qualities.

HF: Brancusi tried to finish off his ideas, get them out in a piece, with no clutter. John Chamberlain clearly has little truck with this way of working: it appears local surface detail is of too little importance to him to occasion any great expenditure of energy in eradicating it. His problem is to get his crumpled and twisted sheets into the right space. A brass ingot is a clock, or a barometer, or a *Blonde Negress* . . . a smashed automobile is nothing at all or a Chamberlain. Bless them all, I mean, but I want to see them produce a whole thing. Otherwise they're asking me to be sculptor. The task is outside my purpose.

CA: Granted. But I saw tonight the photographs of your own carved piece in Ohio. You have a pretty good notion that if you set on a log in the Ohio wilderness long enough, you would come back East with a pretty fair chunk of sculpture. I would say that anyone could if they were clear of a lot of stupid cultural supposition and market pressure. No, no Rousseau, back in the wings! There are cultures in anthropological history which have survived quite well without any notion of art or sculpture, but which have produced great things sheerly from the necessity to alter their environments. In a sense to prove they were men, in a racial way and not sexual, except in that far vision of sex as human identity.

HF: I cut that timber in Ohio because I wanted to get some idea into my forearms of how a certain kind of sculpture was done. I wanted a sense of the *duration* of cutting.

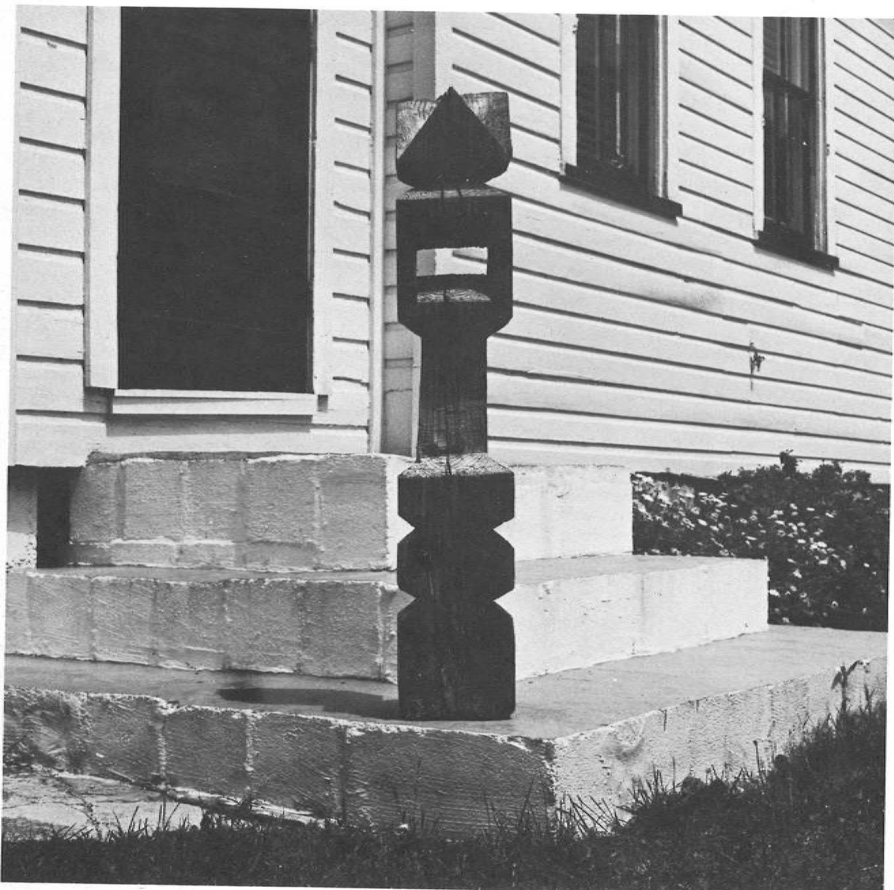
My brief hitch at cutting art out of railroad ties was research: the doctor infecting himself with yellow fever.

This was no sculpture activity. Sculpture is not what we make, I suspect, when we propose to investigate Cardan's Solution in the model . . . or set out to wreck the family car.

CA: You prefer to make photographs. We can't do everything all the time. That's not to say you can't make sculpture. You need and want to make photographs. You have a great advantage over the sculptors and painters. The dead ballast by which the lurching ship of our civilization is righted consists of tons of bad "Renaissance" art and revivals. No one is ready to admit that photography is finished in the way culture has managed pretty much to finish painting by paying 2 some odd million for a middling Rembrandt.

HF: We'll save the advantages of photography for another time; I'll take an exception to your remark about my not having to deal with dead weight, and ask you to come clean about the dead weight in sculpture. If I say that Mr. Hirshhorn's uranium holdings bought him a substantial poundage of it . . .

CA: Curious that a simple process of conversion of mass into energy should encourage a process of conversion of mass into constipation. Why doesn't Hirsh-



*The Piece Carved in Ohio* by Hollis Frampton, 1960. (see p. 15)

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

Seven works of Gaston Lachaise (from 1912-1928) were included in the exhibition. See catalogue of this exhibition, loc. cit. p. 219, reproduced p. 166f.

horn show the machined parts of a nuclear bomb in non-critical material, nickel or stainless? There is much, I think, of the aesthetic ingenuity of the age. But, to raise your ire, there is also much of Chamberlain's or Smith's ingenuity. No, not in their ability as machinists, fortunately or not. But I spoke of Brancusi's wood pieces. A good seasoned piece of oak or hard pine has a set of sculptures in it. A good sculptor winds up with one of them; a bad sculptor winds up with sawdust or Baskin's owl. Sheet metal for Chamberlain and the foundry scraps of Smith have something in common with that piece of wood. These people don't generally start with blank, shiny, visageless stuff. If they did, I don't see how they could ever touch it. A sheet or rod of metal is a quite beautiful thing.

HF: Art is what the artist makes. Duchamp's urinal has been around for decades, but no man has put his signature to the raw ingot, the extruded section erected in isolation, or the drain tile stacked outside the kilns of Ohio. Yet there is use for all these quick projects; I leave them open. They teach us to sustain our curiosity.

CA: Duchamp's urinal? His definition: anything made by man is art. Good enough for me. But then there are some things we like to keep around the house and some things not. Some things we would rather have in a museum than in the front parlor.

HF: This is a public age... that is, if you forget the absence of a public. My quarrel with museums is not their lack of continuity with my parlor, in fact I treasure that. I should prefer my rooms empty. But they never have what I need to see. They have, in fact, parlor art.

CA: For painting I will have about me my Japanese spring toy which pumps out targets of infinite (not true, but better than true) variety; for sculpture I will have three one-inch bright steel ball bearings; for my novel I will take the New York Telephone Directory. These are the things I have and need. How detestable art is as a category. The pyramids of Gizeh, Stonehenge, Boeotian terra cotta groups of the Seventh Century B.C., the futurist ephemeral sculpture. I am afraid we have to cultivate our own and other people's gardens. We are not talking about the virtues of Constantin Brancusi. We are talking about the vices of Gaston Lachaise.

HF: I have seen new work of yours that looks like piles of desiccated dog turds. Dogs have no tenacity, they stand aside somewhere short of sculpture. But they're also the first public admission by a user of concrete that any rich mixture of Portland cement is a thixotropic gel. A dubious asset for the sculptor, a hazard for the contractor: but here are the pieces. And where are your three steel balls, aside from the purposes of dialogue?

CA: They are serving as (of all paradoxical things) bookends on the bureau to your left. Lipshitz is not the maker of pieces in the style of his age. On the contrary, he turned analytic, hermetic Cubism into sculpture. But, what did the dirty old man (Picasso) do when he made the piece "Absinthe Glass"? He made possible a whole discipline which is only now being exploited by Johns and Oldenburg in



highly divergent ways. My point being that Lipshitz turned Picasso's painting into sculpture and Picasso at the same time turned sculpture into something quite different.

HF: Cubist space is a shallow inferential space, based on the errors, or better, evasions of Renaissance painting? God help us, Cubist space is the last, or at least most recent, space of mnemonic art. I'm supposed, or we are supposed, to remember what *real* space is. There is no real space in painting. The space in painting is as real as real space. Through the point outside the given line, *und so weiter*, or name your own poison.

CA: Your Greenbergian explication of Cubism is useful. However, Cubism was also a blocking out of subject matter, rather than an illusionistic modelling of subject matter. Lipshitz in the *circa* 1915 pieces blocks out his sculptural forms rather than models them. The present combination of shallow or absolute surface with modelling yields Still. But Cubism retains the illusion of space to a certain degree. Take collage. Cubist collage is blocking out with appropriate materials. Post-Cubist collage employs alien materials toward the ends of absolute, non-spatial modelling, similar in kind to oriental calligraphy. Hence I would say that Picasso's *Absinthe Glass* is in a class with Claes Oldenburg's *Hamburger* and Jasper Johns' *Beer Can*. Lipshitz' work is, I hope, self terminating.

You mentioned my dog turds. They are the direct inverse of Nakian's terra cotta drawings. I made cement pies and cut strokes from them to be laid on the unspace of no possibility. That sounds like nonsense until I suggest the parallel to my old India ink drawings. The page of the draughtsman is a distinct possibility. When you are laying down strokes of cement, they generate their own field. This seems to me one of the distinct characteristics of sculpture. There is no sculptural space until the elements are projected. There is no canvas and no lens' field of vision to begin with. Only empty space.

HF: What puzzles me is, why do we always find ourselves arguing painting, when we set out to talk about sculpture?

CA: I brought up Lipshitz, you brought up painting. Sculpture? Art consumes both energy and attention, or rather demands both. The measure of art is not only the energy given to it by the artist, but the attention given to it by the watcher. Perhaps that is why I can only tour museums on the run and I give little more attention to my own work. A year or so ago I gave up a poem to a competition sponsored by the American Poetry Society. I never heard reply or acknowledgement from them. Only now do I realize that sending poetry to a poetry society is like sending garbage to the garbage disposal. I do not seek prizes, I seek only a space in which to do my work. All we can do is keep on working, seeking not the acclaim of an invisible posterity, but the qualities of the materials under our own hands.



Pablo Picasso: *Glass of Absinthe*. 1914. Painted bronze with silver sugar strainer. 8½" × 6½"; diameter at base 2½". Collection: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, N.Y. Gift of Mrs. Bertram Smith.

In regard to his "Painted Bronze" (*Ale-Cans*) 1960, a by now famous anecdote describes their origin. Johns recalls: "Somebody told me that Bill de Kooning said (of Leo Castelli) that you could give that son-of-a-bitch two beer cans and he could sell them. I thought, what a wonderful idea for a sculpture."

The two ale cans (Johns: "I was drinking ale at the time") were first made in plaster of paris. "Parts were done by casting, parts by building up from scratch, parts by molding, breaking, and then restoring. I was deliberately making it difficult to tell how it was made." (Johns)

See: Michael Crichton. *Jasper Johns*. N.Y., 1977, p. 42f.

Andre's expression "the terra cotta drawings" refers to Reuben Nakian's terra cotta reliefs from the late Fifties which were displayed in the Guggenheim exhibition of the Hirshhorn Collection.

See: *Sculpture from the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Collection*. loc. cit. p. 225, cat. no. 347, reproduced *ibid.*, p. 174.



Jasper Johns: *Ale Cans*. 1960. Painted bronze. 5½" × 8" × 4½". Collection of Dr. Peter Ludwig, Aachen, Germany.



Claes Oldenburg: *Giant Hamburger*. 1962. Painted sailcloth stuffed with foam. 132 cm × 213 cm. Collection: The Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Ont.



Hollis Frampton, *Self-Portrait*, November 3, 1959

ON PHOTOGRAPHY AND CONSECUTIVE MATTERS.  
October 21, 1962.

CA: A thought came to me tonight while I was walking to the corner for beer: what derives from the case "photography well-known and used by the Greeks of Periclean Athens"?

My case is purely artificial. I do not mean to attribute photography to the Greeks, but for my own purposes to impose it upon them. Phidias was charged with impiety for introducing a portrait of himself upon the shield of a goddess. The point: you can carve, but cannot photograph the gods. The Muslim objection to graven images might be equally appropriate for my purposes. What I really want to know, through all my indirections, is not so much what is photography, but what is photography in a culture or civilization.

HF: We live in the first photographic culture. I may desire to visit Borneo as did my great-grandfather, but not to "see what it looks like". Our notion of what nearly everything looks like, including the artifacts of other arts, depends upon a lifelong inundation of more or less inaccurate photographic record. What it might mean, *in a civilization*, to have at hand an art that produces its object whole, so to speak as a single instantaneous gesture of the mind, is what I am about investigating.

CA: Yes, more of that. The photographer is first off the gifted watcher. Not a collector or connoisseur, but a watcher equipped to verify and prove his gift.

HF: Beware of photographers bearing gifts. A photographer is a man carrying a camera, who knows how to use it. That includes knowing what to use it for. It records modulations in the electromagnetic spectrum from about 350 to 850 millimicrons in wavelength, the photographer himself rather less; the camera over a continuous field, analytically . . . its operator synthetically, by scanning microscopic areas of a continuum.

CA: No, no more of that. I have a vague and faint understanding of your physics. I want some knowing of your metaphysics. Or crudely: we have in photography a kind of easy process which will rescue us from the tedium of anatomy lessons and researches in perspective. Through photography, I, the painter, am liberated to express the inwardmost of my most subtle effusions and all at once not requiring dusty years at the foot of naked charwomen. What else is photography but my weekly *Life*?

HF: The sixth largest industry in America. You object to the scalpel and plaster-cast, I am to take my camera into the back rooms for you? Very well. You deserve to spend your life looking at photographs in the dusty vaults. A photograph is no substitute for anything.

CA: Let us drive through the cotton batting. Why is one still photograph of an indifferently attractive young lady or the cylinder head of a caterpillar tractor executed by Hollis Frampton possibly a work of art?

HF: I set out to record the principle of order, the live principle, as it organizes a bombardment of light. I cut it close at the edges, trying to make the boundaries of



The Portrait of an Indifferently Attractive Young Lady (Rosemarie Castoro), 1959. (see p. 21)

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

The French artist, Arman, in 1960 filled the space of the Gallery Iris Clert in Paris entirely with debris and refuse of all kinds, and called his exhibition *Le Plein*, as a response to Yves Klein's exhibition in the same space, two years before, which had presented the empty space as *Le Vide* (*La spécialisation de la sensibilité à l'état matière première en sensibilité picturale stabilisée*).

Edward Weston, 1886-1958, the American photographer, started as an itinerant portrait photographer, opened a studio in 1911 and until the mid-1920's made conventional salon pictures for exhibitions. Changed his style completely during a three year stay in Mexico City, under the influence of Diego Rivera. Weston made portraits for a living, but his reputation rests on his nature photographs taken from 1927 onwards (see *Daybooks*, Vol. II, p. 37). Founding member of the F64 Group in 1932.

See: Edward Weston, *The Flame of Recognition*, edited by Nancy Newhall, Aperture Quarterly 1958/64.

*The Daybooks of Edward Weston*, Vol. I Mexico, Vol. II California, Aperture, N.Y. 1961/73.

*Edward Weston, Fifty Years*, The definitive volume of his photographic work, illustrated by Ben Maddow, An Aperture Book, New York, 1973.

Hollis Frampton, *Impromptus on Edward Weston: Everything in Its Place*, October No. 5, p. 49, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1978.

Manuel Hernández Galván.  
Senator of the Mexican Revolutionary Government, a friend of Diego Rivera and Edward Weston during his stay in Mexico. Galván was murdered by a counterrevolutionary conspirator in 1924.

"The portrait of Galván, one of his favorites, that he (Weston) loved to reminisce about, is the portrait of Pancho Villa's lieutenant, Manuel Hernández Galván, shooting a peso at fifty paces."  
(Maddow, p. 100)

Edward Weston came to Point Lobos, California in 1929 when he did his first *Point Lobos Series*. The second series dates from 1939 and he did his last photographs there in 1948.

my image coterminous with the boundaries of the ordering principle. Metaphysics? I do a bit of sorting on the groundglass . . .

CA: That was what I wanted out of you. I have before cited Duchamp's definition of art: all that is made by man. Dada is not an arbitrary system of outrages. But certainly it is not practical for us to go about putting our signatures to every jumble of garbage. One show of that in Paris was once enough. The world man made remains however. The photographer becomes the superdada in his galleries of skillful and relatively permanent watching. He is not an outrager of decayed sensibilities but a conserver.

HF: Say as much for any artist. But I have my eye on the slick and wet of it too: the photographer is a man squinting to gauge a brightness, or sluicing hypo around in dim yellow light. Much of what we "conserve", conserves itself. Weston photographed Galván at pistol-practice and the man was assassinated within weeks, but no procedure will make silver particles and gelatin outlast the dunes on Point Lobos.

CA: Photography is a technical process. Some photographers are gifted in such a way that technology is not an impediment but an encouragement to the practice of the art. May I intrude a political definition? The painter is sovereign over his canvas rectangle, the sculptor over his marble prism. (Here I am moved to make a long digression on one of my comments in the "Sculpture dialogue": when I said that the sculptor began with no space, but generated space from nothing, I was obviously betraying a Constructivist bias. To me the prism of marble and the timber are not opportunities to exploit but are elements which can be combined to produce space. In another age, a block of marble was an opportunity already existing in space in the same way in which the canvas exists for the painter. The Constructivists begin with nothing and fill it with space.) Is the photographer sovereign over the whole world possible to his lens or is he sovereign over only the blank blind paper in his black box?

HF: Only over the film and paper, thank God! I accept the given and rejoice in the limits of my acquisition thereof. I see *painting* as a "technical process", but one outside my scope. At the narrowly technical level, gift in photography is partly a matter of tolerance. How long could you put up with standing in a dark room, doing what you cannot see and how long sustain thought in such circumstance? When I tried sculpture, I found *thinking*, through the physical effort of it, nearly unbearable. But let me suggest here that there is a specifically *photographic* sensibility.

CA: To choose is to exercise a political power. Then the poet in his choice of subject does exercise sovereignty over the great world. So the photographer in his choice of subject is politician.

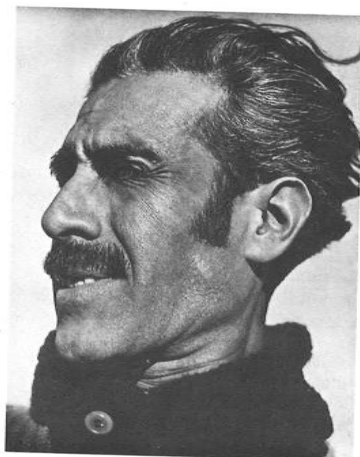
HF: All right, we choose. I choose, first whether to make the negative, then whether to print it, then whether and when and how to let you see it. You choose the angle of your chisel, the size and depth of the cut. I would have you pick out

your own views.

The knowledge that prompts me to discard 19 prints from 20, none of which it is your business to distinguish, is more like a musical than a painterly knowledge. That I'll drop for now, but with the note that a critique of photography (the activity) let alone a critique of photographs, needs a new terminology. My variables are time, density, slope and so forth, physical values which need not concern a painter.

I offer you that photography is the politics of optics and chemistry, from which platitude you may flee as far as this typewriter will take you.

CA: And politics is the expression of power and the power we have recourse to is the personal accumulation. Expression of the self is not what I am after, but each photograph is the result of a photographer operating at a particular time and place. He, himself, is there. Photography even as a science is a system of verified and repeatable human experiences. I am very glad that ions of the same class exhibit consistent sets of behavior under similar conditions and I am also very happy that people of the same class do not exhibit the same characteristics. Ions have valences, people have needs. The conjunction of valence and need may be the stuff of all our arts and our philosophies.



Edward Weston: *Manuel Hernandez Galván*, 1924.



Edward Weston: *Point Lobos*, 1929.

## ON A JOURNEY TO PHILADELPHIA AND CONSECUTIVE MATTERS. October 28, 1962.

HF: Today we saw Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* and Auguste Rodin's *Gate of Hell*, or a small model of it. I want to talk about both pieces. The large and more or less "flat" work which is not clearly either painting or sculpture is a genus deserving of our attention, first for its rarity, and second for its peculiar intensity: I mean that both these things were preoccupations for their makers for more than a decade.

CA: I would like to broaden the issue to include the more or less flat work, which is not clearly painting or sculpture, which lies between Penn Station, Manhattan & 30th St. Station, Philadelphia. For our purposes I might say that the former served as our *Gate of Hell* and the latter was the *Bride's* orifice.

HF: I noticed the Rodin piece is by far the looser. The *Gate* itself is a double door with transom. The artist purports to freeze the gaseous or liquid action of the figures swarming over it: a single frame, not epiphanic, from an automatic film record of a process. It spills out over the jambs and the woodwork. The gate itself has nothing of the sort of interest we find in the scarlet post-and-lintel gates outside Shinto shrines.

Duchamp stays inside the casement, a window through which light passes in one direction, or if you like a surface with only one side, frosted with the exact fingering of a sentimental engineer.

CA: Exactly. Rodin has no taste whatsoever. Duchamp's taste is nothing short of exquisite, up to and including his taste in urinals. Rodin and Duchamp are both sentimentalists. Duchamp is sentimental, I think, about his materials. That is one of the essentials of the Dada. Rodin is sentimental about what has been called content, but what I would prefer to call pretext. Duchamp's complicated pataphysical pretexts for exercising himself in his beloved lead and glass are absolutely cynical. Rodin loved his pretext for *The Kiss* and plainly scorned his marble practice.

HF: Duchamp's cynicism consisted in knowing the value of everything to a hair-breadth without ever reckoning the price. That price was the loss of art as Rodin understood it. I should call Rodin a pornographer were it not for four or five occasional drawings I saw today. He could achieve a clarity in anything he meant to throw away.

CA: That's what I meant. Sentimentality and cynicism are the wrong words, of course. Rather, I should say that Duchamp did not need a piercing intelligence, he had one. Duchamp needed to become a plastic surgeon. His painting was quite good, but he couldn't really throw it away. The Philadelphia Museum has all those deeply sincere and yet waxy paintings. Duchamp was not a bad painter, but I think he gave up painting because he was not a truly great one and came to realize that. Rodin did not need to become a sculptor, either, or a draughtsman. Rodin had to become *Venus Geneatrix*.

HF: And yet this is striking: nothing is so much a full-dress rendering for a sort of sculpture as Duchamp's painting . . . and the thumb and scumbled bronzed

Auguste Rodin's sculpture *The Kiss* (Paolo and Francesca from Dante's *Inferno*) was originally conceived in 1880-82 as a group of the *Gates of Hell*. Rodin commented on it: "... without doubt the interlacing of *The Kiss* is pretty, but in this group I did not find anything. It is a theme treated according to the tradition of the School: a subject complete in itself and artificially isolated from the world that surrounds it...."

Elsen speculates that the group was finally rejected because "... the subject lacked the tragic involvement that the portal required, or that its form was too self-enclosed to unite with adjacent figures." (loc. cit., p. 62)



Auguste Rodin: *The Kiss*, c. 1886. Plaster, 34" x 20½" x 23¾". Milwaukee Art Center Collection. Gift of Mrs. Will Ross in Memory of Her Husband, Will Ross.



Lorenzo Ghiberti: *The Gates of Paradise*, 1425-52. Gilded bronze, height 15', width 8'3".

Ghiberti's two doors for the Baptistry in Florence had to follow closely Andrea Pisano's door which had been executed in 1329-38. Ghiberti received his commission for the first door in 1403. The second door, the so-called *Gates of Paradise*, was ordered in 1425 and was completed in 1452.

See: Ludwig Goldscheider, *Ghiberti*, N.Y./London, 1949. Richard Krautheimer, *Lorenzo Ghiberti*, Vol. I & II, Princeton, 1970.



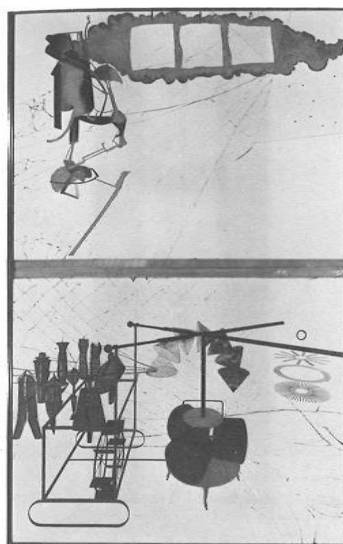
Auguste Rodin: *The Gates of Hell*, 1880-1917. Bronze. The Rodin Museum, Philadelphia, Pa.

*The Gates of Hell* is the last in a long tradition of large size sculptural portals that begins with the doors of Santa Sabina in Rome in the fourth century A.D. and found its highlights in Andrea Pisano's and Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gates* at the Florentine Baptistry and Donatello's portals for San Lorenzo in Florence. Rodin's work was originally conceived to serve as entrance of the new building of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and it was commissioned by the French Government's Fine Arts Committee in 1880.

Rodin himself commented on *The Gates of Hell*: "I had no idea of interpreting Dante though I was glad to accept the *Inferno* as a starting point because I wanted to do something small, in nude figures. I had been accused of using casts from nature in the execution of my work, and I had made the *St. John* to refute this, but it only partially succeeded. To prove completely that I could model from life as well as other sculptors, I determined ... to make the sculpture on the door of figures smaller than life."

(quoted from: T.H. Bartlett, *Auguste Rodin*, American Architect and Building News, January-May, 1889, p. 223.)

For an extensive and specific analysis of the history of *The Gates of Hell* see: Albert Elsen, *Rodin's Gates of Hell*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1960.



Marcel Duchamp: *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, 1915-1923. Oil and lead wire on glass, two panels, 109 1/2" x 69 1/2". Philadelphia Museum of Art, Bequest of Katherine S. Dreier, Philadelphia, Pa.

Samuel Finlay Breese Morse (died in 1872). American artist and inventor of the Morse Code in which letters of the alphabet, numbers and other symbols are represented by dots and dashes or long and short sounds and used for transmitting messages by audible or visual signals (as by telegraphy, wigwag or light flashes).

clay of Rodin is overweeningly painterly. The tricks are painterly. Uncut marble is not blank canvas space, such as we find in the *Baigneuses* of that honest-to-God painter, Cézanne. Don't make me mean that such a Rodin painting, or Duchamp sculpture, would be other than a monstrosity. The latter case is more intriguing than the former.

CA: Beautiful. Two cases spring immediately to mind: Cézanne's portrait of his father is one of the most abominable paintings anywhere; Duchamp's bicycle wheel and strut inserted upright in the stool is, to my mind (with the *Absinthe Glass* of Picasso), one of the great sculptures of our time.

HF: *The Bicycle Wheel* is a fine piece of sculpture. No one else could have willed it or wanted it. Rodin's *Kiss* is the perfect pornograph everyone might want to make, and no one can. Thus, they are both demonstrations: the wheel made with the intellect at the tips of the senses, the blue statuary with the intellect out to lunch. Cézanne's problem was one of talent rather than gift: he struggled his whole life to do the work he was gifted for. Rodin and Duchamp are champions of gift.

CA: Both the *Gate* and the *Bride* are gifts that shit armed men; you name them. These horses of various materials have been brought within our walls. Rodin attacks Ghiberti. Duchamp disembowels whom? Samuel Finley, Breese Morse and Leonardo Da Vinci in one blow. A Duchamp machine is an engine without wishes. A Leonardo siege engine is a wish without engineering.

HF: Choose your residues as you will, Rodin tangles with more than the small mound Ghiberti leaves in my mind. He entombs the basest abdications of my attention to sculpture. Duchamp disembowels the cynicism of my own respect for the graphic craftiness of Leonardo's notebooks. But Rodin's aim is to exceed Ghiberti, and Duchamp's to excell Leonardo.

CA: Now I may reveal my instinctual hatred for Leonardo and for bas relief. To my mind, Rodin solved not only Ghiberti's problem, but Phidias' as well. Bas relief is obviously sculpture where it does not belong. Both Rodin and Ghiberti were sculpting doors and no one has yet devised a free-swinging piece of sculpture which will block an entrance. Phidias was decorating the gable ends of a pitched roof, the ornamentation of which could not protrude beyond the shadow of the eaves. Phidias, as far as I am able to discern, drew in marble the way Pisanello drew in bronze. Ghiberti attempted to paint in bronze. Rodin, the automatic sculptor, at last became the true rat in the cheese which every bas relief sculptor must become. The rat must eat enough to meet his needs but not enough to raise the ire of the pantrymen.

HF: A gate is to walk through. If you hinged the Rodin *Gate* and I walked through it, all the art would fall off. On the other hand, we also saw a doorless gate made to be walked through, Brancusi's gate, and the curators have made bas-relief of it by screwing it to the wall, as proscenium for a dubious Mayan constipation. Phidias knew the *paint* would wash off his stones, so he kept them under the

eaves. After that, sculpture was either backed against the wall anyway, or set invisibly high on pedestals to make way for an inscription bearing the patronymic and favored poesy of the donor. You can't blame the poor sculptor. In fact the Rodin *Gate* was to have been a colossus, with the small figures life size. The gates of hell open of their own accord. I might as well suggest that the *Bride's* sash-windows should be opened, aligning her with her bachelors, save that it wouldn't prove much. We're still talking about sculpture I hope, not ideas.

CA: Note: Phidias could not project his bas-reliefs beyond the extension of the cornice by convention. But that is not the point. In the *Gate of Hell*, Rodin builds out form, and cuts into, the pictorial absolute of the flat ground in bas-relief. Second note: we know about Brancusi, Rodin & beefsteak. Yet, in more than one drawing made by Rodin, the head and coiffure of the female model is reduced to a linear constellation of lines which fix stars. Not at all unlike the conventionalizations of *Mlle. Pogany*. Nothing is lost?

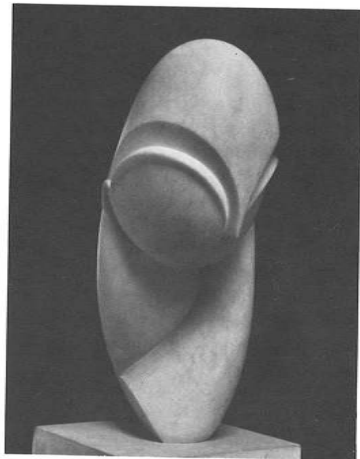
HF: Those drawings are Rodin's "speculations". They are his Lincolnian treatise on light, and end at the boundaries of his sheet. The sculptures treat of his knowledge of the founder's craft. The true armature of a Rodin bronze comprises the sprueaxes of the rough cast. The marbles cohere about a curve that is the description of human weariness under the weight of erotic rapture. The sculpture does not crumble, but the man does. In the bronzes are all Rodin's excellence and cunning; in the marble, all his seduction, stupidity and error. The marble is more *simpatico*, perhaps?

But the promise of the drawings, if promise is the quality, found its mass under the hands of a man who refused Rodin's offer of protection, Constantin Brancusi, who may or may not have been a sage, but was more intelligent than we yet realize. Rodin wanted to be the greatest Renaissance sculptor. He lost his finest chance, perhaps, for a great Renaissance work.

CA: I insist that by eating into the cheese, the Rodin rat ended the Renaissance. But I am going to go far afield. First let me pause to read again what you have written . . . no. The drawings serve, if for nothing more than to put Picasso in his place. The drawings serve. But I am going to say something about the frenzy that is upon me. The frenzy of a man who is learning something under your eyes, and equally under the prodding of your own learning. I would rather talk about steel with Bessemer than with Andrew Carnegie. I would rather talk about painting with Frank Stella than with Leo Castelli. When I want to know about the meaning of a shape of a cloud, I want to consult a meteorologist. The disease of poets and painters is that they tell me of eyes and heads and monsters and bulls when I am interested in wind, rain, snow, hurricane. *Id est*: Goddamn it! Things happen.

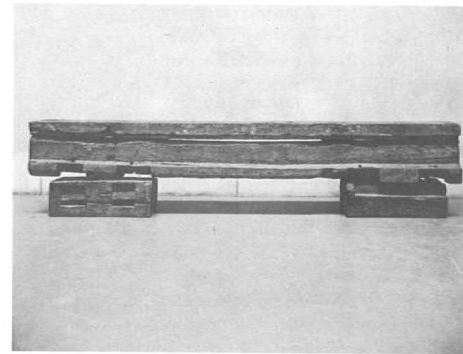
HF: Let me invite the third actor back into this dialogue. I mean the intelligence that made the *Bride*. That intelligence, in fact, along with all the meteorology you care to have join your mighty chorus.

CA: This brings me back to that more or less flat work between New York and Philadelphia which is neither painting nor sculpture. If I were to talk to the resi-



Constantin Brancusi: *Mlle. Pogany*, 1931. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, Philadelphia, Pa.

Sir Henry Bessemer, the English engineer and inventor, died in 1898. Among his inventions is the Bessemer process which allows the making of steel (Bessemer steel) from pig iron by burning out carbon and other impurities through the agency of a blast of air that is forced through the molten metal.



Constantin Brancusi: *Bench*, 1917. Old oak, 10'4½" × 27½" × 10". Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, Philadelphia, Pa.



Constantin Brancusi: *The Arch*, 1917. Old oak, 9'5½" × 8'¾" × 9". Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, Philadelphia, Pa.

dents of Levittown, Pa., about food prices they would answer me with gibberish about Green Stamps. If I asked John Canaday about the *Gate of Hell*, he would say it was never completed, that it was a magnificent failure; he would say with wet lips, "Give me the Kiss, honey, and the *Hand of God*." No, John Canaday ain't queer and the population of Levittown ain't uneconomical. But God, a turnip is a turnip and a bronze door is that or not. Something drives us to divert our attention from the thing at hand.

HF: The brackish boondocks along the Philadelphia right-of-way are an abominable success . . . but frame it, scale it down to parlor size, and Canaday would refuse it as well. You have here two excrescences of a national state of mind. The *Bride* subsumes a state of mind of equal complexity by focussing on the turnips. The *Gate* does something of the same sort by denying the existence of the turnip, let alone the hinge. But our critic's trouble may be simply a failure to distinguish the rat from the pantryman, and a willfull disregard of the cheese. But leave all that for the Brothers Grimm. The fact is that Canaday is plain stupid. His malevolence comes from that. Art is whatever you rub his nose in. What we must reckon with, along with the New Jersey countryside, Canaday's stupidity, and the price of premiums in Levittown, is our own estimate of two manifestations of two other states of mind. I want to get back to the *Bride* and the *Gate*, without subtracing the baneful stretch between Brooklyn and either of them.

CA: Why is the Chairman of the Board of US Steel a solicitor and not a metallurgist, and why is John Canaday a solicitor and not an art critic? With this compound-complex question I move off my high in the personal weather. Both Leonardo and Duchamp abandoned painting for strategy. Or tactics? I do not want to drop the stretch between Brooklyn and Philadelphia. I would be out of my official vocation if we did. But Duchamp troubles me yet. I erred when I said had an instinctual aversion to Leonardo. At the age of fourteen I read the *Romance of Leonardo* and was thrilled. I was not later turned away by Leonardo's aberrations. I was a hip teenager. I was turned away when I found out that the Sforza equestrian colossus collapsed when the moulds were removed.

HF: On the spot, I suggested that the true case of *The Kiss* is a fleshtinted photograph of it. In fact that would be an independent work, as Duchamp's tinted photograph of the *Bride*, in his retail valise, is an independent work.

CA: The virtue of bridalism is its ceremony: the rite cannot have been performed before and can never be performed again. Other ceremonies are consequences, e.g., the naming of progeny. One thing about the new arrangement of the Philadelphia Museum raked through my gall bladder like a raw jute catheter: the distribution of Mayan effluvia among the Arensberg and Gallatin Collections. The fiber mask so fatuously placed above the Klee cartoon, and the two stone pestles laid upon the Brancusi bench. My homeopathic cure for curatorial diseases of this kind is to paste the Klee sketch on the walls of Chichen-Itza, and put the bench on top of the Pyramid of the Sun. Bum-wad and arse-rest are the needs of travellers. *Kami*, I think, is the word for why an apparently random tree is venerated, or

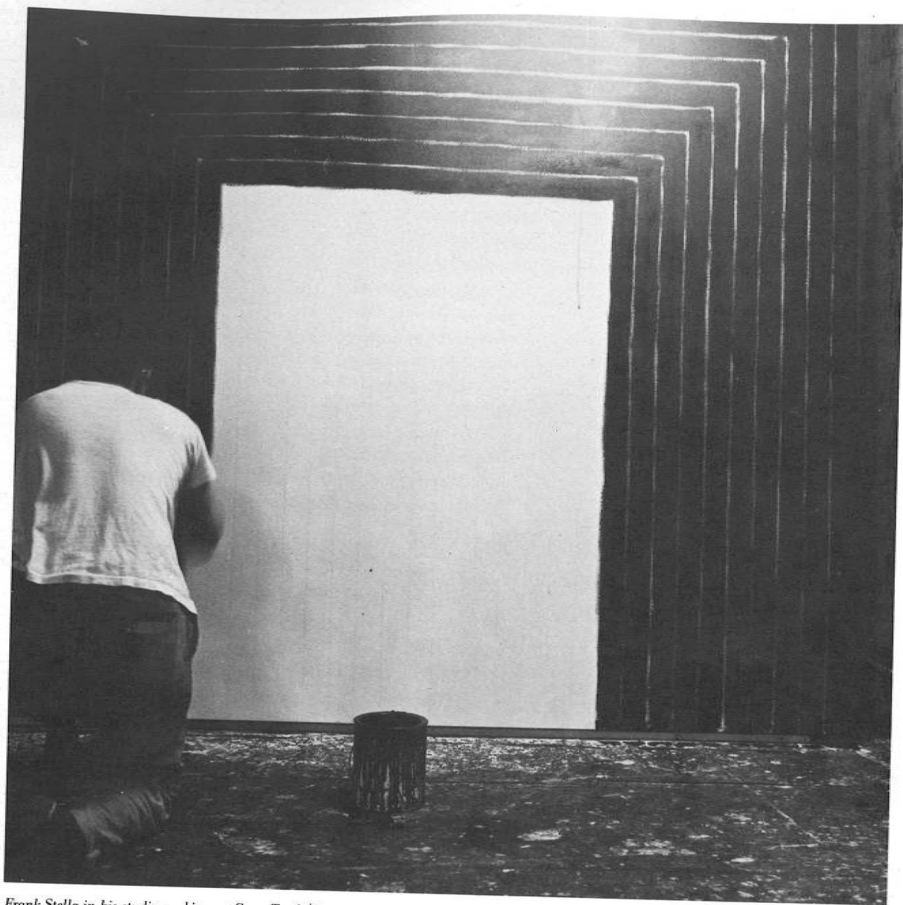
John Canaday (b. 1907). 'Embattled Critic' as he called himself in the title of one of his collections of newspaper reviews, was a rather conservative art critic of the *New York Times* in the late fifties and early sixties. On February 26, 1961 a letter of protest against Canaday's 'insults and polemical campaign against emerging art works' was published by the *Times*, signed by, among many others, John Cage, Stuart Davis, Thomas Hess, Willem de Kooning, Barnett Newman, Harold Rosenberg and David Smith.

Reference is made to Marcel Duchamp's *Boite en Valise* (Box in a Valise). New York 1941, a leather valise containing miniature replicas, photographs and color reproductions of work by Duchamp. Duchamp worked for five years (1935-1940) in Paris on the material for his "portable museum," assembling photographs and supervising color reproductions of his works.

See: *Marcel Duchamp*, edited by Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1973, p. 304.

why a certain sequence in Kurosawa's *Gate of Hell* concerns the spray of sand from the hooves of horses galloping along a sandy stretch of beach. You do not begin with the hours, or the minutes, but with the first second. Brancusi did indeed escape the protection of Rodin but in doing so he confirmed and illuminated a few seconds of ink stroke in Rodin's output. But there is still much in Rodin and in his *Gate of Hell* which has not been confirmed and illuminated. We are the sons of our fathers; it is not their protection which we require, but their seed.

HF: Still, this does not exhaust what we have learned from them. All three are openings passing illumination; they are not difficult to see. The problem, if I may misquote Brancusi, is to put ourselves in condition to see them.



Frank Stella in his studio working on *Getty Tomb (Second Version)*, 1959.

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

ON PAINTING AND CONSECUTIVE MATTERS.  
November 4, 1962.

HF: I propose we talk about painting. That's not to say that painting is something I want to talk about.

CA: Perhaps I should introduce Frank Stella's comment of last night as a pretext for our discoursing. He said, regarding the current Barnett Newman/Willem de Kooning show, that it demonstrated the inherent deficiencies of the Expressionist Style. I replied that our tastes were dictated by our needs, but Frank lapsed into his rhetoric of silence and nothing more was said.

HF: Perhaps one of my old saws will sharpen the teeth of yours: the Abstract-Expressionist style has the deficiencies of any style. The fact that nearly all the "historic" styles have produced one or more masterpieces, or recurrently annoying *exempla* at least, has to do with the individuals practicing painting, and not the style.

CA: Frank Stella and Barnett Newman are both stripe painters, neither is an Expressionist. Both paint in styles which are readily duplicated, yet not, so far as I know, imitated. To imitate Frank Stella is to duplicate him; but the legion of de Kooning imitators have little hope of duplicating his work. Uniqueness of any sort is a market value, not an aesthetic value.

HF: There is a difference. Newman paints pictures of stripes, and glazes them over with symbolic titles. Stripes are the whole content of Stella's paintings. Newman is an Abstract-Expressionist painter because his work subsists as significant painting largely in an Abs-Ex-context.

CA: I take exception. My favorite Newman painting is one I saw at his French & Co. show. It was a colored rectangle with a long vertical axis. Two stripes were painted on the left and right margins in such a way that they disappeared into the ambient space. The result was an aesthetic ambush.

HF: The idea is most attractive. You confound me by picking out a painter to whose "idea" I have little enough objection. But wherever two or three Newman paintings are gathered together in the name of exhibition, I find the old sensation awaits me: just some more damn paintings. Another slough of rectangles that a pack of chromatic snails have walked around on, leaving the glairy trails of the painter's endlessly permuted hesitancy. One bare India ink drawing of Newman, along with a little de Kooning pastel twenty years old, were the rewards of that trip uptown. Newman laid on his ink, then ripped off the masking tape. He wanted to see what it looked like.

CA: I want to see what it looks like, too. That is the conscious motive which causes me to make sculpture or anything else. Don't you take photographs, develop them and print them, in order to see what they look like?

HF: Sometimes. And sometimes I know full well what it looks like, but go ahead with the process anyway. The camera makes documents whether we want them or not; sometimes the problem is to know which the documents are. And I admit



that photography is a means for examining one's subject more fully.

CA: There is also the reciprocal case: knowing how one wants to make something look and then proceeding to find the ways to make it look that way.

HF: Juvenilia. Experimentation. Exercises. My waste paper goes to the incinerator, or into the dark cupboards of my friends; your waste you leave behind, like Earwicker or Alexander, at the geographic sites of earlier investigations, a kind of negative archaeology.

A fraction of surviving plastic artifact is record. It is valid document of the process of invention.

But Newman is supposed to be a master painter, a "mature artist". One possibility of art is spinning a six-week idea into a career . . .

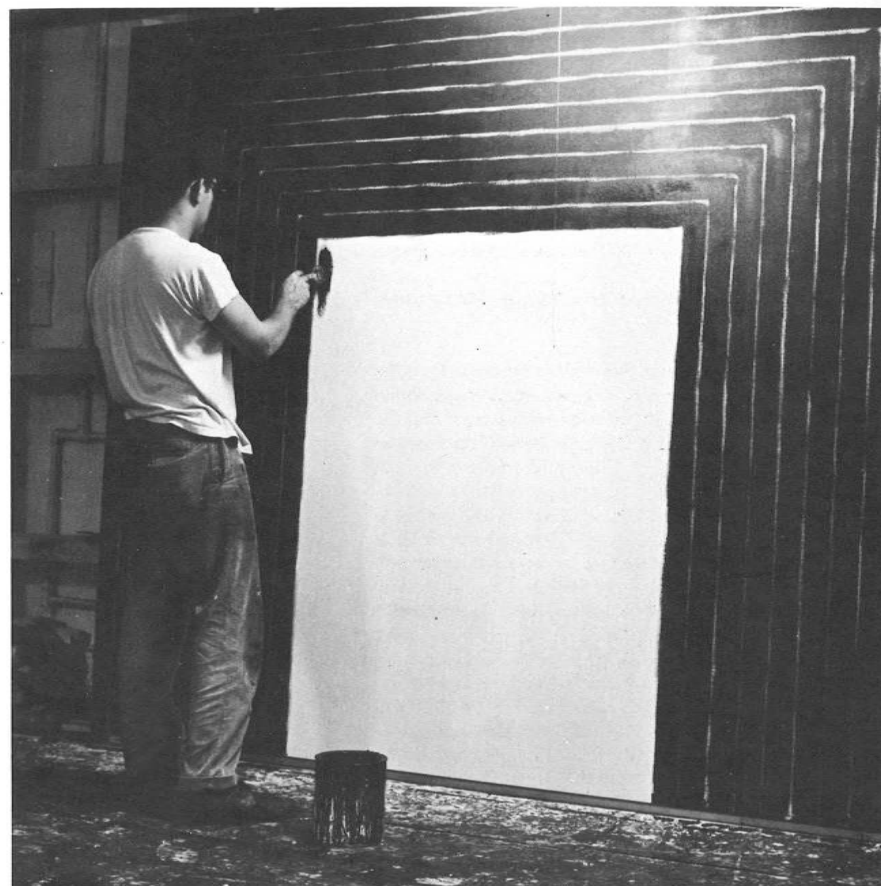
CA: The idea of experimentation in art is very much derided today. I think experimentation in art is exactly the testing of aesthetic rules and taste in general. The results of the Dada experiments have not been fully evaluated to date. I do not think that the true product of Duchamp's experiments is the rising market in Rauschenberg.

HF: We experiment to find something out. Experimentation in art, as in science, is thinking in the concrete. Michelson and Morley performed an experiment with mirrors and mountains to ascertain the precise limits of an important constant, the speed of light.

In the arts we experiment to determine limits and constants. We experiment to test what and how much our methods will discover . . . to *harden* our methods. We experiment to discover our own limits, effective and affective. This dialogue is an experiment. Nearly all your work and nearly all mine, to date, has been experiment. Perhaps the finished work is simply the last term in a series of experimental approximations. The equivalent of the physicist's law or the mathematician's constant in art is some quality of the series so terminated rather than a final discrete aesthetic "number" . . .

CA: Painting is nice and it is fun. Painting is nice because as long as we are looking at paintings, or painting, we are not out breaking street lamps or lynching Negroes. Painting is fun because we like to manipulate viscous pastes and we like to examine the manipulations of other people. On the other hand it is possible to assassinate the President of the United States, or play with the real thing as it emerges from the orifice. I personally have a use for painting which is purely experimental. I would like to arrange some kind of marriage between the art of poetry and the art of painting. Music and poetry have been apart for a long time in the English language, yet we continue to employ the jellies of meter and rhyme which once facilitated that union. I am not saying that poetry and music should not be coupled, only that they have ceased to procreate. I think the graphic possibilities of painting and poetry can be somehow combined in our age in somewhat the spirit, if not the style, of the Chinese written character. The innovation in twentieth century western painting, Constructivism, provides the suggestion of an aesthetic which could be the basis for a kind of plastic poetry

Albert A. Michelson (born 1852), physicist, in 1878 improved the method for measuring the velocity of light. In 1886, a series of experiments by Michelson and the chemist, Edward W. Morley, demonstrated that light travels at the same speed on a line lying in the direction of the earth's movement in space as it does on a line lying across it at any angle. The deductions in light behaviour paved the way for Einstein's theory of relativity. First American Nobel prize winner in 1907.



(See p. 32)



(See p. 32)

which retained the qualities of both poetry and painting. I am experimenting toward that end, anyway.

HF: Without going back to tenth century illumination, uptown to Madison Avenue layout, or across the river to Cubist collage, let me toss out antecedents: 1. the pedantic quaintness of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, or the Morgenstern shape-poems; 2. the Marinetti political rally (crowd composed of spelt-out cat-calls); 3. Mallarmé's *Coup de Dés* (you can push type around on the page the way you can push pigment paste around on canvas); 4. Robert Indiana's sign-paintings (reading the type enforces reading the painting, inchmeal). And a host of others. But why "Constructivist"? You flood me with the yellowed celluloid of Gabo and Pevsner.

CA: Let me indicate some shadow of what I mean by a Constructivist aesthetic. Frank Stella is a Constructivist. He makes paintings by combining identical, discrete units. Those units are not stripes, but brush strokes. We have both watched Frank Stella paint a picture. He fills in a pattern with uniform elements. His stripe designs are the result of the shape and limitation of his primary unit. A brick wall is a Constructivist execution. The various overall bond patterns are a result of the shape of the individual bricks. This definition would exclude Newman's works from the Constructivist aesthetic because he obviously uses many and various means to achieve an overall effect. My Constructivism is the generation of overall designs by the multiplication of the qualities of the individual constituent elements. May I suggest, furthermore, that Ezra Pound in the *Cantos* exploits the plastic and Constructivist quality of words, symbols and phrases. I grant that his purpose is not gained, but enhanced, by this method. Cummings would seem an obvious example, but I would insist that his divisions and eccentricities are more an attempt to reintroduce musical values in poetry than an exploitation of plastic possibilities.

HF: Here is a case where the readymade word fails us. You mean "built art". Not nailed or glued up, but *built* up of discrete fully controlled isometric elements. The bricks are the same size; masons of the past invented the standard bonds to hold the wall together under varying circumstances of height and load. (A discrepancy: the nature of brick will permit the use of the standard running bond in garden walls. We see it on masonry curtain construction hundreds of feet tall.) How many solid pages of 64th notes in a Bach folio? How often are the Ethiopians "blameless" when they've freshly butchered some innocent? The sheer size of a work of art makes a difference. But we began with painting. Will you argue that the isometric element of painting is the pigment grain?

CA: One of the functions of definition is limitation. Constructivism could be extended to include all art anywhere. Music is constructed of intervals, etc. But Cézanne is a Constructivist and Renoir is not. Cézanne's brushstroke is the atom of which his paintings are composed. Renoir's stroke by comparison is miasmic, a mist lost among mists. The Chinese character is constructed from a set of radi-

cal gestures. The English word is not, but the English sentence, or intelligible phrase, is a series of semantic and intellectual gestures placed according to a convention which is, I suggest, not dissimilar to the conventions which dictate the placing of radicals within a Chinese character.

HF: Cézanne's stroke is the *quantum* of painterly gesture. A Chinese radical is the quantum of syntactic gesture. Renoir agrees with a notion of continuity in the intelligible painterly universe. There can be no syntax without some notion of a smaller, discrete particle, not in itself significant. The Chinese written character in isolation is a whole "action". An English or Japanese phoneme is a noise made by the larynx. But let me leave your ends unplaited and go back a page or so. You mention a marriage of poetry and painting. I want to look at this from the back end of the telescope; as a photographer I find this dance of the intellect among means of some concern. (I work directly in my material but you apprehend my work in terms you can name.) What must be brought about is the divorce of this whole precinct of our activity from the vague shapes of synaesthesia. We must see Rimbaud's sonnet on vowels as a *poem*, not a doctrine. Eisenstein fell into the synaesthetic trap in his writing, if not in his films.

CA: My plastic poem about the rose will not be printed in a blooming, petalled pattern:

roseroseroserose  
roseroseroserose  
roseroseroserose  
roseroseroserose  
roseroseroserose  
roseroseroserose  
roseroseroserose  
roseroseroserose

I have typed the alphabet in consecutive and contiguous squares. I think you have seen the result. Painterly areas of various and contrasting values are generated. Miss Stein wrote: "A rose is a rose, etc." and Miss Stein is not to be put down lightly. The word "rose" has a very different plastic appearance from the word "violet". The difference is, I think, worth exploiting. Too much comes to mind and too little comes to finger. To take a moral view, I think Gertrude Stein evolved her style out of a need to be explicit about an awkward subject. Certainly her early works concern themselves with the pleasures and pains of the sexual affinities expressed by women among themselves. This is a source of much obscurity in modern literature. Instead of saying, "Jack likes it up the arse", the phrase comes out: "Jacques bends beneath the pressure of the rose!" Eliot suffers from a similar disability: the theme of Eliot's poetry is the yearning to free the human spirit, modified by the need to restrain spirits more generous than Mr. Eliot's. Yet this yields good poetry. Gertrude Stein in her obfuscation did touch on the human need to return literature to a size compatible to the capacity of the human mouth. Her monosyllables and indicative sentences are impressive, at least one at a time. And surely the great natural poem about anything is its name.



(See p. 32)

ON PLASTICITY AND CONSECUTIVE MATTERS.  
November 11, 1962.

CA: You have evaded the issue long enough. Now I propose to pin you wriggling to a definition of the plastic.

HF: While it's still soft, you can push it around. When it gets hard, it pushes you around. Miss Miriam Webster says it means pliable, impressionable, capable of being molded or modelled. In art, characterized by being modelled, hence sculptural in form or effect.  
I think sculpture in that sense is plastic by custom only.

CA: Are there not dimensional arts and durational arts? Cartography is dimensional and navigation is durational. Shape is the product of dimension, hence plastic. These categories are as false or useful as any others.

HF: Naturally you will say music is a durational art. Yet where is the "real" music? Is it not as much spelled out on the rectangular page as read out into the air? And does not my reading of a painting, or my revolution about a sculptural piece, explicate it in time?

CA: The real music is in the agitation of the molecules of air. Poetry and in fact almost all literary forms are durational in structure. Although a S top sign functions plastically. Perception is durational. You change and unfold if you truly perceive. Calder's mobiles are only apparently durational. Tinguely's self-destructing sculpture may possibly be durational.

HF: There is no such thing as time. Time is a set of conventions for bracketing qualitative variation. E-flat does not exist "in time" relative to B-flat, before or after it: we hear them as they are sounded, which is always here and now. The adverbs *firstly* and *secondly* are pegs we use in our sentences when we wish to emphasize that those sentences imitate actions.

CA: Time as rate certainly is a thing. Given a certain amount of energy to discharge or a certain distance to cover, time as rate becomes time as duration. E-flat and B-flat do differ in terms of the rate of agitation of air molecules. Plasticity, once fixed in the painting or sculpture or building, has no rate of discharge or distance to cover. We do have rates of perception.

HF: Much better. I accept time as a directional stress obtaining among a set of palpable things or qualities. It is the notion of time as a tank of fluid in which everything floats, and which transmits only a displacement of any single particle without itself moving or changing, much like the old fluid aether of wave mechanics, to which I object. Not so much as a bad model, but because it is a model, with attractive qualities of its own but none of the savor of the phenomena it is to account for. Dimension and duration appear to be two aspects of the same thing, if we consider cinema. *Potemkin* is a ribbon of cellulose acetate, cranked through a projector at a constant rate of 16 frames per second (A speed which has to do with our average rate of failure to perceive separate images). Any one of the millions of frames might be considered as a separate event. But, coiled up in the can, no frame is more than a couple of

Guillaume de Machaut was born in 1300 at Machaut in Ardennes and died in Rheims. 1377. De Machaut was the last of the French poets during the age of troubadours to write both words and music of his songs.

On March 17, 1960, the Swiss artist Jean Tinguely showed his *Homage to New York* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. A *Machine Happening Auto-destructive*, as he called it, a gigantic sculptural construction of assembled ready-made elements from scrap metal and junkyards, gradually disintegrated and destroyed itself in the act of performing the *Homage*.

John Lackland, King John (1199-1216) was an exceedingly unpopular king of England who owned little land and taxed his subjects exorbitantly. John Lackland's thumb refers to the old English way of measure whereby an inch was determined by the length of the king's thumb and varied with each reigning monarch.

HF: My mouth is bigger than it was when I was a boy, and I handle more syllables than King James' scholars. Of course men ain't perfectible. But as for nouns: ego is a present indicative, imperfective aspect. I'm what I'm doing. State size and color. I came, with two nouns to hold down the ends of the sentence. I conquered: what is a noun but the passive voice of a bragging verb?

CA: Art is not a code, a secret language, nor is it a rare commodity subject to speculation, like cocoa. Art is what men do to gratify themselves by ways and means not devised directly from nature. Emerson writes in his *Journal* that all men try their hands at poetry, but few know which their poems are. The poets are not those who write poems, but those who know which of the things they write are poems. Matisse insisted that the best training for the fine arts painter was the practice of house painting. Frank Stella, for one, followed the Master's dictum. The detection of better and worse is subsumed under the detection of is and is not.

HF: Art by exclusion? Your suggestion leaves me with a binary system: "A" versus "null-A", Art or not-Art. Very well, a bit of Gorgias: I said to my interlocutrix at the current Gottlieb show, "this is not-not-painting". And we could go into this by the quire and ream. But I remember Guillaume de Machaut saying: The ear must be used to judge musical compositions.

CA: I have a hot deal for you: an exact reproduction of the standard meter bar in Paris. Cheap, too and useless. Why is it so amusing to buy the Brooklyn Bridge? The pearl beyond price is not the pearl without value.

HF: I'll buy the meter bar for the platinum, but I warn you, the distance between the equator and the North Pole has changed. If you don't believe me, go measure it.

CA: We are all poets and we are all measurers. Unless we have an inch in common, an *untaxed* inch, I might add, our yards will contradict, and our miles will wander northward without ever reaching Boston.

HF: The inch we have in common with the rumored worm and John Lackland's thumb. To chop a journey from Aden to Santa Claus into one million parts precisely, we owe to art. Will you say now: gratify ourselves, by means not from nature? What is more natural to us, and more gratifying, than our notion of exact measure?

CA: Do we not measure now from the width of a wave length emitted by the excitation of an atom of cadmium? Nothing lies outside of nature. Bees, too, build cities and abandon them. When I said "not derived directly from nature", I meant that. Our natures are derived from nature and our needs also. If we mark ourselves apart, that is vanity, but art is vain. Every man tries his hand at masturbation at some time or other. Well, see you next Sunday.

handspans from any other.

CA: In place of time and plastic, or in place of duration and distance, substitute moving and still. Some art objects must be moved to be revealed.

HF: Your suggestion is confusing in the concrete. For the cinematographer who edits his own film, and sees a clear sensuous connection between the flickering moving image on his screen and his chopped and spliced and measured celluloid ribbon, the tangible coil of film is his "art object". Likewise the composer laboring over his score . . . and one need only look at scores of recent compositions to realize how much eye-attention modern composers give their work in notation.

You spoke in our last dialogue of poems organized "plastically". Now I was told as a boy that poems are organized "metrically". Perhaps we can come closer to a clear idea of plasticity via meter. I bracket the note-divisions between the composer's barlines, and the "shots" or short bits of film the cinematographer splices together to fill his measure, together with iambus and trochaus, when I mention meter.

CA: We read from left to right. Meter is a controlled rate of sounded reading from left to right. Stravinsky introduced the idea of meter as the articulation, not of bars, but of whole works. Scriabin had begun the process before him. Pound works in a meter whose single foot is a canto. Painting on the other hand does not read from left to right. A well-composed painting is not an interesting middle surrounded by deteriorating lefts and rights, tops and bottoms. The best Renaissance easel painting employed the edge of the painting as a framing device. The view was cut as if by a window frame. Only bad paintings can be read in a metrical way. They have an all-at-once appearance. We have a style of painting now, of which Jackson Pollock is still the exemplar, in which the edge of the painting is used like a political boundary: this much I painted, the rest is yours. A Pollock cannot be read, it can be entered right at the dead level.

HF: Any work of art is *something*, surrounded by *everything* else. We read it in whatever direction it leads us. The foot in verse is not the meter, but the prime condition of our understanding the meter, that is *measure*. The bar-line in the neumatic notation of plainsong was a breathing-space, but not for us: it marked the respiration of the extraordinarily sustained period of medieval chant. The habit of slugging the first note following it, is perhaps three times as old as Picasso.

I am trying to define the splice, foot, bar-line and boundary as systole and diastole: the storage, release and standing aside from a movement of energy.

CA: I have tried to indicate my idea of plasticity as having to do with the manipulation of dimensions. I introduced time, meter, etc. as a contrast. I am rather bugged by one aspect of plasticity: hard-edge as against thumb imprinted. One can pour concrete into a form and let it set. Remove the form and one is no longer confronted by the mud, but by hard smooth stone. Then again, one

can take the concrete mud and throw it about, cutting, wounding, bruising it. When it sets, it sets not as hard smooth stone, but as hard and clotted scab. I am disturbed because my bruised mud or paint always congeals in a peculiarly brutal and vulgar way. The form provides a great leveler. A precise cube is precise because of its dimensions, not because of the gift of its designer. Galena is a better Cubist than I am. My question, doctor, is this: is there a hierarchy of forms and scabs?

HF: The wooden form, then, restrains the sculptor and not his material? Certainly one of the major technical problems in plastic art is restraining the artist. But let me stay a moment with your wooden form. You are confused, perhaps, by the seeming indirection of making the wooden form first. You're not so sure you should not exhibit the wood form, rather than what comes out of it. Your main chance for control is in building the mould.

As for the brutality and ugliness in your work: I had heretofore thought of much of it as didactic.

CA: About my plastic clumsiness, I must admit, I am not interested in the disciplines which develop plastic tact. De Kooning's *Easter Monday* is an anthology of gestures derived from years of sign painting and figurative painting. My work is experimental. I believe all ideas are equal except in execution. My executions are tests of ideas rather than attempts at plastic virtuosity. Nevertheless, the problem of the thumb print exists. Frank Stella insists that thumb print expressionism is an inherently inferior style. The irony of his position is that Frank Stella's stripes are generated by his thumb print brushing. He seeks plastic virtuosity, to match himself with Van Eyck. I, myself, formerly preferred the hard edge style or crystal mode until I happened to read a text on crystal nurture in which the otherwise well-informed author insisted upon the moral superiority of crystalline patterns. I was caught up short by the thought that the poor crystals could extend themselves only by accretion. Not a single fuck in a pound of chrome alum. Even the slippery paramecium enjoys the pleasures of conjugation. Crystals and straight lines suddenly seemed beside the point to me.

HF: Crystalline structure is a habit of matter arrested at the level of logic. Logic is an invention for winning arguments, and matter wins its argument with ionic dissolution by crystallizing. A logical argument cannot change, it can only extend itself into a set of tautological consequences. But I don't think Frank Stella has pursued a train of logic to its end in his paintings. I think he has deliberately eliminated from his paintings every element a human being might find satisfying in the *act* of painting.

Experimentation means moving data from theoretical ground into the precincts of personal, tactile, experience. That is not the same thing as testing or embodying ideas. I believe there are no ideas except in execution. An idea is a shape in my head.

CA: No. An idea is a pattern of electrical potentials in the cells of the human

Thomas B. Hess writes about *Easter Monday*: "DeKooning at times would begin a painting by scattering letters on the picture. He usually began with letters and then painted them out. He continued to use letters in paintings until 1956. *Easter Monday* of that year was titled from its day of completion but it is also, perhaps coincidentally, strewn with E's."

(quoted from: Thomas B. Hess, *Willem de Kooning*, The Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., 1968, p. 50.)



Willem de Kooning: *Easter Monday*, 1956. Oil and newspaper transfer on canvas, 96" x 74". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, New York, N.Y.

brain. These patterns obey the laws of electrical circuitry. The matters with which ideas concern themselves are phenomena which obey laws quite different from those of electrical circuitry. Hence an idea is at best an analogue or model. It must be tested in conditions which are consistent with the external phenomenon. To execute an idea is to recreate the intellectual model in terms of the external phenomenon. I also disagree with you about Frank's painting. His brush stroke is the house painter's, and de Konning's for that matter. Frank typically disguises his humanity with the appearances of a crystalline habit.

The chemical models of procreation have defied intellectual analogy to the present day and with all our science we are only beginning to understand genetic semantics. This brings me to propose a new use or value for the arts. Astronomy and astrology were once one science. They divided out of a fatness of empirical observation, so that we have now a science and a hoax. The hoax of alchemy was split from the science of chemistry. Perhaps the hoax of art will some day be discarded and a system of detailed, accurate, and illuminating perception will become an anchor post for a civilization we have not yet achieved. That means tossing out the magic and the mystery, but I think it means introducing equally the full white light all around. Why is it only a poet seems to detect the fact that the science of economics is a delusive hoax?

I have no coherent thought, only a double image. There is the tree of cells, chemicals, atoms. To be human and humane is to want to know and understand that tree. But to be human and humane is to want to sit in its shade and to watch the bell leaves change the sky. Somehow it seems to me not a defect of science that trees cannot thrive in our cities, but a defect in our art.

## ON MUSIC AND CONSECUTIVE MATTERS. November 18, 1962.

CA: All other arts aspire to its condition. Then, sir, what is the condition of music?

HF: In Walter Pater's day they didn't use it to sell chewing gum. I'll dodge the platonic issues for a moment and leave you with that much.

CA: My sole and only experience with music is informal and personal. Of all the arts, music is to me the only indispensable one. I would not be sorely grieved if the whole contents of the Museum of Modern Art followed the lilies under the axe, but I would be quite unhappy were I to be deprived of access to music.

HF: But what do we mean when we say music? Is this to be *musique pure*, or are we to "admit" all we've heard called music? I should care to get past music talk. I remember a lady asking Frank Stella: "What music do you listen to while you paint?" Answer: *The Moldau*. I take it we're not talking about *that*.

CA: I am more interested in the music you listen to while you listen to music. A definition: the humane ordering of sound. Ornette Coleman and J. S. Bach are humane; chaos is a kind of order; sound is what we can hear. My definition becomes a soluble fish.

HF: Chaos is order if you repeat it often enough. I like your definition because it leaves room for ordered sounds I'm not ready for, as well as for those I am. You mention Coleman and Bach. I miss Liszt and Rachmaninoff. Do those two practitioners fall outside music?

CA: Rachmaninoff died in Hollywood, California. Delius died in Palm Beach, Florida. We criticize ourselves most severely by the manner of our departures. I believe that every fourth note of the Abbé Liszt's music is humanely ordered and if I were a gentleman, I would excise the intervening three.

HF: Music is all the notes in the composition. I recall a young lady who said Tchaikowsky was good in spots. The curate ate an egg, mainly rotten, and stood at table to tell his bishop it was a really good egg . . . in spots. If I said: this is a fine painting, except for all the green and blue . . . I think Pater was talking about the conditions of the *invention* of music. No man can use the verb *incarnadine* again, but the note A retains all its qualities. A melodic minor triad in first inversion can pass through (even) Richard Strauss. Composers, it seems, get closer to their raw stuff, without drowning in it, than the rest of us.

CA: I am now composing before your eyes. My piece is called the *Light Classical Overture*. The score is every fourth note from the Abbé's *Liebestraum*. In the process of performance, the atmosphere is slowly replaced by pure helium . . . the pitch raises itself to a frenzy . . . the hall rises . . . ACTION MUSIC! The two great advantages of music are its freedom from the need to imitate extraneous phenomena, and its need to be constantly renewed by performance. Imagine the advantages (and dis-) of the fugitive Giotto which requires perpetual repainting. Perhaps the glorious recording industry will murder the latter advantage.

Frederick Delius (1862-1934), an English composer of German-Dutch extraction was once an orange grower in Florida. He has been labelled a Romantic composer of the Impressionist School.

HF: A phonograph record has the advantage and disadvantage that you can repeat it exactly by moving the needle. Recording has done to music what book publishers have done to words and the Daily News to photographs. Poets, composers, and photographers starve on for the fattening of a few hundred prime stockholders. The criterion of production in all cases is recognizability. Léger said: "J'attends le jour qu'on offre au publique une merde sur un plat", and that day is far behind us.

CA: All that is made by man is art. A fart symphony, or partita at least? I do not object. We object to nothing anymore. We, the people, do not sing anymore. Beyond the broken back of Jersey, beyond the flambeaux of Bayonne, I hear America dropping a quarter into a jukebox.

HF: The jukebox and Mahler both lie outside what I would expound as the new sensibility, but neither official nor unofficial American culture would care to hear *Das Lied von der Erde* at the roadhouse.

CA: The cultural rage of course is to compose Puccini's next opera with a libretto by Edgar Guest.

HF: Ten minutes ago Stravinsky's *Agon* fell unexpectedly on the turntable. The mental weather became more clement. I want to stop railing against the musical "establishment" and try to account for this.

CA: I have not the musical gifts sufficient to explain away Stravinsky's gift. I remember seeing and hearing *Agon* for the first time at the City Center. It seemed that even the squeaks of the dancers' shoes had been accounted for in the score. Stravinsky's music, like Webern's or Bach's, seems to be a kind of continuous arch in which each element is load-bearing and indispensable. Some exceptions must be allowed for. The Master himself admits that he nodded for a decade over such piffle as *Norwegian Moods*. He kept his hand in, anyway.

HF: To my mind the permanent work is instrumental: *The Soldier's Tale*, the 1953 *Septet*, *Agon*, *Pieces for Piano and Orchestra*. This is a prejudice of my own: all large vocal compositions sound to me like Grand Opera. I held out against the *B Minor Mass* on that ground for some while.

CA: Part of the trouble certainly is that great choral works are not meant to be heard by us, but are meant to be sung by us. Surely the Chorales of Bach are a calendar of congregational song feasts. None of this has anything to do with the rale and rhonchus of Mahler's *Symphony of 1000*.

HF: Stravinsky pointed out in his *Poetics of Music* that the *St. Matthew Passion* was realized during Bach's lifetime, to his satisfaction, with 34 performers, singers and instrumentalists. Stravinsky's own *Oedipus Rex* probably uses fewer. Mahler is a man from an age where there is virtue as well as safety in numbers. From James Petrillo's point of view, the *Symphony of 1000* is better music than Haydn's string quartets, unless 250 of them could be performed

Edgar Guest (1881-1959), journalist and populist writer of *Home Rhymes* (1916), *Just Glad Things*, *Breakfast Table Chat* and *A Heap O' Livin* (1916) which sold more than a million copies.

James Petrillo (1892- ) was a former president of the American Federation of Musicians from 1940-1958. During that time, he staged strikes to combat the increased use of technological devices that would lessen employment for musicians.

simultaneously.

CA: There is that great and enviable continuity in music. Webern's setting of Bach's *Ricercar* sheds light on both composers and it is the same light unmodified. Picasso's *Velázquez* sheds more light on Sam Kootz than it does on either painter. Webern was shot by an American soldier, apparently for the offense of being unable to understand English. He was asked once why he did not double the instrumentation for his extremely spare works and he replied that if he could not write for one clarinet, how could he possibly write for seven.

HF: As an outsider I see music as a continuing process. Sculpture, from the outside, is a procession of discrete monuments. Music has its monuments of course, but they breathe the same air. I envy that condition.

CA: Music still presents problems. The electronic modes and devices have yet to be freed from pre-electronic prejudices. The way of the oscillator has not yet been found. My hope is that Stravinsky will try it before he dies.

HF: I held for a time a similar hope that Pound might learn enough Greek to give us an *Odyssey*. He won't. He has done something far more difficult: prepared the English language for an *Odyssey*. Stravinsky has prepared a musical language of a similar tensile resiliency. I doubt that Boulez' and Stockhausen's better work could have been done without Stravinsky's shoulders and Webern's to stand on. What I mean is, it is possible in 1962 to compose music using electronic sounds. There was probably some similar point at which it became possible to use an orchestra.

The art critic, Samuel Kootz, was a crucial figure in the formation of the New York School reputation. He published his *Modern American Painters* in 1930 and organized the famous Macy's Department Store exhibition in 1942 including works by Gorky, Rothko, Gottlieb and others. This resulted in a collection of writings on the Abstract-Expressionists, *New Frontiers in American Painting* (New York, 1943). Later, Kootz became an art dealer and Picasso's *Velázquez-paraphrase Las Meninas* was among the paintings that he owned and sold.

ON LITERATURE AND CONSECUTIVE MATTERS.  
December 8, 1962.

CA: We have written about all the arts or most of them except the art we practice in devising this colloquium.

HF: You mean literature? We pretend to manufacture some sort of *talk*, these evenings. There may have been a time when talk was literature, but we understand the two things differently now. Dante used the vulgar tongue but wrote what we call "literature".

CA: I fear the track of a definition in this matter leads into a featureless bog. Let me say only that the bog is divided into prose and poetry and I am sure the latter is the more ancient province.

HF: Stendhal thought good prose would do away with bad poetry. Certain practitioners of either think that prose is talk and poetry is literature and take stands on their respective sides. I didn't intend nailing your boots to the floor with my opening remark. I had in mind two currents of practice that have run parallel for some millennia, alternating in fashion. To discuss one is, often, to exclude the other.

CA: But literature is talk of a sort. As a system of symbols and operations, literature would have an appeal as limited as that of mathematics. I can only speak for myself, but a good part of the density of my personal existence derives from an internal discourse with myself. I experience the world in terms of external stimuli, but my sense of myself largely derives from my own private verbalizations of those stimuli. That would place literature in the domain of psychological rather than empirical reality.

HF: You must say: "I think" in words. This leads you to believe you think in words, or "in English". I believe that we often think *using* words, but oftener do not. *White* in my head is no graph of a phoneme but soapsuds, snow and canna lilies. We may invent talk in our minds but I doubt we *think* in talk. Clearly, our internal monologue is not literature.

I propose that whatever is set down in written words, intended for others to see, is literature. This is a bag large enough to hold your telephone directory, *Finnegan's Wake* and the letters of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. It leaves us with a problem of determining what is "good" or "bad" literature of course, but at least that is a qualitative problem. Otherwise we have a quantitative problem: what is the threshold, or boundary line, between literature and not-literature? At what level of wilful organization does a string of sentences become literature?

CA: Let me clarify. What I tried to say was that our sense of ourselves, rather than our thoughts, was verbal. Or rather, thought made fully conscious is verbal. At any rate, it is verbal for me. Perhaps Sam Huff's sense of himself is plastic, rather than verbal. About the qualities of literature: I believe the best of it elucidates our condition, and the worst of it pretends to the fulfillment of our vainest wishes.



HF: Our sense of ourselves is a spectrum beginning with the visceral. We are alive first of all because the physical characteristics of matter under certain conditions permit the formation of colloidal suspensions. If you say that literature elucidates our sense of ourselves I suppose we must begin with the dielectric potential in the bounding membranes of the chromosomes of spermatozoa. Literature is something we make and control. The words go down where I put them. A typing digital computer expounds its sense of itself with every printed sum but doesn't know it. I know it. Somewhere between man and the colloid or the printed circuit, a complicating principle of order has supervened. But again we are off on a quantitative sidetrack. Let me try again: literature is that aliquot of deliberately organized words which we care to keep for some reason or other.

CA: I will belabor it further. If language is only a set of symbols and operations, then I think it cannot become art. The correspondence between a symbol and its referent is too fragile a relationship upon which to build literature. Sculpture is an art because it partakes of our plastic sense of ourselves, that is the materials of the sculptor and his final product occupy physical space in the same way we do. Literature is an art because its products occupy at least in part the same kind of psychological space which our own thoughts occupy. Literature is not about the phenomenal world, but about our relationship to the phenomenal world.

HF: You suggest that literature seems to be "about" something. Sentences have characteristic shapes in imitation of the visual ray moving out from Dick's eye to paint the bouncing ball with recognition. The standard assumption has been that literature is about us, about itself, or about physical phenomena. Developed sensibilities are aware of literature "about" all those things. We use words, all right, but this in no way accounts for *King Lear*, in the sense that it accounts for the Sears & Roebuck Catalog. We cook and eat food, but whence Escoffier?

What is literature for? Why do we formally knuckle down and write books? (For us, after all, literature is books, talk or no).

CA: We cannot ride the letters: "h" "o" "r" "s" "e". We can ride the fourfooted animal for which they stand. The rider's sense of himself and his horse is very different from the writer's and reader's. Yet these senses overlap like blue and yellow transparent discs. Furthermore, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride. The rider may wish himself Bellerephon for that matter. For the last time let me suggest that the aboutness of language is insufficient to explain the literary arts. I am suggesting that literature attains to a sufficient density by a process similar in part to the process by which our consciousness attains the density of the sense of self.

HF: For ourselves, and in this time, I willingly agree. In this very sociable and public age every man is indriven upon whatever resources he can cram into a narrow *temenos* maintained only through the expenditure of much energy. Outside that cautionary area all may not be windy darkness, but the most pacific seas are perilous as we have our raft punctured under us and buckle on

a Mae West. I want no General Theory for literature or any other art; it is the bread of our affections, and we make it to suit our metabolism, from what grain is at hand. Homer, Ovid and Alexander Pope may have felt the need for ballast or linchpin of some sort, but I find none of this preoccupation in their work. Homer starts out with the whole universe of human action, and Joyce winds up with the Oxford English Dictionary.

CA: Ideas are not truths, they are conveniences. For my own convenience I will construct a model of literature: a dark tunnel, one end of which opens upon the external phenomenal world; the other end opens onto individual consciousness. The external gate is the aboutness of words, the relation between symbol and referent. The internal gate is the similarity between the processes of literature and the processes of consciousness. Extending my convenience, I thought at first that the novel was the perfect example of literature at the outer gate and the lyric poem was the literary case at the inner. Reflecting further, I reversed their positions. I insist that the great natural poem about anything is its name. The novel is an elaboration of consciousness; the poem, a perfecting of sensibility. My reason for reversing the positions of my examples was a consideration of *Finnegan's Wake*. That novel is perhaps the ultimate elaboration of consciousness in literature. Mr. Joyce almost dissolves aboutness completely in the water of consciousness.

HF: Jean Cocteau remarked: "Avantgarde ? ! Young man, I was avantgarde before you were born!" Forgive my levity, this is meant as an anecdote about calling things by their right names, or at least by some name remotely appropriate. *Pride and Prejudice* and *Tom Jones* are novels. *L'Education Sentimentale* and *Ulysses* are novels. *Daphnis and Chloë* and *Finnegan's Wake* are novels because they contain 100,000 words or more of prose. At which end of your tunnel lie Ezra Pound's *Cantos*? I do not attack your model. I think we need a new taxonomy. To say "poem" is to bracket the 111th fragment of Sappho with Dante's *Paradiso* and *The Rape of the Lock*. Lyric, epic, dramatic, didactic, won't do.

CA: One curious sign: the great poets do not write fictions. Even *The Rape of the Lock* is mock epic à clef. I think the idea of fiction, a convenience at once an encumbrance, will disappear. Emerson suggested that the final democratic literary form would be the autobiography without vanity or perhaps the life examined in literature. Surely the tender and sensitive "first" novel would disappear in competition with it. *Rouge et Noir* was the result of Stendhal's long contemplation of a news clipping about a murder in his home town. The popular novel today, whether it be by Grace Metalious or James Gould Cozzens, does not derive from our real condition at all, but is an attempt to pass off our interior wishes as external realities. There is certainly gratification to be derived from literature and the arts, but that gratification is counterfeit if it be only vicarious.

HF: *The Popular Novel Today*, or, *Diggings in the Paper Middens of the Upper Disposable Epoch*. We sit writing on an island off the coast of America, where the only action is entertainment and everything is washable. No human being

James Gould Cozzens, born 1903, writer of successful popular novels and short stories, published in *Good Housekeeping*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Saturday Evening Post*. His novel *Guard of Honor* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

deserves more than he has the mother-wit to want, and there are millions across the Hudson who want to participate in the world's first subliminal culture. Not one American in a thousand ever engages in other than fictional activity. Their culture comes in a spray can, their civilization in a plain brown wrapper.

CA: We certainly suffer from the degraded sensibility. Mr. Pound's comment on advertising had to do with the aroma of a good beef stew simmering on the fire. A can of beef stew can be advertised only pornographically, that is, in terms of our wishes. The bright label, the snappy singsong, appeal not to our senses, but to our fantasies. The degraded sensibility involves an irony: a substitution of inferior means for the attainment of splendid ends. You get the pretty girl because you smoke the cigarette of champions.

HF: None but the brave deserve the fair. A man who can survive a lifetime on calcium propionate bread, sodium benzoate wine and carbon monoxide air and die unimpaired deserves the company of houris . . . but nothing better. Degradation of sensibility insensibly leads to degradation of what that sensibility meditates.

CA: One effect the great poets have upon us is to leave us wondering. They do not fulfill our expectations. Rather they indicate that there is more to this world and this life than we had hitherto dreamed of. Wyatt's little lyric "They flee from me . . ." marked out an area of human feeling which I knew nothing of when I first read it, but which I have since come to know something about. If now I were to say "If we truly love, then that love can never diminish, even if it becomes impossible", I might be coming close to the point, but never as close as "I wonder what she hath deserved". Perhaps it is too late, but ideally we should now adjourn to *Paterson* and flush out old Water Closet Williams. There is a man who has been trying to turn the dreck of America into flowers other than pansies. Whole sections of the poem-city *Paterson* prove it can be done. Wallace Stevens found only loneliness in Jersey City. *In the American Grain* is a pocketful of seed waiting for the right sower and the right season.

HF: I might argue that Dr. Williams' writing has benefited as much from the lifelong practice of medicine, as from his seriously taking "America" for subject. It is a serious subject, in Williams' terms, and perhaps the same faculty that leads him to acquit himself honorably in *Paterson* brings him out in *In Praise of Pure Energy* (his recommendation of Ginsberg *et al.*). Williams may be the last man to chew hard on America as a vision in the sense that Europe was once a vision. Hell, give the old man credit: he kept his stuff alive for half a century, and actually lived that fifty years in America. An heroic accomplishment.

CA: By now it is clear that I am a latent moralist. I can think of two uses for the arts, literature included: a direction of our attention to particulars; and a provision of intimations of perfection. Good poetry is calling things by their right names plus an indication of the benefits of doing so. The rest is morphine where penicillin is required.

HF: Just now we were talking about Luis Bunuel's *Viridiana*. I like this film for a half-dozen reasons, one of which is that it seems a work apart from the run of "movies" that solace my late hours. *The Chapman Report* is more in the latter line. The difference is much like that between a Weston or Atget photograph and a snapshot: the box brownie makes something that scarcely qualifies by Weston's standards, but has a whole set of qualities of its own.

CA: I am not a moviegoer. Ice cream, beer, masturbation, etc. have always been my pacifiers. Movies like *The Chapman Report* only serve my wrath and my discomfort. The only movies I can sit through without pain are those which seem to partake of my condition. Those movies which partake of my wishes only bore and disgust me alternately. *Viridiana* and *Loneliness of a Long Distance Runner* are two movies which somehow partake of my condition. *Purple Noon*, for example, I thought a horror of wishes. This is morality rather than aesthetics, but only through the first can I enter the second and only through the second can I finally become disencumbered of the first.

HF: The offerings of 42nd Street are readymade tours for the cultural morphologist. For 75c they sell a four-hour pass to the Bodleian Library of everything the public receives: opinion, knowledge, speculation. *The Chapman Report* explicates Claire Bloom in the postures of nymphomania, alcoholism, and Dior transparency, and ends with a homily on love (the interviewer marries the frigid widow). You say that films that hold you illuminate your condition: reflect for a moment that you live among men who believe or wish that films like *Strangers When We Meet*, or *From the Terrace*, partake of their condition. You know all this, certainly, and I cannot recommend the Flaubertian ecstasy of disgust prolonged steeping in commercial celluloid engenders. But think also that what you say transpires in your consciousness, a passing through to morality via a conspicuous throwaway aesthetic premise, is what seems to every "real American" movie-goer to transpire in his consciousness in the sitting through just such films as we have named. I put this very clumsily, I suspect; but in the face of the proscription of *Viridiana* in Spain, on grounds of "anti-clericalism", I am moved to wonder: 1) what sort of movies do we or should we want; 2) what sort of movies does everybody else want.

CA: We have the things we want. It is not our things which disappoint us but our wants. *Viridiana* was specifically and I think intentionally not "anti-clerical" or even antifascist. Bunuel set up all the clichés of protest and threw them away. His abess at the moment of truth does not act like a corrupt ecclesiastic but like a human being. Bunuel at last seems to be dissolving the categories in favour of the free radicals of human behavior. I am interested only in your first question.

HF: You speak as a republican, or in more open phrase, as a member of an elite. You seem to approve of this erosion Bunuel works on the categories, and particularly on the girl *Viridiana* herself who begins as a figure of farce, a machine masquerading as a person, and gets her gears systematically stripped, so to speak. I approve. Honesty is the best policy, or morality is ultimate utility. But how many other people who have seen that film favor an ionized rather than

a crystalline chemistry of human conduct?

CA: *Viridiana's* gears are stripped in the sense that they are revealed. Her dream, superior in every way to the dream in *Los Olvidados*, reveals the true shape of her being. Her moralism is a kind of sleep in which her dream is a kind of waking. *Viridiana* is not a movie about doing anything, it is a movie about the pain and hardship involved in putting ourselves in a position to do something. If the maid and the bastard spend the rest of their lives playing cards, then the pain may have been wasted, but it can never be cancelled.

HF: But does she feel any pain? She follows her pattern in dauntless rectitude, right to the end, and then the beggars mess up the hall and break all the dishes. The plot slides along with the mechanical precision of a revenge play, the details trundle behind like partridge chicks after a hen. The bastard son seduces the maid in the attic, the cat catches the rat on the draped sofa. Bunuel goes to the trouble of showing us our most cliché analogy undraped. In fact, he shows us literally everything: the film conveys a conviction that all the action is on the screen. No inference, no reportage or Aeschylean messenger, no flashback or "meanwhile" cut and re-cut. It is a little like one of the old feature-length Disney cartoons, *Bambi* for example. Real deer eat and shit, Disney deer do neither. They talk, like Diomedes' horses. They court, to red-and-black cartoon thunder. They commit acts of heroism that leave the fire department in the shade. The comparison need not be carried very far: but *Viridiana* seems to project an intelligible aesthetic and moral universe in toto without appealing (in the pathetic sense) to the filmic canon of verisimilitude that fills so much of *Olvidados* with sawdust.

CA: To sum your infinite series: *Viridiana* partakes of our condition. We are of course talking about the effect of one movie. Being sophisticates we usually limit ourselves to matters of technique. This one movie does not lead us to wonder at the technical marvels. Cocteau dazzles us with moviecraft exactly equivalent to the stagecraft of the 19th century which brought Little Eva over the ice floes at the local Athenaeum. Bunuel's technique in *Viridiana* is practically invisible or, to equivocate, his technique is almost totally efficient in terms of its effect on us. Form separates from content the way curds settle out of the whey when milk sours.

HF: I have long valued Cocteau's films for one element: *trouville*. You do not know this word, so let me give you an example, the one Ezra Pound quotes in *Kulchur*, the oracle speaking in numbers. The *trouville* is in having the oracle speak in numbers, one would determine which numbers precisely by a conventional process with which we are both familiar. We can multiply instances all through Cocteau's films: the angels of death on motorcycles and the limousine radio-messages in *Orphée*, the high-angle shot that ends *Enfants Terribles*. The rising lion in *Potemkin* is an instance, the baby-carriage another. Bunuel's specific donation is in a structural rather than local *trouville*. It seems to me it is a kind of *cut*, in a sense you have used recently.

CA: Ah, Dedekind. A number is represented as the partition of a line segment.  $N$  can then be considered to be the highest value to the left of the cut or the lowest value to the right of it. An irrational number may even be assigned to the cut itself which is empty, in the sense that the cut a pair of scissors makes across a piece of paper is empty, but present and evident. By extension one might say that any single perception is a cut across the spectrum of stimuli available to us. The cut itself then is not perceived; it is an operation, not a quantity. Cocteau makes some lovely cuts, but the sum of any of his two primes is always 69. Finite arithmetics and finite sensibilities are interesting as special cases, useless in any operations beyond themselves. The sum of any two natural numbers (not zero) is a new number.

HF: So by extension you might say in Bunuel's favor that for a whole mathematic we need all the numbers and operations available to us, and not merely such special cases as prime numbers, perfect squares and so on? Right now I want to talk about something else. The origin of the desire is somewhere in my diffuse thinking about Cocteau and Bunuel. Specifically, I want to talk about method. Hugh Kenner has said that for the purposes of understanding a work of art, it is often helpful to think of it as though it followed certain rules, like a game. Now in my own work I have found it useful to consider a given "job" or piece as though it were a problem . . . not an algebraic but an engineering problem. Suppose I need so many cylinders. My problem is, baldly, to invent a lathe. The problem in connection with the *Secret World of Frank Stella*, was not making the particular photographs but in inventing a kind of warning system that would let me know, automatically, what photographs were dangerous enough to include. The imperfections in the series as one work are the imperfections in my invention, the warning mechanism, which I only found I needed after a year on the project.

It seems to me that Bunuel's central invention in *Viridiana* is a mechanism that will generate his film for him, frame by frame. But your own way of working smacks as much of *trouville* (to me), as my own does of sheer method. In short, I find your antipathy to such bits of Cocteau as we've mentioned a bit puzzling. Or, elliptically, if you like *Viridiana* you should like *Ulysses*. Please explain all this. Preferably with the concision of the label on a peanut butter jar: *To open - turn to right and left*.

CA: First, for me the world is full of lathes and I need to find out what kind of cylinders or cones or shapes they invent. Cocteau is always the Surrealist. The work of the dream is to make reality acceptable to consciousness. The Surrealist attempts to recover the rules of the dream-work in order to win victories over those elements of reality which are already acceptable to consciousness. Bunuel has abandoned Surrealism and has begun the great and human work of trying to alter the rules of consciousness in such a way that it can accept more reality. In this work, the sciences and arts have the same purposes. Man is man exactly to the extent that he attempts to expand his consciousness to the dimensions of reality.



*The Secret World of Frank Stella*, 1959. (see p. 55)

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

ON FORTY PHOTOGRAPHS AND CONSECUTIVE MATTERS.  
Part I: January 26, 1963

CA: You have in your tacky black case forty photographs mounted on white cardboard. Before we begin, let me reaffirm my allegiance to Philistia by admitting that, mounted, these photographs are of greater interest to me. The same thing happens when I mount a field poem and lay it on black paper. That is, any residual confusion caused by extraneous field-ground relationships is cancelled by the surrounding neutrality.

HF: The white surround inhibits confusion between photographs and their (and our) ambient sea of things. The cardboard lets us handle the fairly delicate object with some freedom. I would mount on black, but there is no black board that approaches the maximum black of the paper emulsion. I confess that one of my recurring fantasies is to have, in my old age, cabinetted Japanese walls stacked full of uniformly mounted prints.

CA: The first print is from *The Secret World of Frank Stella*. Frank is folded into a port of Manhattan's Battery. The bars behind him square dead white light. The sun must have been behind you at a good angle, morning or afternoon. The stones of the fort are soft and marked, perhaps sandstone. The pose is typical of others in the series: Frank in a foetal crouch. I think *The Secret World* breaks down. Is the world a prop or is Frank Stella? My long and fertile acquaintance with you has led me to a great confidence in your technical mastery and your imagination. Yet *The Secret World* seems to betray a begging of the poetic imagination. In a number of your *Secret World* prints I want to get rid of Frank Stella and in a number of them I want to get rid of the world. Some work as poetic wholes and some as poetic holes. This one at hand has, I think, one too many Frank Stellas.

HF: Every one of the fifty-two shots in that series is one photograph too many. There is no photograph in this Stella series that is not a "gem". There is not one shot that hasn't been made before by a photographer of reputation. My intention was a massive *sottisier*, the prize-picture on the point of becoming cliché. A photographic cliché is not a set of *idées fixes* about how to organize a surface, it is a petrified notion about seeing.

There is a photographic tradition of some sort, in precisely the sense that there is a literary or a painterly tradition. This series has reference to a critical attitude towards that tradition. I use the word "tradition" in the broad sense: what has been done. The photographs, to encompass my aim, had to be "bad".

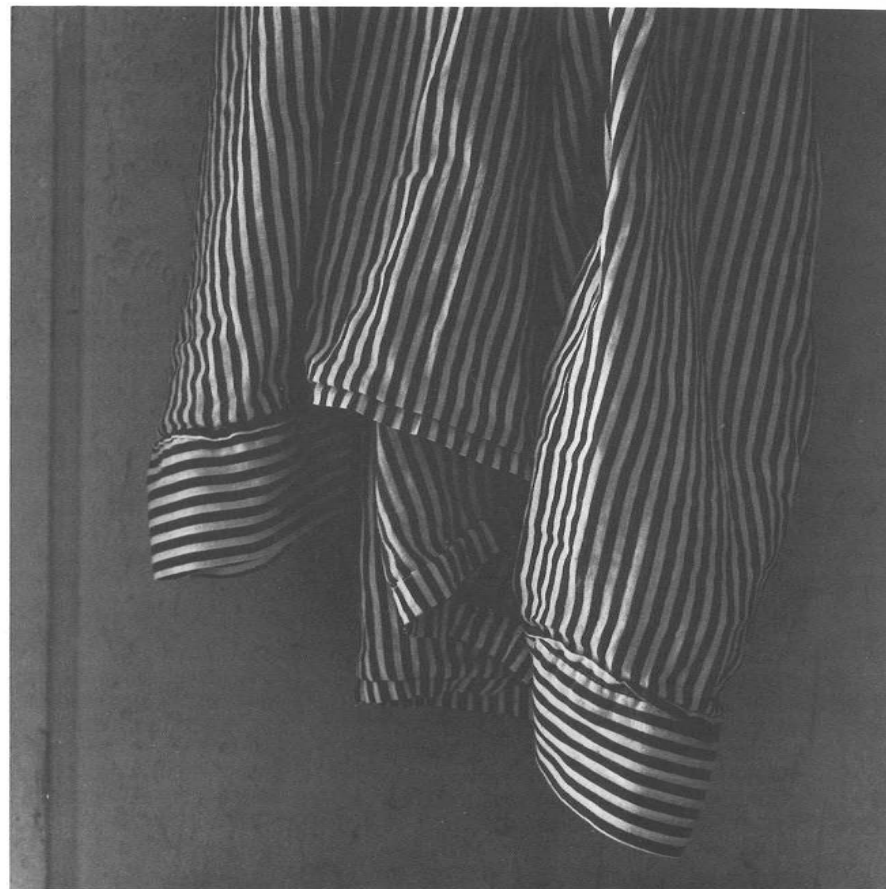
CA: Your next photograph is of white iron stool frames, taken I believe on the Bowery. It always reminds me of Katherine Hepburn's movie, *Summertime*. That slanting Venetian light. Knowledge is not power. This print seems to contain or rather manifest a great deal of the first and little of the second. Satire as a form does not excuse the practitioner from the rigors of his art. There are no clichés of subject, only clichés of method.

HF: Correct . . . within limits. Clichés of method can make whole ranges of subject matter inaccessible for decades. How soon will anyone dare photograph peppers, after Weston?



*Stool Frames on the Bowery, 1962. (see p. 55)*

Photograph by Hollis Frampton



*The Striped Pajamas, 1961. (see p. 62)*

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

I made this negative at a time when, having heard that a photographer must have a sensitive eye, I commenced wondering how sensitive my eye was. There has been much talk about sensitivity in periphotographic prose. What I found was that I could recognize what a "sensitive eye" would notice.

CA: The next print seems to be of a part of the hydraulic system of a Caterpillar tractor. I have no quarrel with it. A handsome print.

HF: This is one of the large mass of images made in 1961 in the ruins of Bleecker Street. I think most of that stuff needs no apology. Someone said Weston solved his problems with the nude; I may recurrently photograph junk and rubble and machinery for similar reasons.

CA: Because I am not engaged in it, I can wonder whether we need photography at all. What does a photograph do that we cannot? We can go to Sumatra if we are willing to cancel our subscription to *National Geographic*. Much of photography seems to be mere convenience. Of course I cannot visit Mr. Lincoln, so photography offers me a likeness not only through space but through time.

HF: What can a written verbal tradition do for you that you could not do for yourself if you threw away your *Odyssey* and heard the Homeridae recite it? What can an automobile do for you that you couldn't do on foot? You have your eye on the next print in the stack, a photograph of your own person in an aspect of alienation from social or personal utility, elevating a paraplegic bicycle among the trees of Fort Green Park. Shall I quote Mr. Burns?

CA: *Hercules Slaying the Cartesian Centaur* did raise the question in my mind. I was there when you took the photograph. I followed your instructions, raised the amputated bike over my head, And you took a picture. It was not until I saw your print that I knew what you or I for that matter were doing at that instant. Of course I was witlessly following your instructions and in the process getting my hands dirty. I presume you dirtied your hands later. It was not until I saw the finished print that I knew how your imagination was operating and on what. Carl Andre, except as an anonymous operator, is not the subject of this photograph. I could easily be replaced. Hollis Frampton could not have been replaced in this photograph. The cut may well be more important than what is cut. Of course imagination and technique are inextricable. The onanist's fantasy, no matter how ornate, is limited by the defects in his method. About this print I have no strong opinions, but I do feel some of the implications of being a photographic object disengaged from narcissism. I presume that the Caterpillar tractor was indifferent to the condition of its paint job. But find me a woman indifferent to the shine on her nose.

HF: Nor am I. But I have no theory of photogenics. My requirements are not a fair subject, but, as Weston said in his Mexican journal, "peace, and an hour's time". I believe that given a need to investigate it, I can make a good photograph from any subject. I try for a structure that satisfies me.



*The Wedding Feast of the Sencer Pipes*, 1962. (see p. 57)

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

I believe that for any "subject" (include light conditions, visual timbre, everything in the frame) there is an absolute structure or composition. To drop in one of my tired quips: appearance is reality, and our business is to discover the true appearances of things. The true appearance of anything, with its confluent modulation of light, has, in the photograph, one most meaningful structure. Most meaningful is most available to the intellect.

CA: My footnote to "appearance is reality" reads Francis Herbert Bradley. But he was an idealist too. Your idea of the perfect appearance amuses me a bit. The perfect appearance seems to belong not to the camera but to the class of ephemera. The print of your striped pajamas before us certainly shows them off to advantage, but is this print the perfect appearance of your pajamas? The quality of the print seems high enough to me, so let us cancel the technical questions for a moment. Could you not have taken a dozen prints of your pajamas different from one another, but equally "perfect"? Cloth is pliable, light sources are variable, we are more or less infirm. Is not your perfect appearance in fact a product of many variables, each value yielding many perfect solutions against the variation in the other values? Is not the perfect appearance nothing but the appearance of an instant?

HF: I did not say the perfect appearance, but the true appearance. The qualifying epithet matters little . . . to begin with we must get at the appearances of things.

I do not believe there is such a thing as a perfect appearance. Even an epiphany is not in the theological sense a perfect appearance . . . appearance itself is imperfect.

Cartier-Bresson, Bruce Davidson, photographers who subscribe to the 'decisive moment' theory, look for the perfect appearance. They look for it, in fact, on their voluminous contact sheets: their cosmophagous cameras snap continually. And *THEY* have something to sell, namely a general attitude towards things and events. They believe there are perfect appearances. The instant they released their shutter was more important, in some way, than other instants when they did not do so. The other instants were riddled with cause; they have caught the effect, the perfectly conspicuous because perfectly recognizable image.

The advertising photographer and the epiphanic photographer are alike, I see, in that they believe they have in fact *caught* their subject. With its pants down, as it were. They have caught it doing the secret thing we knew all along it was doing. They do, in fact, *take* their pictures, that is they subtract an increment from a total commerce between the intellect and things.

I am not trying to catch anything. I am making a photograph.

My concern is not to get the subject looking good, so to say, but to get the look of the thing at all.

Photography then is not a trap, but an action. It has no prey, only a product: the photograph.

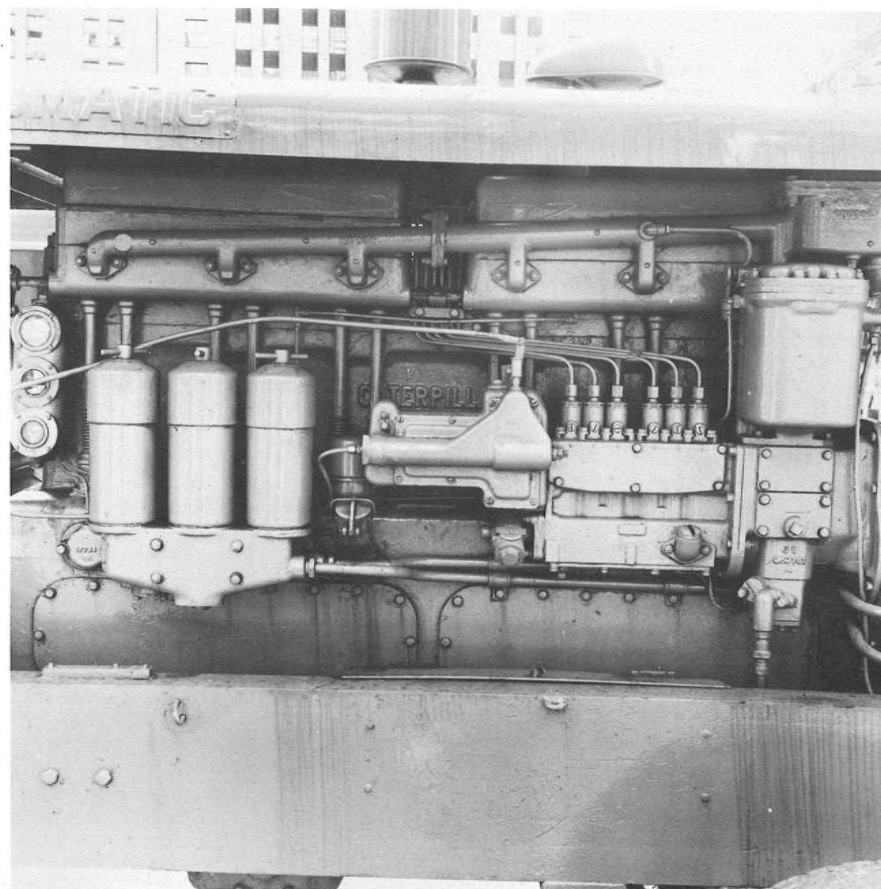
The next flip reveals *The Wedding Feast of the Sewer Pipes*. America is destined to bury its cleanest shapes. Polymorphic Fords will soon be oozing over the graves of these pure shapes. No wonder the photographer is driven to the junk pile. Of course simple, clean forms are not commercial. You cannot patent the

Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924), philosopher and preacher, Merton College, Oxford. The starting point of Bradley's metaphysics lies in his criticism of empirical philosophy of the mind. Works: *Principles of Logic* (1883), *Appearance and Reality* (1893), *Essays on Truth and Reality* (1914).

See: Richard Wollheim, *F.H. Bradley*, 1959.

Henri Cartier-Bresson, the photographer, born near Paris in 1908. Studied painting with André Lhote in 1927-28. Worked as assistant film director with Jean Renoir. *The Decisive Moment* (published as *Images à la Sauvette* in Paris, Verve 1952) became his most famous publication and a central term in photographic discourse. Cartier-Bresson's work was shown at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1946 and 1968.

Bruce Davidson, the photographer, born 1934, working in Paris and New York until 1958. Publications: *East 100th Street*, *The Widow of Montmartre*, *The Clown*, *Brooklyn Gang*. Exhibitions at George Eastman House (1965), Museum of Modern Art, New York (1966), Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (1971).



Hydraulic System of a Caterpillar Tractor, 1960. (see p. 58)

Photograph by Hollis Frampton



*Hercules Slaying the Cartesian Centaur*, 1959. (see p. 58)

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

Alphonse Bertillon (1854-1914). A French anthropologist. Bertillon introduced the identification of criminals by photographic anthropometry which he described in his 'Photographie Judiciaire' (1890).

circle. Your photograph is a cut of America going underground. You speak of the instant cut or the cut in time, some being better than others, according to a certain school of photographers. I would suggest that one cut in time or space is not better than another except as one photograph is better than another. One subject or one instant is just as good as any other, but the qualities of the photographs will differ.

HF: Confucius recommended the *Odes* for the reason that they teach us things we need to know: the names of birds, plants and so forth. In these sewer pipe pictures I am a conservative, I mean I am conserving these shapes for the time when they are buried and we have only Fords and the Pan Am Building to look at. The photograph is my recommendation of the object to your attention.

CA: You bear a great responsibility in that photography seems to be the last of the representational arts. I have heard the hysterical critics say you are all hung up on junk and rubble. I have heard them say that the great monuments of American civilization go unpraised and unportrayed. Hollis Frampton has photographed Wright's Guggenheim Museum and he probably will again. But I can easily understand his preference for Bleeker Street wreckage sites over stirring vistas of Lincoln Center. We have looked to art too long for cosmetic rehabilitation, certainly its most debased use. The great use of art is revelation. Perhaps this is why I dislike your photographs of me, with their careful thickening of my every jowl, and why I am always pleased and flattered with your prints of the sculptural objects I throw up from time to time.

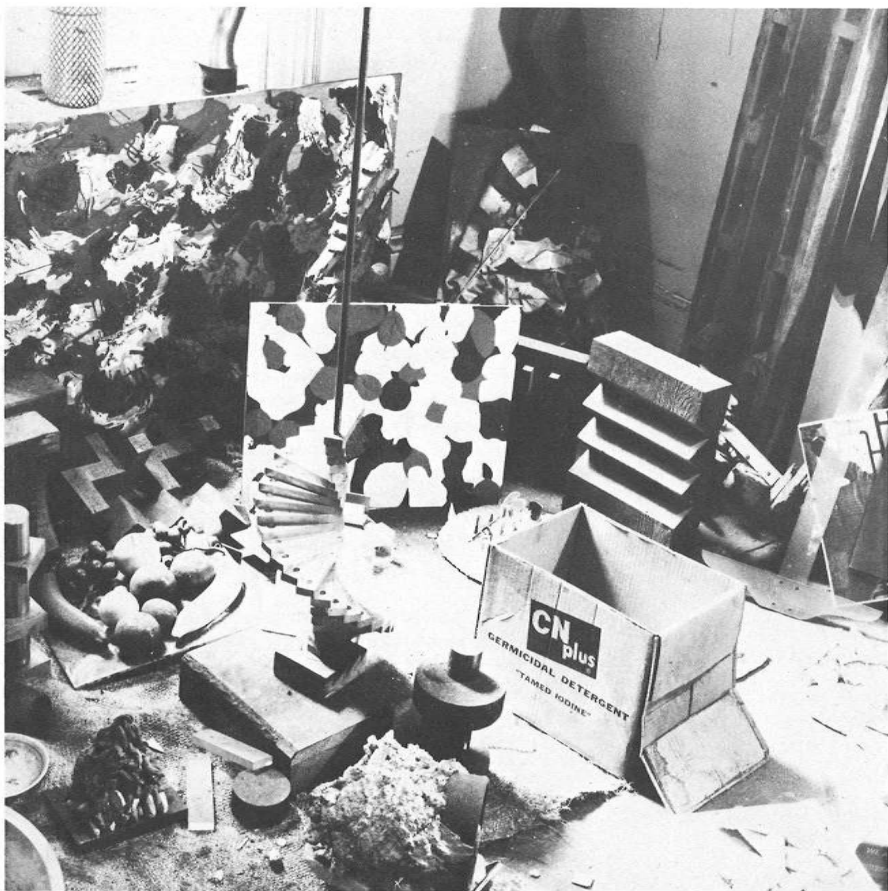
HF: You have company. Nearly everyone has been made unhappy by my portraits, I mean his own. They like my pictures of other people. Certainly no photographer should seriously consider attempting to sell people their own faces on their own terms. But the phenomenon has puzzled me, in a general way. Certain subjects need to be photographed only as certain poems need setting to music: to be explicated, castigated, criticized.

My photographs of your work constitute a kind of mug-book. They are "after" Bertillon: the subject is backed up in the hard light against a ruler and photographed front and right profile. So-and-so was this day apprehended in a littered apartment on New York's lower East Side, responding to gravity, occupying space, reflecting visible radiation, one count of each: booked, finger-printed, admonished, released.

CA: Is not 253 East Broadway, first floor rear, nothing but a special case of the world at large? The junk pile there was of my own devising, but of the same class as all the other vacant lots in the great world. The only difference that I can see is nominal. You knew the name of the person responsible for that junk pile. By the way, have you thought before of the indoor vacant lot as art's reply to the outdoor drive-in movie?

HF: There are no vacant lots, only unexposed emulsions. But to get back to these photographs, you have demurred from saying anything about my print of the *Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument*. The title is facetious of course; it is like a





Carl Andre's Studio at 253 East Broadway, New York, 1962. (see p. 60)

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

Chinese silk painting called *Tsui-T'ing Contemplating Mount Taishan*, where you see the sage but the mountain is lost in fog.

CA: Before you force me to comment on the print, let me say that I realize you photograph my stuff for very much the same reason that Milton wrote *Lycidas* and that I can only hope that your subject gives you the same opportunity for transcending it that Milton's subject afforded to him. About your print: I believe it is a classic attempt on the part of an artist to transfix an error. You will never convince me it is anything but a double exposure. As such I think it is about as valuable as those shots of Sister Susie peering under the wispy gray locks and through the iron spectacles of Grandma.

HF: Bullseye. Some opportunities are irresistible. I would be the last man to hesitate in the execution of a bad idea, given a chance to bring it off in high style without too much effort. This is a view you can sympathize with I'm sure. Execution establishes the badness of the idea in a way that refusal never can, and in some cases this is valuable. I cite your paintings. I must reserve for some later discussion of your work any long exposition of my reasons for shooting it. That is, with the camera, not the bazooka.

CA: Well, I have learned to look at photographs by looking at your photographs of me and my progeny. So I presume you have learned something about taking photographs at the same time. You see, the cats do eat the rats.



Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument, 1961. (see p. 63)

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

ON FORTY PHOTOGRAPHS AND CONSECUTIVE MATTERS.  
Part II: February 24, 1963.

CA: Since we broke off weeks ago, I have been thinking about the sources of my confusion about photography. One of those sources is my penchant for mistaking a photograph for the thing photographed. To put it another way, my father hangs Van Gogh's sunflowers on his wall because he likes flowers. I went to Philadelphia because I like the way Cézanne lays down the paint. Through the influence of patient friends, I have passed from the view of painting as systematic substitute for the real thing, to the view of painting as real system. With your help I hope to make the same passage into photography.

HF: Nearly all argument over photographs has been concerned with the relation between photograph and subject. The photograph, made by an automatic process of which the photographer seems more steward than imperator, cannot be a work of art: nothing has been made, only copied. That, I think, is the gist of the attack on photography. Whereas we think we have answered the question of how a painting or poem is related to its subject. When the camera came into wide use, as they tell us, painters said: we have photography to do all this copying and rendering for us, now we can get about our real business. Now that the New Realists are doing Campbell's Soup and spaghetti, I suggest that photographers may feel free to go about their real business.

CA: Curiously, the vulgar sensibility requires copying and rendering as standards in painting, and some kind of "expression" as a standard in photography. You have mentioned your desire to produce a series of perfectly ordinary photographs. I imagine your aspirations have something to do with Flaubert's attempt to put the right words together. That is, the rejection of all the inspired and inspiring terms and preservation of only those terms which are exactly pertinent.

HF: The golden sunset and the great wind inspire us to awe; the mighty oak reminds us of staunch English honesty; the mellow and fragrant lineaments of a woman at close quarters . . . and so forth. We have thought out ways to have some sort of gratification from all these things without understanding them at all. The resounding cliché is not second-hand or second-rate experience, but a mode of avoiding experience. The advertising photograph tries to sell us the lamb-chop before we've tasted it. But the glow, the sweep and smell and rigor and *Geschmack* are lost on the sensitive emulsion. I cannot imagine deriving from photographs a single gratification not consequent upon understanding.

CA: What we fail to remember is that visual perception is a learned process. My private estimate is that the available light supplies us with about 10% of the data required to "see". Certainly, the psychologists do not build their catty-corner rooms for nothing. Infants are all born blind. If sheer normal everyday seeing is an acquired discipline, certainly photography must require some application and diligence.

HF: Someone asked Bach how he had achieved his mastery and he answered, *Ich musste fleissig arbeiten*, I was obliged to labour industriously. No one will

doubt the truth of the answer, or the man's candor. The practice of photography is a peculiarly deliberate sort of activity. No painter or sculptor would wait hours or even days to see the results of stroke or cut. The photographic process is a recapitulation of a process in the mind of the photographer, which must have been carried through to an end before the shutter is released. We say among ourselves of a photograph that it is "well seen".

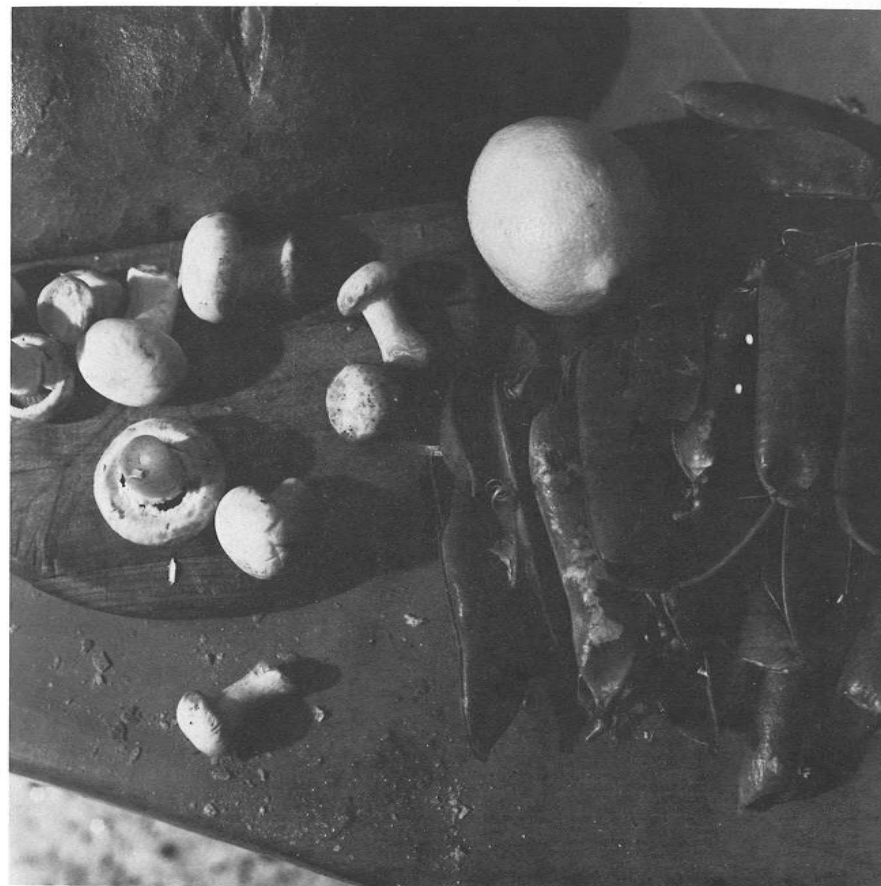
The eye is certainly an instrument for testing the finished photograph, but it is made by mind and hand . . . exactly as the ear composes no music. A gray scale from black to white contains all the elements of a photograph in exactly the way that a chromatic scale from C to C contains all the elements of a musical composition.

CA: Yes, to see is difficult enough. The clichés of painting, photography, architecture, typography, are all perception-saving devices. We all have to learn to see at all, and to see well is very difficult. But we must presume that the photographer who wishes to practice an art has learned to see and continues to learn to see as long as he has sight. Photography certainly is not good seeing. Common sight is the cut our eyes make. The photographer makes a different but related cut with his camera. These distinctions may seem academic, but the very failure of the plastic intelligence begins in the confusion between the visibility of things and our ability to see them.

HF: Exact discrimination between the two must be a central duty of the photographer; and the extent of his serious effort to diminish the gap, a measure of his ability and his usefulness. Fiction is as hard to avoid in the use of the camera as in the use of the typewriter or the chisel or the brush. And the camera is no more an automatic generator of verities than any of those other implements. Camera fiction may be the most dangerous kind, by reason of its appeal to our notions of verisimilitude partly, but even more by virtue of its extreme copiousness.

CA: Let us begin then with the visibility of things which I am willing to accept on animal faith. Then we have our ability to see which is largely learned and entirely susceptible to refinement and sharpening through good hard work. But that is Everyman's work. The task of the artist is to make things which are visible. The painter applies his pigments, makes a visible image. The photographer baits his light trap, catches photons, skins them, tans and combs their pelts, and reclothes the world with a new visibility. Photographs and paintings are not visible substitutes for visible things, but are additions to the list of visible things. The photographer does not see only, but he makes a cut with an optical instrument of the visible world he is able to see, which seeing is in itself a cut of the visible world. But he still is required to make this cut of a cut visible by processing and printing. We do not yet have the Big Dada photographer who sends his subject off to Times Square with a quarter and then displays the three views obtained as his art.

HF: *Ut doceat, ut moveat, ut delectet.* The didactic possibilities of photography are endless. I proposed years ago opening an expensive portrait studio with an automatic photography booth operated by a slug: I sell you the slug for \$1000,



"... the crowded makings of a supper on oilcloth", 1959. (see p. 67)

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

*Ut doceat, ut moveat, ut delectet.* (He/It may instruct, move and delight), a definition of the arts of the rhetoric in Quintilian's opus *Institutio Oratoria* (95 A.D.), deriving from Cicero's definition of the art of persuasion: *et docet, et delectet, et permovet.*

or whatever sum will convince you of my competence.

I will open a studio where you go to have your picture "taken". You bring with you any photograph you like. After a small deposit, the photographer takes the photograph from you, at which time the balance falls due.

CA: We have made our thoughts, such as they are, faintly visible. If you would pick out one exemplary photograph from your valise, we could test its visibility and our ability to see.

HF: Here are the crowded makings of a supper on oilcloth. Peapods with their zippers open, scattered mushrooms, a lemon, corner of breadloaf, chopping board, many breadcrumbs left where they fell as evidence of human energy expended in the orderly completion of a particular task. Strong sidelight from the one bulb in your own kitchen. No one arranged the tabletop, and this is the most satisfying of several cuts I took from its aspect. I tried to intrude nothing but myself and my camera into the kitchen.

CA: I will do my best to resist treating this print as a souvenir of my noodle paella. Even as you were typing the words, I was thinking of the mapping of the color spectrum on the gray scale which black and white photography entails. This may be the first time in my life that I recognized the fact that a black and white photograph is not a cut of a black and white world. As I looked, I began to see the yellow correspondence of the lemon, the green of the peas, the red of the oil cloth, the faint cinnamon wash of the mushrooms. I do not pretend to see it one to one, but I begin to see the deficiencies of my seeing heretofore. Tell me, though, why the focus seems to be most sharp at the peas in the very center, and why it begins to deteriorate on the further mushrooms and crumbs?

HF: I think the whole print well within acceptable sharpness at reading distance. All lens designs are calculated on the premise that the print will be viewed at a certain "normal" distance.

CA: I have long insisted that paintings must be seen at painter's distance, or with the eye at a distance equal to the length from the tip of the extended index finger to the point of the elbow. I have no idea what a photographer's distance might be. But I understand better your admiration for Weston and his peppers. A photograph is not a simple cut, but a cut raised to the power of a number of many cuts.

HF: Weston used the view camera, and that instrument is the true road to photography, to paraphrase Brancusi. Weston's print quality is the despair of all serious photographers, and "contact" quality the despair of all who print optically from small negatives. (Any negative less than 1/2 the size of its print may turn out to be "small".) But of course no man's preference in tools and materials is defensible save in terms of the qualities of the work he produces with them. Weston's old view box was warped and the bellows leaked. Brancusi's workbench would impress one of your public pediment sculptors as a pretty ratty plankful of broken utensils.



Edward Weston: *Pepper*, 1930.

View Camera: American equivalent of the British field camera: in each case, usually a camera of quarter plate size or larger and designed to give the main camera movements. Originally intended for outdoor "views", these cameras are also used by many commercial photographers for subjects like formal groups, school photographs, architecture and general technical work.



Edward Weston: *Nude*, 1927.

But let me go back to your remark about "mapping the color spectrum on the gray scale of black and white photographs". What you have hold of is a central intuition of the process of making a photograph. What follows I will try to write in American . . .

You have seen a photographic negative, and you know that where the subject was bright the negative is dark or dense, and where it was dark the negative is light and clear. Now these densities may not, in fact generally do not, have a "one-to-one" relationship. Very low intensities of light, or very short exposures, produce less density in the negative than a straight-line graph of exposure against density would predict; and very high values likewise produce high densities, but not so high as the increased exposure would warrant on a linear model. In fact every emulsion exhibits a "characteristic curve", in the shape of a flat S. The shape, the steepness of this curve, can be altered chemically. Now: any value in the subject can be placed anywhere on this curve. Toe, slope or shoulder. Other values will normally fall higher or lower. But the distance from the placed value on the curve where they fall, can likewise be altered within extremely wide limits. Values may be expanded or compacted; by the use of filters they may even be reversed. It is possible, with care and experience, to control everything with the greatest exactitude.

When you reflect that not all emulsions are panchromatic, or even panchromatic in the same way (type B pan is green sensitive, type C pan more sensitive to red), and some are blind to one or more colors of visible light, or even, in the case of infrared and X-ray, to virtually all of them, the matter becomes more complex.

I am not trying to promote the intricacy of my vocation. To cope with the variations by rote or rule is impossible. What is necessary is a model that can be held in the mind. I don't know whether any other photographer consciously uses such a model or not, but I certainly do. I have in mind, for the emulsions and processes I use generally, a kind of sloping plane, curving inward at the bottom (toe) and outward at the top (shoulder). It is shaded in steps of gray, from black at the toe to white at the shoulder, and there are about ten steps on the full slope. As I face the plane, it slopes upward more steeply to my right, and more slowly to my left: that is the effect of increased or decreased development, which expands or compresses values in the scale. Whenever I make an exposure, I visualize the print values of areas in the photograph I aim towards, and map these on my sloping gray plane. Readings of light levels, and experience, give me data for a countermap of subject values against my visualized print. The distance between them on the slope, and the shift left or right, tells me where to place subject values on the exposure curve of the film, how to process and print. Every filter produces known changes in the distribution of values on the plane, and it is possible with the model in mind to be precise in their use as well. Colour materials present exactly the same problems, but multiplied by three.

All this probably sounds cumbersome in proportion as I have made it comprehensible. But the consequences are most practical. Rather than expound its abstract virtues let me give you an example from Weston: a photograph of a nude. A woman kneeling against a white ground. The light is axis light (parallel to the axis of the camera), and so is very flat. No ordinary meter reading or rule will give a procedure for delineating the shape of the kneeling figure. Weston

exposes his negative in such a way that the high values, the white background and the frontal areas of flesh, fall on the straight-line part of the curve. But as the contours fall away, there is some diminution in the amount of light reflected to the lens. By careful exposure, Weston maps the falloff values on the toe of the curve, where the low exposure produces little density in the negative. In the print, this edge shows dark, and he achieves an extraordinary impression of plasticity, an edge-line, as if drawn, without any manipulation of the material beyond a clear understanding of what can be done with it. I doubt Weston used my model, but he must have had something similar in his own mind. The deliberate success of the procedure is unmistakable.

CA: You have been describing a calculus of the will and of the sensibilities. Knowledge is not power, but knowledge which informs action tends toward wisdom and art. Those are Mickey Mouse terms, but my fear of Mickey Mouse seems to diminish as I grow older. This was our third try at photography and the divers have finally come up with something more than hot air, cigarette butts, and rhetorical bends. Let me say that I am now prepared to begin to look at your photographs.

## ON CERTAIN POEMS AND CONSECUTIVE MATTERS.

March 3, 1963.

CA: You have consented with no more than passing reluctance to discuss certain poetic inventions of mine. I know some of them puzzle you, as indeed do some of them puzzle me. Let me suggest that we begin with *First Five Poems*.

HF: Blue / six / hair / ear / light? But let me rephrase my question: why your own five words (green, five, horn, eye, sound), instead of the five I just typed? I recall your canting gem to the effect that the great natural poem about anything is its name. These are five single lowercase words centered in five pages. If your aim is plasticity, these poems are altercations rather than arguments for your case.

CA: These poems are called "first" for a reason. They are not the first poems I ever wrote. My first poetic effort was commissioned by my third grade teacher in primary school. I have no copy nor good recollection of it, but it was about the cherry tree that grew outside the window of my bedroom. You have remarked about my metaphysical tendencies in verse. That first poem was built around a conceit about confusing the falling white cherry petals in April for the white snow flakes of February. Anyway, many poems came before these *First Five Poems*. But they are the first poems in which I took the English language for subject matter. All my earlier poems originated in some conceit or observation or sentiment of my own. These poems begin in the qualities of words. Whole poems are made out of the many single poems we call words.

HF: And the whole is equal to the sum of its parts? In isolating your poems on the wide white paper you accomplish for the single word something that seldom transpires within the compost of words that make up most "whole" poems. Diction, poetic diction, any diction is an iron maiden we use to poke our poor poems full of words. A dictionary contains all dictions. It contains the elements of all the possible fields, and is 'closed' in the sense that an operation (alphabetization) has been performed upon those elements. Now am I to understand that you have performed a different operation upon the sum of dictions in the O.E.D., namely removed all but five of the poems? And do you further imply that there are still a million or so 'first' poems in that *vade mecum*?

CA: Yes. Your own blue / six / hair / ear / light follows the method with its own precision. Not even the method is mine but belongs to whomever uses it. Nor do I think that my *Five Poems* are better than yours, but both our sets are radically different from the poem: "I am a red pansy". These latter five words relate most strongly to each other and depart very far from the specificity of their referents. In fact we may presume that the five words together share one super-referent. The five words of my *First Five Poems* very purposely do not share a super-referent. My green is a square of that color or a village's common land. My five is 5 or: . . . My horn is either on the brow of a rhino, or under the hood of a Cadillac. My eye is paired above my nose or founded in my psyche by punning. Sound is Long Island, even. But I have gotten rid of the overriding super-referent. Is that a valuable thing to do?

HF: Most versifiers follow the oyster, immuring the source of irritation in

nacreous secretion. You would grind off the pearly layers to find the grit. From my didactic stance I see these five poems as the nursery school of a new curriculum.

CA: In one sense I am trying to make it new. But even more, I am trying to recover a part of the poet's work which has been lost. Our first poets were the namers, not the rhymers. Our first poets were the men who first associated the sounds they could make in their throats with the things around them. That was surely as great an act as the first association made between the number of legs the deer had and the number of straight fingers that a man had on one hand. The most abstruse analysis of the number theoretician is only an attempt to recapture the ecstatic clarity of those first associations.

HF: Let me leaf on through your binder to the syllabus of the kindergarten: *Twelve Sonnets*. Here are twelve pentameter sonnets without stanza break (neither shaxperian nor petrarchan), showing masculine and feminine endings, alliteration, assonance, rhyme, both terminal and internal.

CA: The *Sonnets* followed *First Five Poems*. In *Five Poems*, I accomplished a kind of dissociation, an isolation of single words from all the others. In the *Sonnets* I attempted to generate a form by the repetition of the dissociated elements. We have spoken before about our differences in temperament. You tend to take curves in order to discover values. I take values in order to obtain their curves. Each sonnet of the *Sonnets* is the curve obtained by the repetition of an element. I was trying to map a poetry on a plastic, rather than a musical system.

HF: Nevertheless your plastic system or model is still musical in that it is linear and not planar. The page of poetry is a plane as is the plane of the page of musical score, but it can only be read "line by line". Your rectangles of repeated words remind me of an anecdote about Stravinsky. An acquaintance came to his rooms in Paris while he was composing *Le Sacre du Printemps* and asked him how he wrote his compositions. Pointing to the leftmost of a row of blank score pages pasted to the wall, he said: "I start over there, and when I get down to the other end, I know my composition is finished."

CA: Any work consists in moving from the beginning of an operation to its end. Of course any place or time we stop is an end, but the real measure is whether we are willing or able to stop at the exact point where the work is finished.

HF: Just now I have been peering at your homegrown crystals of table salt through a microscope, and considering the lattice structure of crystals. It strikes me that these sonnets, like determinants, are lattices also. For the uninitiated, the determinant as written out is an opaque wall; later we find it is an open window.

CA: Crystallization is perhaps a good metaphor for my attempts at recombination in the *Sonnets*. But it is only a metaphor. These experiments were going on at the same time during which I became fascinated with King Philip's War and more particularly with that eccentric treasure, *Indian History and Genealogy*

Ebenezer Weaver Peirce, born Freetown, Mass. (1822). Soldier who rose to the rank of Brigadier-General on the side of the Federals. After the war, Peirce devoted his attention to local biographical, genealogical and historical writing. His *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy* was published in 1878.

by E. W. Peirce. That volume was obtained by Michael Chapman at a remainder sale held by the Columbia University Library in 1957. The source of his interest was the same as mine: King Philip's War was fought in 1675-76 all over the fens, bogs, salt marshes, and forests of southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The issue of the war was the annihilation of the aboriginal population, or as Wamsutta, brother of Philip and his predecessor as Chief Sachem of Poconoket, said: ". . . and I, Wamsutta, am not willing at present to sell all they doe desire." The belligerents in King Philip's War were fighting for their lives and for the lands which my people came to live upon. I have taken King Philip's War for my subject and E. W. Peirce's book for my source.

HF: I believe you have done so four times in as many years, and you are colonizing the rectangular white continents of poetic opportunity on a fifth expedition. In the spring of 1959 there was a prose redaction of the choicer drills and periods from the book, against a kind of ballet *cum* narrator *cum* music *cum* cyclorama *cum* props. Then, the following winter, the *Long History*, an alphabetization of all the words of the *Urtex*. In the spring of 1960 the *Short History*, 52 terms in four suits or seasons, presumably drawn from the *Long History* and last week a *Primer*. Last night I saw charts or flashcards of a matrix, or characteristic curves for the exposure of new frames, whereon you say you have mapped prime numbers against a countermap of verbal terrain fenced off from the text.

CA: History has given me a subject, history has not given me a method. My first attempts at making a poem about King Philip's War from Peirce's book resulted in about seven pages of abstracted phrases and sentence fragments connected by ampersands. Peirce in his book was serving the sciences of genealogy and apology and he was in the hire of one of the few remaining Indian squaws alive in Massachusetts in 1878. Obtaining a sensible chronology from Peirce's curious anthology of bloodlines and Puritan extracts would be quite difficult in itself. I have never bothered to write such a chronology down, because by the time I got a sense of the sequence I knew it by heart. In any event, I did not want to write a narrative poem or a history. What I wanted was the isolation of the terms of King Philip's War and then a suitable operation for recombining the terms in such a way as to produce a poem. My first insight into my own intentions came one night when I was working as a stooge, or independent brakeman on the Westbound Hump of the Greenville Yards. At three o'clock in the dark morning, I quite suddenly realized that the only dissociation complete enough for my purposes was the reduction of Peirce's text into its smallest constituent elements: the isolation of each word.

HF: This isolating activity has given you a set, or rather several sets, of elements. You have acted on these sets of elements in various ways. The derivations of the *Urtex* and the *Long History* are clear enough, but what of the *Short History* and the *Primer*? The terms of the *Long History* are "filed", or conserved, but the other two pieces display the elements in constellations whereof the skein of mutual gravities is not immediately apparent to me.

CA: The *Long History* is the set of isolated terms mapped upon their own alphabetical sequence. The *Short History* is a chart of Indian history from the time of the First Encounter between the English and the Indians to the death of King Philip, which ended his War. That is, of the years between 1620 and 1676. The terms of the *Short History* are all canonical, chosen for their power, one might say, of coverage. The terms are then mapped against the conventional sequence of a deck of playing cards. Each of the four vertical rows is, in a sense, a suit, headed by the name of the Indian personage to whom the terms of the row pertain. The horizontal rows reflect the parallel terms in the career of each person. This is one of my few poems which were written expressly to be read aloud. Two readers are required, one beginning with "Massasoit", the upper left term, and proceeding left to right across the horizontal rows; the second reader also begins with "Massasoit", but reads down the vertical column. This is not really a poem for an audience, but a poem for the two readers. Let's try it out loud.

HF: I think I can qualify the difference between the *Long* and *Short Histories*. The *Long History* is like a strip bituminous coal mine: the excavation is exactly congruent with the extent of the mineral deposit. The *Short History* is like a shaft anthracite mine. The shaft defines the depth and the tunnels the extent of the deposit, but a substantial part of the desiderated mineral must be left in situ so that the remainder can be removed.

CA: Well, I have been drilling into the burden of E. W. Peirce's text. You mentioned the charts which I am now preparing. The charts are ruled to provide 100 rows and each row is divided into five boxes by vertical lines. The vertical columns are headed: *Number*, *Mapped Word*, *Prime Factors*, *All Factors*, and *Mapped Passages*. The *Number* column contains the first hundred natural numbers from one to one hundred. The *Mapped Word* column contains a word or set of words from the *Long History* for each number. The *Prime Factor* column contains the prime factors for each number; the *All Factor* column contains all the factors, prime and otherwise, for each number, and the *Mapped Passages* column contains a fragment from Peirce's text for each number. The words of the *Mapped Word* column begin with "and" assigned to one, "Philip" assigned to two, "red" assigned to three. I wish I could say then *et cetera*, but I cannot. Assigned to four is the set "and Philip Philip". Why? One, two and three are prime numbers, having only themselves and one as factors in the natural number system. Four has as its prime factors one and two taken twice. Six has assigned to it the set: "and Philip red" or  $1 \times 2 \times 3$ . The real work of course is the assignment of pertinent words to the prime number between one and one hundred. There are 26 primes in that set of numbers, hence I have to find 26 terms in the *Long History* which have sufficient coverage to produce in combination a poem about King Philip's War. The usefulness of the natural number system lies in the fact that it possesses its own reverberations. Two will be the number other than one which occurs most frequently as a prime factor. Therefore I assigned the term "Philip" to the number two because my poem has Philip as its central figure. I assigned "red" to three because it was the color of half the belligerents and the color of all their wounds. All the primes less than 50 occur more than once, those greater

than fifty only once. This provided me with a further criterion in assigning terms to the primes. Also the powers of the prime numbers less than ten turn up, the most extreme case being 64, the sixth power of two, which comes out by assignment to read: "and Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip" which may strike some people as futile redundancy. Let me say though, that I do not now consider these charts to constitute a poem. They may be a program for a poem. I do consider *King Philip's War Primer* to be a poem and as you can see it is no more than the ordering of my prime terms from the *Long History* beginning with "and and" ( $1 \times 1$ ), and ending with "and Philip Philip white white" ( $1 \times 2 \times 2 \times 5 \times 5$ ). The idea for mapping my terms against the natural numbers comes directly from my understanding of Gödel's method in his famous *Proof*, wherein he mapped the names of the terms and elements of arithmetic against the sequence of natural numbers. Of course the very burden of his proof was the discovery that such mapping was futile as a method for testing the consistency of mathematics.

HF: Thank you. Now that I have your set of elements and have memorized the operations you perform with them, I can prime my own pump. Suppose I run back to Manhattan and write the *King Philip's War Primer* on my own typewriter. I joke of course, but it occurs to me that if we knew *all* the elements and operations employed by William Shakespeare we could bring the *Histories* up to date. The *Primer* is a synthesis of the event a little like the four palimpsests of half-tone dots that synthesize a colored image, read out dot by dot. The image cannot be sent by wire, the four sheets of dots can. They can be spelled, or counted off.

CA: That metaphor is a very useful one to me. I had not previously thought of mapping terms on the color spectrum, but it may be worth a try. The additive and subtractive possibilities are interesting indeed. Let us call it Frampton's Method. You have a free hand, of course, to work on it yourself. You mentioned rewriting Shakespeare. I don't think that will be necessary. The poetry I am trying to write is poetry which eliminates the poet, or at least makes the poet transparent in relation to the light cast upon his subject. I am interested in those poems which you can go back to Manhattan and duplicate. I am interested in those poems of mine which need me no longer. You could also go back to Manhattan and try to discover the relationship between the hypotenuse of a right triangle and its other two sides. What I want to illuminate in my poetry are not those things which only I can see, but those things which any man can see.

HF: You have chosen your elements in such a way that you have a chance to inquire into the increasingly mellow pleasures of counting. I cite your "arithmetic of one operation", of some months ago, which had to do with taking jet beads from a brandy snifter, counting them, and putting them back. An arithmetic of the ever-normal abacus . . .

CA: Before I go any further, I would like to make it clear that I am neither a numerologist nor a mathematician. My competence in mathematics is a value that tends perpetually to approach zero, but never quite arrives. I am only an

appreciator of mathematics in the sense that we were taught musical appreciation in grade school. But neither am I a believer in the magic of numbers, any more than I am a believer in the magic of poetry. The series of natural numbers possesses certain properties which I find useful, and that is all. I would like to use those properties wisely, but they do not in any way impart wisdom to me by my proximity to them or by my manipulation of them.

We have been mapping my progress through poetry and we do not yet have any assurance that I have gotten anywhere. That doesn't bother me in the least. I suggest you sight the transit of your intelligence upon my work in about six months, and then we can compare the old and the new readings.

KING PHILIP'S WAR PRIMER

and and  
and Philip  
and red  
and Philip Philip  
and white  
and Philip red  
and English  
and Philip Philip Philip  
and red red  
and Philip white  
and land  
and Philip Philip red  
and arm  
and Philip English  
and red white  
and Philip Philip Philip Philip  
and Massasoit  
and Philip red red  
and child  
and Philip Philip white  
and red English  
and Philip land  
and Wamsutta  
and Philip Philip Philip red  
and white white  
and Philip arm  
and red red red  
and Philip Philip English  
and grievance  
and Philip red white



and Weetamo  
and Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip  
and red land  
and Philip Massasoit  
and white English  
and Philip Philip red red  
and dance  
and Philip child  
and red arm  
and Philip Philip Philip white  
and widow  
and Philip red English  
and pistol  
and Philip Philip land  
and red red white  
and Philip Wamsutta  
and fire  
and Philip Philip Philip Philip red  
and English English  
and Philip white white  
and red Massasoit  
and Philip Philip arm  
and Sassamon  
and Philip red red red  
and white land  
and Philip Philip Philip English  
and red child  
and Philip grievance  
and Swansea  
and Philip Philip red white

and drown  
and Philip Weetamo  
and red red English  
and Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip  
and white arm  
and Philip red land  
and Rehobeth  
and Philip Philip Massasoit  
and red Wamsutta  
and Philip white English  
and Annawon  
and Philip Philip Philip red red  
and Alderman  
and Philip dance  
and red white white  
and Philip Philip child  
and English land  
and Philip red arm  
and Montaup  
and Philip Philip Philip Philip white  
and red red red red  
and Philip widow  
and Church  
and Philip Philip red English  
and white Massasoit  
and Philip pistol  
and red grievance  
and Philip Philip Philip land  
and ambush  
and Philip red red white

and English arm

and Philip Philip Wamsutta

and red Weetamo

and Philip fire

and white child

and Philip Philip Philip Philip Philip red

and murder

and Philip English English

and red red land

and Philip Philip white white



James Rosenquist in His Studio, Palm Sunday 1963.

Photograph by Hollis Frampton

ON JAMES ROSENQUIST AND OTHER INQUISITIONS.  
September 22, 1963.

CA: Our exemplar is James Rosenquist. May I catalogue the objects I recognize in his painting: an Oldsmobile broadside, a haircomb, a pair of socks, a woman's half-face, a cigar and incumbent fingers, smoke, a hand, pushbuttons, the back of a man's head, a pair of legs in a skirt, an automobile door opened, a pair of pants on legs, the cent sign, words, mouths, eyes, words partially spelling out "Marilyn Monroe", a woman's legs and hand, et cetera. These structures strike me as the most facile possibilities of degraded fetishism. By comparison, Lindner's choice of highheeled shoes, wound corsets, and leather clothes are the height of aesthetic elegance. But yet there remains the question of execution. Lindner executes in the manner of an expressionist Léger, that is, Léger without painterly qualities, retaining only the cylinders. How does Rosenquist execute? In the manner of a billboard painter. He is an experienced billboard painter. How are billboards executed? In such a manner as to most efficiently execute a picture. Why a picture? In order to sell products which may be recognized immediately at a distance which negates any possibility of examining the quality of the workmanship. To put it another way, Vermeer and Van Eyck survive at painter's distance, and in fact show best at painter's distance. Whereas the billboard painter, by his own admission, cannot recognize his own work at fourteen inches from the slab. His subject is the fetish of advertising and promotion, and his execution is the cheapest technique of billboard. What should I see here? I invite you to direct my attention to some plastic value which here escapes me.

HF: You have spent at least as long looking at paintings as I. You cherish some sentiment for painting as process and artifact. The dominant art of the West: the esoteric disposition of pastes and pigments on roughened flat surfaces. It means something. It tells a story; or should; or doesn't; or shouldn't. Let virgins grind the powder! Mix your own black! Buy bone meal black! Do not occlude the sensibility with images! All painting may be derived from nature! Stand at a cubit's length! Pull down the shades! Never eat meat! Train on wood ashes, blood and mare's milk! Pull up the shades! Sun-thickened oil is best! Sapolin enamel is best! There is a lot of bad painting in the Museum! Photography is not an art! Madison Avenue is corrupt! Your quarrel is with the affluent society at large! The government is corrupt! All government is corrupt! There are numerous spellings for the name of God! Women are OK! The insurance companies own everything! Et cetera! You have catalogued elements of Rosenquist's paintings, I have catalogued statements. A curved, wide, thin, yellow stroke hooking down from top left to 5:30 o'clock? The last element from a painting of Willem de Kooning, *Montauk Highway*. A crumpled red hind fender from a nineteen fifty-seven Dodge convertible? A sub-assembly topping a sculpture of John Chamberlain, *Candy Apple*. A gray hand rubbing gray legs? An element from a painting of Rosenquist, *Over the Square*. I suspect that Rosenquist's painting irritates you, as you remarked you had noticed Flaubert's *Dictionnaire* annoying you, because they contain something of what you hadn't previously noticed yourself believing. Carl Andre, old friend, I here accuse you of believing that art, first and foremost, should be elevating. I suggest instead that we elevate ourselves.

CA: Let me say here, that you are a friend of Rosenquist and I am not. You

espouse his art, I think, out of friendship, as we have both espoused the work of Frank Stella. Yet Frank Stella paints his paintings in such a way as to astound us. We have learned from Frank Stella as we cannot learn from Rosenquist. My advice to you, is to teach Rosenquist something about what I have called, in other context, the necessities of painting. Frank Stella is your friend and mine. We have both seen him through dark times in the career of an artist. Yet, Frank Stella has never been the servant of our advocacy. Frank Stella never needed us. Rosenquist does not yet know what painting is about. Let him study. Let you, Hollis Frampton, instruct him. For God's sake, there is nothing in his work but earnestness!

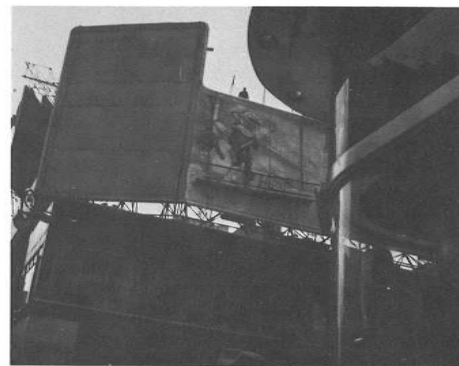
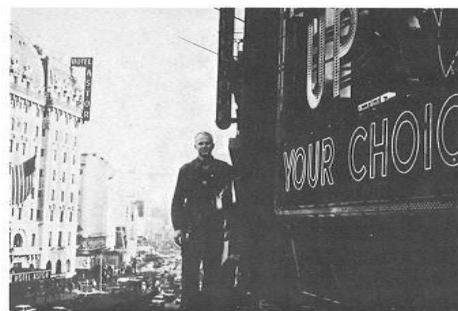
Cézanne painted paintings of apples. Apples need no encouragement to consumption. But why is it that James Rosenquist paints paintings only of those things which require encouragement to consume? Where are James Rosenquist's paintings of apples?

Or rather, if fetishism is the triumph of the recognizable, where are James Rosenquist's challenges to what we do not know? Billboard crap is billboard crap, whether on the walls of the MOMA or on slabs of Highway 69. What is it that Rosenquist adds to our knowledge of painting? To my mind he fouls blank surfaces with broken images of that which is already excessively familiar. What does his brushstroke tell us? We will never know because he adopts the conventions of the eponymous, anonymous, artless signpainter. Let me plead on bended typewriter key that Rosenquist paint one picture containing objects which I cannot recognize through the vain onanistic exercises of advertising and public relations agencies. By God, where are his paintings of apples? They were good enough for Cézanne. If a man can only paint that which has been reduced to two dimensions by the art laboratory of an advertising agency, then I say a man has been reduced to the dignity of a rubber stamp. Marilyn is in her grave. Let the worms celebrate her. I have won my women in the face of bad breath. Look, Rosenquist paints the common, ordinary shit of our time, and it is my naïve boast that art serves to provide intimations of the perfect. A lesser service I grant to art is the demoralization of the bourgeoisie. Let the poor lad fester, if he must, on the contents of *Life Magazine*, I prefer at least apples. His painting is a facile imitation not of art but that form which deliberately degrades our sensibility.



James Rosenquist: *Marilyn Monroe, I*, 1962. Oil and spray enamel on canvas, 7'9" x 6'3/4". The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection. Gift to the Museum of Modern Art, New York, N.Y.

From 1957-1960, James Rosenquist actually worked as a billboard painter for Artercraft Strauss Company in New York at the Astor Victoria Theater in the Times Square area (see illustration p. 89).



James Rosenquist Working as a Billboard Painter in Times Square, New York, 1958.

HF: If you object to that absence of apples, I suggest you glue an apple to one of Rosenquist's paintings, thereby making it into a Jim Dine. You ask that he make a painting with no recognizable object in it. You once chastized me, at a time when I was photographing cracked and peeling surfaces, for not making photographs of things you *could* recognize. Rosenquist adds nothing to our knowledge of painting except the paintings themselves. Where is our knowledge of painting except *in* paintings? In a book by Clement Greenberg? What his brushstroke tells us is that it *isn't* there, in the sense that it clearly *is* there in a painting of Newman or Rothko or de Kooning. I suggest you pause here and reflect a moment. Once before, at this very typewriter, you wrote that art is an open set. Why close the set just this side of Rosenquist? Where are Cézanne's apples now, my friend? Where are Kline's apples? What is Ellsworth Kelly but broken images? You ask that Jim Rosenquist paint the sort of thing you have already learned to like. You think, because you

have something connected to say about Clyfford Still's work, that you understand it.

Thus far, you have noticed only that Rosenquist is not painting other people's pictures. I think you can do better than that. I think you can do better than notice that noses and eyes and legs are to be found in *Life Magazine*. The word "red" is to be found in the *Police Gazette* and in the dictionary. Circles are to be found on bags of Union Workman chewing tobacco, and stripes on the rear ends of Con Edison trucks. Of course there are the "art circles" and the "art stripes". Goodness me, aren't we lugging enough damn baggage around with us already? Must we multiply opinions about what kind of opinions we shall have about who may paint what and when?

You object to the degradation of the American sensibility. God eternally damn and destroy the American sensibility. The American sensibility at its ripest never built a house or wrote a letter, any more than the "mind of Europe" ever wrote a poem or painted a picture. If you think Dr. Williams or Thomas Jefferson partake of the American sensibility, you are indulging yourself in a fantasy unworthy of a free mind. The (oh very) American sensibility has manifested itself, precisely, in the regurgitations of the advertising agency. The American sensibility has produced the implements by which the sensibilities of individuals are degraded. There is little in the way of artifact that this degradation has not tainted. Look about you, at this room, the walls, the woodwork, and ask yourself what adjunct to the muse's diadem you find here. The serious artist, now as never before, goes on working in spite of, and in the teeth of, the dictates of every institution in which the American sensibility has flowered. I say that if Jim Rosenquist is out to destroy the American sensibility, God bless his holy name! I am not a connoisseur of billboards; I do not seek in this man's work what I like or dislike.

One last note: Why are we so concerned with establishing a man's historical antecedents? If I can prove that Frank Stella learned from Matisse etc. . . . Matisse be damned! Bomb the Museum! I will part gladly with the work of five years, into the bargain. Every day is the beginning of the world.

CA: Dear Hollis, it was good hearing from you. I am sorry to hear you were sick, but glad to hear you are better. We are on the edge of the matter. I detest the painting of Rosenquist. Why? I think there is a crisis in painting today. A crisis of pretext. Pretext? By that I mean the problem of what to paint. Painting as we know it before Cimabue (in Europe) was totally abstract. Painters made images which had no empirical reality outside of the conventions of symbol and sanctity. No portraits from life. No perspective because Heaven could have no vanishing point. The infinite was contained in God's radiance which could be indicated by a gold foil ground and conferred through the inference of halo and nimbus. The saints and holy persons were arranged by hagiography and the science of theology. Likeness to extant persons was undreamed of because saints were canonized after their deaths. No one living had seen Jesus. With the revival of speculative and experimental science in the 12th and 13th centuries in Europe, the attention of the individual intelligence was turned to the mortal finite world, where vanishing points were very much in evidence. The conventions of religion were replaced by the conventions of projective geometry, a study at

once both subtle and obvious. Portraits of donors began to be included among the saints in altar pieces. Perhaps the rediscovered art of the Romans which was portraiture, when it was anything at all, turned the attention of artists away from the eternal conventions of color and feature which fixed the images of holy persons. The revival of interest in the arts of the ancients also introduced a counter to this inquiry into natural appearances. Beyond the observable appearance lay an ideal form which could be approached through observation of natural phenomena, but required a purification in the mind. From the conventional icons of Sebastian's martyrdom, to the use of Sebastian's martyrdom to portray an ideal figure which would never be seen but could only be painted, is a course moving through three different sets of conventions. Any historical painting, that is a painterly reconstruction of a scene which the artist could not have observed, could be considered an abstract painting. Yet another strain became apparent in European art. A strain which is the true matter of Chinese and Japanese Sumi painting. The means of painting became apparent in painters like Hals and Vermeer. No longer was a stress laid on the invisibility of the artist's method, but the very evidence of the act of the artist became a mark of his skill. Rembrandt, Fragonard, Watteau etc. made the mark of their mark a true part of their art. Impressionism as a term was not meant to convey a color idea but the principle that the work of the artist was to record the precision and sensibility of his intelligence confronted by a cut of phenomenal reality.

I have tried to sketch two streams in painting. The first stream has to do with an achievement of an ideal or conventional appearance. The second has to do with the qualities of the artist's manipulation of his materials and his own imagination. De Kooning has painted pictures like *Easter Monday* which are evidences of his devotion to the act of painting and his knowledge of himself and his materials. Ellsworth Kelly has painted paintings which concern themselves with the division of colors one from the other with the invisible precision of a sharp late shadow. Kelly's work reminds me of the shadows in the *Tum* of Duchamp. It is important to Kelly that he and his manipulations be invisible in terms of his image. Kelly has an ideal derived from nature by way of his observations of the sun streaming through his rubber plant.

Now this is why I detest the paintings of Rosenquist. He too is an idealist in paint. He makes his manipulations as invisible as he can within the limits of his billboard training. But he derives his ideal forms from exactly those places where we have learned by bitter tasting to expect shit. Marilyn Monroe was a woman whose guts had been so grossly fiddled with in the course of her career making cheap celluloid imitations of movies that she could not bear a living child. Advertising is the stillbirth of the sensibilities. To turn to these horrors for one's conventions is to believe that those excrescences in the street are strawberry tarts.

HF: An attack on Christianity or its iconography is not an attack on Giotto or della Francesca. An attack on Marilyn Monroe or Ford automobiles is not an attack on James Rosenquist. Let us talk about what we're talking about.

CA: The invisibility of a brushstroke is as much an irony in painting as the visibility

of a brushstroke. Dali imitates the oleograph. Still leaves every mark of his brush visible. What I am attacking is Rosenquist's pretext in painting. You and I both know, I more than you, the invited terror of the blank canvas and the too easy need to mark it. All I ask of any painter is that his marks on the canvas demonstrated to me an aspect of the world which has escaped my seeing. Marilyn Monroe and Ford automobiles have not escaped me. They have been dunned into me by persons paid to dun. If Rosenquist is paid to dun he earns his pay. If he is paid to show me something I have never seen before, then he is a charlatan. For I have seen his every cut better done in Journal Square.

HF: How clean our hands are, and how pure our minds! The dollar that bought the film and paper that went into the best work I've done, the photograph of James Rosenquist I made on Palm Sunday last, and the taxi fare that took me to his studio, and the dollar that kept me alive to do it, . . . all were money earned in an establishment that brings out of latency the images that plague us both. I work in a color laboratory, and nightly expend my skill and knowledge towards perfecting "commercial" photography: nylons, frozen orange juice, leaded gasoline, bread with calcium propionate and so forth. You run out to Jersey every afternoon and assist in the transport into and out of America's largest urban area of poisons for mind and body so filthy and unspeakable that I hesitate to remind you of them. The dollar you earned on the Jersey boondocks kept you alive to sit at this typewriter.

Why rail against the billboard when you bring tons of Coca-Cola syrup in, to meet the desire the billboard pretends to promote? How can I clean *my* hands? Carl, we are not outside it. There is no crisis in art nor ever has been. The only natural activity, and all the natural activity of man, is art. The crisis is in and among us. I think this is not new. We say in our textbooks that man is a toolmaker and toolbearer. This is a lie. Man is a maker and bearer of weapons. A few have turned to tools. Some of that few must disguise them as weapons. A few hairs on the end of a stick have been sometimes a spear sharper than the shafts of Philoctetus.

To use an image is to make another. I do it myself. I have only what is in me and before me, and can only examine the honesty of the effort by which I have come by the scraps I conserve. James Rosenquist is "in" the same thing . . . not a culture, a set of predicates, an informed and trenchant article on the latest trend, but the only human activity: art. I contend that he bears a tool; you, that he bears a weapon. But I will not pretend to certainty that I bear a tool. I have my camera, and Rosenquist his pot of paint. We are not old men, nor old masters, but young men in search of what we need, and what we need to know. I know the man, a little, and his work a little more, and this is one man whose work may interest me next year. That is all I know. That is the only thing from which I will not stand aside.

CA: *Mea culpa*. The faults we find most grievous in others are exactly those faults we find most grievous in ourselves. My drilling is not my art, yet my art has its own share of corruption. We agree on our responsibilities, we differ about the assignment of term: weapon or tool. I would say it is important not to become a weapon in the hands of those we despise.

## APPENDIX

## PHOTOGRAPHS BY HOLLIS FRAMPTON OF WORKS BY CARL ANDRE, 1958 - 1963