



Pontus Hultén and Moderna Museet. The Formative Years

PONTUS HULTÉN AND MODERNA MUSEET THE FORMATIVE YEARS

MODERNA MUSEET Koenig Books, London

Authors:
Patrik Andersson, Ph.D. and Associate Professor at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver
Annika Gunnarsson, Ph.D. and Curator of Prints and Drawings at Moderna Museet
Ylva Hillström, M.Phil. and Curator of Education at Moderna Museet
Anna Lundström, Ph.D., researcher and teacher at Stockholm University
Jimmy Pettersson, M.Phil. and doctoral student in Art History at Stockholm University
Anna Tellgren, Ph.D., Curator of Photography and Research Leader at Moderna Museet



Cover: Invitation to the exhibition *Movement in Art*, Moderna Museet, 1961.



Claes Oldenburg and Pontus Hultén at
Moderna Museet, 1966

Pontus Hultén and Moderna Museet.
The Formative Years

11	Daniel Birnbaum: Preface
15	Anna Tellgren: Pontus Hultén and Moderna Museet. Research and learning based on an art collection, an archive and a library
39	Patrik Andersson: The Inner and the Outer Space. Rethinking movement in art
67	Anna Lundström: Movement in Art. The layers of an exhibition
97	Jimmy Pettersson: Apropos Film. On moving images in a modern art museum
121	Annika Gunnarsson: Sam Francis and Claes Oldenburg. Two Americans
149	Ylva Hillström: Parallel Stories. Educational activities in Moderna Museet's early years
177	Pontus Hultén: How does one wish a museum for modern art to function?
183	Exhibitions at Moderna Museet during its formative years
186	Index of Names

THE INNER AND THE OUTER SPACE



The Inner and the Outer Space, Moderna Museet, 1965

The Inner and the Outer Space.
Rethinking movement in art

Patrik Andersson

Between 1961 and 1966, Stockholm's Moderna Museet propelled itself into the world of contemporary art under the directorship of Pontus Hultén. While he directed the museum until 1973, these years were vital in defining and promoting a visually, physically, and philosophically dynamic art. Two exhibitions bracket these years and gained the greatest international notoriety: *Rörelse i konsten* (*Movement in Art*, 1961) and *Hon – en katedral* (*She – A Cathedral*, 1966). Each was spectacular in its own way. Yet they typify Hultén's anarchic aspirations and his penchant for art in the spirit of Marcel Duchamp that employed machines, movement, irony, chance, and humour. While much has been written about these exhibitions, very little has been said about *Den inre och den yttre rymden*. *En utställning rörande en universell konst* (*The Inner and the Outer Space. An Exhibition on Universal Art*, 1965–66), the exhibition just prior to *Hon – en katedral*. While less rambunctious, it was equally monumental and helped set the stage for the notorious work that succeeded it.

As I have shown elsewhere, Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely and Per Olof Ultvedt's *Hon* was a tongue-in-cheek critique of the optimism and entertainment associated with certain types of American art (in particular Happenings, Pop Art, and Experiments in Art and Technology).¹ Here I suggest the exhibition *Den inre och den yttre rymden* was vital in strategically redeeming Hultén's previous curatorial decisions and addressing the combative criticism the museum was receiving circa 1965.² If we consider that *Hon* was a distinctly European critique of what the artists saw as the technological hubris of a New York-centred participatory art that had broken free from modernist art (such as Colour Field Painting and Post-Painterly Abstraction), we need to look at *Den inre och den yttre rymden* as an attempt to reassert Hultén's alliance with a radically individualist form of anarchism rooted in proto-forms of European existentialism.³ With this in mind, *Den inre och den yttre rymden* functioned as both an engagement with, and a negation of, curatorial projects Hultén had avoided overt contact with in the late fifties and early sixties such as *Zero*. What Hultén shared with these other projects,

and artists like Tinguely and Yves Klein in particular, was a desire to challenge the confines of the traditional gallery by introducing physical and philosophical movement. By the time he curated *Den inre och yttre den rymden* in 1965, movement had preoccupied Hultén for a decade.

As early as 1955 Hultén convinced Denise René, arguably the most influential gallerist in Paris supporting geometric abstraction, to let him co-curate *Le Mouvement*, an exhibition devoted to kinetic art. The project allowed Hultén to put his own spin on an increasingly contemporary paradigm.⁴ Like a number of like-minded artists, he sought to escape the polemics of not only the School of Paris, but also, by the late fifties, of gestural and geometric abstraction. *Le Mouvement* consisted of three elements: a historical section, with kinetic sculptures by Alexander Calder and Marcel Duchamp; contemporary work by Victor Vasarely and Robert Jacobsen; and work by four emerging artists who came from places considered peripheral to an art world centred on Paris: Yaacov Agam (Israel), Pol Bury (Belgium), Jesús Rafael Soto (Venezuela), and Jean Tinguely (Switzerland). While anchoring the exhibition in Denise René's elegant stable of international kinetic art with works by Calder, Jacobsen and Vasarely, Hultén's inclusion of Duchamp's optical experiment *Rotary Demisphere* (1925) gave the exhibition its intellectual edge and rooted it in the anarchism of Dada. Unlike Vasarely's formalist Op Art, Duchamp's optical work destabilised the mind in order to activate the intellect.⁵

Of the younger artists in *Le Mouvement*, Hultén found Tinguely's work most "free". Unlike the pseudo-scientific seriousness exhibited by the majority of the artists at Denise René, Tinguely seemed to share Duchamp's pataphysical playfulness, which forged a path between the often naïve optimism of geometric abstraction and the more pessimistic expressions of an *art informel*. Through curating *Le Mouvement*, Hultén established an artistic and intellectual framework that governed his idea of modern art for the next decade – an idea that took issue with the technocratic side of contemporary art and design without dismissing its modernity. Hultén also developed a deep philosophical interest in the existential side of Expressionist art, but not an interest so entrenched in abject materiality that he ignored modernity's pop cultural aesthetic-pleasure and humour. In other words, it was an art that negotiated the inner and outer spaces defining Europe's post-war Socialism.

Hultén was by no means the only curator attempting to establish his own post-war canon. For example, in France, Michel Tapié's *Art Autre* and Charles Estienne's Tachisme were but two of the movements progressing alongside Hultén's trajectory, and in London Lawrence Alloway's activities at the Institute of Contemporary Art were even closer in spirit.⁶ But Hultén avoided direct dialogue with these other curators to secure his own vision of art. As he would later recall:

What distinguished *Le Mouvement* from other exhibitions and earned it widespread publicity was its presentation of a new outlook in art. A great deal of the art of the 1950s had been pessimistic, defeatist, and passive. A lot of people were surprised to learn that there was another kind of 'modern' art, dynamic, constructive, joyful, deliberately bewildering, ironic, critical, teasing, and aggressive.⁷

To distance his project from others' interest in kinetic art, particularly that of Europeans connected to László Moholy-Nagy's dominant account of the historical avant-garde *Vision in Motion* (1947), Hultén shifted the terms of the discussion ever so slightly – from motion to the more metaphorical possibilities of movement:

When you want to talk about movement, Swedish is an unpractical language. English is much more convenient since it distinguishes between *motion* and *movement*. Motion appears to imply movement in general ... (whereas) movement implies movement itself ... This belongs to this century's big events to allow an art work to move within itself like a motor or the way a tree moves in the wind.⁸

Hultén increasingly understood Duchamp's visual and conceptual experiments as a genre-breaking toolbox to challenge the rational and technocratic optimism of Moholy-Nagy's Bauhaus rhetoric.⁹ For this reason, as Tinguely would later recall, Hultén "had to fight for Duchamp at Denise René," since his playful critique of scientific rationalism was not always appreciated or understood.¹⁰ Perhaps it was the resistance of René, Vasarely, and art critics such as Léon Degand that made Hultén realize his interest in Duchamp could help define his own anarchistic position.

By the early sixties, Hultén had managed to import the ideas and artists he had discovered in Paris to Stockholm. He had established himself as curator and director of Stockholm's Moderna Museet,

which was founded in 1958. In October 1959, the museum's public was given a taste of Hultén's international and philosophical interests with the exhibition *Sebastián Matta. 15 Forms of Doubt*. Having worked with both Le Corbusier and Duchamp during the 1930s, this Chilean artist's painted psychological morphologies, or inscapes, read as a response to work such as Jean Fautrier's heavy *informel* lead-clad hostages.¹¹ But they were also understood as a reaction to the seductive coloured structures of technocratic urban environments. In other words, Matta's work was a responsive dialectical play between an *inner and outer space* – a hint of the kind of “movement” that Hultén needed to escape art-world polemics while remaining anchored in the dominant existential and progressive discourses of his day.

By 1961, Hultén was ready to activate the museum with the exhibition *Rörelse i konsten* (Movement in Art). This refined elaboration of the 1955 *Le Mouvement* exhibition would launch Hultén's career in ways few could have predicted.¹² Much has been made of the fact that this exhibition established Hultén's international reputation. But often downplayed is the fact that movement had become a widespread discourse by the time the exhibition opened at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Moderna Museet, Stockholm and the Louisiana, Humlebæk. In fact, this exhibition for which Hultén has largely been credited was not entirely his own but was in fact a collaboration with Daniel Spoerri, an artist who then was closely associated with *Nouveau réalisme* and the Zero group.¹³

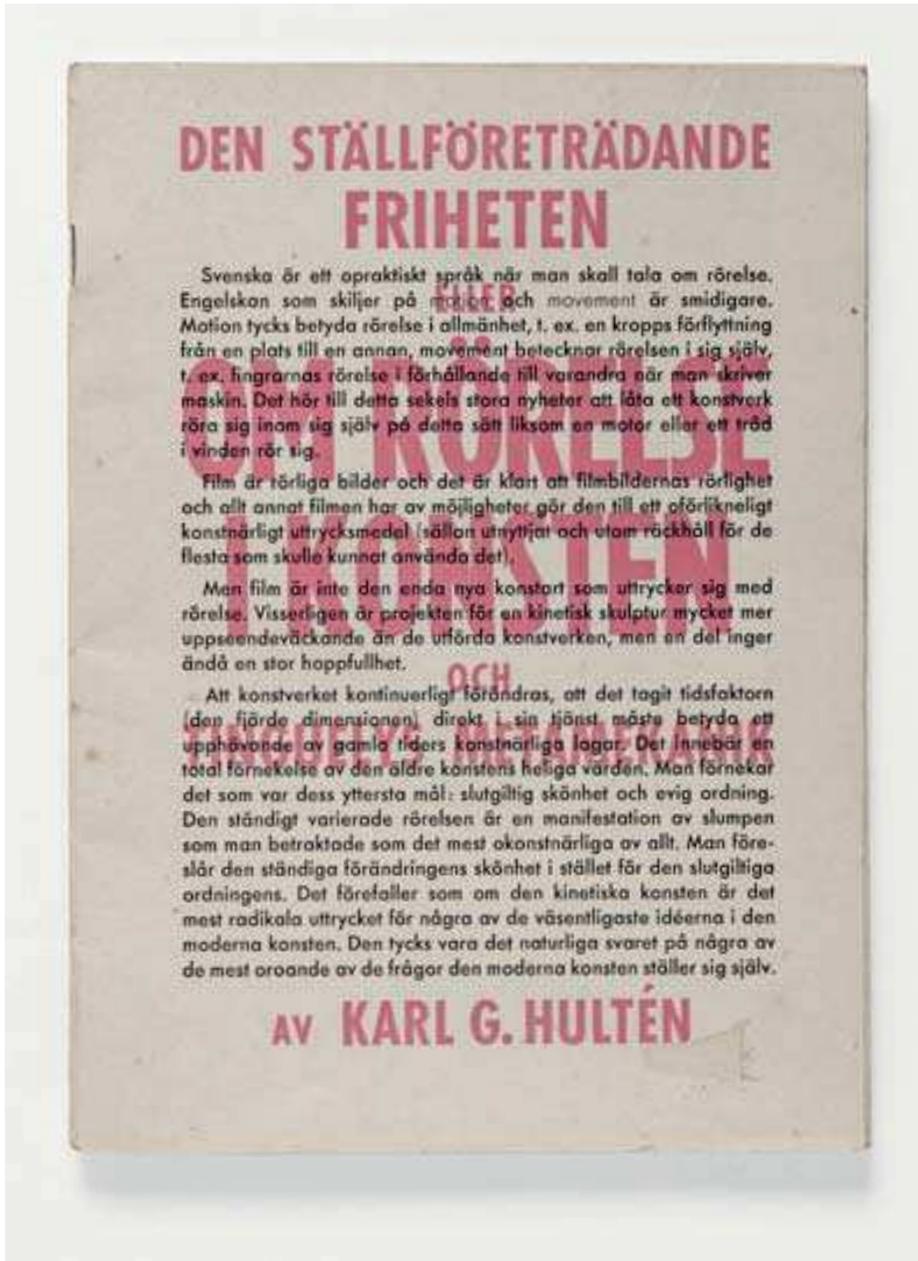
Between 1955 and 1961, the art that Hultén had invested so much energy in developing had gained widespread currency. Not only was work like Tinguely's being shown and discussed in the Parisian circle around Pierre Restany, but platforms for his ideas around movement had also emerged in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, and Denmark.¹⁴ Artists such as Klein, Spoerri and Tinguely were particularly active in the circle around Zero, the collaborative project initiated by Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker in the late fifties that blurred institutional distinctions by arguing for artist curators, collaboration, and artistic exchanges. By November 1960, members of *Nouveau réalisme* and Zero were exhibiting together in places such as *Le Festival de l'art d'avantgarde*, an exhibition held at the Palais des Expositions in Versailles, Paris.¹⁵

As these activities suggest, by the late fifties, Hultén was not the only curator responding to Moholy-Nagy's *Vision in Motion*. Most

obvious in this regard was the Antwerp group of artists who in 1959 organised the exhibition *Vision in Motion–Motion in Vision*. In other words, movement and motion had become catchwords, representing responses to stasis in numerous contexts. Generally speaking, these various movements challenged the increasingly institutional historicising Hultén was offering at his new museum. Perhaps this was why Hultén would by 1961 redirect his activities to make greater room for a New York-centred avant-garde open to his platform.

As we will see, while the 1965 exhibition *The Inner and the Outer Space* would on many levels resemble a Zero exhibition, Hultén was clearly responding to these movements in his own way. He was defining this contemporary art as a historical paradigm rather than an impermanent gesture. This is particularly interesting to consider in light of the fact that Hultén's first major exhibition, *Rörelse i konsten*, was curated in close collaboration with Spoerri. As art historian Andres Pardey has recently chronicled, Hultén and Spoerri's relationship was extremely strained. Both were vying for Stedelijk director Willem Sandberg's attention and both had nuanced and contrasting ideas about the direction the exhibition should take.¹⁶ As Pardey makes clear, Spoerri had a deep investment in Zero through his *Édition MAT*, which produced editions with artists such as Yacov Agam, Josef Albers, Pol Bury, Marcel Duchamp, Heinz Mack, Dieter Roth, Jesús Rafael Soto, Jean Tinguely, and Victor Vasarely.¹⁷ While this lineup suggests interests similar to Hultén's, Spoerri disagreed with Hultén's desire to include established artists like Calder as well as design objects in their exhibition: “the idea of building a monument when one wants to show something young and alive is somewhat strange.”¹⁸

In the end, *Rörelse i konsten* represented Hultén's first major international success and defined Moderna Museet as one of the most progressive art institutions in Europe. Not only did the exhibition break attendance records in Stockholm and receive critical reviews in Amsterdam, Stockholm and Humlebæk, it also helped redirect art history towards Hultén's interest in movement and build an expansive international network of artists. While the following years demonstrated a diverse agenda – establishing government funding, building the museum's collection – the most prominent feature of the museum was its strong focus on a New York-centred art scene. Perhaps this was a way for Hultén to distinguish his project from Zero and *Nouveau réalisme*, gaining attention through promoters



DEN STÄLLFÖRETRÄDANDE FRIHETEN

Svenska är ett opraktiskt språk när man skall tala om rörelse. Engelskan som skiljer på motion och movement är smidigare. Motion tycks betyda rörelse i allmänhet, t. ex. en kropps förflyttning från en plats till en annan, movement betecknar rörelsen i sig själv, t. ex. fingrarnas rörelse i förhållande till varandra när man skriver maskin. Det hör till detta sekels stora nyheter att låta ett konstverk röra sig inom sig själv på detta sätt liksom en motor eller ett träd i vinden rör sig.

Film är rörliga bilder och det är klart att filmbildernas rörlighet och allt annat filmen har av möjligheter gör den till ett oförläppligt konstnärligt uttrycksmedel (sällan utnyttjat och utom räckhåll för de flesta som skulle kunnat använda det).

Men film är inte den enda nya konstform som uttrycker sig med rörelse. Visserligen är projekten för en kinetisk skulptur mycket mer uppseendeväckande än de utförda konstverken, men en del inger ändå en stor hoppfullhet.

Att konstverket kontinuerligt förändras, att det tagit tidsfaktorn (den fjärde dimensionen) direkt i sin tjänst måste betyda ett upphävande av gamla tiders konstnärliga lagar. Det innebär en total förnekelse av den äldre konstens heliga värden. Man förnekar det som var dess yttersta mål: slutgiltig skönhet och evig ordning. Den ständigt varierade rörelsen är en manifestation av slumpen som man betraktade som det mest konstnärliga av allt. Man föreslår den ständiga förändringens skönhet i stället för den slutgiltiga ordningens. Det förefaller som om den kinetiska konsten är det mest radikala uttrycket för några av de viktigaste idéerna i den moderna konsten. Den tycks vara det naturliga svaret på några av de mest oroande av de frågor den moderna konsten ställer sig själv.

AV KARL G. HULTÉN

such as Pierre Restany. However, as we will see, for Hultén, controlling his own movement would prove difficult.

As early as the spring of 1962, Moderna Museet opened its doors to *4 Americans*, which showcased the work of Jasper Johns, Alfred Leslie, Robert Rauschenberg and Richard Stankiewicz. A lively debate ensued between the museum's defenders and more conservative factions of the art community. A particular target in the debate was the display of Rauschenberg's *Monogram* (1955–59), which became a scapegoat for professors at both the Royal Academy of Art and Lund University to attack contemporary art.¹⁹ To coincide with this exhibition, Moderna Museet organised *The New American Cinema – New York Film* as well as *New American Music and Poetry*, for which John Cage presented his lecture "Where are we going? And what are we doing?"²⁰

Contextualising these contemporary exhibitions of American art, in 1963 Hultén offered his Swedish public *Ben Shahn. American Commentary* and *Jackson Pollock*, the first survey of Pollock's work in Scandinavia. By 1964, the museum had committed a large portion of its exhibition schedule to American art. *American Pop Art. 106 Forms of Love and Despair* was the most impressive exhibition that year and was the first major museum presentation of Pop Art in Europe. This show, which included work by Claes Oldenburg, George Segal, James Rosenquist, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Tom Wesselman and Jim Dine, was complemented by *The New American Cinema, Tributes and Floor Plans. A Happening by Ken Dewey, The Films of Chris Marker*; and *Five New York Evenings* – a major collaboration with the music society Fylkingen that featured Merce Cunningham, Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, David Tudor, Yvonne Rainer, and Öyvind Fahlström, among others. There were, of course, many exhibitions featuring European and specifically Swedish art, such as *Sigrid Hjertén 1885–1948* and the group exhibition *Swish. A Manifestation* But for the news media and the cultural press it was clear that under Hultén's directorship, New York occupied Moderna Museet's agenda.²¹

But as early as 1964, the year Hultén began to organise what would become *Den inre och den yttre rymden*, it appears that he had himself begun to regret this rushed relationship with an avant-garde that defined itself by rejecting modernist abstraction rooted in European philosophical traditions. As the working title for the show proposed, Hultén was looking for "New Spaces in Art," but this did



Poster for *The Inner and the Outer Space*,
Moderna Museet, 1965

not mean at the expense of history.²² Perhaps it was his own radical individualism, rooted in European existentialism, that prevented Hultén from embracing an art that was increasingly read as an optimistic symbol for collectivity and American individualism. In his catalogue introduction for *American Pop Art*, Hultén did not provide the usual enthusiastic sales pitch one would have expected. In fact, considering how much time and effort Hultén had invested in promoting an art tied to irony and humour, the introduction casts a rather dark shadow on an otherwise eye-popping exhibition. It also shows how Hultén filtered his views through existentialism:

It is a common mistake to believe that there is irony pointed at mass culture embedded in Lichtenstein's or Warhol's pictures . . . This is in many ways a new art created from a different point of origin. It is the creation of a generation that feels powerless to transform the world . . . and in order to survive is forced to accept it . . . They partake in much of the world around them in a meaningless, unengaged manner. In relation to society and its problems they stand passive. Politics do not interest them.²³

Hultén's description of these artists' "apolitical" attitude and lack of irony may be a false accusation. Nevertheless, it did serve to distance Pop Art from the more apparently engaged and historical European avant-garde that Tinguely, for example, aligned himself with. By pointing to the American artists' "middle-class upbringing," Hultén positioned them squarely in the lap of a consumer-based mass culture:

They are not bohemians. They have never had to confront real external pressures. Most of them are too young to have participated in the war. As artists they have reached success and economic security with a speed rarely seen before. This economic success is what they strive for. They are not especially intellectual, nor do they have a deep interest in anything but pure personal experience. Their way to respond to society is personal, not social.²⁴

Despite the political nature of his own project, Hultén advocated neither a socially detached politics nor a socially political art. Most important, he was not interested in having his museum become a political platform. What was important was that in social spaces such as Moderna Museet Hultén could activate his ideas of anarchist "play" rooted in the same kind of radical individualism that artists like

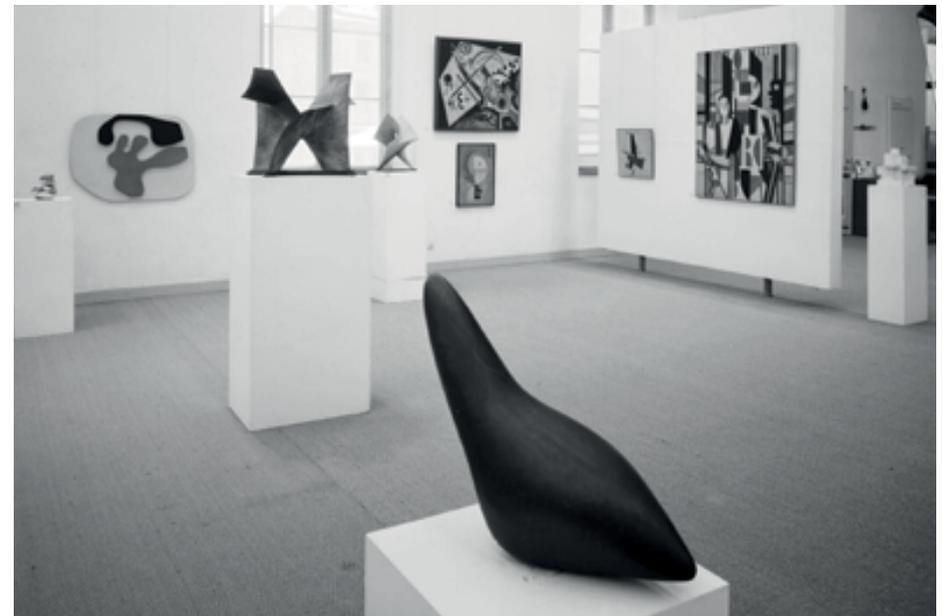
Duchamp and Tinguely saw as liberating. Considering the above quote, Hultén's image of Pop Art reads as one of *despair* – a position to be avoided. Scrambling to make something positive of the exhibition, Hultén, without suggesting that the work was socially critical, proposed that the 106 forms of love and despair on display revealed a desperate attempt to obtain the freedom to experience life:

Pop Art is not social criticism. Instead one can say that it shows a longing for relaxation. It is desperately taking part in an unavoidable environment, and being subtly optimistic about the power of vulgarity and banality. On a personal level, one object is not better than the next. If there is something of interest one can manage to find in these often similar copies of objects, it is the triumph of feelings. The Pop artists do not ask any questions and have no agendas. What they want to offer us, by all accounts, is a new way of feeling.²⁵

Withholding a public judgment of Pop Art, Hultén concluded his introduction with the rhetorical question in brackets: “Will (these artists) be successful in fulfilling that part of the experiential vacuum which is the bomb’s ultimate reason?”²⁶

Swedish political commentators had for some time attacked America’s role in Vietnam, but when the U.S. began bombing Vietnam in March 1965 the public outcry was great enough to warrant questions about Moderna Museet’s role in promoting American art. The decision to organise a large Rauschenberg exhibition did not make things easier.²⁷ Perhaps most significant for Hultén was that one of the museum’s strongest supporters and intellectual allies, art critic Ulf Linde, wrote the first of four “seminal” articles denouncing the New York avant-garde in the liberal daily *Dagens Nyheter*.²⁸ For Linde, the discourse around Pop Art consistently confused the influence of John Cage and Marcel Duchamp. This, he felt, was due to not understanding their differences, which were rooted in an embrace of instinct (Cage) and of intuition (Duchamp). For Linde, the former rejected the intentionality that Duchamp had advocated by embracing artistic choice. In other words, the “openness” advocated by Happenings and Pop Art was problematic for Linde. It removed artistic control – something dangerous that he equated with a specifically American form of pragmatic liberalism.

Hultén’s response to all this was swift. Rather than avoid another “American” show, Hultén offered an exhibition to James Rosenquist,



one of the most prominent American Pop artists. Rosenquist had just produced an epically scaled painting that clearly articulated a critique of both America's consumer culture and its foreign politics. Despite Hultén's claim in 1964 that "Pop Art is not social criticism," Hultén saw that a few such artists were critical of their culture. This would certainly help Hultén save face in light of public anti-American sentiments. In September that year, the museum presented Rosenquist's *F-111* (1964), a twenty-eight-meter-long painting on canvas and aluminum reminiscent of Picasso's *Guernica* (itself the first work to be exhibited at Moderna Museet, in 1956).²⁹ The billboard-size montage was made up of images such as canned spaghetti, an umbrella, and an atomic bomb's mushroom cloud superimposed onto the side of an American fighter-bomber that stretched the full twenty-eight meters. As art critic Eugene Wretholm pointed out in the art journal *Konstrevy*, "Every American is part owner and partly responsible for its horrible existence."³⁰ Against this tumultuous backdrop of internal and external politics, Hultén turned his attention to the most ambitious exhibition he had organised since *Rörelse i konsten: Den inre och yttre den rymden*, which was to be devoted to universal art.

Having spent a decade supporting a new generation of artists who questioned high modernist ideals, it must have seemed odd that Hultén was now organising an exhibition that on the surface seemed very formalist. But despite how "contemporary" his museum had become, he had never abandoned his grounding in art history and philosophy.³¹ On October 16, 1965, Hultén wrote to Barnett Newman in an effort to restore a relationship possibly soured by supporting so called Neo-Dada and Pop Art:

I would like to tell you more about the exhibition that I rapidly mentioned at Kiki Kogelnik and Mr. Kaplan's party. It is meant to be a thematic show concerned with the art of artists like Malevich, Albers, Rothko, Fontana, Stella, Yves Klein, Reinhardt, Robert Morris, Don Judd. It will be an exhibition of an art which is neither constructivist, nor "op art," an art using space, silence, stillness, even emptiness and negation as means of expression. An art of contemplation more than an art of the eye, of space more than of building.³²

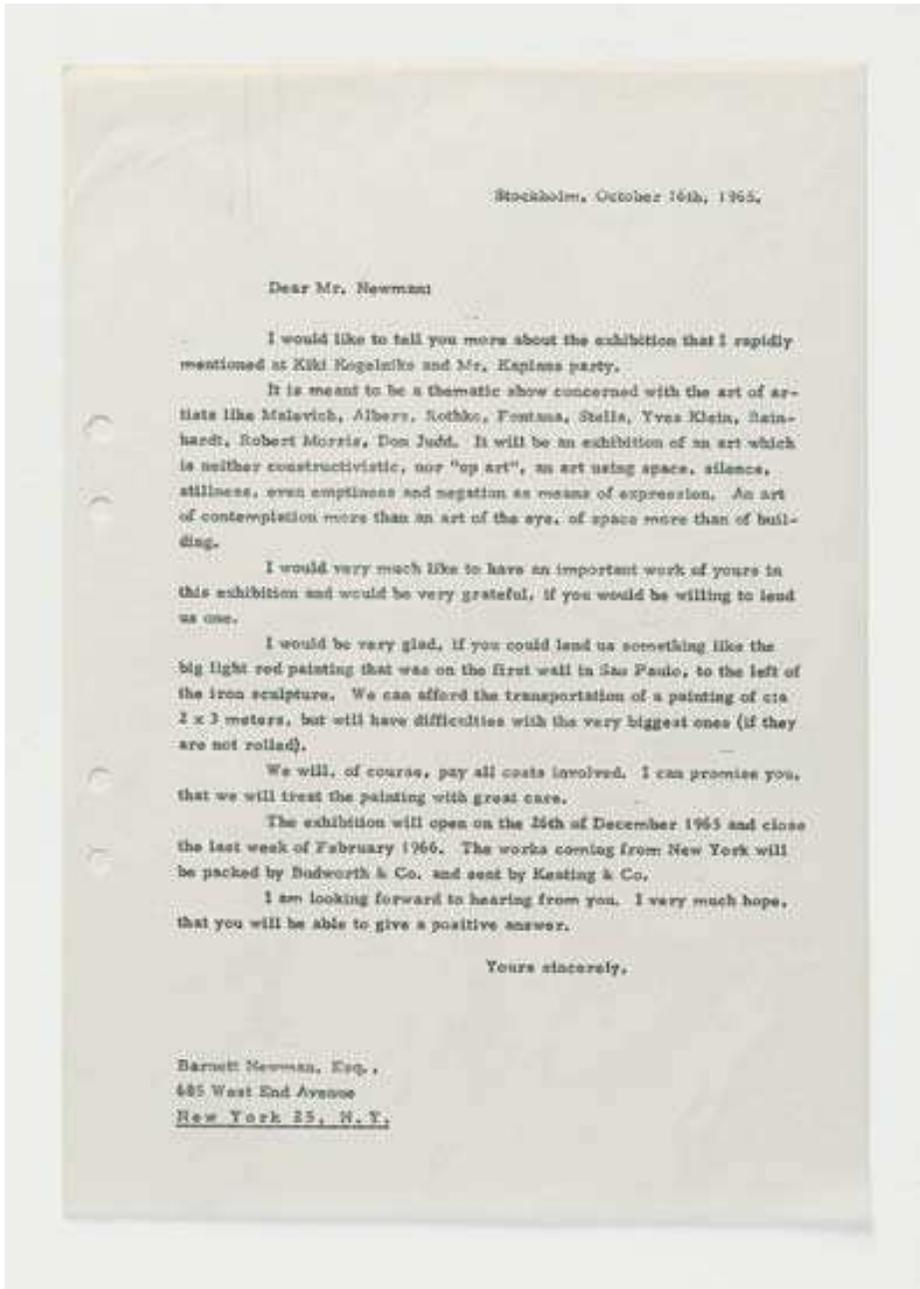
This return was necessary for Hultén to redeem the dialectical play he had helped set in motion as early as 1955. By turning back to a

Hegelian tradition of negative dialectics, Hultén hoped to salvage art's "social" responsibility without being tied down by the kind of Socialist politics that he saw institutionalized in places such as Sweden under Socialism.

The exhibition opened on December 26, 1965. It was accompanied by an impressive catalogue that was laboriously constructed with individual elements that were hand-stamped and bolted together before being packaged into a square box. As in the past, Hultén followed Willem Sandberg's footsteps in seeing the catalogue and poster design not only as a document of the exhibition but also as a creative outlet for his own artistic impulses.

While introducing artists from many countries on an epic scale similar to *Rörelse i konsten, Den inre och den yttre rymden* lacked the former show's overtly anarchic spirit. With the exception of a *White Painting* from 1951 by Rauschenberg, it was also notably void of any so-called Neo-Dada or Pop Art.³³ And as much as this exhibition resembled a Zero exhibition through the inclusion of Enrico Castellani, Lucio Fontana, Yayoi Kusama, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker and Herman de Vries, it extended that group's paradigm by historicising their work. Indeed, Hultén's installation looked more like a museum hang than an experimental laboratory. This was the very thing that Spoerri, a member of Zero, had objected to back in 1961.³⁴ Not surprisingly, Spoerri was left out of *Den inre och den yttre rymden* while his close friend and collaborator Robert Breer was represented with his sculpture *T* (1964). Breer's inclusion makes clear that Hultén's early agenda – finding movement in art – was still at play. Breer, after all, had been with Hultén throughout his journey from Paris (*Le Mouvement*) to Stockholm. In 1961, during *Rörelse i konsten*, Breer screened his animation *Inner and Outer Space* (1959–60), a film that humorously addresses the space between the viewer and screen with images that oscillate between abstraction and figuration and whose title clearly lent itself to Hultén's show.³⁵

In Hultén's catalogue introduction, titled "A Concluding Beginning," he carefully steers his exhibition away from the continental discourses rooted in *Art Concrete* and Op Art and towards the meta-paradigm of Duchamp's *Creative Act*. He stresses that the exhibition is meant to historicize the type of art that "uses negation as a mode of expression" and makes it clear that this art "is not constructivist" (although it shares some of Constructivism's "emotive" qualities).³⁶ As



Copy of letter from Pontus Hultén to Barnett Newman, 16 October, 1965

exemplified by the work of Malevich and Klein, it also has “a strong tendency towards a transcendental mystic side.”³⁷ As in the past, Hultén stressed how different this work is from that promoted by someone like Moholy-Nagy and his followers:

This art has very little to do with the optimistic, worldly, factual, and concrete type of art which was made during the thirties at the Bauhaus. Nor does it have much to do with the Concretism of the forties and fifties. It has very little to do with optical art (Op art), which in most cases does nothing more than entertain the slimy surface of the retina.³⁸

As in *Le Mouvement* and *Rörelse i konsten*, Duchamp’s material but anti-retinal focus on artistic intentionality is highlighted:

The actual decision about the art work is the artistic work, the creative act. The simple act of manual execution decides a part of the object’s magnificence. The decision is thus what the work is; in a similar way as when Marcel Duchamp chose a factory-made object to be an artwork, a “ready-made.”³⁹

This “negation,” or turn away from the street-smart realism of Pop Art (outer space) towards a more contemplative “minimal” and “mystical” abstraction (inner/outer space), rooted in individual intent, shows a strategic return to his engagement in art before New York had taken centre stage. But it was also a way to make clear that Hultén’s project had “nothing to do with ‘op art.’”⁴⁰ It is worth remembering that this had been one of the main paradigms Hultén had confronted as early as 1955, when he inserted artists like Duchamp and Tinguely into René’s and Vasarely’s Op Art agenda in *Le Mouvement*.

Like Duchamp and Tinguely, by the sixties New York’s avant-garde had also provided Hultén with a Dada-inspired sceptical view of art with which to respond to philosophical and aesthetic dilemmas concerning inner existential space and outer social space. As the quotation above suggests, Duchamp’s Dadaistic impulse was still central. Carefully organised around three separate sections devoted to the work of Kazimir Malevich, Naum Gabo, and Yves Klein, *Den inre och den yttre rymden* presented work by thirty-six postwar artists who had in different ways visibly demonstrated a return to degree zero.

While Malevich, Gabo and Klein were represented in individual spaces by approximately fifty works each, the thirty-six other artists

generally showed single works that were positioned to provide a heterogeneous paradigm of inner and outer space. For example, the dramatic and surreal spatial abstraction of Mark Rothko's *Orange Red and Red* (1962) was placed next to the self-conscious spaceless materialism of Ad Reinhardt's *Abstract Painting* (1961–63) and against the base materialism of Lucio Fontana's *Nature* (1959–60). In another section, the bodily theatricality of Robert Morris's *Sculpture* (1965) and Kusama's horizontal *Aggregation Boat* (1962–65), stood counter to Donald Judd's objectivity and the stoic and masculine verticality of Barnett Newman's *Tertia* (1964).⁴¹ In other words, as quiet as this exhibition looked on the surface, each section was meant to break down philosophical or material stasis. With the inclusion of artists from Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, the United States, and Venezuela, the exhibition was truly international. Not only that: the six Swedish artists included in the show – Olle Bærtling, Albert Contreras, Lars Englund, Eddie Figge, Einar Höste, and Eric H. Olson – suggested that Hultén was also looking after the interests of his local art scene.⁴²

As the catalogue essay by abstract painter Joost Baljeu, entitled “The Hegelian Romantic Negation in Modern Picture Making” made clear, the exhibition's three touchstone artists were chosen for their varying utopian impulses, as well as their ability to illustrate a Hegelian philosophy of art.⁴³ While all three artists “dreamed of a better world – Utopia” their romantic negations of the world around them manifested differently.⁴⁴ While Malevich had attempted to escape what he viewed as the confines of space (*rummet*) and time through a spiritual understanding of symbols, Gabo had clung to the material world through a “constructive principle” closely related to the Bauhaus.⁴⁵ Understanding these conflicting philosophies of art, Klein, Joost argues, had tried to suspend himself *in between* these two romantic approaches towards abstraction by making himself and his art the *synthesis* of the material and immaterial world. This is the elevated position his blue monochrome paintings sought to achieve and his *Leap into the Void* illustrated. Neither soaring toward the heavens nor crashing to earth, Klein represented that magical position between heaven and earth, reality and fiction.

By positioning Klein as central postwar artist best able to synthesise inner and outer space, Hultén had in effect whitewashed (or more literally bluewashed) his recent engagement with Pop Art. If European art had lost its centrality to America, as Duchamp once



Works by Yves Klein in *The Inner and the Outer Space*, Moderna Museet, 1965



Aggregation Boat (1962–65) by Yayoi Kusama in
The Inner and the Outer Space, Moderna Museet, 1965

suggested with his *Air de Paris*, it was now given back some of this aura in the form of *Yves the Monochrome*. Despite its conservative façade, for Hultén, this performative “copy-cat” could still represent a rebellious spirit in art which remained both social (outer space) and individual (inner space):

Art in this day and age has an important part to play and is often made into an object of interest to the state. At the same time, our society and nation lacks a place for it and shows little interest in finding a place for it. While art may have a purely decorative role to play, the programmatically anti-decorative art we are talking about here suggests an unwillingness to let itself be caught in this unclear situation. By producing pictures that are so big, or so boring, that they can hardly ever be put up in a home, a museum, or anywhere else, the artists show an unwillingness to contribute to the decorative and extroverted “artist’s life” and even that commercialization (to that mundane cocktail-like atmosphere) that in some cases highlight modern art’s appearance. Consequently, one often avoids considering this detachment. The picture of space (*rymdens*) in art is a picture of our ability to use fantasy to penetrate the universe. Since each and every one carries our own universe within ourselves, these images also become images of ourselves.⁴⁶

Following Hegel’s example, Hultén argued for an art bound as much by the social as it was made free by the individual – a position he had always seen manifested in the work of Tinguely. In a subtle way, the focus on Klein, who had died at the very moment Pop Art was born, allowed Hultén to reinforce his interest in Tinguely. While Tinguely was not mentioned in the list of contributing artists at the back of the catalogue, it is noteworthy that Hultén included *L’escavatrice de l’espace*, the collaboration between Tinguely and Klein made for the 1958 exhibition *Vitesse pure et stabilité Monochrome* at Galerie Iris Clert, Paris. That piece is a reworking of Duchamp’s *Rotary Demisphere* (1925), which Hultén had included in *Le Mouvement*.

In his contributing essay on Klein, Ulf Linde, whose four-article critique of the New York avant-garde was still fresh in everyone’s mind, focused on the idea of a dialectical “fourth dimension” in Klein’s work. In this dimension, where three-dimensional objects could metaphorically and metaphysically become the shadows of a mystic fourth dimension, the individual was formulated as the synthesis of inner and outer space – perfectly embodied by Klein’s

levitation act. Here, in this reformulated space, Linde suggested that movement would always be possible: “If you can even just move a millimeter in a direction, the whole universe has been left behind you!”⁴⁷ In many ways, this assertion by Linde gave Hultén a renewed license to move forward from what must have felt like a position of stasis. Considering the mystical, even spiritual, side of this move toward an unknown fourth dimension, we can say that Moderna Museet found itself born again. It was now ready to reconcile inner individual spaces with outer social space by constructing the spectacular *Hon – en katedral*, a cathedral built with Duchampian irony and wit.

1. Patrik Andersson, “Niki de Saint Phalle’s Killing Game. Participation, Happenings, and Theatre”, *Niki de Saint-Phalle* (exh. cat.) Bilbao: Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, pp. 56–61.

2. As international as Hultén’s agenda was, by 1965 the museum had begun to receive national criticism for having a bias toward American art in general and avant-garde art from New York in particular. This criticism became especially heated at the moment when the United States began dropping bombs over Vietnam, and Swedish-American diplomatic relations entered a Cold War phase. While this essay will consider some of this political turmoil, it examines how Hultén was forced to respond to intellectual, philosophical, and artistic differences within the very art world he had tried to foster in Stockholm. The most poignant critique of the New York avant-garde came in the form of four articles published by Ulf Linde in *Dagens Nyheter*. See Ulf Linde, *Fyra artiklar*, Stockholm: Bonniers, 1965.

3. I have argued elsewhere that Hultén’s philosophical and political perspective was indebted not only to Marcel Duchamp and Jean Tinguely, but also to the writings of Max Stirner, the nineteenth-century “young Hegelian” who argued for a radically individualist form of anarchism against more mainstream socialist forms of anarchism espoused by Marx, Engels, and others. See Patrik Andersson, “Rörelse i konsten. The Art of Re-assemblage,” *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, vol. 78, issue 4, 2009, pp. 178–192. See also Patrik Andersson, *Euro-Pop. The Mechanical Bride Stripped Bare in Stockholm, Even* (diss.), University of British Columbia: Vancouver, 2001.

4. It should be noted that Hultén did not curate *Le Mouvement* alone. In fact, according to Denise René, she and Victor Vasarely were responsible for organising it. See *Le Mouvement, The Movement, Paris 1955*, Paris, New York, Düsseldorf: Editions Denise René, 1975. Hultén’s contribution was his introduction of, and work with, the younger artists such as Tinguely and his argument for Duchamp’s inclusion in the show.

5. The exhibition also grew out of his own interest in abstraction and film, as evident in his collaborations with filmmaker Robert Breer and curatorial work with Swedish Dadaist Viking Eggeling’s abstract films. The exhibition was complemented by a film night at the Cinématique Française that included work by Robert Breer, at the time a frequent collaborator with Hultén on abstract films.

6. Notes related to the planning of Hultén’s 1961 *Rörelse i konsten* exhibition makes this awareness clear. MMA PHA 4.2.60.

7. Pontus Hultén, *Jean Tinguely. Méta*, Moderna Museet exhibition catalogue no. 107, Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1972, p. 35.

8. Karl G. Hultén, “Den ställföreträdande friheten eller Om rörelse i konsten och Tinguelys metamekanik”, *Kasark*, no. 2, 1955, p. 1.

9. Hultén drew a curious historical lineage: from turn-of-the-century Italian designer Ettore Bugatti’s automobile and the Futurists’ interest in speed, to Duchamp and Alexander Calder’s kinetic experiments, to the constructivist tendencies of Gabo, Nikolaus Pevsner, Vladimir Tatlin and the early

work of Moholy-Nagy, to the Italian artist Bruno Munari, to Tinguely's meta-mechanical sculptures.

10. Quoted from a 1988 interview with Dieter Daniels in Heidi E. Vieland-Hobi, *Jean Tinguely: Life and Work*, New York: Prestel, 1995, p. 41.

11. Sebastian Matta, "On Emotion", *Reality*, no. 2, 1954, p. 12

12. The exhibition showcased 233 works by 85 artists. As in Amsterdam, the exhibition in Stockholm broke attendance records with 70,000 visitors. *Moderna Museet 1958–1983*, eds. Olle Granath and Monica Nieckels Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1983, p. 80.

13. See Andres Pardey, "Curating *Bewogen Bewegung*. The Exchange Between Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely, Pontus Hultén, and Willem Sandberg", *The Artist as Curator. Collaborative Initiatives in the Internal ZERO Movement 1957–67*, eds. Tiziana Caianiello and Mattijs Visser, Ghent: MER Paper Kunsthalle, 2015.

14. For a detailed account of some of these activities, see *The Artist as Curator*, 2015.

15. Andres Pardey, *The Artist as Curator*, 2015, p. 222.

16. Correspondence between Pontus Hultén, Daniel Spoerri, and Willem Sandberg concerning this exhibition can be found in MMA PHA 5.1.47.

17. Regarding *Édition MAT*, see Ulrike Schmitt, "An 'Art Manager' on the Road", *The Artist as Curator*, 2015, pp. 193–219

18. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

19. See Rabbe Enckell, "Ikaros och lindansaren (ett försvar för klassicismen)," *BLM*, no. 7, 1962, pp. 550–554 and Hultén's rebuttal: K.G. Hultén, "Enckells förvirringar", *BLM*, no. 9 1962, p. 550. See also *Är allting konst? Inlägg i den stora konstdebatten*, ed. Hans Hederberg, Stockholm: Bonnier, 1963.

20. "Historik", *Moderna Museet 1958–1983*, 1983, p. 83. The lecture had been published the previous year in John Cage, *Silence. Lectures and Writings*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961.

21. For detailed analysis of this conflict, see Marianne Hultman, "New York Collection for Stockholm", *Teknologi för livet. Om Experiments in Art and Technology*, Paris: Schultz Förlag AB, 2004, pp. 159–170. See also Annika Öhrner, *Barbro Östlihn & New York. Konstens rum och möjligheter* (diss.), Göteborg, Stockholm: Makadam förlag, 2010.

22. As a letter from Pontus Hultén to poet Carlo Belloli suggests, the exhibition was planned as early as November 1964 under the working title *New Spaces in Art*. The early title is significant in that it points to Hultén's penchant for summarizing and historicizing art. MMA MA F1a: 30.

23. Pontus Hultén, "Förord", *Amerikansk pop-konst. 106 former av kärlek och förtvivlan*, Moderna Museet exhibition catalogue no. 37, Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1964, p. 15.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

27. On March 19, 1965, Moderna Museet opened Rauschenberg's 34 *Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy*. The timing could not have been more

sensitive: within a week of the opening the American bombing of Vietnam began and what has been called the "Swedish-American conflict" escalated to the point of daily public demonstrations throughout the city. As historian Fredrik Logevall and others have shown, the summer of 1965 marked a new direction in Swedish foreign policy, one that embodied a more activist approach to international issues and a greater determination to stake out a position between the superpowers. Sweden's new direction, an attempt to forge a more sovereign path, ultimately strained Swedish-American relations to the point where both the Johnson and Nixon administrations issued numerous threats of impending economic sanctions. Fredrik Logevall, "The Swedish-American Conflict Over Vietnam", *Diplomatic History*, summer, 1993, pp. 427–444.

28. Ulf Linde's four articles: "Den öppna konsten: arvet från München", *Dagens Nyheter*, 26 March, 1965; "Den öppna konsten. Myten om den historielösa formen", *Dagens Nyheter*, 30 March, 1965; "Den öppna konsten. Den bild 'man' har", *Dagens Nyheter*, 4 April, 1965; "Den öppna konsten. Dialog utan slut", *Dagens Nyheter*, 13 May, 1965.

29. For Rosenquist's political intent, see James Rosenquist, "The F-111. An Interview with James Rosenquist by G.R. Swenson", *Partisan Review*, fall, 1965, pp. 590–595.

30. Eugen Wretholm "Utställningsrond", *Konstrevy*, no. 6, 1965, p. 223.

31. His Licentiate degree, completed in 1951, was on Spinoza and Vermeer. Hultén's grounding in art history and philosophy has been stressed by Hans Hayden. See his "Double Bind: Moderna Museet as an Arena for Interpreting the Past and the Present", *The History Book. On Moderna Museet 1958–2008*, eds. Anna Tellgren och Martin Sundberg, Stockholm: Moderna Museet and Göttingen: Steidl, 2008, pp. 177–200.

32. Letter from Hultén to Barnett Newman, 16 October, 1965. MMA MA F1a: 30. Hultén's collaboration with Newman is particularly interesting when we consider how much Newman disliked Duchamp. In 1957 Newman accused Robert Motherwell of "smear and slander" saying that he wanted to "make clear that if Motherwell wishes to make Marcel Duchamp a father, Duchamp is his father and not mine nor that of any American painter that I respect." See Newman, *Barnett Newman. Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. John P. O'Neill, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990, p. 208.

33. On November 22, Hultén received instructions from Rauschenberg via Billy Klüver on how to reproduce his *White Paintings* from 1951 in order to save money on shipping: "These are Bob's *White Paintings*, you are to make them in Stockholm according to his instructions. They are not to be labeled as copies or reproductions but simply dated 1951. When the show is over you are to send the paintings back to Bob in New York." Letter from Billy Klüver to Pontus Hultén 22 November, 1965. MMA PHA 4.1.4. As it turned out, the paintings were not returned to Rauschenberg. On November 12, 1999, Jan Runnqvist, director of Galerie Bonnier, wrote to James Goodman Gallery in New York requesting an estimated value for his *White Paintings* that had been shown in *Den inre och den yttre rymden*. The request was

forwarded to Rauschenberg's studio, which promptly replied on November 15 to point out: "Obviously the instructions were ignored." Letter from David White to Jan Runnqvist, 15 November, 1999. MMA PHA 4.1.4. The motives for not returning the work unknown, but it should be pointed out that in 1965 the museum still operated on a shoestring budget and exhibitions were generally organised with a fairly laissez-faire attitude – especially with artists who were considered friends.

34. Correspondences between Hultén and Heinz Mack show that Hultén was fully aware of New York's Museum of Modern Art's *The Responsive Eye* exhibition that opened in February of 1965 – an exhibition by Peter Seitz that similarly attempted to historicize art associated with art ranging from Optical Art to Post-Painterly Abstraction. See letter from Heinz Mack to Pontus Hultén, 5 February, 1964. MMA MA F1a:30. The additional thirty-five included artists were: Josef Albers, Martin Barré, Olle Bærtling, Max Bill, Robert Breer, Enrico Castellani, Albert Contreras, Piero Dorazio, Lars Englund, Eddie Figge, Sam Francis, Lucio Fontana, Kasper Heiberg, Einar Höste, Donald Judd, Akira Kanayama, Yayoi Kusama, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Robert Morris, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, Eric H. Olson, Otto Piene, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, Jean Paul Riopelle, Mark Rothko, Jesús Rafael Soto, Frank Stella, Wladyslaw Stzemiński, Mark Tobey, Günther Uecker, Georges Vantongerloo, and Herman de Vries.

35. For complete details of the film, theatre, and music events organised for *Rörelse i konsten*, see event calendar/poster. MMA MA F1: 12.

36. Pontus Hultén, "Avslutande inledning", *Den inre och den yttre rymden. En utställning rörande en universiell konst*, eds. Karin Bergqvist Lindegren and Pontus Hultén, Moderna Museet exhibition catalogue no. 51, Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1965, n.p. This historicizing agenda was made clear by Hultén in a letter dated 18 May, 1965 to contributing writer Joost Baljeu when describing the exhibition: "The meaning of the exhibition is to show the great line in modern art that starts with Malevich and Gabo and which I think has never been defined. (And which, of course, has nothing to do with 'op art'.)" Letter from Pontus Hultén to Joost Baljeu, 18 May, 1965. MMA MA F1a: 30.

37. Pontus Hultén, *Den inre och den yttre rymden*, 1965, n.p.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. The significance of Kusama's inclusion was not lost on art critic Beate Sydoff, who wrote a feature on Kusama's work in *Konstrevy* in which she clearly situated the artist as much in New York's art world as in the group activities of Japan's Gutai and Europe's Zero movements. Beate Sydoff, "Kusama eller mångfalden upprepad i nya landskap", *Konstrevy*, no. 1, 1966, pp. 20–23. Kusama's *Aggregation Boat* was shipped along with other artists' work from the Stedelijk Museum, which had just concluded a large Zero exhibition. Worried that her work was not going to arrive on time, Kusama

wrote to Hultén on 15 November, 1965, five weeks before the exhibition opening, proposing that it should ideally be shown with accompanying posters. Stressing that "it would mean very much to me for Stockholm to have an important example of my work," she offered to gift to Moderna Museet her *Sofa (Accumulation #2)* (1962) on the condition that the museum pay for its transport. Whether it was a lack of funding or interest on the part of Hultén is unclear, but *Sofa* was never gifted. Letter from Yayoi Kusama to Pontus Hultén, 15 November, 1964. MMA MA F1a: 30.

42. Several articles in the January 1966 issue of *Konstrevy* gave a close reading of the exhibition and specific works. In his editorial, art critic Olle Granath brought to light the differences he saw between large-scale biennials administered out of financial need and Hultén's large-scale exhibitions *Rörelse i konsten* and *Den inre och den yttre rymden*, which he felt had "a critical historical contribution from an informed perspective." Olle Granath, "Två teman", *Konstrevy*, no. 1, 1966, p. 4.

43. Joost Baljeu, "Den hegelianska romantiska negationen i den moderna bildkonsten", *Den inre och den yttre rymden*, 1965, n.p.

44. Ibid.

45. Gabo quoted in *Den inre och den yttre rymden*, 1965, n.p. I would suggest that the choice of Gabo to represent the Constructivist tendency in art was a way to overshadow the more dominant legacy of László Moholy-Nagy.

46. Pontus Hultén, *Den inre och den yttre rymden*, 1965, n.p.

47. Ulf Linde, "Den fjärde dimensionen", *Den inre och den yttre rymden*, 1965, n.p.

Pontus Hultén and Moderna
Museet. The Formative Years

The research project has been
carried out with support from
the Swedish Arts Council

Editor: Anna Tellgren
Assistant editor:
Anna Lundström
Managing editor: Teresa Hahr

Translation:
Gabriella Berggren
Picture editor: Guy Engström
Pre-press: Albin Dahlström
Graphic design:
Karl Stefan Andersson
Printed by: Göteborgstryckeriet,
Göteborg 2017

© 2017 Moderna Museet,
Stockholm; Koenig Books,
London; and the authors, the
artists, the photographers

ISBN 978-91-86243-84-5
(Moderna Museet)
ISBN 978-3-96098-082-7
(Koenig Books, London)

www.modernamuseet.se

Cover: Invitation to the
exhibition *Movement in Art*,
Moderna Museet, 1961.
MMA MA F11d:10

Published by Moderna Museet
and Koenig Books

Printed in Sweden

Koenig Books Ltd
At the Serpentine Gallery
Kensington Garden
London W2 3XA
www.koenigbooks.co.uk

Distribution:
Buchhandlung Walther König,
Köln
Ehrenstr. 4, 50672 Cologne
Tel. +49 (0) 221 / 20 59 6-53
Fax +49 (0) 221 / 20 59 6-60
verlag@buchhandlung-walther-koenig.de

UK & Ireland
Cornerhouse Publications
2 Tony Wilson Place
UK Manchester M154FN
Tel +44 (0) 161/212 34 66
Fax +44 (0)161/236 90 79
publications@cornerhouse.org

Outside Europe
D.A.P. / Distributed Art
Publishers, Inc.
155 6th Avenue, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10013
Tel. +1 (212) 627-1999
Fax +1 (212) 627-9484
elshowitz@dapinc.com