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Barbara Munger: an interview
at her West Los Angeles apartment 12/73

BM - I've been looking at other artists for . . . you know, opening myself up to a much bigger scope of what the art world is about. Not the art world, but what the artists were doing, and that automatically meant becoming more involved with more conceptually oriented art. The first contact I ever had with that sort of art was when I was a T.A.

for John Baldissari, actually, at Cal Arts. I remember I was really into my own thing at that time. At that point I had closed myself off and made a stand and said this is what I stand for in the art world, this kind of work that I'm doing now. Being a T.A. in John Baldissari's class kind of turned my head around even though I didn't realize at the time what influence he was really having on me. Naturally he was presenting his own point of view, and naturally I could not help but be confronted with several artists that I had never heard about before, most of them being conceptually oriented artists. So, I picked a little of that up and didn't realize that it would ever be any use to me. I thought it was just superfluous knowledge that you carry around in a knapsack on your back. And it turns out now that I think John Baldissari has been one of the most important influences on me, and when that influence was happening I didn't realize it. I wasn't aware that anything was happening, which is really very surprising when you think back on it. Very very slowly, I suppose, as I continued on working in my regular way of working within certain restrictions that I had set up, I felt myself becoming more and more discontent with the flexibility and openness and potential of my own art. So it had been an important thing in the last year to break it open and expand and merge into something bigger than what it had been before, which automatically meant changing the general format of it... structure and even intent. I think the whole change had to do with the intent that I wished my art to have and I was dissatisfied with what it was saying. At the time, in the early stage of my career, when I jumped head first into the art world and when I began my career... It's a funny thing to say, you might as well say my first year as a fireman. I was rather poor when I was in school and I didn't, for the most part, have a studio. So I also justified jumping head first into the art scene as an excuse to do work in big space, in museums. Whereas, if I didn't take advantage of that, I wouldn't have a chance at all to do art work. So, I would always go to the museum and look at the space and work with it for a few days, experimenting, since I didn't have any physical space to experiment in, or if I did, it wasn't a very adequate one. And because I was working professionally, I would be forced naturally to come up with something, a by-product, that was correct or proper or acceptable and... a conclusive statement that was not just adequate but outstanding. So, I guess all I'm saying is that I was working in a situation where there was a certain degree of pressure and now as I look back on it I would never work that

way again.

Art is simply a vehicle through which you express yourself, or, I'd even go so far as to say through which something very pure can flow through you-to. That's what art would be and the whole trick, of course, would be cleaning yourself up enough, having some process of purification going on in your nervous system to where you could accept more and more as it came through, or that you would be a better and better channel. The art is just something that it could flow through-to. The art is just a vehicle and it's not a super important thing in and of itself. It's just a tool that can be used, or a form of expression, or it's simply another type of activity that one could do. And so, I guess the whole thing goes back to you, and what it is that you can do best, or what it is that you can do that is kind of innately or naturally expansive or broad enough to give you as much leeway and as much breathing room as possible for you to express yourself. So, then, the whole thing, again, would be a form of purification... and by that I mean a certain type of evolution evolving to where the more you do that, the more you would naturally line up with what was innately the best thing for you to do. Or I suppose if you wanted to use Eastern philosophy, it would be what your dharma was, and you would therefore be doing it, and it would be easiest for you once you found that spot to express yourself there, and you would have natural support once you were there. On the other hand, if you were not trying to do that, let's say by accident, if you found yourself over in some other category or career that you worked in, say as a mathematician instead, and you found that being a mathematician was very very difficult, and it meant that you had to work just very diligently at it in order to succeed at all. It could be that that wasn't the right place for you to be, because you were meeting up with so much resistance, because you were off-base and you didn't know what your real base was, and so, therefore, you didn't have the base there to naturally support you. You had to build a base which you had no previous experience with. So it meant that you were really kind of doing an awful lot of swimming in order to stay up above water, which was why you were meeting so much resistance. So, there's that kind of idea too, which I've come into a little bit, wondering about what art is doing for me. You just naturally run into it in trying to understand that, or why I was doing art rather than something else, you know. And so, I think I care much less about an art career per se, and an art success, and an art acceptance, and an art wide covering of my material. I don't

care to really push that. And also, I find myself relying less and less upon certain rules that already exist within the art world, or certain rules because of my training, or because of certain people I've met that have been influences on me... But it could be, and I think I've done this in the past, identify so strongly with the formal issue that you're trying to do your work in the terms of the formal issues, and that has nothing to do with you... And so, in a sense, it might become this thing where if everybody had a list of the rules, they could sit down and work one out too. Why not? I mean I ran into that problem of feeling that I was trying to manipulate certain given rules, and either I was trying to work within the framework of the rules or was trying to cancel them out, void them out, or add on some new ones. And it definitely took a little manipulation. And in so doing, sometimes, you would find yourself backed up into a corner where one of the laws got out of hand and said, 'oh no, you can't do that', when one of the laws backfired on you. So then, it takes some fancy footwork to get yourself out of that corner. And I found that I didn't like to get shoved around by the rules like that. I didn't care to use that type of a process in determining what the final outcome of my work would be, because it was almost like having to walk through an entire forest of rules, and trying not to do it, trying to come out safely without being attacked. Put it that way. And if you did, you were rewarded with a 'together' art work. It just suddenly struck me as absurd. Let's just put it that way. Then, I suppose, as all artists work, they drop aside certain assumptions that they've agreed to accept and work with faithfully in the beginning theory of their development. But I suppose that is a lot about what art is. Which is probably pretty good about art because it gives you a chance to decide what you will accept and what you won't, and what you say is and what you say is not. And in the long run, it really takes a lot of courage and a lot of strength, too, just to take a stance and to constantly keep on the move and keep developing. So, when you think of it, that's probably something I really respect about art. It builds good, strong character...

TS - It's like you take the formal issues, or whatever, as a way to get in and just start working and building a sensibility, and when you get by those formal issues you realize they're nothing more... formal issues are formal issues. They're nothing more than what they say they are. If you say something's an issue then it is an issue for you. That seems to be what

intimidates a lot of people working off of their own sensibility, the set of rules that they have to follow in order to make a modern art piece.

BM - . . . Because if you are . . . it still means that you have to take stands and make your own issues, in a sense, about your own decisions. It doesn't mean that you work without that kind of thing. So, there always must be a certain structure.

TS - It gets wrapped up in formal issues, it gets really thick, kind of cumbersome, distasteful. It starts working against you where you can't reach that. . . . where you can't just do it. You have to kind of cover all the bases to cover yourself.

BM - Yes, I think so. It's, like, a kind of very intricate chess game almost. Make the wrong move and you get slaughtered.

TS - There's an awful lot of slaughtered people around.

BM - Well, do you think that sums it up?

TS - Yeah, one, sort of, aspect of it.

BM - I'm very involved in meditation and that kind of thing. Art is something that fits underneath that. It's an activity. Basically, that's most of all what I'm interested in when I make art and teach art. I'm interested in relating meditation principles to the art, or just viewing certain principles functioning in the art activity, or get to the structure that underlines the art structure, which would be on a much more universal level. I'm very much interested in that.

TS - It seems like the art world, or whatever that kind of obligation that society or the art world places on you, doesn't have anything to do with art. It has to do with the art business. So, people are getting down now to where they realize that they don't have to do what they don't like to do. They just have to do what they want to do and that has a validity and it doesn't need to be apologized for. Art criticism and things like that are in another place, where art critics become the middle man between the artist and the public. The public isn't a necessary outlet for the artist. It's just that that's part of the business. It's something that you have to deal with, but it's not something that you have to be sold out to.

BM - Sure, there are practical aspects of it that you just take care of.

TS - Yeah. It's like paying your gas bill.

BM - Yeah. There's a certain procedure you go through to pay your gas bill. You just do it.

TS - Why is that so. . . . why is that such a difficult thing to. . . . you know, like a critic would go into a place or something and try to give it relevance in the context of formal issues, avantgardism. . . . what sort of clique, or whatever it is, that the artist fits into. . . . and they end up talking about reductivism or. . . . all these things are happening, but when a person does it, he just does it, more or less. And then the critic defines it for the public. . . . What was I asking?

BM - You were trying to figure out why is that. . . .

TS - Why is that such a big issue. It's the system of the art world that builds up all these issues and things, trying to relate to the public. And every now and then, one of the public kind of crosses over and he uses that as a transition point. . . . But when he gets over there, he still uses that for awhile. . . . but gets very screwed up until he finds that he doesn't have to deal with that and he finds that the people in the middle don't really have that much to do with him. I guess if it has any function at all, Art Forum and things like that serve as good P.R. for the. . . . It's like having a yoga school, it serves as good P.R. for yoga, but the teachers kind of have to shine them on and fake them out and give them just the very basics, which is a very low level of what that existence is.

BM - There are all sorts of levels in art, and the art world, and when you're on that level I suppose it has its purposes. Obviously it does.

The more I understood myself the more my art started making more sense, and so I could see more clearly what I was gaining from my art and why I was with my art and what I was putting into it and why. . . . just the reasons. It all started being a little more understood. So, I suppose my intentions couldn't help but change or at least become a little more clear. It has to do with just more understanding.

TS - Do you think it has to do with teaching?

BM - Sure. I think it had more to do with my involvement with meditation, but on the other hand, teaching was once again a vehicle through which I could, through activity, run through a lot of different pos-

sibilities of art and creativity and look at the changes I was going through inside of myself, outside myself. That activity, teaching, just afforded me. . . . Too bad that tape recorder can't see all of our expressions. . . . See, I'm more interested in personal growth and that kind of thing. Once that happens, the changes are automatically there in the work, the changes just follow suit. They are there and you can look at them and watch them. The new ideas are just automatically there once your own growth is there. So, that's what I mean when I say I'm not letting art call all these shots. Because, the art in itself I don't think is very important in terms of that growth factor. But, some people, I think, probably do use the art only as a vehicle to expand themselves or push on. Some people do that. My own way of going about it is different, where I've got another vehicle that's pushing me on and the changes follow suit in the art. As I push on to another level it sets off a different response in the art. I think of art also as something that can be very thin or very thick or very deep, not that it just goes on in history, not that it's just chronology. And so I'm more interested in the depth of it. I think you can have your art all lined up perfectly in accord with art history and art issues, but it still might be pretty thin. I think the depth comes from your own individual growth, your expansion, because the more you have, then, the more your art has, in terms of depth. It's the depth that is the only thing that really counts, although. . . . And then you could say that the chronology and the formal issues and all that are just a certain procedure, like, you were saying, mailing a gas bill. It's just a certain procedure. All that's there. . . . but that's not where the real importance lies. . . . and so I think that it should all be considered and, like you say, there should be a certain awareness of it. But there needs to be that depth, and the depth can go on forever, and the deeper it is the more powerful it is. And, of course, then the deeper it is. . . .

TS - By deeper, do you mean the different levels by which you relate to that? Like when you finish a piece. . . . some pieces are very up front. I think pop art sort of exemplifies that attitude. Very up front. And there's no real importance other than considering what it had to say right then. So, by depth, do you mean those other things that are involved? Those different levels? I guess the easiest way to say it would be those meanings that it has to you. Like in a conceptualist's piece, you would have the straight forward kind of connotation, the most obvious thing that you would get into then, the different levels of

meaning that he's talking about; semantics and language. Is that what you would call depth? Within the piece itself?

BM - Not specifically, no. I'm talking about something that...It could take on any kind of personality It does not matter whether the statement is powerful or subtle or simple or complicated, those are just personalities that different art falls under. So, what I'm talking about is.....I suppose you could relate it to the quality of the work. The quality of the work could be judged on this level. Once again, I'm talking about something more abstract.

TS - Is it abstract within the piece or abstract within the experience of doing the piece?

BM - No. It's doing the piece too. I think it would be, if it's in you, it would be in the piece too. And if there were plenty of depth as I was saying..... chances are the piece is going to be a very strong work regardless of what category it's falling under, as conceptual or otherwise, environmental art or whatever.

TS - If you set up a situation, you come to that situation with a lot of....purification, I guess is what you were saying....and you do the piece and that strong peach....that strong piece....peach....

BM - Okay, I guess I had my fun with that.

TS - What was I saying? That strong piece, piece, will have a....It's like if you follow in that.... natural....It's very hard to go on and be serious.. ..so I won't.

BM - I'm sorry. I have to have this laughter release. No. Go ahead. I'm listening.

TS - I forgot what I was saying.

BM - What are you doing?

TS - Huh?.....Just killing time.

BM - I figured out what it was.

TS - Oh yeah? Did you?

BM - It's energy, quality of energy in work, which therefore determines the quality of the power distinct from the work. I'm talking about the quality of energy

....and also the more quality there is in the energy level the more the more subtle levels you will have in your work. A gross level of energy....that would be one where say the motivation of the work was just simply geared towards acceptance or success, and the intention of the artist went no further than that. So, I'm talking about what an individual's energy level is, energy quality, and that has a lot to do with what his motivating factors were for doing the work, and his intentions, and the purity of the work, and all this and that, and what energy he has to draw upon to put into the work; something that is, to a certain degree, of purity, and the purity once put in there, will obviously have its outer personality, like a certain type of art....and either a subtle kind of statement or an overt kind of statement or a certain kind of art. All those are just various ways of expression. I'm talking about a certain quality of expression that has something to do with the energy that was put into it so it becomes a very individual thing, because people put in different kinds of energy and they're drawing from different potentials and they've developed their potentials to a different degree. All that is what goes into their art work regardless of what it ends up as appearing to be; a more relative material form of its expression. So, I guess I'm talking about the actual creative processes and what I think that involves and what comes out of you into the art work. I think that, I don't know, this is just hypothetical....I suppose that someone might not be able to read all the levels in your work. They might not be able to pick up on all the subtle energy because they don't have comparable levels developed within themselves. All people have different potentials that they're working with, or that different people are working from different points. But, I think that I find more and more as I look at art that I'm judging more from the point of energy level in the art than I am from the point of view of formal issues. Although, I'm aware of all that. I have done my homework on it all and I've made a point of doing that, in fact that's what I was doing all last year, acquainting myself with all of that. And then that's there, and I take that into consideration, but I find that I'm picking up more in the quality of energy that's put into the work and if there is that quality of energy, all those other things fall into place very nicely. It's a very curious thing. In fact, I find myself reading people, situations, everything relying upon that feeling more so than usual....I don't know if I should be talking about this or not. But, just coming into contact with certain people you can tell what they're putting out,

to a certain degree, in terms of vibrations, which is what I'm talking about in terms of the art, too. It could be that you would be misled less with the formal issues, the complication of, the elaboration of, and the sophistication of, or the type of group that is in vogue at a certain time, the whole thing. You'd be less taken in by all that kind of thing if you were adding this other value criteria or judgment into your value system. Put it that way. But, then I think it works with art the same way it works with people. You can be around someone who is really upset, or has certain feelings toward you, who might be hostile, who might not like you that day. You can pick up on it right away, you know, it's just an immediate reading of it and you don't have to get into specifics about why they have this feeling toward you. You don't even have to bother to allow them to have a full expression of what they feel toward you. You just can leave....You can do what you want to after you know that . . . That's a way that you could relate certain things that you're dealing with through meditation into your art, because obviously the whole idea of the energy level of the vibration is something that you get into immediately in meditation, because that's what you're dealing with. You're raising your vibration. You are also raising your energy level and the quality of it. It's just that simple.

TS - I had a friend....he told me to mention this to you to see if you remembered him. One time, when you were doing your thing at Pasadena, you were carrying a pail around....No. At L.A. County, you were carrying a bucket around, or something, and he came up to you and asked you something about the bucket. What he says is that he went in there and saw you carrying a bucket around and he thought it looked pretty neat because it was out of context. He asked me to ask you if you remembered him.

BM - What did he ask me? Why I was carrying the bucket around?

TS - I guess so, or what you were doing with the bucket, or what was happening.

BM - I don't remember....I don't remember....Was that when I was doing that garden work?

TS - Yeah.

BM - I couldn't have been carrying a pail of dirt around....



Peter Plagens: an interview at his Pasadena studio 11/73

PP - . . . There is a historical significance which is, even for the novice in art, a personal commitment; a relevancy or non-relevancy that you haven't got anything to do with. It's given to you. There're a lot of portrait painters around. They believe in it. They're committed to it. But, how relevant is it to the whole dialectic of modern art history? In fact, it's just one step away from craft discipline to where you ignore history and say 'fuck it'. 'I don't care what other artists are doing, I'm going to concentrate on whether I can make this glaze,' etc. You can talk with your fellow painters like that and you don't worry about anything else. I think that's a danger. I'm trying to persuade a guy to write this month on the current state of formalist criticism or formalist art theory. 'Cause God knows that generation after generation of artists are still going ahead with this shit. Is everybody operating on ten year old theory? Is everybody reading Michael Fried or Clement Greenberg, for Christ's sake, and basing paintings or that sort of stuff, or is there a new idea extant? Or are all those people just incredibly, irrevocably, out of it? I don't know. Are they painting just because it's such a nice seductive thing to do? I don't really know. I have ideas of what I'm doing, but, those are full of the same conceits that any painter has about his own work. Artists are the most unreliable people to talk about their own work. . . . The first thing they always get into is 'type'.

TS - Type or style?

PP - Type. You know, they say, 'Hey, look, I'm not a photo-realist!' And, all of a sudden they turn up at every photo-realist show there is with their own consent.

TS - I have a friend that's painting on paper much like you are, only he gets a heavy grid pattern by putting together six or eight papers. I say you have a little problem with that grid system. It's something that's been done since. . . . He says the grid system has nothing to do with it other than being structure. That's for him, he knows that, but I don't know that.

PP - You can choose that, though. There was a show called 'Grids', it was back East, and somebody wrote a very nice article pointing out the fact that most of the artists in there seemed to have regarded the grid as a blameless thing that. . . . 'I just do grids because they're natural. They're

almost unavoidable. They're rectangular. Echo a rectangle you get a grid.' It's like public domain, as a structure; you can't blame the artist; the artist can't take credit. And, the rebuttal is in recent history the grid has become a symbol for serious painting, you're doing Serious Modern Painting. It's become an iconographic element rather than a structural element. It's just like the gesture. In the early abstract painting the gesture used to be an indexed passion. But, after it got out into the public domain the gesture was a little symbol that you used to show that you were a Modern Artist. You had to have a couple drips in your painting. The same pass has come to the grid. The little badge on the painting was a grid. I think there's something to be said for that.

TS - The thing about grids is that they alleviate the problem of structure so you can paint.

PP - But that in itself is a certain kind of aesthetic choice you make; whether to be bothered by composition. We're all victims of determinism, more than we suppose. An artist does things because certain philosophical modes are current, allowable. Johns and Stella said, in effect, 'I don't want to bother with composition, I don't like balancing this against that. It's old hat stuff. What I want is an a priori design that eliminates compositional choices, 'cause then I get down to the business of picture.' Then you say 'Okay, I accept that on its merits'. But, most artists don't accept it so much on its merits as they do on its feeling of being cool or hip; for a certain period of time it seems like something is very hip to do, so you do it, whereas, you wouldn't do it ten years later because it's passe. You don't find many people seriously saying, 'I want to eliminate all compositional choice in my pictures'.

TS - Well, once it's been eliminated you either quit painting or. . . .

PP - That distant 'I don't make any moral, ethical, artistic, aesthetic judgments' works for awhile, then it goes out of fashion. Fashion, by the way, is good. If we didn't have fashion, we wouldn't have change.

TK - Did you read that article in Artforum, the last one? Relating to content?

PP - I am. . . . was, about eight issues behind. I'm working my way up to it. There's nothing more

fatiguing than trying to read three issues of Artforum in one night. Did you read that one on the cold war, a bit earlier? Those great big Stellas and Nolands and Olitskis were symptomatic of the sixties in the United States. With a couple of years retrospect, you can see that the same kind of American exuberance had conceived an idea that you could solve problems mechanically with hardware and visceral chutzpah and stuff like that. It's the same kind of aesthetic that you can get into a Stella with a ninety foot protractor. In a culture given over to mysticism you couldn't possibly have that sort of stuff. Nobody pointed it out at the time 'cause you only get this perspective with a little time.

TS - When you start painting. . . you're starting with a rectangular surface, you're starting with a rectangular base, it's unavoidable the way you put your things together. . . .

PP - What? There's a certain grid?

TS - Yes.

PP - Oh yeah. . . I don't think, however, if somebody comes along and says that lately a lot of paintings have been painted with a grid and it's not really an honest structural element but a symbol for modern art, that necessarily negates the whole business of painting with a grid. You've just got to overcome that problem. In other words, you can not get built-in quality by using the grid. As a matter of fact, you might get built-in speciousness by using the grid, and that's healthy. Devices come and go.

TS - The grid has been used and there's a case against it, but that doesn't mean a hell of a lot.

PP - No, but if word ever gets out it's going to boil out all of the shallow people, that using the grid is a kind of formula and they're going to get fucked over, their paintings won't stand up and it's nice to have everybody know that. It's like a few years ago; those few brave souls in the movie studios, the first ones, who shot into the sun and put light spots on the lens. But then it became a style and everybody had to shoot into the sun to get those beads of light on the lens. It isn't honest anymore. It's now a symbol that you're a hot shot cinematographer and the movie is hip. But it doesn't mean you gotta go back to never shooting into the sun anymore. Have a good reason for doing it. It's

got to be something that's integral to the film.

TS - It seems to have a lot to do with the decisions you make when you're in a painting. Do you get strung out by having a grid there? Is it in the way? Or is it irrelevant to what you're doing?

PP - I wasn't doing paintings with grids in them for awhile, because I was using photo paper, backdrop paper, single sheets.

TK - It doesn't seem like you're paying any attention to the grid at all.

PP - I'm trying not to but the problem is the fellow who says, 'Well, you son-of-a-bitch, if you weren't paying any attention to it you should have left it out, because it just doesn't work'. I like the arbitrariness . . . I happened to have these paintings that I did before, and they just happened to have a built-in grid, which, at the time I sort of liked, and now I don't. But what I've got is the same format with a different frame of mind. It should be interesting to see what happens. I've got the same problem with a built-in grid, whereas before I thought it was a virtue, now I don't. So what does that mean? That means this painting was fucked up at the start. Is it still fucked? I don't know, we'll see.

TS - It sounds like a risk. You take the grid as a jumping off point. You try to make it irrelevant to what you're putting down.

PP - It's interesting to work with a grid that you don't really want to be there. Say I'm doing it for some psychological reasons. I like the idea of using my old paintings over. I couldn't throw them out and I didn't want to save them so I started to paint on them again and now I've got this grid that I don't really want but it's there. Have you ever painted on a canvas that's crooked or were hard up and bought somebody else's canvas that had a painting under it and you gesso'd it and inevitably the canvas was no longer absorbing paint? That underpainting was there and it just changed your whole painting? But you had to deal with it all the time . . . THERE it is: a 'block'. Scientology,

TS - That guy was a science fiction writer . . .

PP - L. Ron Hubbard . . . there's a little bit to it. One of the bad parts about it, from what I under-

stand (my acquaintance is very cursory), it's dangerous to people who aren't really together, and people who aren't together tend to be the exact types who go into that. It involves, basically, sort of an attempt to clear away the past residue of associations so that you perceive things absolutely new each time, absolutely clear. Unfortunately, the past residues and associations you have are what keep you from going insane.

TK - That's what the classical pre-Christ Buddhists were saying, 2500 b.c., still saying it; as a matter of fact.

PP - The only thing, if I remember right, is that it (Scientology) couples that with a little Pavlovian conditioning . . . you can supposedly see on a meter when people are making associations and blocking and you just train them like Pavlov's dogs to not do it, and then you can absolutely clear them out. I think that you probably can, but I think you are fucking with something that's really dangerous . . .

TK - Have you had an interview with Toby yet?

TS - No. Not yet.

PP - Who's Toby.

TS - He's a guy . . . a friend of mine who graduated from Irvine.

TK - Is that his first name?

TS - I don't know if that's his first or last name.

TK - He's into painting as purely a meditative process . . . which I don't think you can escape from at all . . . I think that's why a painting . . . that's why I enjoy it so much. It's the act of . . .

TS - Why would you want to escape?

TK - In the sense that the whole minimalist movement was a rejection of that kind of idea.

PP - Why?

TK - The spontaneous, intuitive, gestural, meditative acts a painting . . . The denial of paint surface; of movement towards industrial application; flat paints; no marks of any personality; no mistakes . . .

PP - John Canady, rest his soul, said that the trouble with reductive art objects is that there is such a torrent of words surrounding them. It seems like the less there is of an art object the more criticism . . .

TS - Are there a lot of color field paintings in your classes at Northridge?

PP - Yeah . . . it's the thing. I haven't done much this semester to push anybody toward anything. There's a kind of fashion out there: if you're going to paint, one way to make it conceptually and visibly safe, to protect yourself, is a kind of monochrome style.

TS - I always thought it was curious that color field was more or less synonymous with very toned down, very quiet . . .

PP - They've gotten that way. The original term, 'field painting', applied to people like Olitski, and Poons, and early Frankenthaler. Later, Olitski and those other guys have gotten into different kinds of color . . .

TK - What do you think of Noland's recent paintings?

PP - Those grids?

TK - Yeah. Well, you know . . . he's setting up a grid . . . maybe . . . in the corner . . .

PP - I don't like them . . .

TK - It seems like he's sort of creating a stepping down situation. Like, in one corner . . . setting up a depth relationship. Edge to field . . . I saw them in Artforum.

TS - Nick Wilder advertised a show of Noland's but never had it . . .

PP - He wouldn't sell, that's why. Irving (Blum) had a show of Noland's that didn't sell . . . He couldn't give the fuckers away.

TS - That's pretty hard news for Noland.

PP - I don't know whether that means they're good paintings or not, but it has a lot to do with what Noland will do the next time . . . I hear that the son-of-a-bitch owns a five story building in

New York, you know, one floor for stretching, one floor for painting, one floor for conceiving, and, you know, twenty-two assistants, or something like that... he's a small manufacturer. And if you've got that much overhead into it, I bet it makes a difference... It would sure as hell make a difference to me. I'm exceedingly weak in it (the business of art) and I don't know what you do with that kind of situation.

TS - The business of it...

PP - Just the psychology of it, not how you make it but how you handle it when you make it, how that ties in with your art... Lichtenstein, I hear, makes three hundred thousand dollars a year, he's a superstar. How do you deal with that? How do you deal with changing or not changing, how much responsibility do you have, how does it get into your head? You've got to believe, after a certain point, that some of your pull in art history is, in fact, powerful. You're not some kind of shrinking violet that meditates alone, by himself. You have to feel that a work of art is good to the degree that it gets out there and moves itself up in the world. Otherwise, you wouldn't have gone to all that trouble to get there. Lichtenstein was a college professor, he taught painting at Rutgers, and he wouldn't have become a New York heavy if that didn't mean something to him, aesthetically. You see what I mean? It's sort of a political force. You're a superstar, and one day you make a decision and business then tails off. People aren't buying anymore which is okay, that's one thing. But you're in the position where you got yourself into thinking that your art was good because it sold, because it actually got out there and moved. It's a very objective worldly view: 'My art is good because it's in all the fucking textbooks and all the magazines and it wouldn't be there if it wasn't good, and good art has got to get out there and do that, otherwise, it's chicken shit art and doesn't take its chances'. So what do you do when you get up there and everything turns to gold? I imagine it must weigh heavily.

TS - It seems like a lot of young artists say, 'I don't want that. If it happens to me, if they come along and knight me, I'll get behind it. I don't want to hustle it'.

PP - They don't know what the fuck they're talking about at that stage.



TS - There's a lot of people saying that.

PP - I've got some women in my class who are very art-for-art's-sake, but their husbands are dermatologists, see, and they don't have to worry about business. They don't have to...

TK - I would really like to be free from pressures like having to worry about other places to get money to buy materials, to eat, whatever. When you get to the point where your entire life depends upon the income of your art, it starts to decline, because, let's say, you're going into something which is unsalable. Then you're locked in. You've locked yourself into a style from which you won't be able to escape from because there's this five story building in New York which has to have the rent paid. It seems that if you could make enough income to pay your expenses but not go into superstar status, where your living keeps increasing your cost to the degree that you're forced to continue painting salable paintings...

PP - Yeah, but the trouble is... your desires do not stay stationary. I've never known anybody who said all I want is ten thousand dollars a year, and they got ten thousand dollars a year, and that was all they wanted, including me.

TK - It'd be kinda nice if you could always get what you need. If you could just keep the wants down to the need level... Through the art, you are separating your consciousness from the consciousness of the environment, which has to do with the whole American ethic of money and success and status and prestige. It seems that there are a lot of people who are rejecting those kinds of... that kind of a consciousness.

PP - There's all kinds of things to want besides those material things. You start off by saying, 'All I want is enough money to do my art'. Okay, then you get enough money to do your art. Then you're confronted with the fact that other people's art is getting out there and doing something with the real world, and yours isn't, right? And you say, 'Shit, I want my art to do that, too.' Not because you want a lot of money, but you just say, 'You know, I want to say something. I want people to hear it. More than anything, I want to test it out. I'm not so sure my stuff is really as good as I think it is unless I get some feedback.' That business of feedback, to an extent, necessarily

means making it, you know. You start getting competitive. The money will be a by-product.

TS - Would one of the reasons . . . the reason that you put out . . . paint . . . be that you feel you have information that you can't say but that visually delivers so that somebody can pick up on it if they know the language that you're presenting?

PP - Do you know Greg Card?

TS - No, I don't.

PP - I just asked because he said exactly the same thing. He published a book about mystical number systems and things like that. And I was wondering if he put it out as a justification of his own paintings. He said no, he regarded it as a kind of service; it was because he could no longer keep this information wrapped up inside of him. And so he had to get it out, and I believe him. He's not a rip-off person. My reason is more of a guilt thing. I've been conceptually ripping off a lot of painters with a lot of blood in their work for years and years and years. In other words, I never repaid anybody. I never paid de Kooning one cent for all the de Koonings I saw and learned from. I picked up and learned from them and then tried to put something back into my own pictures. So leaving my pictures in a closet, and not trying to get them out there and say anything to anybody, would not be ethical. You know what I mean? You've been living off the stream. You've got to put your thing back into it. You owe that . . . I like being public. I can paint with people around. I can talk and paint. I listen to the ball game and paint. It doesn't bother me to hang my pictures in a room and have somebody say bad things about it. I enjoy it. Even if you don't like that stuff, even if you can't stand it, even if it's the most repugnant thing in the world for you to do, even if you just tremble, you still owe it to all those people from whom you have taken spirit or the stream of art or art history. You've got a stake in it, and you owe it to get out there and do something with it. It doesn't mean that you have to be a three hundred thousand a year person. I had an argument with Dina Dar, the one who does the paintings with the little Gertrude Stein cultural references . . .

TS - Dina Dar, that's a great name.

PP - She thinks that everything is over-

commercialized. But I'm not talking about painting to hustle and make some money. I'm talking about, goddamn it, standing up in public for something. You know, take your lumps with everybody else, take your shots and take your lumps. You just owe it to the stream. Otherwise you're not going to contribute anything. It's a very simple kind of thing. The film-makers should show their films, the novelists should try to get their books published, musicians should try to perform, and composers should try to get their works performed.

TK - Maybe, to the degree where you don't put your art in front of the public, you're stopping the art continuum. You're allowing a stalemate. Essentially, you function as a member of society, whether you like it or not. You're in it and either you can keep taking from it and taking from it and never put anything back or you can start putting something back in.

PP - Artists, of all the people in the arts, I think are the least connected (maybe musicians and composers), the least connected with any feeling that they're a part of the culture as a whole, and that they have a responsibility or duty to the whole intellectual tone of the city, or the nation, or the state, or the fabric. In L.A., artists especially are like that. They're satisfied to be just sort of hip entertainers, really sort of court jesters for a few rich people, and they like that. They'll do something interesting in glass, bounce lights off it, and the patrons say, 'Okay'. But the artists refuse to admit that that thing might mean something, that it might be a cultural statement.

TK - What degree do you deal with content and what degree do you not? Where do you draw a line and say that this has content and this does not?

PP - Everything does.

TS - I think at times we have to be aware that content can get in the way and we have to be reminded that content doesn't make it, times when you have to get rid of those statements and just deal with paint and after you've served your little apprenticeship there, then become more conscious of content.

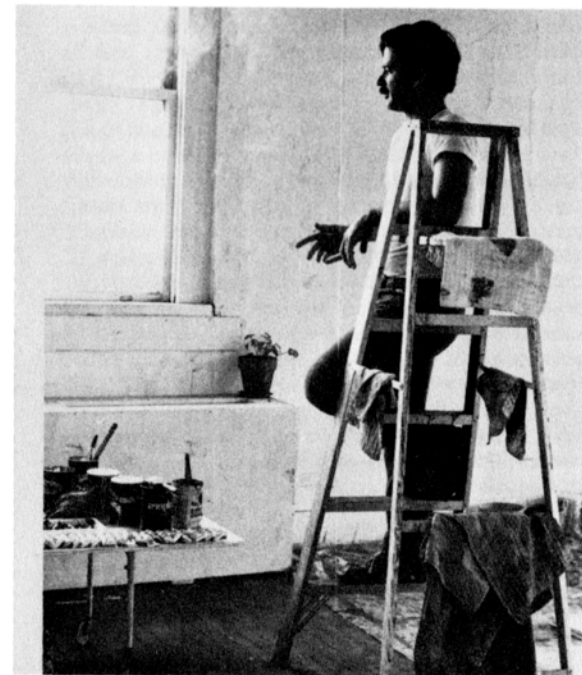
TK - That's content in the sense of storytelling.

TS - No, just in the sense of pure painting and not being concerned with content or what else you may think you're doing.

PP - That's the kind of content that's sort of the direct equivalent kind of thing: 'I want to be a humanist artist so therefore my art will have pictures of humans in it'. It's this-stands-for-this, you know, that only gets in the way.

TS - Something that seems interesting to me is that people confuse social politics with art politics. They look at society and negate what they see as anachronisms, then they apply the same logic to art, but within an art context there really are no anachronisms.

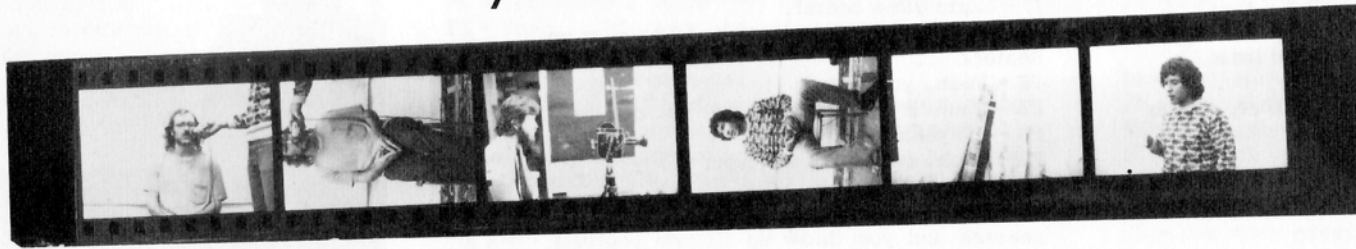
PP - No, there aren't. There is an attitude in art that you can do whatever you want to, that when you're acting, you're acting as a free agent. But even when you're doing the Minimal cube you're acting under a certain stylistic idea of what art can be in a society. I have to go run an errand before five o'clock.



G+

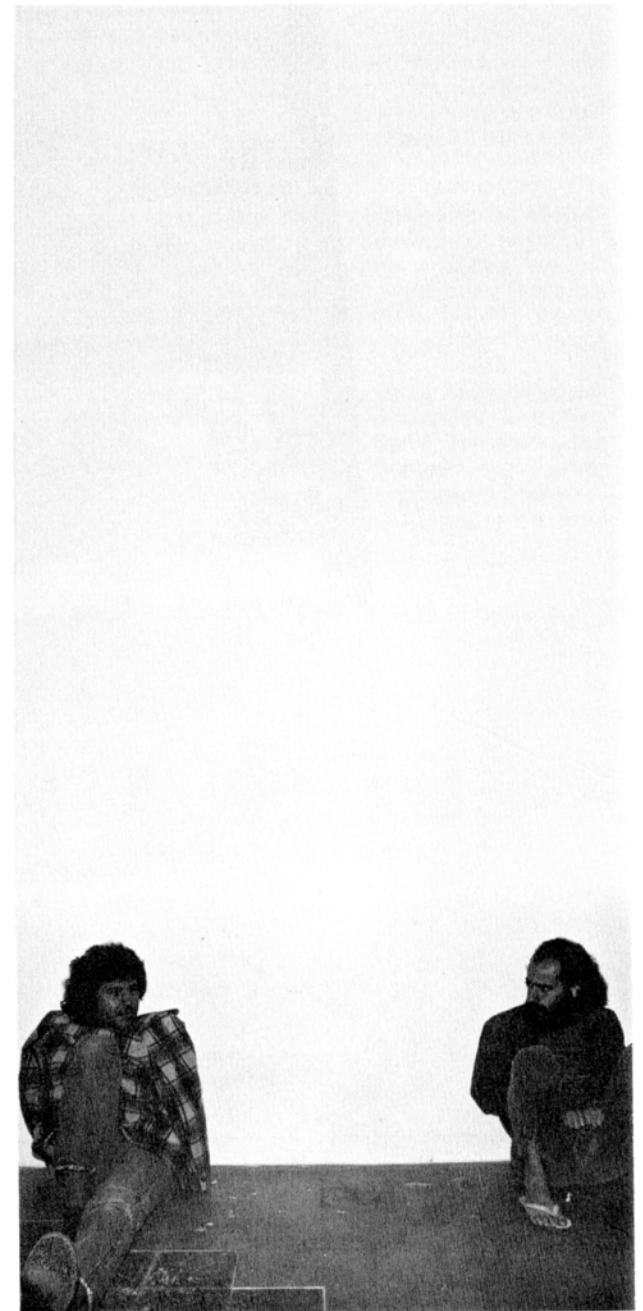


Fyodor Zest on Art Education



IJ - Hey Paul, what is this?
PB - What?
IJ - What is this?
PB - You mean this?
IJ - Yeah.
PB - I found it out on the street. Picked it up out of the gutter. What's it look like? It's a catalogue.
IJ - Of what?
PB - The faculty show.
IJ - There's no pictures in there.
PB - Have you seen the show?
IJ - Yeah. How much did this cost?
PB - A quarter.
IJ - It cost a quarter! It's a rape. How's your job?
PB - Ummmmm.....
IJ - You quit.
PB - Pretty slow now. Today I only did an hour's work. I slept most of the day.
IJ - Get paid for the whole day?
PB - Of course.....get paid for forty hours a week.
IJ - You're making good money, huh?
PB - No.....
IJ - Is it hard work?
PB - No, no I'm not.....Making two eighty-five an hour.
IJ - That's about a hundred a week.
PB - Ninety-five to ninety-seven dollars.
IJ - That's not bad.....Saving all your money?
PB - Well, I've got a dentist bill coming up. Two hundred and fifty dollars....got to pay that off.
IJ - What's that, about four hundred dollars you've saved?
PB - I don't know.....that's a possibility.....butyou know....as soon as I pay off my dentist bill I can put some money aside for a bike.....
What you been up to Tim?
OG - He's been a shit....making everyone around him depressed.
PB - There's a lot of reasons to be depressed..... good reasons....excuses....just read a paper.
OG - He did a painting.
PB - This the same piece I saw?
OG - A real nice tasty little piece.
IJ - Same painting....I just changed it a little.
PB - How'd you change it?
IJ - I did three more paintings on top of that....The third one was a charm.
PB - What size is that piece?
IJ - Four by nine.....four and a half by nine.
PB - What'd you use?
IJ - Oil paint.
PB - Oil? Whew.
IJ - Painted in oil....HEY! Ramon, que PASA, man?

FZ - Hey....I saw your buddy today....both your buddies....all three your buddies.
IJ - Who was that?
FZ - Kim....she was at the nursery.
PB - She's not a buddy of mine.
FZ - Well....too bad....two out of three isn't bad ...yeah....that's too much man....I was surprised to find you around.
IJ - We're always around.
FZ - Is that yours?
IJ - No.
FZ - It's still wet....or is that varnish?
IJ - It's Bob's.
OG - It was here when we came in.
IJ - It's still wet.
FZ - Still wet?....Pretty nice....That other one's pretty nice.....Did you get your Rhoplex?
IJ - No, is it in?
FZ - Yeah.....It's in a big cardboard barrel. Just take the top off and you can scoop the shit out..... It's a barrel, man....It's cardboard, man....like a soap barrel.
IJ - What are we paying for that?
FZ - Twenty-eight dollars.
IJ - That's pretty good.
FZ - Sure....fourteen gallons, or whatever it comes out to.
OG - I thought you guys were going to get a fifty-five gallon drum.
FZ - It is, but there's four of us getting it. If the thing works out, you know, I'd like to get a barrel for myself.
OG - Tim made himself a waterbed.
IJ - You know, a heated waterbed.
FZ - You made one? I don't think I could sleep on anything else anymore.
IJ - Sure is nice.
FZ - Yeah, I don't think I could sleep on a regular bed anymore.
IJ - Gotta heater?
FZ - No.
IJ - Gotta get a heater.
FZ - Is that right? Is that what I have to get.....a heater?
PB - Yeah, you gotta.
FZ - There's also an oscillator you can get.
PB - Oh yeah?
FZ - Yeah, it's pretty strange.
IJ - Put milk in it.
FZ - No, you lay back and what happens is you get seasick and you throw up all over yourself. It's a neat trick. No....it's only this big and they want ten zillion dollars for it....You need two oscillators,



right, and a capacitor and that's all. It costs them three. . . .thirty-five, forty cents to make it and they're marketing it for a hundred dollars.

IJ - Sounds pretty good.

FZ - It's the Innerspace Company. They won't sell you any item on it....It's one unit and that's the only way you can buy that shit....Those people are real capitalists.....Why do you guys look so serious?.....It's amazing!

IJ - Serious?

FZ - Yeah, you guys all look so serious.

PB - This guy's on a bumper.

FZ - Oh, is he?

PB - Yeah.

FZ - Who him? What are you bummed out about, man? What cause do you have to be bummed out? Huh? Fuck.....Now that should bum me out but I don't get bummed out, and here you're bummed out you ain't even fucked up and I'm fucked up and I ain't bummed out....What's your fucking scene man? Shit.....Sure hope that isn't oil paint....

PB - I don't think so.

FZ - No....I'm not bummed out now....no....What are you bummed out about man? Cool your nuts and lie down.

IJ - Uh....

FZ - So, what happened? Is it your job?

IJ - It all started when I was sixteen....

FZ - Started?....No, what's wrong?....Well, you gonna tell me, or is it a secret?

IJ - It's a secret.

FZ - Well....I don't know. When you get bummed out, at the least, you have a moral obligation to share it with everybody. Burden 'em with it, man. What do you need, Psychology-three? Or is that five. . . .No, man, you shouldn't be bummed out. You're not a concept artist. . . .Those are the guys who have the think problem.....Oh, I didn't get any mail, did I?

IJ - Somebody got a letter from a doctor....That's not for you is it?

FZ - That was me. Doctor E. Zola....It was a tube, man. It was my Marilyn Monroe poster.

IJ - Naw, you didn't get that.

FZ - Huh?

IJ - You didn't get that.

FZ - That wasn't it?

IJ - No.

FZ - Oh.....Yeah, there's a tube that's going to be coming over there....

IJ - It was a bill.

FZ - Oh! I don't want no fucking bill.

IJ - It was for a Mondo Reyes or something like that.

FZ - No, there's a cardboard tube going to be comingIt's about that big, it's got a Monroe poster in it....The only way I could get it for free was to tell them I was a doctor....otherwise it would have cost me three or four dollars....When I called the guy up....told him I would order a bunch of stuff from him....Also my social security....you know, what is that card?is that a social security card? Yeah....Hey! You heard about me running into that car?....that lady?....Yeah....that might come.

PB - What happened?

FZ - Uh....a lady ran into me and she accused me of running into her with my bicycle and destroying her car and she said she was going to sue me.

PB - You were on a bike?

FZ - Sure....It's all I drive....Cut me right off and said I ran into her. You know.

PB - A motorbike?

FZ - NO, a fucking bicycle.

PB - A fucking bicycle!

FZ - Yeah, it was weird....No, she asked me if I was alright....I says 'YEAH I'm alright, YOU alright!'Yeah....And so I pedaled away....And I was coming up in front of the old studio complex and she comes varoooooom, like the cops, man....Give me your drivers license....I ain't got a drivers license. I ride a bike....so....I give her a card I had made up that said 'Emile Zola' on it....with your address

IJ - Emile Zola?

FZ - Yeah....I was trying to get pissed off at her, you know, to show her how fucked she was, but I started laughing, man, I couldn't stop laughing.... She said, 'You think this is a big joke'....I said, 'YOU'LL find out'....Oh, that was weird....And then Toby's dog took a shit in front of someone's estate down there, so the guy was gonna run him home....Toby took his dog past his studio, kept on going, and the guy gave up the chase....oh, wow.

PB - Where is this?

FZ - Phelan....off Artesia.

PB - Yeah, that's where Toby has his studio.

FZ - Yeah....It's near the green apartment....the store front job, man.

PB - Yeah....I been there.

FZ - Well....That's where all this action is taking place....It's a notorious neighborhood anyway....The dregs of society are just....all over.....godIt's really fine. You going to school Paul?

PB - I'm working full time.

FZ - Oh, yeah? What do you do?

PB - I do technical illustration.

FZ - Oh, yeah?

PB - Paste up and design.

FZ - Oh.

PB - Layouts, field graphs.

FZ - Pay very well?

PB - Two eighty-five an hour....I make about ninety-seven a week. I work forty hours....full time It's the first steady job I've had.

FZ - Well....I'm still a virgin....I've never had a full time job....no way....nowaynoway....I'll hold out 'til guaranteed annual income....

PB - I'm taking sculpture....I haven't done anything yet.

FZ - Well how could you? Working forty hours a week. How can you do anything.....You taking it here or at Long Beach?

PB - Uomoto.

FZ - Uomoto-o-o-o-o-o....You ought to get next to the cat....Go up to his house.....'cause he isn't into that stuff, he's into neon. He's got all the gear, bending it, filling it with gas.....Pretty swift cat.

PB - Yeah I....I've talked to him....I been doing a lot of painting....Hey! I might apply to Cal Arts.. ..If I can save up enough money.

FZ - Yeah....The place is expensive....You oughta ummmm....What do you wanta....You wanta go to school to get some connections, is that it?.....In the art biz?

PB - Uh, I want to go to school and get a.....get a degree.

FZ - Oh....You want a degree. Yeah, you can get out of there really fast. But if you want connections you ought to go to Irvine.

PB - Who's at Irvine?

FZ - Well, people that are really making it right now, like Moses, Irwin, Bell, and....and they get a lot of visiting New Yorkers.

PB - At Irvine?

FZ - Yeah....all the time.

PB - What about Cal Arts? What kind of place is that?

FZ - Ha....It's fucked.

PB - Is it really?

FZ - Yes....If you want a degree fast....like I could have got one in a year.

PB - Is that right?

FZ - Yeah, they'll put you on an accelerated program if they think your work is up to it.

PB - Cal Arts?

FZ - Yes, I don't know about Irvine.

PB - You were accepted at Cal Arts, weren't you? But you turned it down.

FZ - Yeah....They accepted me but I rejected them

.... sent them a rejection slip.... a drop card. That's what I should have done.... sent them a drop card.. .. oh, no.... yeah.... that's right.... that's what happened.... I dropped them.

PB - You dropped Cal Arts. That's pretty heavy.

FZ - Yeah.... but, uh, like.... I can see going to an institution like Irvine just to meet those turkeys and.. you know.. con them.. you know.. just seduce them into letting you in their..uh.. stream..'cause those guys.. you know.. that's the only way you get in there, man, is through political channels... Your work is one thing but unless you know the fuckers you aren't anywhere in the art biz.... so that's.... that's about the only thing I can see to school, unless you want to be a good student or a teacher.. and I.. you know.. that's.. that's where you belong..... It teaches you how to be a teacher or a good student.. .. Yeah.... You could get out of Cal Arts really fast.

PB - I don't know too much about Cal Arts or Irvine.... the faculty or what's.... what's happening.

FZ - Well..uh.. fortunately neither do I and I can't answer any of your questions....

PB - I thought the faculty at Cal Arts was supposed to be good and I thought their..like.. grading system was relaxed and....

FZ - Well that's everywhere now.. upper division... you know.. even at Long Beach.... You don't have to study it if you lie good enough..'cause.. you know .. I mean, face it, those people don't like to show up for work either, they want to do their own work, you know. Some of those people at Irvine never show up, you know, you might have two meetings a year.

PB - You're not going to school?

FZ - No.

PB - Are you going to?

FZ - No..... No I'll..... I won't go back to school unless it means I'll get a fortune from it or something like that.... or I'd go to a better workshop, like Innerscity Institute, or something like that.... You heard of the Innerscity Workshop?

PB - Yeah.

FZ - Yeah, well there's some really fine people there.... mimes and stuff from Europe....

PB - Is that what you're into now?

FZ - No, but, if I got into it that's something I could see was valid as a learning tool.... 'cause I think, undoubtedly, that there are some things they can teach me.

SD - You see Toby?

FZ - Um, I saw him this afternoon.... we're going to a movie tonight, but I told him the guy was as loose as his friend Paul, that it wasn't one hundred

percent sure.... and I told him that if the guy didn't show, you know, I wouldn't be there....

SD - Toby left here about twenty minutes ago. Said he was going to pick up Ramon right now.

FZ - He's gonna what?

SD - He's going to pick YOU up!

FZ - Did he have a car?.... Oh no.... you're joking.... see, I wasn't there.... I had to come back from the beach, right, and I was supposed to meet this guy at the beach and we were going to come by and pick up Toby and then we were gonna go 'cause.... SD - Maybe that's where he was going.... back to his studio.

FZ - Yeah, that's where he was supposed to be.... I told him it wasn't one hundred percent sure.... He'll understand.... What's he gonna do? Kick my ass? He doesn't have a gun.... shit.... He drove up here, huh? He said he was going to ride his bike....

SD - That's the reason....

FZ - Okay.

SD - Well, he changed his mind.

FZ - I don't know what to say.

PB - What do you mean?

FZ - What do you mean what do I mean?

PB - I thought you said something about political...

FZ - Hey, that's what it is, man. The art biz is, one, economics, and two, you know, politics, and maybe there's one percent art....

PB - What's this politics about art?

FZ - I'm talking about art business.... you know... showing your work, etcetera.... getting paid for it .. getting shown.. that's politics, that's economics that has nothing to do with art.... zip zap.

PB - What does politics have to do with getting into Cal Arts?

FZ - Well, everything, you know. Like the first time I went over there I met a young woman, and she did everything but tell me to get the fuck out.... She wasn't cordial about it at all. She was a core feminist, you know, and.... I was looking at her like I look at people, and she didn't like it at all, and she got very defensive and offended by it.... and.... she told me I wouldn't be happy there, she told me the chances of my getting accepted were very slim.

PB - Is she an instructor there?

FZ - Yeah, right.... and so I, you know, laughed at her.... I got an application and I sent a couple of slides to this guy whose name I can't recall.... and then he called me on the phone and told me he wanted me to bring some work over there.... I told him I had been there once before and that I was pretty dubious about going back to school.... Then he came to my home... to look at my work.... Then the next thing I

know I'm registering for school, and I see all these people around with their good intentions and smiling faces and expectations, and I just flipped them off, got in my car and waved goodbye.

PB - Who's this guy you talked to?

FZ - I don't know his name.... I could find it 'cause it's on some information that I've got.... Yeah, they said, you know, they'd put me on an accelerated program and all this other shit....

PB - They give you a scholarship or....

FZ - Yeah.

PB - Are you.... thinking about....

FZ - No..... no.... because, one, I didn't want to teach, and two, I wasn't particularly interested in being a student, you know. The identity is getting too cheap.... That's the way I feel about it..... Well.... Are you interested in ultimately having your work shown?

PB - Hope to.... yeah....

FZ - Well then, you know, you better get into politics .. I'm not jiving you.. shit no, man.. You think your work is.. is.. Your work might be great, you know.. You fall in with some of these people, man.... You say HERE.... They don't want to talk to you.... no way.... If you know somebody, you don't even have to talk to them, you know, you're in.... How do you think all those people get in?.... Like, you've heard of Jack Glenn I'm sure.... Seventy-five percent of the people that he has, the new people, are from Irvine.... Why is that? That's because he handles Moses, Irwin, Bell, you know.. Jim Dine, all those turkeys.... They're all buddies, you know.... ex-students, helpers, groupies....

PB - Groupies?

FZ - Yeah.... That's the key.... be somebody's groupie.... And if they dig you, you've got it made, for sure.. when you have some of those connections .. you know.... Use those people, man. What the fuck, they use you when you're a student. Right! I think it should be a reciprocal thing....

PB - Who's this Jack Glenn?

FZ - Jack Glenn's a gallery owner.... He's got about four of them now.. you know.. They're like franchises now.... you know.. 'Pizza Man - He delivers'.... Right.... He shows very high quality art.. New York oriented shit.... But the new people that....

PB - You been to that place in Corona Del Mar?

FZ - What's that? Yeah, I've been to his gallery. Yeah.... I saw Jack Tworokv..... I thought it was really fine.... I think that that old man really has a lot on the ball.... I also think he ought to marry Agnes Martin.... No.... I thought they'd spend their remaining years together in just..uh.. pure romantic

.....Yeah, it's a pretty nice place.

PB - So I should get the....

FZ - Yeah. Go to Irvine.

PB - Play that game.

FZ - Yeah....you know....Don't fall behind it, don't be shy. You can afford to be intellectually arrogant ...afford to just dismiss people..you know..before they end up heroes and stuff....so....The time is right.... It's right now.... So you better get 'em before they all fade away....because everybody's entitled to fifteen minutes of fame....Just get your things together.

PB - So, you think by knowing these instructors, the main people up at Irvine, I'll have a chance at....

FZ - Oh, you're sure to have a chance. But what I'm saying is that it might take a long, long time and it'll be a hard thing to do and cause a lot of anxieties....

PB - What would you do to get your work shown?

FZ - The same thing.

PB - The same thing?

FZ - Yeah. I'd go to Irvine....Well first I'd find out who was where.... you know, at UCLA, or if they were at North High School, that's where I'd be.... you know....And I'd be stroking them all the way....for sure... 'cause that's what they want to hear anyway..you know....It's either use or get used.

PB - Pretty weird....I don't understand that.

FZ - What about that don't you understand?

PB - I don't know.... I just can't understand the whole thing....the system.

FZ - That's exactly what it is, a system. Yeah, it's an economic system, like the government..like any other institution...A business..It's just a business....And the fact that art is a business is just incidental..you know..First of all it's business..How much sensitivity do you think those gallery owners, operators, have? zip.... Otherwise they'd be painting or something....They wouldn't be in any business.. They're making money.. That's where it is, man....You've got to deal with that reality.... unless you're happy with the way things are going, you don't care about having your work shown, you don't care about making a lot of money, or being famous, or any of that stuff, then there's no problems at all. You just continue at some task to get enough money to do your own work....you know....which is really fine.

PB - Is that how you feel?

FZ - I don't care right now....The only thing I cared about last week was getting the Rhoplex. I got that now, so I don't care.....My problems are really basic, you know....like, you know, paint..stuff

like that...This other stuff doesn't mean that much.

PB - Well that's....that's pretty interesting.

FZ - Don't sound like art, huh?

PB - I think you're putting me on.

FZ - You think so?

PB - Yeah, you know, what I heard about Cal Arts was that it was a pretty good school, it's just....

FZ - Well, like school is school...You know what I mean? School is school is school is school....It hasn't progressed to the point where it's a learning center....When that happens it will be worthwhile....Maybe it is worthwhile for something....I don't know....I guess trade schools are pretty good.... Or if there's, like, some gear you want made available to you, that's pretty tight. Like if you're into video or something like that...you go to a school that's got all that gear, which Cal Arts does, they got surplus gear.

PB - There's going to be a video show at L.A. County. Did you hear about that? In about a couple of weeks....supposed to be a good video show....video tapes by Bay Area residents and Los Angeles..... Can't wait 'til the Olitski show comes to Pasadena.

FZ - They had some Olitski's at Nick's Gallery.

PB - Nicks?.....Oh yeah?

FZ - Yeah....Yeah, they were there....when were they there....I think it was June....They had one, two, three, four....they had about six or eight of his paintings there.

PB - Recent?

FZ - Yeah....They were all recent.....They were like....well, some of them....He was using this foam, and mixes it with pigment..shoots it on..the surface is really thick..and then he had some funny little edge treatments..Didn't make it on a couple of paintings, but they did on some others...There's a real thin line in his work. Some of it really tends to be decorative, but the ones that are nice are JUST GORGEOUS.....

PB - Mark's coming back Thanksgiving.

FZ - Where's he gonna stay?

PB - With his sister I guess.

FZ - His sister still around here?

PB - Yes.

FZ - His brother-in-law still living with 'em?

PB - I don't think so....I think they split....but his sister's living in Torrance and....

FZ - Have you seen her?

PB - Yeah.

FZ - Is there a way you can get her phone number?

PB - Yeah. I'll get it for you.

FZ - Yeah. I sure would appreciate it.

PB - He's supposed to come back.....when's

Thanksgiving?

FZ - Soon. I've seen pumpkins all around.

IJ - That's Halloween.

FZ - Oh yeah....I thought the new moon and the pumpkin was Thanksgiving.

IJ - Thanksgiving's about five weeks.

FZ - Oh.

PB - You heard about Mark's accident haven't you?

FZ - No, I haven't....haven't heard anything about Mark in a year....

PB - Last summer he got his jaw broken....His jaw was all smashed up....Broke his head open.

FZ - That's awful!

PB - Concussion....

FZ - Was he in the hospital or anything?

PB - Yeah. He was in the hospital about two or three weeks..had his jaw wired up..eating out of those tubes with a straw.

FZ - How did it happen?

PB - He got in a fight in a basketball game.

FZ - Did the whole team jump on him?

PB - One guy hit him...hit him in the jaw and broke his jaw.

FZ - Mark's not the kind of guy that would....

PB - No, he's not....This guy came up behind him and hit him..and Mark hit the floor and he had his mouth open when the guy hit him..so it just broke his jaw like that, hit the floor, broke his head.... and then he was knocked out completely and then he was in shock for about an hour.

FZ - Was this in Ohio?

PB - New Mexico....Albuquerque....University...

FZ - Is he going to the university?

PB - No. He was just playing basketball in the gym ..and...so, he was in the hospital for a few weeks and got out....went to Ohio, messed around....

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Business, Politics, Painting, Zen: a three-way conversation

TG - I don't see how you can make art if you're a hero worshiper. It seems antithetical to me, or at least, if the heroes you worship are in art. That's a bad position to have to be put into. I feel sorry for those old fuckers really being put on the spot with people asking them stupid questions.

RK - It's the same regardless of who's up there. You can have somebody like Judd, somebody like Plagens, somebody like Bueys, it's the same old shit. It just depends on where you're coming from. All those people just have different bases.

TG - Well, Bueys was a teacher.

RK - Oh yeah, he's into that. He feels that it's necessary. Thinks there's got to be a cultural revolution. He's heavy into that revolution shit. If any of his students were sympathetic to the whole idea of revolution he'd probably cheer 'em on, but for someone who isn't into politics it's probably pretty awkward.

TG - Do you think revolutionaries work in a fucking school?

RK - Yeah. Students are the only sometimes available, sometimes sympathetic, audience.

TG - You do?

RK - Yeah....to make money.

TG - Student radicals and revolutionary teachers, what are they doing in school? That's working within the system, which is a pretty liberal concept. You can't confront the system by working in it, taking their money and then pretending you're shitting on them. It's corrupt, it's stupid.

TS - That's liberal within a social context. It does not have anything to do with art.

TG - Doesn't it?

RK - The way those people handle it, it has a great deal to do with art.

TS - How can you say somebody's a liberal in art?

TG - He comes down on the students for being lame, but he's just as lame as they are.

RK - Depending on where you're coming from, it's all socio-political. The whole idea of having a strike in New York was against the galleries, the art landlords.

TG - Yeah, but, they had all those other people lined up.

RK - They had people like Andre. Andre is a Marxist.

TG - Well, Andre's showing in the galleries and museums too. So what the....The guy is just as corrupt.

RK - The minute you show in a gallery, you're corrupt.

TG - No you're not. Not necessarily. If you

realize where you're at you're not going to be. If you're getting into Wilder's and you say you're against galleries, then you're corrupt. I mean, how can you say that? It's obviously bullshit.

TS - You may be corrupt socially, but what does that have to do with it?

TG - I mean, you say one thing and you demonstrate another.

RK - Andre might not believe in a few choice galleries pushing their own stuff, propagandizing their particular stable or their particular artist. If you have a show at Wilder's, or something like that, other people are going to be looking at you the same way you're looking at Andre. They'll be looking at you and saying, 'that fucking corrupt, capitalist bastard'.

TS - What is capitalism? What does that have to do with whether or not you show? Social politics and art politics aren't the same.

RK - That's what people like Bueys are all about.

TG - What do you think the main thing of conceptual art is all about?

TS - Maybe that's what their problem is. I don't think it has anything to do with art, per se.

RK - But those people are saying it has everything to do with it.

TG - I don't see how anybody can say that about my stuff. My stuff is apolitical....my stuff does not have any political references.

RK - The way those people feel about it, it's political simply by its existence. It's high art. High art is bourgeois. It belongs in fucking galleries, museums, and rich people's homes. You're going to get your art down in a gallery? No way man. You're deceiving yourself if that's what you think. It's political. It's political in that context because that's how they look at it. You're making high art. You're bourgeois, man. There's no way around it. You're not going to beat that trap unless you want to go to landscape painting and sell them for twenty dollars at Woolworth's.

TG - If you accept art history, if you play the game, then that's where you're at. I'm trying to develop some sort of ahistorical approach. When I try to do a painting I try to do it just as simply as breathing exercises. Just pulling the brush back and forth over the paper, paying attention to it. It doesn't have any references to history....

RK - I know that your own personal activity doesn't. You might say that's an internal situation.

TG -If somebody wants to interpret the result, then that's their problem.

RK - No it isn't. Artists have been saying that for

a long time, that it doesn't matter once you've released your work, made it public, or even completed your work. If somebody wants to wipe their ass with it, or decides to frame it and hang it in their living room, it's completely out of your hands. But, that's what people like Bueys are asking, is it completely out of your hands?

TG - I think my stuff is less an object than the stuff Andre does. My stuff is much more transient than his. It's just newspaper. It's going to just fall apart. It's not going to hold up for any time at all. It's not going to last half the time as a fucking lead plate.

RK - It's a very political move whether or not your own personal activity is or not.

TG - The only thing you can possibly control is your own personal activity.

RK - If you decide you're not going to become part of the system, that you're not going to vote, that you're not going to pay taxes, that you're going to be completely apolitical, that all your actions are apolitical actions; that in itself is a political act.

TG - If you go by Western thought it is, but if you deny that kind of linear thinking then I don't think it's true.

RK - It's a political act simply because, as certain people might state it, there is no way out of it. There is no way out of that particular situation. It has nothing to do with you as a person, or the ideas you're going to have as an individual, or what your particular feelings are, it's simply that your existence is a political existence and you can't beat it. You can deny it. You can deny the existence of politics. You can deny that you are a political being. You can deny that man is political. If you assert your being, it's a political act because you don't exist out of a socio-political context, and that's what they're saying about your art, too. They put you in the framework of a bourgeois idea, and if you make high art you're right there. You're bourgeois. You're elitist. You're really denying the masses. You're going off on some kind of 'art for art's sake' number.

TG - That's control through non-control. There isn't any reason why I would want to change anybody's attitude toward art. There isn't any reason why I'd want to sell my point of view. They're the ones that are into politics. They're into manipulating people. Altering experience, perception, and that kind of stuff, which is very political.

RK - If you show your paintings, you are engaged in that, altering people's perception. Turning them on or turning them off. Exposing yourself. It's the

at asocial and ahistorical statement. Creation ex nihilo.

RK - No way.

TG - I think it might be a possibility, although the notion is an alien thought to our own training.

RK - That's pretty reactionary to say that political art is not art or that political activity is not art. It's a reactionary statement because you're saying that art is something. . . Their concern is still with art. They're not saying that politics is not different than art, they're saying that it's the same thing. A moment ago you were saying that that's not art, that all you wanted to do was art. That's what they are saying. That all they want to do is art, only they're putting art into a different context. It's no longer believing in objects, no longer believing in design, no longer believing in all that aesthetic shit. They feel that aesthetics is just baggage and what you're doing. . . they say who really needs that, who needs that shit.

TG - That's the beauty of it, it just recognizes it's own frivolity.

RK - They're saying that you're hung up on your aesthetics.

TG - I'm saying that they're hung up on their aesthetics. I'm not hung up on them. I accept them.

RK - They're saying that a certain kind of painting, narrative painting for example, is no longer viable. The very political artists would look at conceptualists, and at painting, and at sculpture, and they would say that that's all bullshit.

TS - Do you think that most people still care about politics? It's passe.

RK - You're talking about Washington politics, international politics.

TS - No, I'm talking about art politics. I'm talking about projecting social politics into art politics. Being conservative or for the status quo inside of art doesn't have anything to do with being conservative or for the status quo outside of art.

RK - That's a reactionary statement.

TS - Is it? To a large extent that's what art is. But, avant gardism in the arts might be the most conservative stance that you could have right now.

RK - I don't know if it has anything to do with avant gardism unless you're thinking historically, and then you say, well, they're political movements.

TS - I can't help but think historically in art, in historical terms at the moment, because you keep laying it on me.

RK - What?

TS - Politics. I don't want to talk about politics.

RK - What you're saying is that there is art and there is politics.

TS - What I'm saying is that there's art and then there is political art. There is art in politics. There is politics in art. There's social politics. There's society. There's the world and all that stuff, but they're not necessarily connected. Being an accountant can have its political moves within accounting, but that does not relate specifically. I don't believe you can apply socio-political terms and have them mean the same thing. You can't apply socio-political terms to art history, it doesn't work. You come across with too many logical contradictions. You can define it politically from outside but you're not doing anything because it doesn't have anything to do with when you get down and paint, and when you look at a painting, unless it's a political painting, a baby burning or something. That's why people aren't dealing with figurative art and heavy humanistic statements. They're not humanistic statements within art but are outside of art.

RK - What do you call. . . when you say 'I want to do this painting, laying down the paint, experiencing the painting, getting behind the painting, because it gives me nothing better to do. It's doing something, you know. There's nothing else to do, you may as well do that. It's not important, it's not any more important than anything else you might decide to do'. And all those things. I consider those things pretty humanistic.

TS - I do consider them humanistic.

RK - Nobody cares about that flag-waving humanism anymore.

TS - A lot of people do, and that's where the confusion is.

RK - We turn right around and get right into it.

TG - What's that?

RK - Art for art's sake. . . It's just politics. People aren't into 'art' anymore. . . a lot of people talk about the same stuff you're talking about, fooling around, secrets, mysteries, intuition, and shit like that.

TS - How can you paint unless you work with intuition? How can you paint unless you just deal with process? How can you pre-conceive a painting?

RK - There's a lot of ways you can paint without dealing with the process.

TS - How can you pre-conceive a painting? It's impossible.

RK - You can pre-conceive a painting.

TS - No you can't, because at that point of conception you're in the painting process.

TG - I think you can develop a certain amount of pre-conception.

TS - But that's all part of the process.

TG - But that depends on what emphasis of the process you're talking about. I think if you just deal with it as process it becomes intuition, but I think if you start dealing with intent you can just about figure what the painting's going to look like. You can just about compute it.

TS - Yeah, what you're doing is working on it. You're still working on it, you just have it once removed from the final object.

RK - That's the concept. If you think other people's thinking is old, you'd better look at your own, because it's right there also.

TG - I'm not looking for any solutions. I don't want to solve anything.

TS - Yeah, but that's a way of solving things.

TG - The only thing I'm solving is some sort of psychological problem. I'm escaping into art, but I don't know what that has to do with art issues.

TS - That is an art issue.

TG - YOU think it is. It's an art issue for me, but I don't know if it is, per se.

TS - Well if it's an art issue for you, it's an art issue for you, and then it's an art issue for everybody. You're part of the art community.

TG - A pretty insignificant part.

RK - The insignificant majority.

TS - I base my significance of a piece of art on whether there is anything there that I can use.

RK - Sounds like the same old stuff to me. When you tune into your paintings, you're saying that it matters to you whether this is this much or that much, and these are subtle personal distinctions that someone makes, and he doesn't know from which source. . . from what source these qualifications are made. You're the source but you don't know what the ultimate source is if somebody asks you the question 'how do you do this?'. Well, just pick a word. What do you want? Instinct? What do you want to use? Intuition? What do you want to use? Mystery? It's the same thing. Just pick a half a dozen words and say which one you want to use, 'cause what we were talking about the other day, language as people commonly use it, just gets in the way. It's pretty inaccurate. People relate to it in different ways. That's why you have to say 'which word do you want?'. How can you make those critical judgments? How do you arrive at a rational justification for why something is there? But we're talking about critical distinctions. In your case, how do you make those critical surface

distinctions? How do you make spatial distinctions? I think that what a lot of people think, or are reacting against, are people like Greenberg and the whole sixties kind of attitude. Just because Greenberg started to nail some things down doesn't mean that it isn't the same old shit. All that mystery, all that taste, all that sensibility, is just the same old shit.

TG - The only problem with Greenberg is that when he nailed it all down he made it boring. As soon as you could read about it in a book....who the fuck cares about it anymore as soon as it's all mapped out. It's just a fucking cliché. I'm not looking for the solutions in books. I'd much rather paint. It's too fucking easy. Why the hell would I want to go around worrying about my escape? That's just not productive....reading books to try to validate and qualify and solve problems that exist, to a great extent, because you read those books. I don't want to be a warehouse of information. The least stupid thing you can be is gullible. The stupidest thing you can do is gather information and try not to be gullible and try to warehouse information. It's a consumer attitude. Defeat somebody with your information, scare 'em with it, whip your books out and....

TS - You're just getting into value judgments, TG - I don't think it's that necessary to have your own value judgments. I think it's extremely necessary not to have someone else's. That's the thing about heroes. If you're a hero worshipper, you're just setting yourself up for disappointment because the viable information this week may be obsolete next week. I think in a society where you're encouraged to find an identity you just individuate yourself into obscurity. Like excelling as an athlete, something like that, you're just getting tighter into the club. You're not excelling, separating yourself, you're just getting more involved....any kind of competition is the same.

RK - That's the whole existential number, an identity, disappearing into identity....existentialism extolls the individual....that's why it's so palatable in the West, it concentrates on the individual.

TG - One of the things you have to watch out for in existentialism and Marxism is that it's a justification for our situation....

RK - There's no question about it. Free enterprise is really an existential number. There is an ulterior motive for art, you know, in Western countries.... as opposed to Marxist countries.

TG - Are you kidding me?

RK - Oh, fuck yes, there's that extolling the individual, putting a premium on uniqueness.

TG - What I mean is not that there isn't an ulterior motive, but, why do you think there is one in Marxist countries? I think that is purely propaganda....

RK - Because in this country it's.... I'll say Western countries....genius....individual uniqueness....creativity, originality, all those terms....be your own man, be an individual, do your own thing....I, myself, etcetera, ad infinitum, ad nauseum....Whereas, in the Soviet Union, that's why their art is so poor. That's why we think it's so crummy, because their ulterior motive is NOT the individual....but an abstract thing called society....Books are good when they don't promote an author but they promote an idea that contributes to whoever happens to be in, like Stalin, or whatever. Plays are good, paintings are good, literature is good, ballet is good, and the motive isn't individual performance, it doesn't point to the individual. It points to....in the case of communism, to the state....a particular ideology....and this country is just the exact opposite....do something different, point to yourself not to your country....Identity....you don't want non-identity, you want IDENTITY, that means YOU.

TG - That's why I think it's not a good idea extending the boundaries of art or trying to develop a new idiom, or any of those things. That's the oldest mode of thinking as far as art's concerned.

RK - It's the same stuff.

TG - It has a very conservative attitude. It seems like a dead-end street to me. I mean, how far can it go before it dies....turns back on itself.

RK - Art in the service of mankind, to art in the service of the individual....I think they're both....just....over there....They're still with us, you still think of them, but they're over there, that's all....If there doesn't already exist an alternative to that situation....Well what is the difference whether you're in the service of God or in the service of the state....or you're in the service of a particular ideology....or on the other hand, you're in the service of yourself, the individual. Your freedom, your liberty, your self, your 'hands off' POLICY....art for art's sake. There must be an alternative to those situations.

TG - Art for art's sake's no crime. You're not responsible for society....That's assuming an awfully heavy load, you know. To go around trying to help a society when the fucking society doesn't

want your goddamn help in the first place. They'll be happy if you let them alone....apparently.... They keep on doing the same things don't they?

RK - That's what I said, about these people getting into political things. If you make a statement like that to them, they'll just say you're a pretty good German....

TG - I can say whatever I want! What'll I do, knuckle under? You gonna intimidate me out of my ideals?....I'm sure they could, probably, out think me anyway. Maybe that's the way it is. I don't know. I don't really care. I'm not into being a fucking warehouse of information or arguing or exploiting or....No....I don't want to write any manifestos on art or write criticism or get into any of that bullshit. I mean, like, that's boring. It's the same old shit....Talking about art is just something else to do and if it gets beyond that it becomes sort of perverted....It becomes very serious....Art becomes something beyond what it is....frivolous, most of the fucking time. It's just for bored people to occupy themselves with....I mean this is a pretty bored society, you don't have to fucking look around much to notice that - Disneyland, campers, t.v., movies, and all those time wasters.

TS - But that's just one level of society. There's a lot of people beyond it.

TG - Most people at best are boring....Being bored is kind of a neat thing. Just laying around not doing anything is pretty heavy sometimes.... You can hear a lot more, you can see a lot more, it's really strange what it does to your perception.

TS - It's not boring, huh?

TG - The most boring thing, it seems to me, are people who are not bored....People with a cause, man, remind me of Christian missionaries....got to save the fucking heathens. Save them from what?....Society is neat, people are really interesting. It's fine driving down the street, looking out the window of your car, digging on the folks, you know....They don't need to be changed, they're all right....They're doing just fine. The real elitists, it seems to me, are the ones that are gonna help 'em out of their fucking misery....The people who are in misery are the elitists who write the books about it. Seems to me the cats dig their fucking boats and all that stuff....their little pacifiers, they really get it on with that shit....I don't want someone coming over telling me my art's a bunch of crap. We ought to have an art war between all the conceptualists and painters, then we could settle this art issue once and for all.

RK - I don't think it's a question of conceptualists and painters. Conceptualists and painters are in one camp. . . .

TG - We'll have a three way war.

TS - What's the other camp?

TG - Yeah, what is the other camp?

RK - The other camp, I think, right now is a political camp. I don't think there's essentially any difference between someone like Kosuth who says all art is essentially conceptual and someone like Greenberg who says all painting is a reduction to the essence of paint. They're both THERE with art, art for art's sake. One of Kosuth's heroes is Reinhardt. They're right there in the same camp. The others are saying get out of that 'art for art' shit. Get out in the external world, the real situation.

TG - Yeah, but I don't think the external situation needs to be manipulated or changed. That's the kind of thing that gets into heavy politics, power politics. That's just blatant power politics. It's a bad attitude to take toward your fellows, you know. You should just go out and dig 'em.

RK - On top, you might say, it's a response against the Skulls.

TG - The Skulls have a right to do what they are doing. If they want to sell that shit, it's okay. Why would you react to all that shit anyway. They are so goddamn stupid, buying all that art junk. That to me is really lame. I really don't understand why anybody would buy a painting. I could only understand why someone would make one. But to have that same old shit hanging on the wall all the time. I don't know.

RK - I don't know if that's what it is. . . .

TS - I don't know if it's looking at it. I think it just may be a vicarious way of doing it.

TG - But, I think art is the poorest of poor repetitive experiences. It just does not stand up.

TS - I think it does.

TG - Do you? I don't. I began noticing that when I was going to school. . . . I was going to museums and raved about the paintings. I'd go back and see them again and I didn't know if I was right raving about it.

TS - Some of it stands up.

TG - I'd go back to check on the second time, it was even worse the third time. . . . That whole kind of attachment to possession I think is fading. Paintings just don't offer that kind of information. . . . that much information anymore. People can read too fast now.

TS - Slow 'em down.

TG - How you going to slow them down? You going

to get back into narrative painting? Movies have much better narration than painting.

TS - If you made a movie or something, people don't get into it for the first ten minutes or so, so don't lay your heavy information on 'em, or don't do that kind of thing to begin with, right? 'Cause they'll miss it. Whether you care if they miss it or not is irrelevant. If you're making a movie, the way to structure it is to be aware that people won't be into it for awhile. When you're doing a painting I think the same things are involved. It's like if you lay it all on top, if you do a Campbell's soup can, you have a very quick experience. It takes nothing to read it. You get into field painting, it takes a little longer. But gradually that wears out. It's like something that's hard to understand when you first look at it is something that gives you more and more information as you look at it more and more. . . . but they all reach a point. . . . a saturation point.

TG - I had the same feelings about my own paintings for a long time, and then I had the feelings about other people's paintings. . . . Like I looked at them. . . . I just wasn't having. . . . like the first experiences I had were very satisfying. I could enjoy other people's paintings and then I went back and saw them again and I was less satisfied, third time around again I was usually dissatisfied with it.

TS - It's like what you were talking about before, it's being just one more piece of information, one more piece of information of all the information you get. If you treat it that way, it's just one more time you came back to it again, and got something out of it again. I don't think they wear themselves out. A few of them do.

TG - Yeah. I think there's degrees. It's obvious. . . . Some painters are obviously less interesting than others. It just doesn't take that long to nail down what somebody's doing.

TS - What does it have to do with nailing it down? That has to do with making art judgments. If you just treat it as a painting. . . .

TG - I don't think it does. You just take the information in and after you've absorbed that information it just becomes more and more meaningless.

TS - I don't know. I really don't know about that.

RK - You know that Kelly painting at Pasadena?

TG - Yeah. . . . yeah, that one looks good.

RK - I can keep going back to that. It's so fucking simple as far as information is concerned, that kind of information, I see it and I feel refreshed after I see it.

TG - I don't think that kind of information is simple. I don't think what those colors do is simple. What

those colors do is hard to remember. It's a helluva lot different than Stella. I think Stellas are the least satisfying of paintings I've seen. Those old black ones he did were just gorgeous and he started going downhill from there. I still like to see those old black ones occasionally.

TS - A good painting, to me, is something you come back to and get something from. And when that ceases to happen it's not important. If the game is information or experience or whatever. . . .

TG - There's just so much information you can get.

TS - Yeah. You can't possibly get all the information from a painting at one time, but you can get tired of looking.

RK - I've often asked myself why even bother to look at that painting. . . . I don't know why. . . . I just find myself looking at it, like an idiot, really. And I don't know that I'm. . . . I don't know. . . . You can see how vague it is. It's like. . . . I know I feel better after seeing it, for some stupid reason, and I don't know, and that's really dumb. It starts putting that painting into a class of an icon. There is something that you can almost get. . . .

TS - What's wrong with icons?

RK - I don't know.

TS - It's just we replace them, that's all.

RK - I'm not sure what it is. . . .

TS - When you get tired of something, just quit looking at it.

RK - Because you begin to venerate it.

TG - Yeah that's right, I mean, if it's a good icon it's okay. . . . If it's a cheesy icon I can see why you won't dig it. If it's a ripped-off icon you might be suspicious of it or something.

TS - It has something to do with not making any art judgments. You don't have to validate that painting. If it's something you've seen before, just look at it and enjoy it.

TG - I was just thinking. The more I think about that Kelly painting, the more I don't like it. I liked it before we started talking about it and now I don't want to see it again.

RK - You don't want to see it?

TS - You'll probably look at it the next time you're there.

RK - Next time you look at it there you may not turn on to it, or you may look at it and dig it. Shit, you don't know, man.

TG - Talking about painting. . . . that one striped thing of Noland's was really neat. . . . They put it on one wall. . . . almost at the end of the wall. . . . if those round corners are ends. One end of the wall is one side of the door and it goes around to

the other side of the door. It's kinda dumb I hate that fucking place. Paintings just don't survive there. At Hesse's show I had the same reaction. I thought the building just dominated that stuff. It just looked like shit. I really dug it in the magazines especially in her studio Her studio was really cluttered and fucked up just like a studio with all those neat things in it. They fit because it looked like something somebody made from the clutter in their studio. They look strange in a museum.

TS - What did you think of that show?

TG - I was disappointed. I didn't think it was as good as the photographs, 'cause her stuff is really photogenic It just photographs great I'd like to see it in her studio.

RK - I think her stuff is pretty damn personal. The show was pretty bad. But you can compare her stuff to something like Fine, arts and crafts show, eccentricity, eccentric use of material and shit.

TG - They've all got their little gimmick, like bamboo, chicken wire, boards and bails of hay or All this stuff is very nice, pleasing combinations of materials, looks like the same fucking guy did 'em.

TS - That's 'cause you're a painter and can't figure out why they did that.

TG - Bullshit. It's the same, man.

TS - We've all got our little biases.

TG - You mean just because you paint you don't think you can see three dimensional objects? That is bullshit. You live in a world of three dimensional objects.

TS - No, I think you can see them.

TG - I read that garbage they write about 'em and I'm really appalled.

TS - I think they're dealing with one level of um uh

TG - It seems like tastefulness has gotten to the point of where it's just tasteless. It's just everywhere, it's just every fucking where it's unavoidable.

RK - What if, about your pieces, that that comments similar to comments that are made about, like, Hesse, Marden, or somebody like that about they're being of personal sensibility, of personal reason. It would be a personal sense of something, you know, of any of those manifestations. They made those comments about you, that they are yours, and since they are so personal you have a particular way of handling them. You have a personal way of developing the image, you know. Comments made about Marden, comments made about

Hesse, and this extends to people like Fine and how they put things together. What do you think of the comments I've made about you?

TG - I don't know. You've got me confused. Like, when I'm making the things I'm not thinking about that stuff.

RK - Right, I know. See, that's what is said. 'What do you want me to say? I don't think about those things, god, who knows, it's a mystery. I don't think about those things.' I don't know.

TG - Mysterious like in all that art mystery bullshit. It seems like a fucking cop out to me, you know. It's just that I just don't think about it.

RK - You don't think about it, it happens. Okay, you don't think about it. We've accepted you don't think about it. You're not conscious of the stuff, you don't know how to articulate how these discriminations or qualifications are made. When you're working, you just do it, that's pretty much what you're saying.

TG - Yeah, yeah okay.

RK - I don't know how Marden goes about deciding is this particular color right, is this particular surface right, is this particular shape right?'. They were talking about shape is color, color is shape, scale relationships. Now if you ask Marden, he might be able to articulate it, but it still comes out the same shit.

TG - Yeah. He's not into that. The thing is he's not into polemics, he just fucking makes paintings.

RK - Yeah, so he's going to be saying the same things that they all say.

TG - Hey, that's nice, that's easy, that's what I want to do. I don't want to get into that discussing or defending

TS - If you want to understand Marden you don't ask him, you just look at his paintings.

TG - That's right.

TS - 'Cause he's got all that information down and it's non-verbal, it's visual and that's hard to translate if at all possible. It's hard to translate so why ask him? Just look at his paintings. That's why he's doing painting instead of talking.

TG - That's the obvious thing to do anyway.

TS - Verbal communication's a whole different number.

RK - I wasn't strictly speaking about verbal communication, I was talking about personal sensibility. They could not have happened, like the paintings couldn't have happened unless Toby did them. There would be nothing for you to see.

TG - I don't agree with that.

TS - What don't you agree with? How can you get out of that? How would you want to get out of it, why would you want to concern yourself with that

TG - I don't do anything special. I mean there's no technique that I'm especially enamoured of, there's nothing, no skills I've developed to get those

TS - Fuck, you've been doing this, you've got fifteen, maybe twenty, paintings same technique.

TG - Yeah, but, I mean I didn't do it by learning to scumble, or whatever the techniques of painting are. I mean it just has to do with applying the fucking material to a surface.

TS - Well, You had to learn how to do that. You had to get rid of all that other stuff, you had to forget about scumbling and glazes and all that bullshit. That's a way to learn. That's pretty personal. But, in a way, it isn't.

RK - It's like you say, perceiving, laying it down, perceiving, something like that, all that stuff, all the stuff that's subtly there, looking at impressionist painting, looking at scumbling, looking at things, knifing it down. Eventually you're going to get to a point

TG - Yeah, there's a certain reaction to that kind of technique that I avoid. The reaction is that I avoid it. Right. I avoid it.

RK - If the appearance of the thing, if it's a strictly visual number, the appearance of the thing looks like scumbling, for example, or some other kind of thing, then you're going to avoid it right? If you continue doing this, if you continue working on it, then it's up, okay, somebody else comes along and says 'wow, what's that? Anybody can do it.', right? Anybody can do it, anybody can squeegee it, anybody can knife it. Anybody can do it. And they look at your painting, But you let that other person try it, it's not going to be the same Are you going to say I don't want them to be mine?

TG - No, what I'm saying is that I let the craftsmanship be involved in it to the degree that the thing should be its own justification. You paint because you like to paint, so you do a good job at it that becomes uh Shit, I just fucking do it that's all I do it because I'm an artist . . .

RK - No, the thing is not why you're doing it or anything like that

TG - Let me ask you a lot of fucking questions and fucking put you on the spot and you start getting confused about the way you're doing things and the next day you can't paint 'cause you're all fucked up Somebody's going to challenge your little

fucking territory and it'll take you three or four days to settle it and get it all back together again and start to function. That's the thing I like about talking, it's very disruptive.

TS - No it isn't.

RK - Then you start getting anxious, or do you, you start wanting feedback

TG - I don't usually get anxious when I paint I can roll 'em up and start a new one and it's

RK - But after awhile isn't there a point where you're curious

TG - Yeah, I'd take you guys over to look at my stuff and a positive reaction makes me happy but a negative one doesn't debilitate me I like to show my work to my friends I'm not anxious to show to anybody else, unless they want to buy it 'cause I'm interested in maintaining my level of existence, you know, 'cause I like to have enough money to paint, and to eat, I'm not especially interested in buying things, acquiring stuff. I guess the main thing about making a definitive statement, drawing up sides, it's so fucking much work. It's a lot of work. I don't want to be bothered with it.

RK - It's not a question of wanting to get involved with it it's a question of finding out you're involved with it whether you want to be or not.

TG - Don't you think you can remove yourself from that?

RK - Nope.

TS - I don't think you can, I think you're involved

TG - I think you can to a degree.

TS - If you sit down and start typing out definitive statements, then you're working at it. Even if you're just thinking you can't help but be involved with it, you're constantly processing that information. You're involved in it, you know. Gradually you get it all down, you feel like you've reached that point where words

TG - Yeah, but at certain times when I'm actually doing the paintings I have brief little interludes where I'm really down to nothing. Where I can just pay attention to what I'm doing unless it's very transient but

RK - Yeah, but then you think, you'll step back and look at it, then you say 'that fucker's too tasty'.

TS - That blows your whole game.

RK - Then you know you're involved. It's not a question of whether you wanted to be or not. But that fucker looks too tasty for you.

TS - I really think if you get down to the point you are talking about, just getting into the paint, just

doing that, getting into doing nothing, just not thinking about it, you can't help but do a tasty painting.

TG - Really?

TS - 'Cause that's pretty tasteful, doing that. That's a pretty hard trip to get into.

RK - It's the old AE syndrome, man.

TS - Well, you know, we can't help our psychosis. What's the old AE syndrome? What are you talking about?

TG - I think it's the opposite of the AE syndrome, shit.

TS - They were conscious of what they were doing, splashing, action, conscious every step of the way. But if you're not conscious of that and you get the same thing, it's a different deal to you.

TG - Yeah, that's surrealist, tapping the unconscious is a very conscious act.

RK - It's the same thing.

TS - I think what you're talking about, not using material, I think that's what you're talking about, what Hesse was talking about, that she was using material not using it specifically. That seems very natural to me. Seems like losing control, giving control away, is a way of controlling something. It is a very natural way to function.

RK - When you refer to this way of painting, of putting the paint down and watching what happens, and all this, that in itself is a taste. You can't help but make a tasty painting. The painting can't help but be right if you get into it, if you really get into the act of painting. Is that what is being said?

TG - Yeah, well, I think that has been kinda resolved.

RK - Because Jackson Pollock said the same fucking thing. That's what I said. It's only AE again.

TG - I don't think Jackson Pollock was really AE He was just there at the same time.

RK - Yeah, but that whole, what they call the second generation, was more conscious of that Pretty soon that whole thing started dripping, running, globbing, and a whole bunch of other numbers.

TS - Okay, I think the term abstract expressionism is a very bad term for what I would read those people were doing.

RK - Okay, take it as Dali, or Matta, or anybody. Stream of consciousness writing. What's the fucking difference, just getting a word and what it does? Not exercising control over your consciousness?

TS - It's eliminating or getting rid of that control. I'm talking about control in the sense of something external to you directing your painting, some art

historical thing that's directing your painting. What I'm talking about is letting the painting just become.

RK - And relating to it.

TG - I think relating to it is part of the situation.

RK - Yeah, relating to it is part of the situation, right? Why the hell do you think those AE painters call that thing an arena?

TS - What I'm talking about is I don't care what they said about their work, I care about how I relate to their work and I relate to their work as not being what they said about it. It's just seeing their work. It's just being able not to think, just being able to let your mind work, without directing, without standing over here directing things, saying you can't do this, you can't do that, do this, do that do you understand what I mean?

RK - I understand what you mean, but I

TS - But you can't buy it.

RK - But I think it's really contrary to, if you're saying there's a difference between like AE painters having a certain attitude of mind in painting, and like, zen or an Eastern mind, that there's a distinct difference between the two, then I'd probably agree with you. But I think Eastern mysticism is a result of a varied discipline it's a far cry from 'do your thing and just let things happen and work'

TS - I don't think it's a matter of letting things happen and work, that's I don't think it has anything to do with 'do your own thing', that's such a cliché that I don't know how to deal with it. I think the attitude of the abstract expressionists is probably pretty far away from zen. Is that what you were saying?

RK - Yeah, I think that for some. There was this one guy when I was going to school. and he happened to be from Japan. and I don't know how much he was into zen. but I watched him paint once and it was action painting. it was fast, it was really fast and it wasn't just willy nilly fast. It was like a dance, it was like watching a guy dance. Gallons of paint and big brushes and paint flying all over. It's like intense focus.

TG - I think to me it's intense de-focus.

RK - A de-focus or something. it's something. it's something you can see. It's like some karate people that respond very quickly. They don't have time to fuck around.

TG - That's one thing I'm having trouble with now, trying to direct my attention. In my experience, I learn through repetition. I learn things until they become second nature. I learn things until I dismiss them. But, it's hard for me to relate to that

kind of information to what I'm doing now.
RK - Eastern mysticism has something else, I don't know what it does. It's like that guy who was practicing archery that didn't have anything to do with archery.

TG - That's why I couldn't understand Cage and how he could become so uptight about that. He put that kind of experience down. He goes through this whole anarchist trip and then he turns around and is very prejudiced about this other guy's trip. It's really bizzare.

Epilogue

T - You better watch out you could become an anachronism.

R - It's all those things, history.... What's the alternative to history?

T - I don't know, if you just deal with your own personal history.

R - Your whole person is tied to history, your perceptions, the way you think, unless you investigate how do you know?

T - You can't help but become aware of things that hit you but if you get told enough that it doesn't make any difference then you might start to believe it.... some time during your day, you may be driving to work, it might make a difference, some time you may be a romantic idealist, some time you may be ambitious, lazy, escapist.

R - Those are just diversions, people don't want diversions anymore, they're beginning to realize that all those things are diversions....

T - From what?

R - What they feel needs to be done. They might be an artist, idea art, a conceptualist. For some people, media people, myth maintenance people. Like painting landscape, figures, or a certain kind of space, it's reached a dead end, so out of necessity another kind of painting will develop. It doesn't mean that landscape, figures, or a certain kind of space isn't being used, it is.

T - It's not another kind of paint that's out there, it's another way of seeing. Somebody may look at Pollock and see it as energy, see it as action. Okay, someone else may see it as field painting, or totally different, or look at Bannard and see colors and squares. Someone else may see the whole universe, depending on how perceptive he is. Someone may look at Kelly and see only a flat canvas.

R - All you're saying is that it is only subjective.
T - Right, the more ways you have to look at something, the more diversions you have, the more you can delude yourself, and people want to. They don't want reality.

R - I don't know about that.

T - It's what you've been saying.

R - It depends on whether you want an ultimate reality. It might depend on whatever coincides with your particular....

T - Wherever you're at is what you're saying.

R - Yeah.

T - That's karma.

R - You see, you keep talking about that kind of crap but the minute you make fun of it I think that you're gaining a certain amount of objectivity on it..karma

....history....the whole notion of, it's hard to put my finger on it so I can't speak of it. You know that some people go to school and they're turned on to something and for the rest of their lives that's where they're at, intuition or something, they will use the intuitive approach in any situation.

T - But every now and then someone does something just good enough to keep other people going. You might read a good book. Every generation somebody plays the role, and it has to be played to sustain that generation in the proper sort of norm, stasis. Every generation has artists, tall guys, skinny guys, hitlers, comedians, so what. Every generation is depressed about themselves and then they get five years older and they are nostalgic as hell about all that depression, saying 'wasn't that lively, oh yeah, that was lively back then when I was so depressed'. People jump off bridges, murder each other, and live vicariously. In ten years it won't make much difference, in twenty it won't make much difference...if I was a cynic I'd say that was true. It's karma. Every generation is living their lives as well as they can except they don't realize that the last generation did the same thing.

R - It depends on how large a view you take. The stuff we're living through happened in the thirties, existentialists, Marxists, it all happened at the turn of the century.

T - The only difficulty I would have with that is that we have more communication. Except, the only flaw with that is that we are also more people. You can look at Nietzsche as someone in the nineties, and at Mondrian as someone in the twenties. You say well that's sixty years ago, but if you ignore the years and look at it as something that exists right now, it just hits you like somebody writing you a letter.

R - Find out about it so you can dismiss it, or use it, what do you do?

T - I do that, use it, dismiss it, forget it, think about it. It depends on what happens at the time. If I wake up in the morning and decide to think about it, I'll think about it. All I can do is perpetuate a myth, nothing else. If a few people pick up on the myth and can see through it then they will be happy. Some people think and approach things and analyze them and question and they finally come to the conclusion that it doesn't make any difference what they do. All they can do is perpetuate a myth, so they do until something else happens along, then they become preachers. It's true, all art is a myth. But, when I paint, it's right there. It's not a myth....



A "Rule of Thumb" for Evaluating Freshman Compositions
 prepared by Dave Samuelson, revised and adapted from
Joint Statement on Freshman English in College and High School Preparation, p. 4

	A	B	C	D	F
	Distinctive	Effective	Adequate	Inadequate	Botched
CONTENT					
Central Idea:	meaningful, valid	of some value, flawed	insignificant, vague, cliched	barely perceptible, not quite hopeless	indeterminate, unclear, obscure, not backed up
supporting details:	solid, vivid, well-developed, well-connected	good, but incomplete, unalive	failures in connection, development	redundant, contradictory, disconnected	nonexistent, irrelevant, extremely vague
DEVELOPMENT					
plan:	vivid	clear	apparent	discernible	imperceptible
execution:	complete	adequate	inadequate	inconsistent	a total loss
parts:	distinct	clear	visible	run together	indistinguishable
order of parts:	inevitable	necessary	explainable	disconnected	nonexistent
proportion:	well-balanced	balanced	some imbalance	-----generally	unbalanced-----
emphasis:	effective	appropriate	inadequate	weak	none, poorly chosen
paragraphs:	unified	flawed	adequate	inadequate	disconnected, incoherent, undeveloped
transitions:	coherent well-developed	"	"	"	nonexistent
	clear varied, "leading"	usually good, but flawed	visible, but sudden, rather monotonous	unclear, disjointed, boring	ineffective
SENTENCES					
construction:	skilled	correct, plus...	correct	flawed	incorrect
unity:	tight	definite	recognizable	-----generally	lacking-----
coherence:	pointed	developed	adequate	inadequate	incoherent
effectiveness:	commanding	forceful	adequate	-----generally	lacking-----
variety:	exciting	interesting	adequate	purposeless, confusing,	nonexistent
DICTION					
imagery:	distinctive	fresh	clear	unclear, trite	vague, cliched
word choice:	effective	precise	accurate	inaccurate	vague, misleading
economy:	concise	economical	adequate	uneconomical	wordy
usage:	-----	-----idiomatic-----	-----	-----	-----unidiomatic or nonstandard-----
MECHANICS (grammar, punctuation, spelling)					
communication:	good	good, despite	weakened by	obscured by	obscured by
errors:	none	a few	some	frequent OR	frequent AND
		-----insignificant-----	-----	significant	significant

In re-evaluating the 'myth' of criticism we find that this otherwise secondary form has taken on an unduly large share of influence in setting standards and defining the qualification for the modern art piece. Although it provides an accessible structure in which the artist and public can relate, it still must be seen in its basic function as an important but otherwise secondary element of the whole art process. It's a position that

art critics would like to fill with more, newer, better, more objective, and generally tedious adjective-weighted verbage. Within context, modernist critics now establish definitive standards that function effectively enough to lead to the incestuous relationship now being enjoyed by artists depending on critics for their impetus and direction. Art done to placate the system tends to be overweighted with external reference leaving the work, itself, an experiential vacuum saved only by rationalizing polemics and art double-speak. Artists are looking for the word-boys to give them the issues that they lack and the drive they can't develop themselves; forgetting that criticism deals almost solely with the art of criticism not the art of art. Simply, the whole system is so thin as to be completely and only self-referential. Art is not really involved.

A more important concern for the artist is our technology, which the old system fails to acknowledge. The issues are not involved so much with internal disagreement between types, form is no longer the issue. When you reach the essence you back off, become reactionary, stop, take your art-stance or push past stagnance. As we have become enamoured with format, the culture is evolving. Time and technology are leaving us in the self-gratification of past achievements: playing linguistic parlor games instead of developing a cultural significance.

Painting hasn't evolved beyond the mechanization of Olitski, Stella, Noland or any of the East Coast monumental museum pieces. The dialectic is becoming a colossal bore. But there seems to be much more to it than this. To go beyond essences we are going to have to expand conceptually beyond the allowable stylized forms. The rejuvenation in painting we are experiencing can be explained as a reaction against the second-generation banalities of our hip-think-conceptualists (if I may slur the good names of Nauman, Acconci, Art-Language and all the little naumans, acconcis, art-languages developing in the void) that the Art-Mags validate monthly. Look at the work coming out of any art school or university or gallery. Mindless repetition. Mindless repetition. Mindless repetition.

But all is not lost, we still have our Sixties art theories. What is my point? Individual Iconoclast Tedium New Icons God TV Concept Happiness Movement-Mentality Pier Structure Idea's-Attitude-Ideal Clic Complex-to-Simple Representation Reduction Label Standardize Ultimate Quality becomes a matter of circumstance.
Validation Importance Importance in relation to effectiveness
Stature in relation to High-Art Esoteric stances dismissing society
Society laughs right back.

Ingmar Jargone: Notes on Criticism

The 'myth' of criticism is simply in its current re-evaluation of Art criticism, which as a valuable function, serves to promote a certain verbal level of understanding the art piece. It provides a structure that artist and community can function within in their relationship to each other. The problem of criticism isn't going to be solved by newer and better criticism, by more objective more personal or tougher criticism. Criticism is a secondary element that thrives on the creations of artists. It has become the point at which work receives its qualification. If I don't understand an art work I ask Artforum; this is where the standards for the art community are set. And well it should be. Look at the standards of the art community and then look at the last ten years of Artforum and you will find that they are synonymous.

- You say that maybe that isn't such a bad situation and what am I implying, anyway?

- That the whole system Critic-Magazine-artist-Gallery-Museum-Magazine-Critic is just a manifestation of the evolution of AE with a stroke of Concept and very little real concern with artists; but, rather, laps up salable concepts at the rate of one dominate and three or four subordinate causes a year.

- Good market research I would say.

- The only art is that which lies within the critical standards of art.

- You say that you depend on the system for your information; that is as good as any place to get information.

- Is it?

- Sure, and they present the issues that are the concern of modern young artists.

- And you can read that right there?

- I think it serves a great professional need and art is business.

- It functions, but it seems to have more to do with business than with serving the artists.

- You know that Artforum makes almost no money for itself?

- The artist has to learn the whole notion of critical standards has more to do with the art of criticism than any real issues. We've reached the end of that cycle. The artist has to realize that criticism is a secondary issue behind his own concerns. Technology is a more immediate issue.

PAINTERS 3 : CONCEPTUALISTS 0

- You mean we're getting back to painting? What are you talking about revolution for? Painting sure isn't a revolution, Greenberg saw to that. Painting is what the mags have become in the last years; Bannard, Mardin, Poons, Olitski. What do you think they're doing?

- They're just tired Action painters.

PHOTO-REALISTS 2 : ABSTRACTIONISTS 1

- You know the difference between what the AE people did and what the Colorfield painters are doing is considerable.

- Is it? I don't think so. We've reached the end of the painting stream.

ABSTRACTIONISTS (REPRESENTATIVE) 1 :

ABSTRACTIONISTS (NON-OBJECTIVE COLORFIELD) 1

- The physicality of the art form is unimportant.

CONCEPTUALISTS 1 : CRITICS 0

- Oh yeah?

ANARCHISTS 2 : CRITICS 4

- We seem to have run out of concrete issues.

MYSTICISM 1 : ALL OTHERS 1

- Conceptual format is not important, not that it wasn't at one time. It did, after all, get us from Pop to Colorfield. The iconoclasm and anarchy that was involved in concept art and the search for essentials in the Sixties are now turning back on themselves. After reaching the essence of a thing what do you do then? Back off? Time and technology are leaving us playing our little space and idea games. Painting technology hasn't managed to evolve past East Coast post modernist dogma. It's time to produce new concepts not just expand the old.

- Hallelujah.

- We have to expand beyond the allowable stylized forms/imagery of today; go beyond the allowable stylized formats.

ALLOWING 0 : SARCASM 5

PROCESS 2 : TRADITIONALISTS 1

SOCIAL 2 : ECONOMIC 2

REACTIONARIES 2 : MALADIES 0

AMERICAN & EUROPEAN vie.

WESTERN & EASTERN rescheduled (Watts died)

- The second generation conceptual art reaction and the representations that Artforum and magazines of that sort . . .

- What sort?

- They validate and we can see it in all the galleries and on any art campus, the thing to do is to bring the particular formats pass the . . .

- You sure about that?

3

For The Avant-Garde

The relevancy of the essential the

The intimidation the essential the

The importance I see essential see

The time to see that essential the

The relevancy of the essential the

The relevancy or non-relevancy the

Now Art is words but is promises too. It is structure around dogmatic affirmations:

"The symbol, then, for which I invent an image has no worth unless it speaks with other symbols, which I must choose in the course of my invention, and are entirely peculiar to that invention."

An assertion of things unseen, of dogmatic religious experience.

- The beginning is the most important part of my work, especially when it will be seen in magazines or in a gallery, for that is the time when the quality and the desired content is more readily dealt with.

- Quite true.

- And can we let the galleries and magazines be subject to the casual art of casual artists and receive information and ideas for the most part very divergent from our own views?

- We cannot.

- Then the first thing we must do is establish some sort of censorship of fiction.

4

To reiterate the value of criticism:

Criticism is functional for the art community although it doesn't always provide the accessibility that the artists and public find palatable, it does provide a means to define. We are coming into a time of increased relevance for criticism. There is more criticism; newer, better. We are more objective and we are exploring new structures. It is now the primary source for new artistic thought. It is the definition. It sets the standards. It's functional. The artist needs the critic. We are the main impetus for serious art consideration. The shapers of the style and tone of Art and new issues. Criticism has become an art; an important art form. This is the new attitude that we are now evolving to. It is through criticism that the art experience is best made intelligible. The artist must realize that he is a secondary and often inarticulate element of the process who has become lost in his own systems and affectations and gone into an esoteric stupor. We must realize that to deal with art is a matter of realizing the internal inconsistencies that now exist between the manifestations of the art being done now, painting, process, idea, etc. It all can be condensed down to the realization of form and thereby content. This is where we have to study. We must realize that we are in search of the essential quality of the art experience, not the various affectations that the so-called new art is strung-out on. Yet, we must also see that some of these affectations are going to become forms. We must keep searching for the essence of the experience. We will never reach those definitions, but we will be getting closer to the form that is THE form. Places that Noland and Olitski are beginning to reach in their work. These are the painters that are dealing with the issues that other painters would be wise to investigate. These are the people who are working within the process, conceptually, as well as working toward an essential state. What conceptualists don't realize is that their game, in toto, is just a small part of these people's concerns. They have avoided the banalities of the conceptual format without losing the vigor, tone, or style that is necessary for the process. Our good painters are dealing with surface concerns, color relationships and metaphorical realizations. They've been establishing these sensibilities over the past ten years and have evolved a certain content: structuring the individual artist as paramount, breaking through the AE mentality to lay fresh ground, revitalizing, painting, and dealing with the internal reality of that process as well as developing new pictorial and perceptual considerations. They have conceptually put the idea people back into the comic strip genre, establishing a direct sense of coherence to the art milieu. Their importance resides in their quality of content. Their effectiveness is a matter of history. Their contribution to the art continuum is now becoming more and more acknowledged by the art community and accepted by society.

In
 her throat
 a sigh
 swells in
 her sigh
 my throat
 swells in
 a sigh
 But
 Why of
 her thigh
 this sweet sigh?
 Swallow sigh
 her
 thigh sigh
 a sweat
 her thigh
 threat
 why? in
 her sigh
 THREAT I?

Sharon Keel: writings

There's no self-conscious transcendence of the level I'm on, it is connected to it like an image or a thought. It's like logic or idea as opposed to experience. It's like conversation, a reaction. Yet, it's in tune with an elitism that I really despise. Like when you get to the point where you say everything has been done before. It takes you away from emotion. I don't like intellectualizing about it, I know what I want and then it exists. I don't have anything to do with my poetry conversationally.

		anxiety	of dread	of no	emotional
		anxiety	of dread	or no	emotional
		anxiety	of dread	of no	emotional
He's got this		anxiety	of dread	of no	emotional
content	He thought		there was	no	emotional
content	I thought		there existed	a movement	to
re-define	He thought no		only a visual	linear	farce
with no	I thought		wordsworth	reading	always
although	He thought no		it is not poetry	just a mass of	
words with	I thought no		words	are	just a mass of
poetry	He thought				
	I thought		he was	just	an old fart who
couldn't	He thought		appreciate	poetry	because
it didn't	I thought no		shouldn't	always	convey an
emotional	He thought		the dread of a	poet is	fear
of no	I thought		the dread of a	poet is	fear
of no	He thought		notworth	reading	
but	I thought		theworth is	open	reading any
thing again	He thought no		emotional	content	should
stop	I thought no		it		could
nt.					

Robert Zwiegman:
ART NOUVEAU a short play/story

1

This is how I came to understand morality.
This became the basis of all my thought.
This is what I mean.
All that bullshit about knowledge can, after this, be forgotten.
There is none.
There is no security in believing that there is. .
The only truth is illusion.
Security is delusion.
Freedom unattainable.
There is no morality, justice, good, beauty, weakness, death or hope.
These are only illusions to a non-existent dream.
No self-awareness.
nothing.
So, consider this.

Consider what?

Consider the fact that no matter what you do there is no way that you can change one speck of your fate.

Existentialist!

Reactionary!

What are you talking about?

Listen I'm trying to make an important point.
Now, if fate is something that eventually overruns us shouldn't we try to clarify the intimidating aspects of it?

It doesn't intimidate me.

You're out of your fucking mind.

Okay, okay; anyway, it doesn't bother me.

Carlyle, what time you have?

Ten minutes now.

Fielding was an idiot.
SORRY WE'RE CLOSED,
COME AGAIN,
HRS. WKDYS.,
10AM-6PM;
SAT. & SUN.
11AM-5PM.

We've been standing in front of this furniture store ten minutes and we're talking like we always talk.
We all know it's important to talk this way because we learned all

this in school and can remember telling each other that it was important to communicate; really be honest with each other.
Really.
Really.
Really.
So, we talk.
Then we began planning our route to the coast trying to avoid all the problems we could.
Jessie had something to say about her growing long-stemmed roses into short-stemmed ones.
The Allende assassination.
Music.
This wasn't anyway to spend the summer so we left for Boise.
Jessie never could tell a joke that more than two people in a crowd could get.
The rainy season in Ontario made hiking and

That's a kind of truth.

What is?

Intimidation.

Fielding also was an existentialist.
I don't really know if that's good or bad.
But, he always lets you know.
After coming back from the Coast last year I noticed a change in his attitude toward us.
He said he was going through changes.
Changes in what.
Then, he said he was bored.
Beethoven and Watergate and the lost revolution and apathy, philosophy and Mark-Almond and the Last Tango and places to eat and playing the guitar.
Writing a novel and painting families' houses and cars and gas and nothing at all.
We never ran out of talk.
Fielding always says the right things but then screws up.
Assassination.
Music.
Vitamins.
And Art.
We all want that, I said.
Did we?
I didn't know.
Still

Ultimately, the meaning of Art lies in the human element.
The fact that people generally prefer figurative Art, both meaning of literary symbol and of the greater symbol of the Art piece itself, can be explained by the dominating force of the individual inclination in human nature blah blah blah.

I think I'm becoming cynical.

Anyway, he told me that he didn't like to complain and never made those strong assertions again.
It's like we reach a point of tolerance and don't wish to pass that line.
Or, don't know how.
55MPH.
I suppose it is better to be pretentious than bored.
These tires should last.
They're eight months old?
STOP
One more stop in Lansing then to the Coast.
It isn't what I had in mind

What time is it Carlyle?

11:20

2

7:30

Vesco left the country while the matter was under investigation and is believed to be in Costa Rica.
Vesco, 37, was under investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission at the time the money changed hands.
Vesco and others, forty-one others, had been accused in a civil suit by the SEC proceedings

Maybe another fifteen minutes and I'll be rested enough to get up.

but the SEC did in fact proceed vigorously against Mr. Vesco.
Donald Nixon Jr., President Nixon's nephew, is an official in the Vesco financial empire and earlier was reported living with the Vesco family in their Long Island home.
8:00

Well, I'll be a little late anyway, so, I won't rush.
Another ten minutes.
One of these days I'll quit smoking.
I'll leave the heater on tonight; just keep the bathroom door closed.
Too hot.
There.

LATE FINAL
ELLSBURG TRIAL SENSATION

Don't people know he'll get out of that?
I must be starting to wake-up.
Wake-up.
Typewriter.

The end of the revolution has been a bit of a disappointment to say the least. We have probably lost our last chance to establish a viable alternative to the archaic political institutions that have for so long limited the scope and understanding of our ability for genius.

3

We'll need some gas before we hit the San Bernardino Freeway.
Jessie, you hungry?

Let's wait 'til we get there.

There was a place in Palos Verdes where George lived.
A friend.
Fond of talk and wisdom and being hip.
But, more than that he was money and almost dead.
That doesn't mean what you think.
He was an author, a convenience since I wouldn't know how to end this story without having him take up the loose ends.
SAN DIEGO SOUTH
RIGHT LANE

Fielding, did you hear that?

What ever happened to Bobby Seales?

There's the estate.
There's a guard at the gate.

What are you going to do if he asks for I.D.?

Don't worry.

I'm not about that, I'm thinking about the car and George's will.

Okay, we're through.

Bitch is always worried about something.
Yeah, you sure do look good George.
Where's the kitchen?
Kitchen?
Hallway, dining room, kitchen.

I'm sorry if we're having bacon.

Tim, does that combination seem revolting to you?

Raisin and sour-dough.

One on the top and one on the bottom.

I'll just have a regular sandwich.

I think that is so neat.

Mike, don't you tell me what to do.

Well, I used to.

These aren't for you bug brain.

I'm not so sure.

God damn!

I was just thinking of the gall, the cheek, the nerve.

No they don't.

Remember that?

I will Mike.

I'm sure Tim likes eggs too.

Nope.

Allright we are.

It's the right time, it's the best time.

Tell you what honey; you come back next week and we might have a place for you.

This is called the Rock 'em - Shake 'em method.

I think it is absurd not to but,

Tim doesn't know.

Hey, you never cooked eggs like that before.

You like mayo Tim?

Don't do that.

Because.

You better watch out.

Okay.

How do you like my new plants Mike?

They're very nice.

Toast popped.

Why can't you make that sandwich?

Okay.

Come on in kitty.

Come on kitty come on kittycome kittycome.

Here Sharon, it's all ready.

I want you to put some lettuce and tomato on it.

Lettuce, tomato, mayo.

I know what he's doing.

Just like in a hit parade, just like in a hit parade.

Tim's sandwich, toothpick.

Toothpick doesn't hold it together.

Yeah, why don't you turn on some music?

I don't know.

It was the best time, it was the best time.

He ate, he ate it already!

Come on in kitty.

What are you doing Carlyle?
Carlyle!

Listen to these servants talking

Four hours later after supper sitting in the den.
George and I are each swallowed up in beanbag chairs at opposite
ends of a long narrow room.
Jessie is under the earphones.
Chatter in the kitchen.
Fielding.

Now I'm so happy, I saw the light, I saw the light, praise the lord.

I think we have a purpose.

We aren't here simply to entertain ourselves.

But, I believe we can distinguish

Hey, aren't you people going to watch the News?

The end of the revolution has been a bit of a disappointment to say the least. We have probably lost our last chance to establish a viable alternative to the archaic political and educational institutions that have for so long limited the scope and understanding of our ability for genius.

Shut-up George.

Kitchen, the bathroom is along that side.

Fielding's still singing.

Jessie switches on the t.v., George takes the earphones.

Less than three years ago Bobby Seales

The World Health Organization

Oct. 15th.

terrific news

place your hand in front of your left eye

I don't want your I.D.

Don't just scratch like that.

I'll bet your mother don't know you scratch like that, I bet she never saw you scratch my back.

and I'll give you 5,000 Blue Chip Stamps just for

Founded in 1836 by terms of the charter an integral part of the educational system of the state, it provides for all students a college education. It's instruction covers all the broad and essential fields. In the past century the University has grown a small Oakland School to the present nine campuses.
Information regarding

Now I'm so happy,
I saw the light,
I saw the light,
praise the Lord,
I saw the light.
Just like the blind man,
I wandered alone,
no sorrows in sight,
praise the Lord,
I saw the light.

The reading of the Will takes place at three that next afternoon.
George is dead.
We're all in the den again.
The papers hanging loose on my lap. 1, 2, ...

eight times I've tried to stop this reading from coming about.

and the red lake that caught the eye by surprise, lies and begins to flow
if you can, the course blue and the white, let's think on this, or the blue,
or the blue, so all I have to do you already know, so all that changes,
changes for you

Huh.

It has become embarrassingly clear that I have chosen, or better, fallen
into, a debilitating situation. None of my needs are met. I can't become
interested in that which I detest. I don't believe in the industrialized
mentality. All my joys have turned

Why don't you leave it out and we'll read it if we have time?
Get on to the particulars.

Okay, Jessie.
Coffee.

Remember that bit we had about college?
Well, I used that.

Done with a snare drum.

V I V A R I N.

Thump thump thump thump thump
thump thmup thmup thump thmup

My face is greasy

Too die, Too sleep, too sleep no more,

The weatherman says,

Near 67, overnight lows.

In the early seventh century

Have you ever had really good Italian food Tim?

Like in a restaurant?
This is really good.

Christine Neuwirth: writing

uwttx

macc 26.42 tty uwtt11

@run 7863.3956032274

runid: y72142 date: 050473 time: 023601 file reload
time: 193000

purge of temp cat files at 2030 5/3/73

password please

nomul

continue

@basic demo'demo

basic r4.03 02:36:38 4 may 73

old: hamurabi

run

hamurabi 02:36:56 4 may 73

hamurabi says: welcome, new village manager!

your population is 121 people

you own 954 acres

you have 3016 bushels of grain in store

hamurabi says: land is trading at 25 bushels per acre

how many acres of land do you wish to buy? 0

to sell

? 50

you now have 904 acres and 4266 bushels

bushels to use as food? 3000

how many acres do you wish to plant? 904

hamurabi says: at end of year 1 there were 2 accidental

deaths and 7 deaths from disease

9 births and 12 moved in

the population is now 133

we harvested 4 bushels per acre rats ate 0 bushels

you now have 904 acres and 4882 bushels in store

hamurabi says:

UNIVAC

land is trading at 24 bushels per acre

how many acres do you wish to buy? 10

you now have 918 acres and 6506 bushels

bushels to use as food? 4000

how many acres do you wish to plant? 918

hamurabi says: at end of year 3 there were 3 accidental

deaths and 10 deaths from disease

10 births and 11 moved in

the population is now 154

we harvested 1 bushel per acre

rats ate 0 bushels

you now have 918 acres and 3424 bushels

bushels to use as food? 3000

how many acres do you wish to plant? 900

hamurabi says: at end of year 4

4 starved

there were 1 accidental deaths and 6 deaths from disease

8 births and 0 moved in

the population is now 151

we harvested 1 bushels per acre

rats ate 0 bushels

you now have 900 acres and 1738 bushels in store

hamurabi says:

land is trading at 20 bushels per acre

how many acres of land do you wish to buy? 0

to sell

? I don't want to be village manager anymore

error-- re-type line in 330.

? 150

you now have 750 acres and 4738 bushels in store

hamurabi says:

land is trading at 24 bushels per acre

how many acres of land do you wish to buy? 0

to sell

? 25

you now have 725 acres

and 788 bushels in store

how many acres do you wish to plant? 900

but you have only 725 in store

how many acres do you wish to plant? 825

but you have only 725 in store

how many acres do you wish to plant? 800

but you have only 725 in store

how many acres do you wish to plant? 100

hamurabi says:

at end of year 6

there were 8 accidental deaths and 12 deaths from disease

9 births and 21 moved in

the population is now 185

we harvested 7 bushels per acre

rats ate 0 bushels

you now have 725 acres and 788 bushels in store

hamurabi says:

land is trading at 22 bushels per acre

how many acres of land do you wish to buy? 0

to sell

? why do people do that? why do they keep moving here???????

error-- re-type line in 330.

? 100

you now have 625 acres and 2988 bushels

bushels to use as food? 2500

how many acres do you wish to plant? 600

hamurabi says: at end of year 7

60 starved

there were 4 accidental deaths and 10 deaths from disease

16 births and 0 moved in

the population is now 127

we harvested 2 bushels per acre

rats ate 0 bushels

you now have 625 acres and 1688 bushels in store

hamurabi says:

land is trading at 21 bushels per acre

how many acres of land do you wish to buy? 10

you now have 635 acres and 1478 bushels

bushels to use as food? 1300

how many acres do you wish to plant? 600

but you have only 178 bushels in store

how many acres do you wish to plant? you let me plant more

last time

error-- re-type in 530.

? 500

but you have only 178 bushels in store

how many acres do you wish to plant? 400

but you have only 178 bushels in store

how many acres do you wish to plant? 300

hamurabi says: at end of year 8

62 starved

there were 3 accidental deaths and 2 deaths from disease

5 births and 0 moved in

the population is now 65

hamurabi says:

land is trading at 21 bushels per acre

how many acres of land do you wish to buy? 35

you now have 670 acres and 343 bushels

bushels to use as food? I told you I didn't want to be

manager

error--re-type line in 440.

? 300

? don't let them start moving in again

error-- re-type line in 330.

? 0

hamurabi says: at end of year 9

17 starved

*****plague*****

there were 0 accidental deaths and 11 deaths from disease

the population is now 0

hamurabi says:*****purge*****

you have been replaced by a military junta

good bye

time: .611

Yeah, then I had begun to rub, stain, and roll acrylic paint into unsized canvas, often modulating one color into the next, avoiding any sense of boundary between. In these works color begins to flow downwards from the top of the canvas, stopping short of the lower framing edge. Fatal Plunge Lady is the major painting executed in this manner.*

Overworked, overhyped wall decorations. It's unfortunate that he hadn't the presence of mind to notice that his paintings weren't carrying any of the force that I must assume that he intended that they carry. Your metaphysical leanings

Your metaphysical leanings are just too heavy-handed Jules, they don't contact any but the most patient of your audience. And you say that that is what a viable art form will do? Is it? It is certainly what an elitist art form will do But, you looked so self-satisfied when you hit the cover of the View section of the L.A. Times the day after your opening that it seems that all you did was just you. Did the show have anything to do with anything outside of just business again?

So why come down on Jules? He's a pleasant enough painter and it is not his particular duty to

Jules Olitski is the best Painter in America today. So say Walter Darby Bannard, Kenworth Moffet, and Ken Carpenter to list the most notable. Then it is up to Olitski to turn something back to those people and move out of his present well painted, saccharine surfaces into

Are you interested in posterity Jules? Or are you interested in the situation that we exist in now? Are you ignorant of the fact that to a large extent you are, by allowing the Art Historians to entrench you in the Art Continuum, losing any effectiveness that you still might have on the process. When you allow the critics to use you as their new god aren't you a little shaken by your loss of identity? Or is such a situation perfectly acceptable to your conception of Jules Olitski? If this is the case, then you are of little value to that same continuum and very few artists are going to hear what you have to say.

This reaction against Olitski at PMMA is against the loss of an effective painter to the banalities of an overly manipulated art world. Do we have to function at this level when there are other greater possibilities which offer a much more viable means for the extension of the creative processes? Processes that are now suffering

because our good painters are allowing themselves to be distributed as a commodity that enhances one's cultural ego but that is antithetical to the advancement of painting and that shows a distinct disregard for the growing populace of better equipped artists. If the present state of disregard is allowed then it would do well for the rest of us to say fuck it and hang up our esthetic intentions and knowledge and let the established boys, Olitski among others, have the last gasp of the culture's creative potential. Then we could all get into more rewarding occupations.

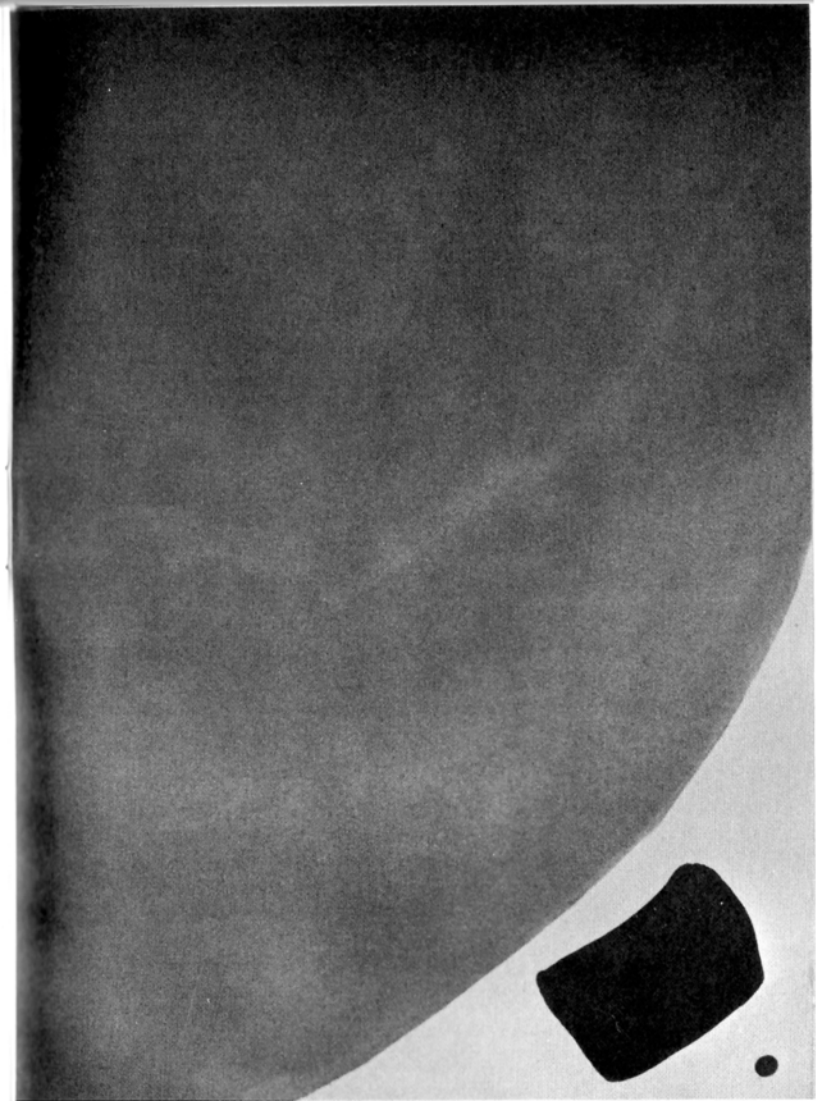
The cultural response to the artist today is so negative that only really bad art is allowed to surface and then only because of the liberal consciousness of the galleries, museums, and magazines. Really bad art could have been seen last December at Nick Wilder's where Bruce Nauman Played with his eclectic Neon word games and plaster board privacies. The show could have been subtitled BRUCE NAUMAN WANTS TO KNOW IF YOU GET IT? We got it Bruce. So?

Surprise. The impressive art recently on view came from some unsuspected sources. Surprising because it seemed so good and yet without the flaws of hype or eclecticism. William Wegman at Claire Copely and Laddie John Dill at Riko Mizuno. Wegman deals with art by not dealing with art as an external process to the human situation but as art without art. He is touching on some points that Nauman illustrates only vague awareness of. It is an experience that reaches the viewer through conceptual consciousness without conceptual self-consciousness. It is an experience not to be described but to be realized. It seems so effective, in fact, that I'm tempted not to call it art at all. Laddie John Dill was another revelation only more subtle than Wegman. Dill's self-consciousness of painting as object is so intense that we are shocked again into wondering just why it is that the art object is no longer viable. How did we come to the acceptance of those stances of the Sixties so easily? There is nothing precious in the paintings or the installation, both being just straight forward good art considerations. Dill's awareness of the material and his conceptual basis for painting stand on art as experience for the mind through the eye. His ability to manifest intense visual communication without mundane rationalization, which was encountered in Olitski's art, was an undeniable relief.

Reviews

Jon Perry

* See Kenworth Moffet in the catalogue Jules Olitski, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1973.



Jules Olitski, Fatal Plunge Lady, 1963. oil-miscible acrylic on canvas, 100" x 72"

The Jules Olitski retrospective recently held at PMMA was another landmark in the banality of American painting, showing only the attitude of an outmoded painter as presented through the contrived designations of a tired museum staffed by overzealous unperceptive security guards, curators, and middle-aged docents. Neither the contents nor the installation were anything beyond the most overly synthetic pedestrian achievement. The show demonstrates that American painting is once again in the hands of the tedious middle-class. Aaron Bros.' gold plated slat frames placed against the edges of Olitski's

Jules, I really liked those three spatial planes you're dealing with in Fatal Plunge Lady.

LETTERS:

Editor
Straight Turkey
Lawndale, CA

Prod Jud Fine with bamboo whip into a pool of tar.
Tie with twine in fetal position, douse with feathers,
Roll lightly, and encube with bailing wire.

Make Bill deKooning ^{buy}~~pay~~ one of his own paintings and
keep it forever and ever.

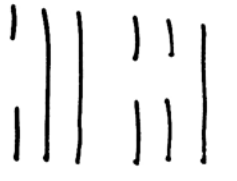
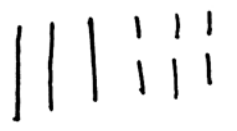
Mutilate Pearlstein at the joints.

Paint with pork chops, swine, andswill, and smother
with bloody ooze.

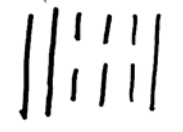
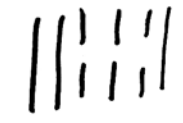
(courtesy) RNMA



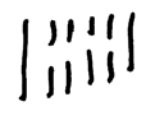
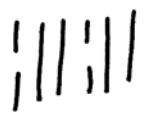
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For appointment: 213 329-5687



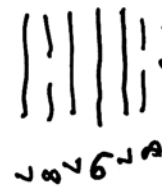
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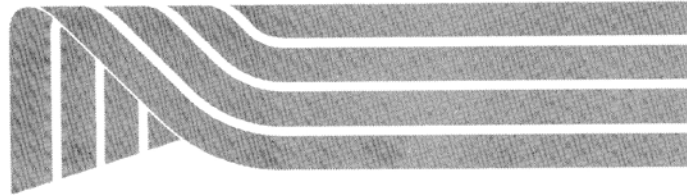
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Bill Foresee

special thanks

