

FORM

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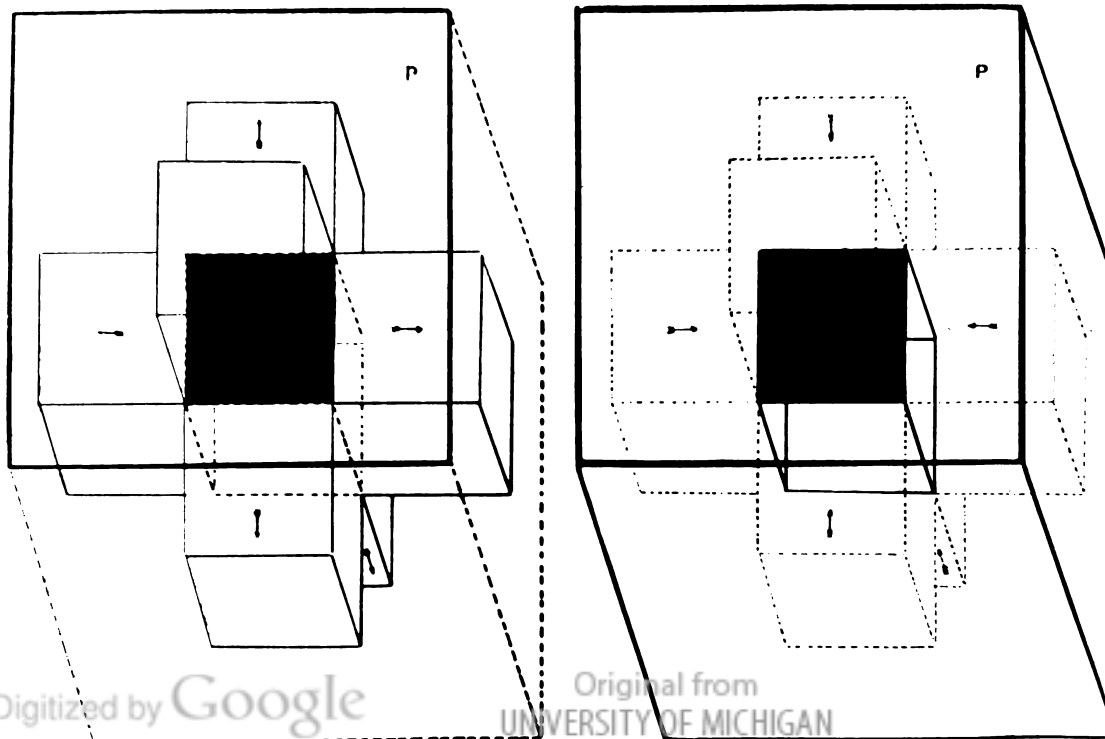
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1974

A quarterly magazine of the arts. In this issue: **Film as Pure Form** by Theo van Doesburg; **The Activity of Structuralism** by Roland Barthes; **Experimental Aesthetics** by Carolyn Cumming; **Computers and Design** by Crispin Gray; **Fernand Leger and the International Style** by Duncan Robinson; **Great Little Magazines**, No. 1 **Secession**, with work by Yvor Winters, William Carlos Williams and Hans Arp; and **Poems** by Pedro Xisto.

From 'Film as Pure Form' by Theo van Doesburg: 'schematic representation of a three-dimensional space, simultaneously agitated in all directions. At right, movement towards the centre; at left, movement towards periphery. The black field represents the movie screen up till now.'



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The aims of 'Form' are to publish and provoke discussion of the relations of form to structure in the work of art, and of correspondences between the arts. Emphasis is to be placed in particular on the fields of kinetic art and concrete poetry.

The second number will be published on September 1st, and will include articles by

Stephen Bann on the Romantic theory of communication, and by Basil Gilbert on Hirschfeld-Mack's Bauhaus experiments and 'reflected light compositions': more on perception psychology, an unpublished article by William Carlos Williams and in the Great Little Magazine series 'Blues'. Comment and contributions are both welcome.

Editors

Philip Steadman
Mike Weaver (USA)
Stephen Bann

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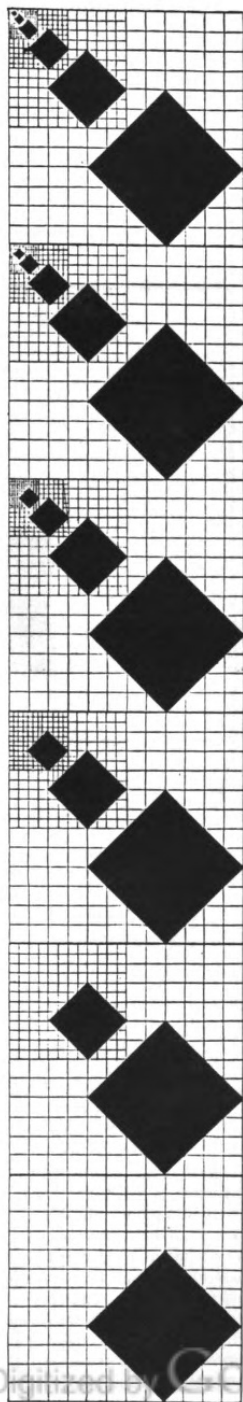
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From Surface to Space. Six moments of a space-time construction (with 24 variations), formation of a diagonal dimension' Atelier van Doesburg, Paris, 1926.



Translator's Note

'Film als reine Gestaltung' originally appeared in 'Die Form' (IV, no. 10, 15th May 1929, pp. 241-248) in connection with the 'Film und Foto' exhibition sponsored by the Deutsche Werkbund in Stuttgart. To my knowledge, the article has never been translated or reprinted, and, in fact, has curiously received little attention, despite the fame of its author and the significance of his thesis, both in his day and ours.

Van Doesburg had long been interested in the film—he was the first to show Richter's 'Rhythm 21' in Paris—and in the following essay was stimulated to speculate on the recently engineered marriage of sound to film. And yet, as always, van Doesburg's major concern here is visual. At the time of this manifesto, the avant-garde film had largely abandoned geometrically abstract forms in favour of essays in a more surrealist vein. For van Doesburg, this amounted to artistic heresy. In 'Film als reine Gestaltung' he called for a geometrically ordered and logically constructed world of abstract imagery which leaves the two-dimensional movie screen to activate the entire spectator space through new optics and new phonetics. He describes this goal, however, without prescribing the means. The editors of 'Die Form', apparently in the belief that revolutionary artistic manifestos should provide recipes as well as inspirations, felt compelled to add their own note of clarification: 'Due to its consequence we gladly give space to the statements by van Doesburg, although we hold the

Film as Pure Form by Theo van Doesburg

Translated by Standish D. Lawder

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point of view that a concrete placing of the problem of film and a concrete explanation of its means is necessary. Only in this way will film be able to free itself from preliminary judgements and will be able to realise its own development.'

Film as Pure Form

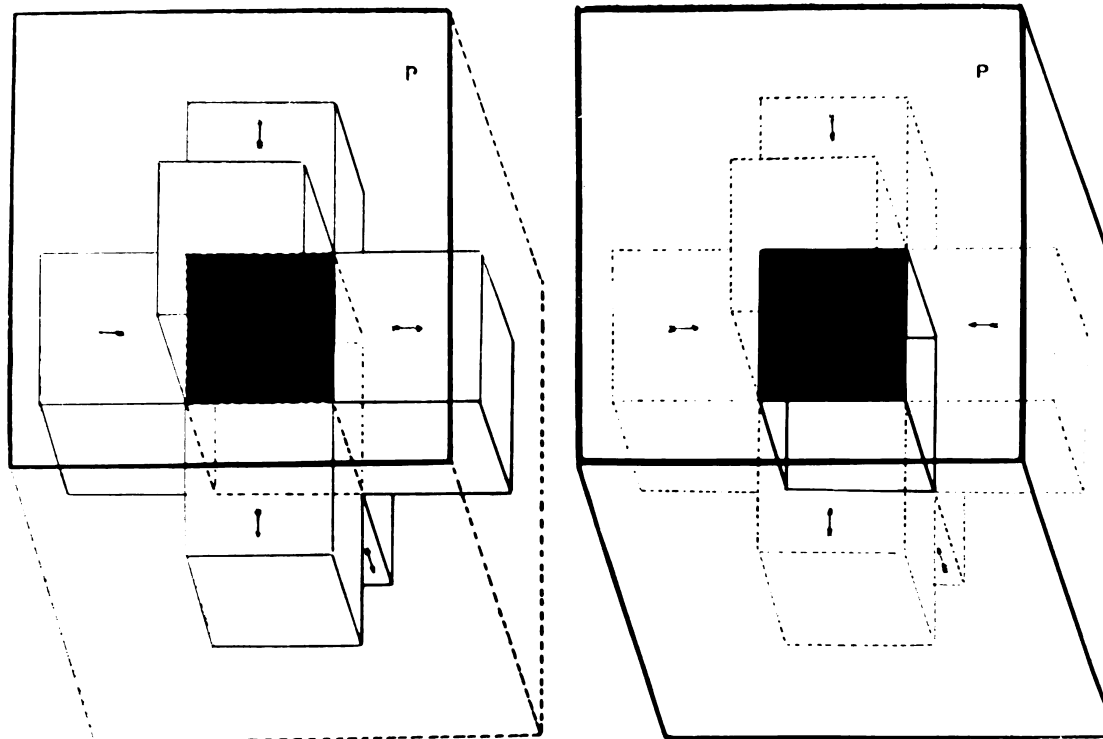
The problem of film as an independent creative form has made no great progress in the last decade. Only the issues have clarified themselves more and more. The film problem as such is clearly revealed through the many experiments by men of widely differing temperament.

With each new type of art the first question is mainly the conquest of material. The attempts are technical ones to utilise the refinements inherent in the new means of expression. Photography experienced a similar development, and has already reached a stage today where one is able to play with its recently mastered technical means. And indeed play is the first step of creation. The three most important stages of creative activity—imitation—description—formation (*Imitation, Darstellung, Gestaltung*)—are stipulated for any art form. Formation is always the goal, regardless of whether it be in painting, sculpture, photography or film. As soon as creative initiative sets in, the course is altered, and what began as reproduction shifts into the sphere of creativity. Reality grows into a kind of super-reality. However, this

shift can take place only when the old means are exhausted. Whether we are concerned with optical or acoustical sensibilities I think this is fundamentally the case; together with the cleaning up—or better, the reduction of essential elements (*Elementarisierung*)—simultaneously comes a rejuvenation of the human organs of sensory reception. For not only do technical means belong to the structure of art, but the eye and ear as well. Schönberg and Stravinsky are not only the creators of a new music, but also the creators of a new phonetic. Likewise, a new optic was created with Futurism and Cubism. The Euclidean statics in pictures were destroyed. The retina of the eye, enfeebled through the repetitious static renderings in the old perspective painting, became rejuvenated by means of Futurist dynamism. We find exactly the same situation in sculpture. The frontal and static statue became ineffectual, it no longer made an impression on the retina. Boccioni destroyed the static axes and created at once a new sculpture and a new optic. Instead of the old manner of seeing, in which the eye moved from points of rest or points of focus outwards and from left to right and from below to above, it now is forced to move about the sculpture in circles or spirals. The retina assimilates new impressions, the intellect is enriched by these new sculptural experiences.

This precedent in sculpture and painting has been of the greatest importance in the revival of photography and film.

Schematic representation of a three-dimensional space, simultaneously agitated in all directions. At right, movement towards the centre; at left, movement towards periphery. The black field represents the movie screen up to now.



There is today already a large literature of film. Writers, for the most part artists who have concerned themselves with film, start with a false assumption when they note:

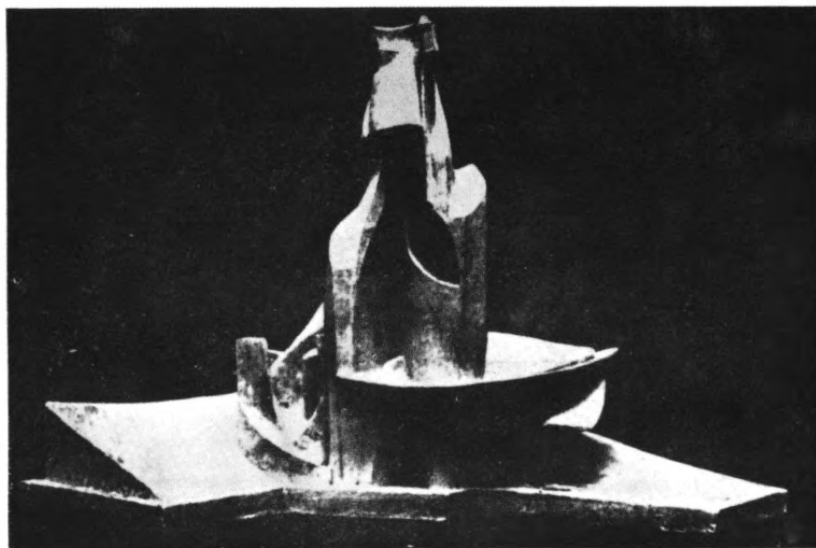
1. The dynamic work of film art replaces static painting.
2. The essential character of film will be determined only through elements properly belonging to the means of filmic expression, and without which there can be no 'film'.
3. The means of filmic expression are endlessly rich, diverse, etc.

How are these assumptions wrong? Because they do not grow out of facts, but rather from an idealised conception of film form. For the facts indicate that my above mentioned thesis is correct: every art expression has developed from a drive towards imitation. When, however, that drive meets up with creative initiative, it is at this stage that the course is changed. The end objective is also changed, and with it the whole problem. In the beginning, film, like photography, was imitative. The inventors of film,

the Lumière brothers, had no artistic intentions whatsoever, only reproductive ones. They wanted to intensify naturalistic illusionism and this could be accomplished only after instantaneous exposures were made possible by the development of the photographic apparatus. The further development of film technique depended on the use of very short exposures permitted by the acuity of lenses and the high sensitivity of emulsions. The image of an object or a view of nature, projected on a two-dimensional

plate, still lacks the plastic tangibility of reality. Therefore between film and photography there occurred one further stage of development, namely the stereoscope, again the result of the original tendency towards naturalistic imitation. Photography, stereoscopic devices and film are the three principal models we must keep in mind if we wish to understand film as a substance to be used, not for reproductive, but rather for purely creative purposes.

Spatio-temporal development of a surface. Sculpture by Umberto Boccioni (1912). Destruction of the static axes of sculpture.



'The Night', 1911, by Luigi Russolo. Destruction of the static (Euclidean) point of rest in pictorial composition. This configuration and those of Boccioni (see above) demonstrate the necessity to create form not only with space but also through time. These principles of formation have exercised a great influence on new film experiments.



I need not tabulate here an entire inventory of films today. What interests us in the following:

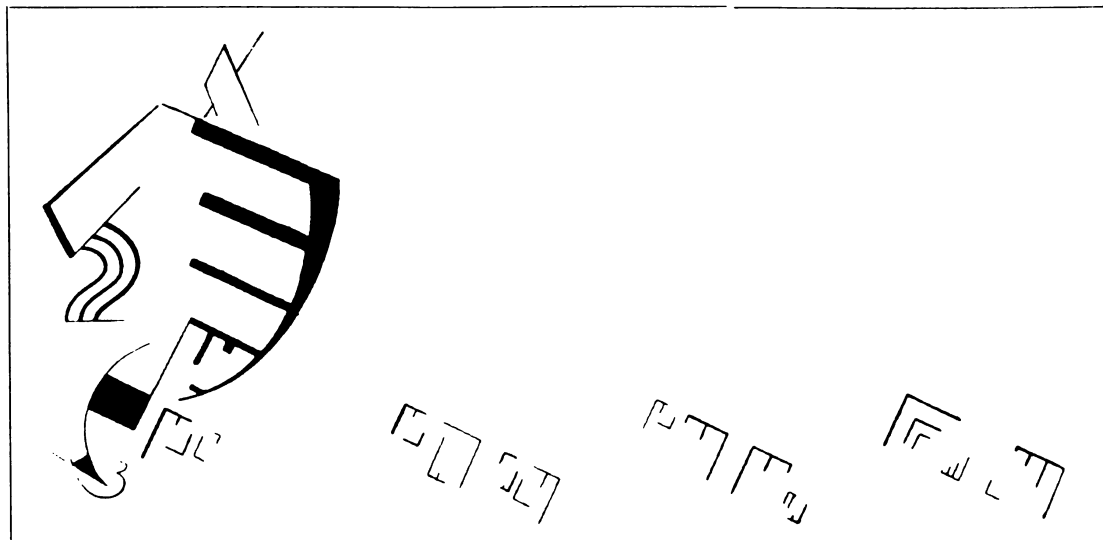
1. Does the advanced technique of film enable us to have a pure film form?
 2. Will this film form replace painting?
 3. How much justification has the reproductive-imitative film?
- Of course we still stand at the beginning of a pure film form, but already today we are trying to discover the dominant trends, the real substance of films. As always in the beginning, material is examined in order to capture those creative means unique to film. I hardly need to argue here that the well-worn tricks such as superimposition, deformation, dissolves, accelerated and retarded motion, and the like, have nothing to do with the essential elemental

means of filmic expression. As in photography where photographic defects such as unsharp focus, veiled lenses, and so forth, have been used to draw the image away from a dully imitative reproduction, so too in film every possible trick has been tried to produce a super-realistic pictorial expression. The camera lens has been tried out under every conceivable circumstance, and this has shown the way towards totally new possibilities for the journalist-documentary film, the scientific film, and the feature film. With these aids an optical poetry has even been created, a poetry particularly well suited for bestowing a visible form on spiritual changes, or indeed on the nature of the spirit altogether. Naturally the attempts in this direction—and the progress here has occurred mainly in the last five years—are extraordinarily important, but nonetheless we must sharply distinguish between this kind of film poetry and the concept of the pure form film (*rein gestaltender Film*).

Film already has a 30-year-old culture behind it, a culture primarily orientated towards reality. Thus there are already ordinary realistic films (*Solitude*, for example) so powerful in their effects that, by comparison, experiments in film form simply remain ineffectual. They work, however, within the frame of the screen, not in space. Now in order to overcome this, realistic objects have sometimes been allowed to 'take part' in so-called abstract films. To be sure, stronger effects have been produced thereby, but this actually proves the point that a

1. It is within the realms of possibility that future techniques will permit the development of a coloured film form. (trans. note: written in 1929.)

Film Fragment by Viking Eggeling. Moving ornament within a two-dimensional surface.



pure film form, constructed only with elements of the film, is not possible.

Here lies the same compromise as in cubist painting. The goal of the cubists' disintegration of form was to arrive at a 'pure art'. Only for commercial reasons and in the interests of intelligibility did they employ motifs of 'imitative art' (nudes, still-lives, violins, etc.) and mix together these two totally contradictory domains of artistic sensibility.

The clever combinations, distortions, and deformations, which today characterise the avant-garde film, are consequently outside the sphere of the form film (*gestaltenden Film*). The form film is not concerned with witticisms, or what are called in Paris 'trouvailles', but

rather with the completely constructivist, clearly elemental structure of a dynamic light architecture. This kind of dynamic light form implies, in fact, a new type of art, an art in which the 'one thing after another' of music and the 'one thing next to another' of painting are brought together in one. The form film does not, however, rob painting of its position, for here the aim is to create permanent compositions in paint, in film just the opposite. Paintings are concerned neither with statics nor dynamics, but with neutralising, with balance, with a permanent harmony—in short, with the realities of pure painting itself. The presuppositions of painting and film differ, and so too their respective elements of construction vary, and from this difference comes the justification for the exist-

ence of both art forms.

The constructive elements of pure creative films are: light—movement—space—time—shadow.¹ The dynamic light architecture of the pure creative film is put together from these elements. It is very obvious that such a film is a work of art completely within itself, and must be approached as such. Bach's dream of finding an optical equivalent for the temporal structure of a musical composition would have thereby been realised. For with the form film the question is that of building up, with control, a composition of light and shade within a space-time framework.

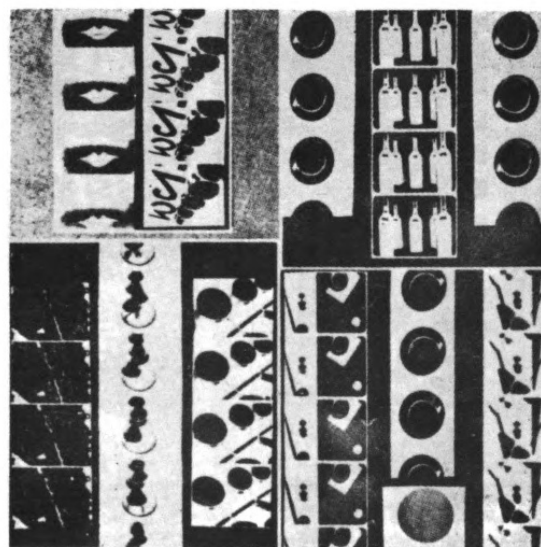
If one had up to now considered the projection surface an enframed canvas, one

should eventually discover the light-space, the film continuum. The attempt to create, through film technique, the dimension of time lacking in static pictures leads only to frustration, because those coming from a tradition of painting consider the projection screen a canvas. Experiments of this kind (Eggeling) go no further than moving graphic design. What has been offered to us up till now as abstract film was based on the erroneous idea that the projection surface was equivalent to the picture surface of traditional painting.

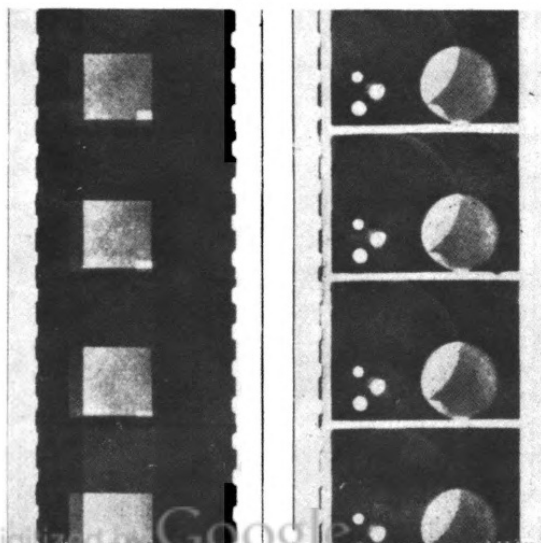
The film form is built up along a central axis something like a Renaissance painting. Exactly as in classical music (or in oriental rug patterns), the temporal instant becomes expressive through the repeti-

Realistic elements of the plastic film, from 'Ballet Mécanique' by Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy. Music by George Antheil.

Far right: from Hans Richter's 'Film Study'.



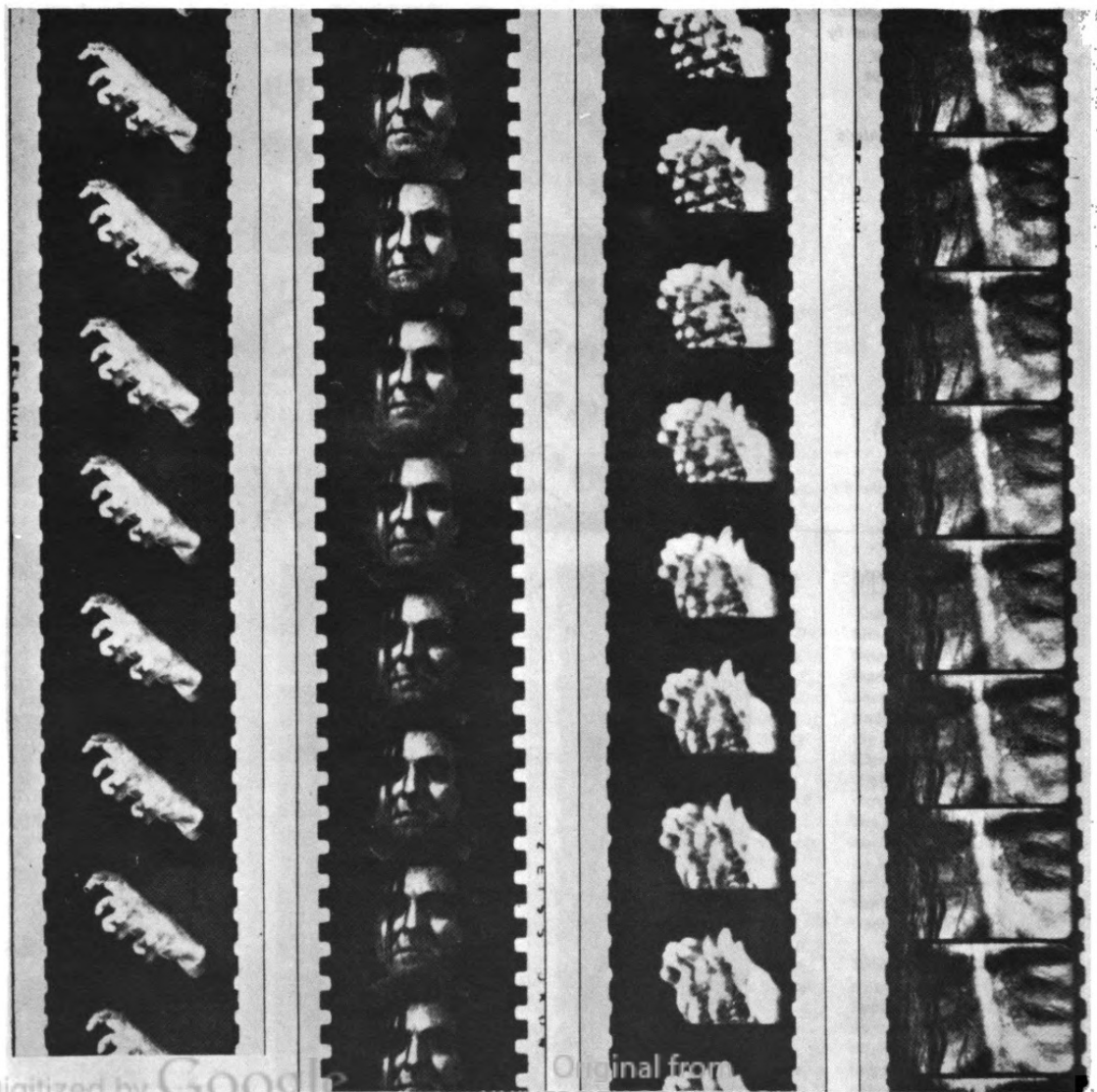
Elementarist elements of the plastic film, from Hans Richter's 'Film Study'.



tions of certain themes, with no other result than the creation of a moving ornament. The eye goes only from left to right and from above to below, moving only inside a two-dimensional surface. In this manner only a tiny portion of the film-light-space is animated, merely the surface facing the spectator. But it is exactly this surface which must be split in order to discover the new depths beneath, the space-time film continuum. The creative sphere of the form film lies there and no place else! The many-dimensional space, which sculptors since Michelangelo in his 'Burial' have vainly tried to realise, will some day be brought alive by means of refined film technique.

The new film experiments of the past decade we owe, on the one hand, to the progress of photographic methods, and, on the other hand, to the progress in painting. From photography and the stage developed the modern illusionistic feature film, from modern painting (cubism, neo-plasticism, futurism) developed the abstract film ornament. Whether it be modern painting or film, the process is the same. Merely by agitating the canvas, or the movie screen, new proportions or dynamic-plastic and dynamic-ornamental effects were created inside the confines of the picture frame. The film space, however, remained unaffected. We know, too, that the entire assortment of film experiments stems from the desire, more intuitive than conscious, to view the world from a new dimension. Multiplication of space by means of cross-cutting, repetition of

Realistic elements of the plastic film, from 'Miracle' (Tales of Hoffmann) by Moholy-Nagy, 1929.



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Film Fragment by Viking Eggeling.



A moment from the Coloured Light Play by Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, Weimar.



objects by means of superimpositions, sequential close-up shots and the like will never make a new film form possible. Even the 'modern' eye is showing signs of fatigue, for these means of creating pictorial rhythms are a new illusionism based on effects and accidents.

What we now finally demand from film as a creative manifestation is:

1. Logical structure of the work of film with its pure means: light, movement, shadow.
2. Controllable (geometric) orchestration of light and shadow.

Unlimited light-space will first take form when we are able to sense its movement in all directions and by means of passage through time (continuous and disjunctive). This awareness must be a bodily one, but in no sense does this mean illusionistic.

Film till now, realistic or abstract, illusionistic or super-illusionistic, has been constructed from our everyday sense of space, but film as a pure work of art will be based upon an infinitely finer spatial sensitivity. Instead of a painterly setting, an architectural one will first be necessary. Then the newly mastered medium will make possible a new light-architecture, bringing forth dimensions hitherto totally unsuspected.

I have till now mentioned only the first phases of this new film; I have shown the necessity of splitting the unframed picture surface (the plane surface), and have referred to the possibility of

2. In 'Studio 28' in Paris I saw a Coloured Light Play by Baranof de Rossiné ('Clavier optique'). To be sure, the Coloured Light Play is technically distinct from film, but the entire effect is so intense that one must not overlook this experiment as directly in the development of the new space-time film.

constructing a film continuum through unlimited light-space, that is to say, through means of movement. This entire process may be carried out without colour, in black and white alone. The second stage will form this crystalline space through colour, orchestrated by means of movement. The spectator will look into a completely new world, he will be able to follow the whole process of this dynamic light-sculpture rather like the orchestral work of Schönberg, Stravinsky or Antheil. From this it follows that the spectator space will become part of the film space. The separation of 'projection surface' is abolished. The spectator will no longer observe the film, like a theatrical presentation, but will participate in it optically and acoustically. For the film of the future is not a constant and mute form like painting, but a new expressive possibility, simultaneously optical and phonetic.²

The experiments of various artists (Eggeling, Richter, Léger/Murphy, Man Ray and others) bring to an end a period characterised by the photographic and painterly film form.

The new experiments, geometrically orientated, succumb to laws of an almost architectural structure for a multi-dimensional film space. Thus, more scientific than artistic, they prepare the way for an orchestration of film to be developed in totally new and unsuspected dimensions.

Translated by Stephen Bann

Translator's Note

This is a slightly shortened version of an article which M. Barthes wrote for 'Les Lettres Nouvelles' in 1963, and which was reprinted in his collection of 'Essais Critiques' (1964). It provides a new model for the relationship of the work, the artist and the world, which is relevant to much contemporary literature and art, as well as to the examples given. The poems of Pedro Xisto, featured elsewhere in the magazine, are a case in point.

The aim of all structuralist activity, in the fields of both thought and poetry is to reconstitute an 'object', and, by this process, to make known the rules of functioning, or 'functions', of this object. The structure is therefore effectively a representation (*simulacre*) of the object, but it is a representation that is both purposeful and relevant, since the object derived by imitation brings out something that remained invisible or, if you like, unintelligible in the natural object. The structuralist takes reality, decomposes it, and recomposes it again; on the surface this is very little (and for this reason some say that the work of the structuralist is 'insignificant, uninteresting, useless', etc.). But from another point of view this small contribution is decisive; for between the two objects, or the two stages in time, which set the bounds of structuralist activity, *something new* is brought into being, and this new element is nothing less than intelligibility: the representation is intellect added to the object, and this addition has an anthropological value, being the trace of man himself, his history, his situation, his freedom of choice, and the barrier between nature and his mind.

We now see why it is necessary to speak of structuralist activity: thought and artistic creation do not arise in this case from the original 'imprint' of the world; they are concerned with the actual fabrication of a world which resembles the first, for the purpose of making it intelligible and not of copying it. It is because of this that we may say that structuralism is essentially an imitative activity,

and in this respect there is, properly speaking, no *technical* difference between the structuralism of the scholar on the one hand, and, on the other, literature in particular and art in general: both derive from a *mimesis*, founded not on the analogy of substances (as in 'realist' art), but on the analogy of functions (which Lévi-Strauss calls *homology*). When Troubetzkoy reconstructs the phonetic object in the form of a system of variations . . . when J.-P. Richard divides the Mallarmé poem into its distinctive vibrations, they are in fact doing what Mondrian, Boulez or Butor do, when they set up a particular object, to be known precisely as a *composition*, through the orderly display of certain units and certain associations of these units. Whether the primary object which undergoes representation is offered by the world in a form that is already coherent (as in the case of a structural analysis carried out upon a language, a society or a work already brought to completion) or in a dispersed form (in the case of the structural 'composition'), whether this primary object is discovered in social reality or in the reality of the imagination—all this is of little importance: it is not the nature of the object which is copied that defines an art (although this is a prejudice that clings strongly to all forms of realism) but the element which man supplies in reconstituting it—technique is the very essence of all creation. It is therefore according to the measure in which the aims of structuralist activity are bound indissolubly to a certain technique, that structuralism

has a distinctive existence vis-à-vis other methods of analysis or creation: the object is recomposed *in order that* the functions may become apparent, and, if we may say so, it is the process that constitutes the work; that is why we must speak of structuralist activity and not the structuralist work. Structuralist activity allows two typical operations: dissection and arrangement. The dissection of the primary object, the one which undergoes representation, is a matter of discovering there movable fragments whose relative positions provide particular meanings; the fragment is meaningless in itself, but it is such that the least variation in arrangement brings about a change in the entire composition; a *square* by Mondrian, a *series* from Pousseur, a *verse* from Butor's *Mobile*, the 'mytheme' in Lévi-Strauss, the phoneme among phonologists, the 'theme' for a literary critic, all these units (whatever their intrinsic structure and extent, which differ correspondingly) have no meaningful existence except by virtue of their frontiers: those which separate them from the other effective units in the discursive framework (a question of arrangement), and also those which distinguish them from other virtual units, with which they form a particular class (that the linguists call a *paradigm*); this notion of the paradigm is essential, so it would seem, for the understanding of what the structuralist vision amounts to: the paradigm is a reserve, as limited as possible, of objects (units), out of which we summon, by an act of citation, the object or unit which we

wish to endow with an effective meaning; what characterises the paradigm object is the fact that it exists vis-à-vis the other objects of its class in a particular relationship of affinity and dissimilarity: two units of the same paradigm must be similar in some degree *in order that* the difference which separates them may have a sufficiently striking effect: s and z must have at the same time a common trait (dentality) and a distinctive trait (presence or absence of sonority) to prevent us from attributing the same meaning to the French words *poisson* and *poison*; Mondrian's squares must at the same time resemble one another in being square-shaped, and differ from one another in proportion and colour; the American automobiles in Butor's *Mobile* must be inspected time after time in the same manner, but colour and make must still be different every time; the episodes from the Oedipus myth (in Lévi-Strauss's analysis) must be at once identical and varied, in order that every one of them may be intelligible. The operation of cutting out thereby gives rise to an initial, dispersed state of the image, but the units of structure are in no way anarchic: before they are distributed and inserted in the continuum of the composition, each forms with its own reserve potential an intelligent organism, subject to a supreme motive principle: that of the most minute difference. Once the units are established, the structuralist must disclose in them or instil in them some rules of association: this is the activity of mustering the units.

The syntax of the arts and of discursive writing is, we know, extremely varied; but what can always be found in a work of structuralist plan is the submission to regular constraints, a matter less of formalism, as has wrongly been the accusation, than of stability; for what is taking place, in this second stage of the representation, is a kind of battle against chance; this is why the constraints of the recurring units have an almost craftsmanlike value: it is through the regular return of units and associations of units that the work appears to have been constructed, that is to say, endowed with meaning; the linguists call these rules of combination *forms*, and there would be a great advantage in retaining this rigorous usage of an overworked word: the form, it has been said, is that which allows the contiguity of units not to appear as the effect of chance, purely and simply: the work of art is what man seizes from chance. Perhaps this enables us to understand why, on the one hand, those works which we refer to as non-figurative are all the same works in every sense, human thought subscribing not to the analogy of copies and models, but to the regularity of combinations, and on the other hand why these same works appear to be, precisely, fortuitous and by that token useless to those who can discern no form there: in front of an abstract picture, Kruschev is no doubt wrong to see nothing but the tracks of an ass's tail dragged across the canvas; at least he knows in this own way that art is in some sense a victory over chance (he simply forgets that all rules must be

learned, whether one wishes to apply them or decipher them). Once the image is established, it does not register the world as it has found it, and here lies the importance of structuralism. In the first place, it makes known a new category of object, neither real nor rational, but *functional*, linking up in this way with a whole scientific complex, which is in the process of being developed, in relation to researches on the theory of information. Furthermore, and most important, it brings to light the distinctively human process by which men confer meaning on things. Is this new? To a certain extent, yes; doubtless the world has never ceased to look for the meaning of what is presented to it and what it produces; the thing that is new is the form of thought (or 'poetic') which is concerned less with assigning full meanings to the objects which it discovers, than with knowing how meaning is possible, at what price and through what channels. In the last resort, we might say that the object of structuralism is not man the possessor of particular meanings, but man the fabricator of meanings, as though it was not the content of the meanings which exhausted the semantic goals of humanity, but solely the act by which these meanings, historically variable and contingent, are produced. According to Hegel, the ancient Greek was amazed by the *natural* in nature; he listened to it continually, and demanded the meaning of springs, mountains, forests, storms; without knowing what all these objects said to him one by one, he perceived in the order of the

vegetable world and of the cosmos an immense *frisson* of meaning, to which he gave the name of a god, Pan. Since that time, nature has changed, and become social: all that man encounters is *already* human, including the forests and rivers that we cross on our journeys. But before this nature become social, which is quite simply culture, the structuralist does not differ from the ancient Greek: he also lends an ear to the natural element in culture, and perceives there all the time, not so much stable, definitive, 'true' meanings, as the *frisson* of an immense machine which is humanity in the process of moving tirelessly towards the creation of meaning, without which it would cease to be human. And it is because this fabrication of meaning is in his eyes more important than the meanings themselves, because the function extends beyond the works, that structuralism itself becomes an activity and comprises within one and the same identity the exercise of the work and the work itself: a serial composition or an analysis by Lévi-Strauss are only objects inasmuch as they have been *made*: their present being is their past act: they are in a state of *having-been-made*; the artist, the analyst retraces the path of meaning, he is not obliged to describe it: his function, to quote from Hegel once again, is of prophesying (*manteia*); like the ancient soothsayer, he *tells* the area of meaning but does not give any names. And it is because literature, in particular, falls within this description that it is at once intelligible and questioning, speaking and speechless, implicated in the

world by the path of meaning which it takes along with her, but disengaged from the contingent meanings which the world marks out: an answer to the one who completes the work and at the same time always a question posed to nature, an answer which questions and a question which replies. How then can the structuralist accept the accusation of unreality that is sometimes pressed against him? Are not the forms part of the world? Are they not accountable? Was the revolutionary element in Brecht really his Marxism? Was it not rather the decision to link with Marxism, on the stage, innovations in lighting and costume? Structuralism does not withdraw history from the world: it seeks to relate to history not simply contents (a thing which has been done a thousand times), but also forms, not simply the material, but also the intelligible, not simply the ideological but also the aesthetic. And precisely because all thoughts on the element of intelligibility in history are also a participation in this element, the structuralist is, we may be sure, not deeply concerned with permanence: he knows that structuralism is in itself a particular *form* of the world, which will change with the world; and just as he is aware of its validity (but not its truth) through his power of speaking the ancient languages of the world in a new fashion, so he knows that the historical development of a new language, which performs this function in its turn, is all that is needed for the culmination of his own task.

The idea that aesthetics should be submitted to scientific scrutiny still seems to engender a considerable amount of hostility in those who believe that the creation and appreciation of objects of beauty is so personal and subjective a thing, that it cannot be reduced to the consistencies and logicalities of the experimentalist's approach. Yet if we are to assume that the artist and the designer do not work entirely on ad hoc principles, and that there is some consistency in people's judgements of what they like and do not like, we have a basis upon which we can start to build the principles needed to define the structure of aesthetic appreciation. One must not be too critical if the experimenter starts by using simple colours and designs for his working material as, after all, progress in any investigation is usually from the simple to the complex. Can we demonstrate any consistencies in preference judgements for different people? In colour preferences for example, for single colours of the same brightness and saturation, people do show considerable agreement in ranking the colours in an order of preference which seems to follow the order of the spectrum, with most liked at the red end through to least liked at the blue end. The interesting thing is that this finding is consistent for totally different cultures from our own, which Eysenck sees as indicating 'some strong biological foundation for judgements of colour preference,' the basis for which is however left unexplained.

Ranking of colours of different saturation and brightness on a

semantic scale in which the observer has to place his judgement at a point somewhere on a continuum between two opposites such as pleasant/unpleasant, strong/weak, obvious/subtle, has been used to determine whether judgements made about a single colour can be used to predict how a pair of colours will be judged. Only the pleasant/unpleasant scale seems to relate single colours to the pairs; for the other scales the important factor differs with a combination of two colours. For example, on the strong/weak rankings, a single colour appears to be judged as 'strong' when it is heavily saturated, while a colour pair is strong not because both in it are highly saturated, but because of the contrast between the hues in the pair—if the hues in the pair are not contrasted, the combination will be judged as 'weak'. Whether a colour has been judged as pleasant or unpleasant has been found to affect the accuracy with which it can be recalled afterwards. Colours judged as 'pleasant' are often recalled more accurately in a subsequent recognition test than those which are not liked. It may simply be that less attention is given to the non-preferred colours.

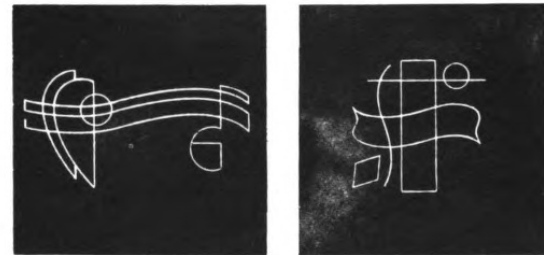
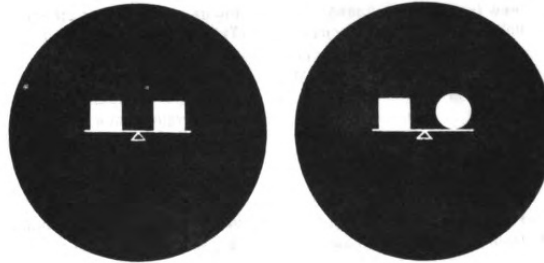
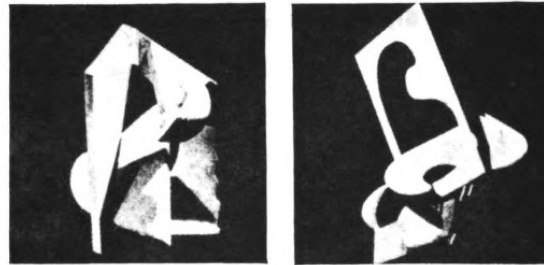
How do artists compare with non-artists in their memory for colour? When they have to recognise just one colour, which they have been presented with before, from a number of similar hues, they are in general no better than non-artists, but they do show significant superiority when a configuration

of colours is used. This suggests that immediate memory for colours, dissociated from configurations, is not greatly influenced by constant use of colours. Artists have been found to be less susceptible than non-artists to the phenomenon of colour constancy, which is the tendency to see colours as we know them to be, so that they do not appear to undergo startling changes in different illuminations. If this is due to the artist having learned to judge colours analytically because he is concerned with depicting the actual sensory impression of the colour rather than what one might think it is, then we would expect him to have no advantage over the non-artist in perceiving and memorising a single colour patch, but in a complex of colours the ability to analyse the component colours without this judgement being blurred by their inter-relationship, would give him the advantage in perceiving and memorising a group of colours accurately. There is evidence that the artist is constantly making this kind of analytical appraisal of what he sees, until it becomes almost automatic. People normally compensate in perceiving objects, for their apparent distance from and angle of tilt to the eye, so that a far object does not usually appear to have shrunk, although its image on the retina may be very small, and a tilted circle does not seem to have changed into an oval although it presents an elliptical image. But trained artists tend to match shapes and sizes as nearer to their actual retinal image than do other people

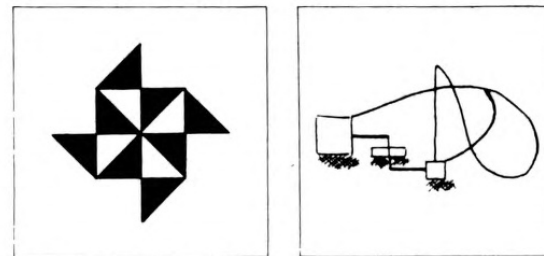
and are less susceptible to some of the visual illusions.

Experiments on colour preferences have also brought out another factor in which the artist differs from others—that of consistency of judgement. Artists do seem to be more consistent in their colour preferences both as a group and in their individual judgements, although their preferences are not necessarily stronger than those of non-artists. This consistency has been shown in judging representational and abstract painting. What are the factors entering into the evaluation of a painting? Here, semantic scales of the type already mentioned have been used. Tucker suggested that judgements of representational paintings might be analysed into an 'activity' factor (characterised by such scales as active/passive, vibrant/still), a 'potency' factor (e.g. hard/soft, formal/informal) and an 'evaluative' factor (e.g. pleasant/unpleasant, ordered/chaotic). These three factors were all distinguishable in the judgements of both artists and non-artists, although they did not give them equal weight. However, for abstract paintings, factor analysis of the semantic ratings of the artists and non-artists were quite different. In the former group the evaluating factor predominated, suggesting that artists have a strong emotional reaction to an abstract painting, which dominates over other factors if the painting is liked, so that all other judgements are at the 'favourable' poles of the scale. This consistent dominance points to the fact that the artist must

Right and below: three pairs of examples from the Maitland Graves Design Judgement Test. Which one from each pair do you prefer?



Two examples from the Welsh Figure Preference Test. Do you like or dislike the figure?



have a specific underlying evaluative system in order that such consistencies should override individual scale differences. The non-artists had no such determining factor and their judgements on different scales seemed almost random, resulting in what was described as 'semantic chaos'. For them, the judgement of abstract painting was a task for

which they had an ill-defined structure of principles to go on. The question arises, of course, as to whether we are justified in relating semantic judgements to the actual uses of colour and form by artists. Will the artist's pictorial representation of extreme activity, passivity and strength for example, be differentiated and judged correctly by the observer? The

obvious test was an experiment in which a group of artists were asked to create abstract pastels representing extreme 'activity', 'passivity', 'weakness', 'chaos', etc. In general, 'activity' was depicted in warm colours with jagged lines, 'passivity' in pale colours with large and simple curvilinear shapes. Another group was then asked to select the adjectives appropriate to the pastels and could do so with a good degree of accuracy for most of the different representations, but there was some confusion between 'weak' and 'passive', and 'active' and 'chaotic'. How far the intentions of the artist are correctly decoded by the observer affords an interesting study in communication, into which a great deal more investigation is needed.

A considerable amount of investigation in psychology is devoted to the devising of tests which will differentiate reliably between people with or without a specific ability, such as high intelligence, mechanical aptitude, manual dexterity and so on. A reliable test of aesthetic judgement might seem particularly difficult to devise. The tests in use so far relate good judgement to the ability to pick out designs which conform to the 'laws of good composition', among them balance, grouping, and the placing of the parts of the figure in relation to the golden section. Pairs or triads of achromatic and meaningless figures have been devised, some of which violate these standard principles of composition in some respect, and the observer is asked to say either whether he likes or does

not like them—as in the Barron-Welsh Test—or to choose which of the drawings he prefers, as in the Maitland Graves Test. The interesting fact is, that although we might argue that the artist is not normally concerned with these simplified types of designs, and that he himself might often say that he is unaware in his painting of making any effort to conform to these standard principles of composition, the artist scores significantly higher than the non-artist in the test. This must surely justify its use, and the demonstration of the consistency of judgement which we also found with colour preferences shows that there must be some basic scheme operating in the making of preferences. In one validation test, Graves found that a large group of young art students scored an average of 73–77 correct out of a possible 90 maximum, while a comparable group of engineering students had a mean score of about 50 and a group of dental technology students 42.

This account of experimental work is far from being a comprehensive description of all the lines of research being followed in aesthetics, but it does suggest that aesthetic judgement is not such an irrational subjective process as it might at first sight appear to be. 'Good judges' seem to have a definite structure of principles on which they operate consistently in judging a wide variety of types of material. Many of these principles remain as yet unspecified and provide a very fertile ground for future research.

1: 'A New Realism', *Little Review*, New York 1922.
 2: Blaise Cendrars, 'J'ai Tué', Paris 1919.
 3: quoted by Katherine Kuh in her book *Fernand Léger*, Illinois 1959.

'The war had thrust me as a soldier into the heart of a mechanical atmosphere. Here I discovered the beauty of the fragment. I sensed a new reality in the detail of a machine, in the common object. I tried to find the plastic value of these fragments in our modern life.'¹

We are more familiar with the pleas of the poets; the complaints of men whose humanity and self-respect were assaulted by the brutality and stupidity of machine warfare. At the same time, quite a number of formidably sensitive men who fought in the trenches found an exhilaration in their unique condition. Léger was not alone. The sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska wrote letters from the front lines in which he described the beauty of an exploding shell, and when he objected to the trenches it was not because of privation but because they disturbed the natural contour and sculptural volume of the landscape. Similarly, Blaise Cendrars, a writer and friend of Léger with whom he was to co-operate after the war, 'discovered' himself as a new kind of (dadaist) noble savage: 'Here I am, my nerves tense and my muscles taut, ready to leap into reality. I have defied the shelling and bombardment, the mines, fire, gas and artillery; all the anonymous, demonic and blind machinery of war. Now I am going to stand up to a man. My likeness . . . I struck first. I have a sense of reality, me, the poet. I acted and I killed. Like a man who wants to live.'²

As Mr. Lawder showed in 'Image' (Oct. 1965), Léger's

'new realism' was closely linked with his experiences during the war, and was applied first of all to the landscape of the city in 1919.

At first it was confused and profuse. The illustrations which Léger made for Cendrars' scenario, 'La Fin du Monde Filmée par l'Ange de Notre-Dame' present the modern city as a battle-ground of ill-assorted detail on top of which it is the printed word which imposes coherence. Letters of the alphabet had already played their part in Léger's paintings of 'The City' from the same year. There they appear as a part of the multi-focal perspective, along with traffic lights and human forms to suggest the interaction of constituent elements in the modern commercial centre. The city of 'La Fin du Monde' however is condemned. When the American businessman who is God cries judgement, it is the last judgement, at which the world returns to a surrealist state of primordial chaos. At the same time, the illustrations achieve a new simplicity once the end of the world has been reached: the city disappears and leaves just the alphabet from which Léger constructs a series of typographical diagrams. His letters and symbols are in the simple style of cheap block printing, popular in Paris among shoe-string publishers and commercial artists. They are clear and functional, almost as though 'in the beginning was the word'.

To some extent, when we trace Léger's development as an artist, we trace a reflection of

the developments of others. This is not so harsh as it sounds; all artists remain sensitive to the climate in which they operate, and Léger was certainly not a slavish imitator. It was simply as if he discovered in the courses of his contemporaries lines compatible with his own. When he worked with Cendrars, for instance, he worked with a writer whose mind was something of a melting pot, but at the same time found himself in an artistic impasse. The experiments suggested by Cendrars' scenario ended at the point where words assumed an active role as substitutes for representation, and converted illustration into a typographical exercise.

At about this time Léger became associated with van Doesburg and the 'de Stijl' movement in Holland. Here, again, he found an influence which encouraged economy and clarity, and which embodied in its architectural theory the admiration for machinery which Léger himself had already discovered. For 'de Stijl' and for the 'international style' which it nurtured, curves bred confusion and architectural decadence. Like the Constructivists in pre-Stalinist Russia, they celebrated a dawning era of construction after the bathos of 'fin de siècle' and after the purgative destruction of the Great War: 'The epoch of destruction is totally over. A new epoch is beginning: THE GREAT EPOCH OF CONSTRUCTION.' 'We have studied the relationships between scale, proportion, space, time and materials, and we have discovered the

definitive method of constructional unity.'

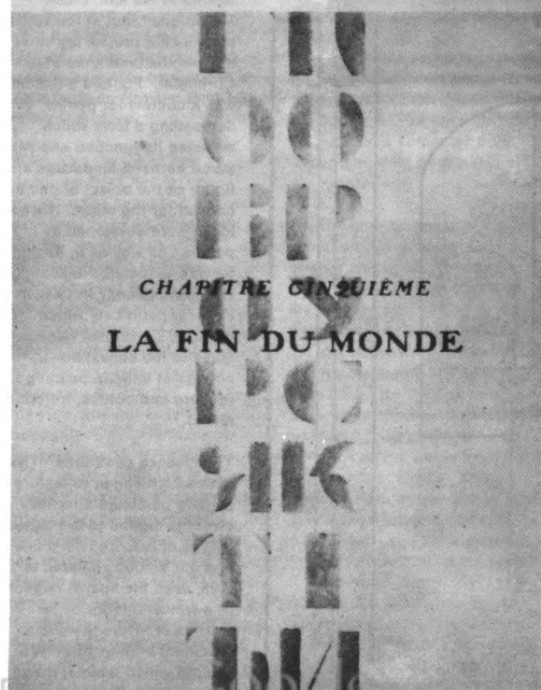
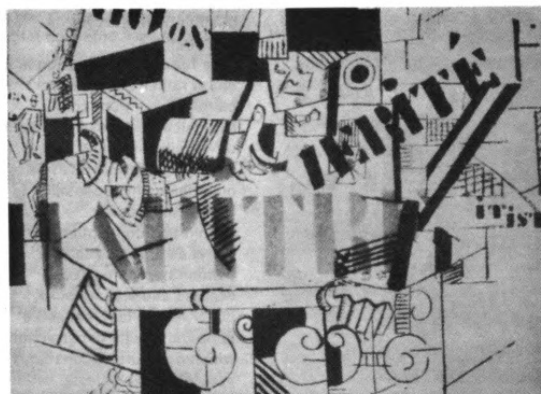
'We have given colour its rightful place in architecture and we declare that painting separated from architectural construction (easel-painting) has no reason for existence.'

It may seem surprising that Léger was drawn towards a group so predominantly architectural until we remember that he had reached an impasse in the course of his search for coherence and clarity. Like Mondrian, who was more closely identified with the group, he was content for a while to experiment with forms and colour, and to achieve through the spatial effects created by flat surfaces of pigment a new dimension in painting which replaced perspective as a means to creating depth.

But also like Mondrian, Léger only remained faithful to the theories of van Doesburg for as long as it served his own development to do so. He never really accepted a theory of abstraction which aimed to reduce the sacred object to a pattern; for him, simplification was meant to serve the opposite end, and to emphasise the 'new reality' of forms liberated from irrelevant and obscuring detail: 'The object has replaced the subject. Abstract art came as a total liberation, and one could then consider the human figure not as a sentimental value but simply as a plastic one.'³

He did not accept van Doesburg's abstraction of a cow which transformed its representation into a cubist

Two of Léger's illustrations for Blaise Cendrars' scenario 'La Fin du Monde Filmée par l'Ange de Notre-Dame'.



CHAPITRE CINQUIÈME
LA FIN DU MONDE

exercise and then into a two-dimensional design in which the cow is no longer recognisable. But what he did find in the simplicity of 'de Stijl' was an order in which to place his objects for their settings. In paintings like 'Woman with a Cat' (1921) the background against which his objective portrait is placed has been reduced to a simple composition in two dimensions, and in the manner of, say, 'Compositie' by van Doesburg (1917). The object itself, however, is emphasised rather than enveloped by its context. In 1924, 'de Stijl' held an exhibition in Paris at the Galerie de l'Effort Moderne, run by Léonce Rosenberg who was, in fact, one of Léger's dealers. It is surprising at first to read the review in 'L'Esprit Nouveau' signed by Ozenfant and Jeanneret, in which the French participants of the International Style dissociated themselves from their Dutch colleagues. Earlier relations between the two groups had been cordial, and exchanges of material had taken place between their two journals, but by 1924 differences began to damage the entente: 'Today we are furnished with a negative demonstration by a whole movement of modern painting recently arisen in Holland, which seems to us to exclude itself from the necessary conditions for painting . . . and to limit itself strictly to a series of geometrical signs related to the rectangle.' 'One can reach purity of expression by stripping art . . . the extreme is often the absurd.'

The photographs of the

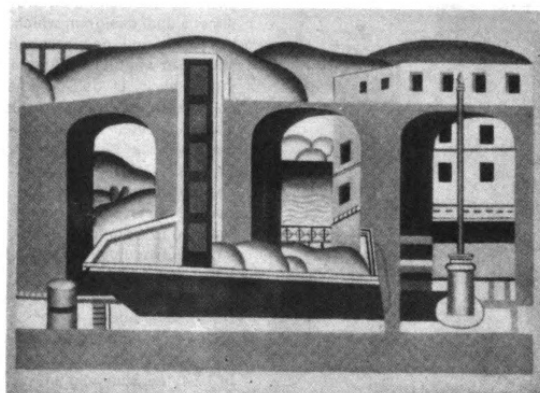
exhibition printed in 'de Stijl' show that it was largely architectural, and confirm the suspicion that apart from specific references to Mondrian, it was le Corbusier the architect rather than Jeanneret the painter protesting here against a theory of style which eliminated curves from design. It was in 1924 that van Doesburg labelled Oud's plans for workers' houses in the Hook of Holland as 'van der Velde architecture' because his terraces admitted the curve to their structure. This was, for le Corbusier, the point at which theory became both 'extreme' and 'absurd'.

In 1924 Léger and Ozenfant moved into the same studio. For some time this new alliance between Léger and the leaders of 'L'Esprit Nouveau' had been forming, and when le Corbusier summed up his differences from 'de Stijl', he did so for his friend Léger too. Although he controlled it and restricted it to a concise form totally different from the flowing arabesques of Matisse (or his own late style) Léger had never abandoned the curve. In the mechanical forms he used to construct the human body, cylinders and spheres are prominent, and combine rotundity with the impression of gun-metal as characteristics of his brave world of the new realism.

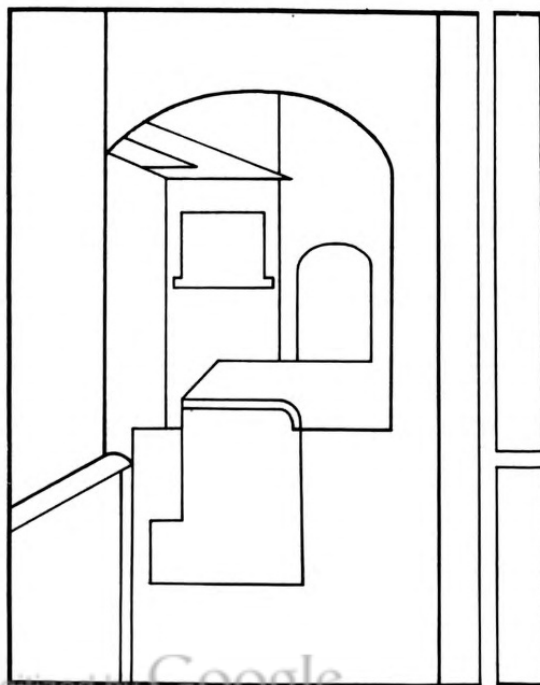
In 1925, le Corbusier asked Léger to design a mural for the 'L'Esprit Nouveau' pavilion at the 'Exposition des Arts Décoratifs' held in Paris. This was the only field in which he worked as an abstract artist, creating on the walls of the

4: quoted by Miss Kuh (*ibid.*).
5: for an account of this work,
see Standish Lawder in 'Image'
Oct. 1965.

Fernand Léger: 'Le Viaduc'
(1925) (courtesy of the Yale
University Art Gallery, Philip L.
Goodwin Collection).



From a photograph (in 'L'Esprit
Nouveau') of an interior design
by Le Corbusier, c. 1923.



building a context for its inhabitants:
'The future of abstraction is in mural rather than in easel paintings . . . pure colour dynamically disposed is capable of visually destroying a wall. Colour is a formidable raw material, as indispensable to life as water or fire.'⁴
Within this conception of the mural as a setting for the contents of the pavilion, exhibits and visitors alike, Léger had in fact realised a temporal kinetic construction which used the unconscious spectators as 'objects' within a defined space. In a way this is related to his film 'Ballet Mécanique'⁵, but at the same time such a project lay close to the architectural aims of le Corbusier. For him a building was a context for people, demanding a form which reflected its function and which stood between landscape and figure as the object of one and context for the other. His own ideas were developed in painting as well as in design; he was associated with Ozenfant, already in 1920, in the purist experiments which explored curvilinear relationships in the conventional objects of still-life painting (guitars and bottles, fruit and glass).

The alliance continued. The vase which began to feature in Léger's paintings after 1924 owed its outline to the muted curves of le Corbusier's design, and 'Le Viaduc', painted in 1925, uses the spatial relations of a typical interior by le Corbusier. Here there is a dominant architectural foreground which leads through into a perspective of 'natural'

forms; the middle arch of Léger's painting seems almost a demonstration of the principles embraced by the villa of 1923.

By 1926, the influence of le Corbusier on Léger already seems to be waning. From the rather aggressive but attractive ideas of 'de Stijl', Léger moved towards the more moderate and highly personal style of his saviour, another architect associated with the international style, but one whose originality insisted upon its own course. For a while, the twenties design of le Corbusier was gratefully reflected in Léger's painting, while he emphasised the importance of the object in its architectural context. After 1926, however, the object was related less often to a setting, as Léger's interest moved from that issue towards a preoccupation with relationships between objects in juxtaposition. Here the shortcomings of a thematic approach to his work are apparent; we have to return to the 'Ballet Mécanique' to explain the revival of film in Léger's iconography around 1927. At this point where his attention is absorbed by surrealism and its implications for the isolated fragment, his relations with the architects end.

The automatic digital computer, that essential feature of our modern technology, is almost exactly twenty years old: in 1946 J. Presper Eckert and John W. Mauchley built the ENIAC at the Moore School of Electrical Engineering at the University of Pennsylvania. Although it can claim to be the first all-electronic computer, its design was still under the influence of the mechanical calculators which are the ancestors of the modern computer, in that it worked on the scale of ten. The philosophy of the binary computer, to which class all modern computers belong, was expounded in June 1945 by the late John von Neumann, and these ideas were incorporated in the EDVAC, which was built and used to calculate trajectories at the Aberdeen Proving Ground of the U.S. Army.

Now although these first machines were indeed computers in the numerical sense, it was obvious to the designers and the small group of enthusiasts who attended the colloquia given at the Moore school, that the ultimate uses of computers would be far more various than just calculations for artillery ranges or on astronomical data: but initially this view was not easy to propagate. One of these pioneers was M. V. Wilkes, who came back to build the EDSAC I at the Cambridge Mathematical Laboratory; he recounts how one of the directors of Powers-Samas (now part of I.C.T.) came to watch the EDSAC I being built, and returned unconvinced that there was any commercial future in electronic computers.

The name 'computer' is somewhat inadequate, for computing in the numerical sense is only one of the functions of a computer. It is much more useful to think of it as a 'data-processor'. Any computer consists of four main functional blocks: The input/output machinery: The Central Control Unit, which organises the actions taken by the machine: The Arithmetic Unit, which performs all logical and arithmetical calculations: The Store, subdivided into two or more sections—the fast (electronic) store, and a slower but much larger backing store which may consist of magnetic tapes, discs and/or drums.

Any automatic computer takes its calculation instructions from a 'program', which it then obeys in sequence. The uses that can be made of a computer thus depend entirely on the skill of the programmer.

For the first ten years in the evolution of the computer, the greater part of the time and money available was spent on the development of the electronics, or 'hardware'. But the last ten years has seen a very considerable shift away from hardware development, towards research and development into programming, or 'software'. This arises from the fundamental problem, how to communicate with a computer. Both the calculation and control instructions, and the numerical data, are stored in the machine in the form of binary digit ('bit') patterns; these are usually translated from or into decimal before being read into or written from the computer. Thus the basic 'machine code', or

language understood by the machine, consists of a sequence of (decimal) digits; this code had, in the first place, to be learned by anybody wishing to program the computer. It soon became apparent, however, that for a physicist to write a program in machine code was about as time-consuming as for him to write his papers in runes, with a comparable lack of clarity for the lay reader. From these considerations emerged the various programming languages: the Autocodes, Fortran I-IV, Algol, CPL, COBOL, etc. The first four named are 'scientific', in that they permit programming in a language closely resembling normal mathematics. COBOL is a language specially designed for business applications. All these languages are translated automatically from pseudo-English into machine code, by means of a special program called a 'compiler'. Considerable experience has now been acquired both in the design of languages and in the writing of compilers.

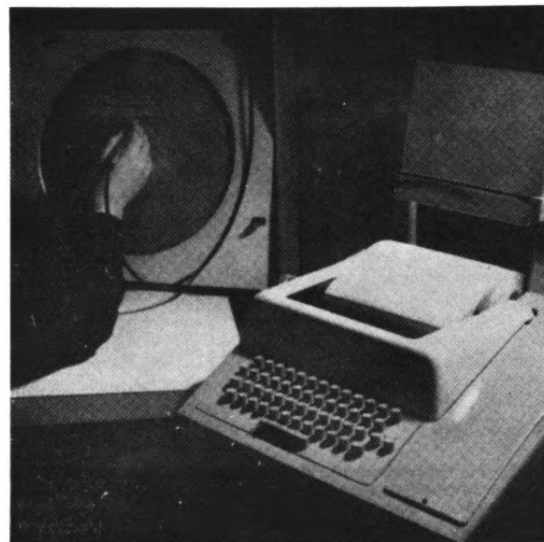
The emergence of automatic programming languages was a considerable advance in the communication problem. But, in that a program has to be punched on cards or paper tape, handed over to the operators, fed into the machine and then handed back to the originator, the programmer is still in effect writing letters to the computer (albeit in a language common to both) rather than talking to it direct. Moreover, the commonest form of programming error is an error of syntax, so that the user has to wait perhaps for a day in order to discover that he has spelt some word incorrectly, or mismatched

a pair of brackets.

It would obviously be highly uneconomical for one person to monopolise a giant computer, capable of performing perhaps half a million calculations in a second, for two or three hours while he punches, edits and checks out a program; but the alternative has been up to now a long delay while that program and many others are run on a queue. Two new developments combine to reduce this loss of contact: multiprogramming, and time-sharing. Multiprogramming is a method whereby more than one program can share the store of the same machine at the same time, in effect being run simultaneously. This, at least, considerably reduces the turn-around-time for programs. Time-sharing, or multi-access programming, effectively produces the desired result of having the programmer in sole charge of the machine, or seeming to be so. To any user it appears that he alone, sitting at his console, has the machine at his disposal, and can take as long as he likes to run, check and edit his program. In fact all users are being processed more or less simultaneously, each oblivious of the others.

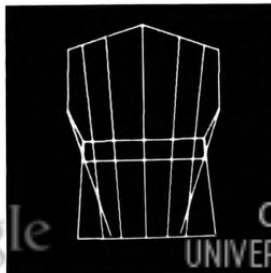
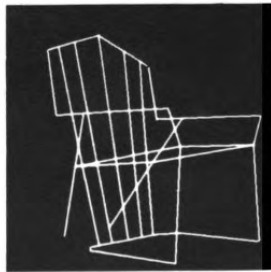
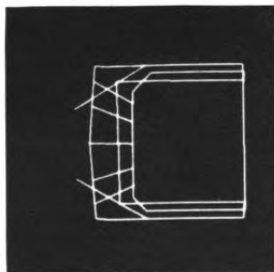
The importance of this is considerable, as it permits of a 'conversational mode' of addressing the computer. Given a suitable console, which may be in his own office, remote from the machine, the designer can use the full power of the computer to calculate, retrieve and sort data, and store intermediate results. Work on this system was started at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, under the acronym

PDP 7, plus DEC 340 display, showing the cathode ray screen, 'light pen' (in the operator's hand), and input/output typewriter.



Edward Leigh

A typical SKETCHPAD III display, photographed at the MIT Lincoln Laboratory TX-2 computer, showing a perspective view and three orthogonal projections of a wire frame chair.



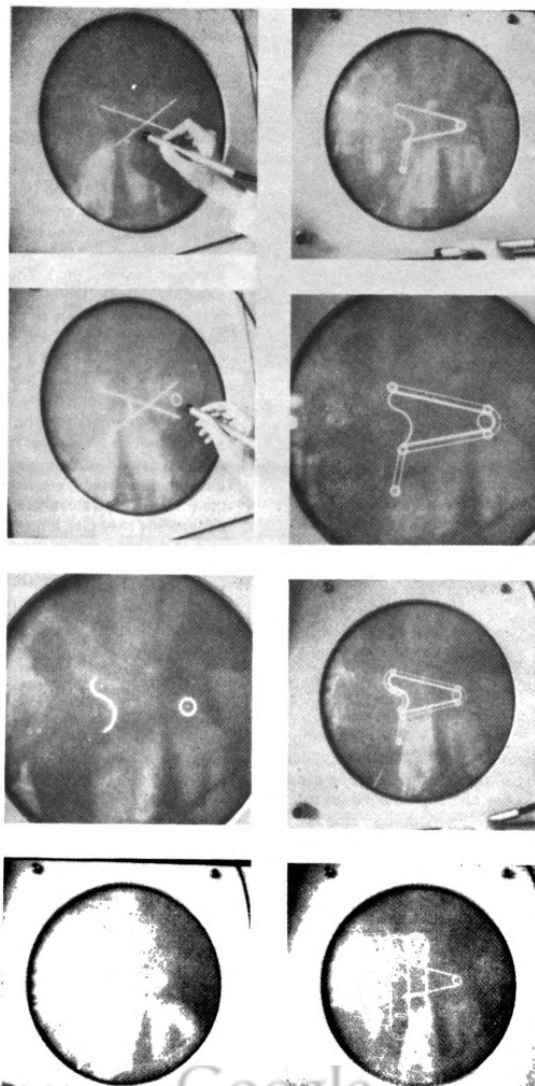
MAC (multi-access computer, or machine-aided cognition) about five years ago, and has reached the state at which several computer manufacturers are now offering m.a.c. systems commercially.

We shall now consider the further developments which have gone far to make the concept of 'computer aided design' a reality. In the early 1950s what is now the Electronic Systems Laboratory at MIT developed the first numerically controlled milling machine; the data tape was prepared from detailed engineering drawings, and contained all the information required for the tool to produce automatically the finished part. In order to simplify the amount of work necessary in this 'part programming', a language called APT (automatic programmed tool) was devised and implemented, and the amount of work required to produce a numerical control tape greatly reduced. But this APT, important though it was, still demanded that the designer produce a complete specification of the part in blueprint form: although the computer was now much more accessible, there still remained the problem that most designers think, as the name implies, in graphical terms. Before the computer could offer any assistance, design problems had to be reduced to tables of coordinates and data. The final step was taken as a result of work done simultaneously at MIT Lincoln Laboratory (Ivan Sutherland), and Electronic Systems Laboratory (Douglas Ross), on the graphical input of information directly to a computer. The first and much publicised result

was Sutherland's SKETCHPAD system. The operator sits in front of a cathode ray screen, connected to and controlled by the computer, and can draw on the screen with the aid of a 'light pen'. His sketches are interpreted in terms of their component lines, arcs, curves, etc., and are stored away together with any associated properties and values. Subsequently they can be reproduced, enlarged, rotated or plotted out on an automatic drawing board. Further, certain constraints can be built in, so that for example a mechanical linkage can be drawn, and movement of any part made to cause the linkage to move as a whole in the correct kinematic response. That this is in fact useful is shown dramatically by the fact that in 1951 Hrones and Nelson took several months to compile a dictionary of all possible motions of a four-bar linkage: using SKETCHPAD the work was done in as many minutes. Alternatively, a bridge may be drawn and on the application of specific loads, the compressions and tensions in the members displayed: or an electrical circuit laid out and the response to the introduction of voltages and currents read off. However, there were certain limitations in the original SKETCHPAD system which restricted its usefulness, although as an exercise it provided invaluable practice in handling graphical data. The system was extended by T. E. Johnson, in SKETCHPAD III, to work in three dimensions, so that the sketching of an isometric or perspective view of an object caused three two-dimensional views and the original view to be displayed: and Larry Roberts,

8 stages in the design of an aircraft part (courtesy Lockheed-Georgia Co.) using CAD techniques. 1-4 show the building up of the part itself, using two arcs and two straight lines: in 5-7 the path of a cutter is indicated, and 8 indicates how a larger diameter cutter could be used to swathe out the top and bottom of the part. The diagrams will generate directly a numerical control tape for the automatic milling of the part.

1 5
2 6
3 7
4 8



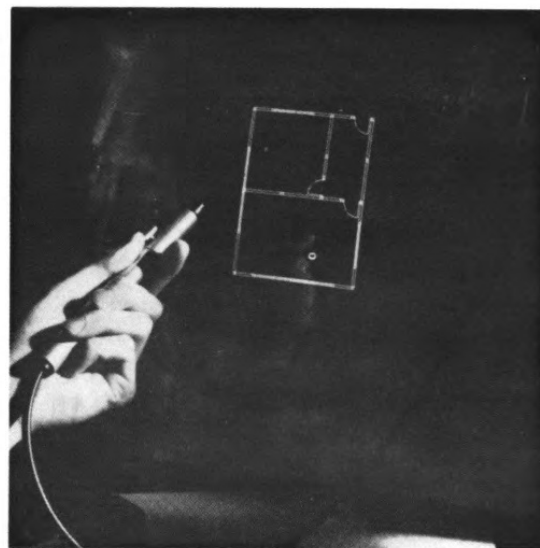
also at MIT, has modified the display so that instead of producing 'wire-frame' drawings the hidden lines are removed. (It should be stressed at this point that what is new in the above is not the use of output displays as such: these have been in use since the mid-fifties, mostly in connection with military systems such as SAGE. Also, the use of photographed displays to reconstruct a dynamic system goes back to the early days of computing: a recent impressive example of this is the work on fluid dynamics by F. Harlow and E. Welch of Los Alamos, in which the motions of fluid configurations are followed numerically and displayed in such detail that even the spray off breaking waves is shown. The innovation lies in the use of a display to *input* information.)

We are now in a position to review the current applications of display-driven computer systems. In industry, the only groups who have made a serious investigation into the potentialities of Computer Aided Design are the automobile and aerospace companies. Lockheed-Georgia at Marietta have an extremely extensive program of research and development into all aspects of the design process, and have used CAD for much of the work on both the C-141 (in which APT programming time was cut from 1,500 to 60 hours using computer graphics) and the C-5A giant transport. Boeing of Seattle are also heavily committed to CAD. General Motors have a system called DAC-1 (design augmented by computer) which enables car bodies to be

restyled at the console and body blueprints to be output: the ability of the computer to hold in its memory all details of the body of a particular car is of especial use since certain major features of a design are kept unchanged over several years' production runs. The Ford Company uses the same techniques: in particular it has developed special routines for the analysis of four-bar linkages used in spring-loaded bonnet and boot lids and the motions of window-lifters, and also for calculating wiper patterns and the optical distortion of wind-screens. Previously, hours of detailed drawing followed by pilot production or the construction of full-size clay models would have been necessary; design time can now be cut by several orders of magnitude.

As an example of the use of CAD techniques, consider the accompanying illustrations showing the production of an aircraft part (courtesy Lockheed-Georgia Company). In 1-4, the circular arcs defining the end of the part are drawn with the help of two intersecting lines (I and II) which are then made invisible. The ends are joined by two straight lines, and the part is finished. In 5-7 the path of a cutter is indicated (the cutting surface is the outer of the two concentric circles), following exactly the outside geometry of the part. 8 indicates how a larger diameter cutter could be used to swathe out the top and bottom of the part. These diagrams together with cutter speeds, depths, etc., will generate a numerical control tape automatically.

W. Newman's NIBS system, based on the IBIS modular building system, for the sketching of building plans using standard components—columns, staircases, doors—on a 3' x 3' grid. An inventory of parts used, and the total floor area can be read out as the design proceeds.



Edward Leigh

The main applications so far of computer graphics are, as I have shown, in engineering. A start has been made on the application of CAD techniques to architectural problems: at Cambridge W. Newman has produced a system called NIBS, based on the IBIS modular building system, for sketching plans of buildings. A list of stock parts is provided which can be inserted on a 3' x 3' grid; an inventory of parts used, and the total floor area can be read out as the design proceeds. With slight elaboration, elevations could also be produced. In America, Liclikder and Clark have produced a system called 'Coplanner' to help with the design of hospitals: ground plans are sketched, and numerical data supplied which then enables the machine to

simulate circulation problems and queueing bottlenecks for those plans. Further extensions into the field of architecture and industrial design are only a matter of time.

There is great interest currently in ways in which the computer can help in the actual process of design itself, beyond providing an automatic means of drawing. Although little is known about the intuitive procedures adopted by the designer, attempts have been made, notably by Christopher Alexander at Berkeley, to put the problems of design on a quantitative rational basis. The distinctive contributions which the designer and the machine have to make are broadly as follows:

The designer selects goals and formulates hypotheses,

recognises the relevant and takes over when unforeseen contingencies arise: The computer can store and retrieve large quantities of data, calculate rapidly and accurately, and does not forget.

Most design problems other than the trivial proceed from a given data base or environment, on which is superimposed a set of constraints (cost, weight, previous designs, etc.). The designer initially 'feels' his way, testing his hypothesis or design against these constraints, and changing it until he has a satisfactory solution. In the case of a complicated artefact, such as an aeroplane, long periods will be given over to detailed calculations of weight, performance, range, etc.: and the process of evaluating these constraints may take a major part of the time required for the design. In this sort of task, the computer can act as an invaluable complement to the designer's skill; so much so that the (rather inappropriate) phrase 'man/machine symbiosis' is often used.

In any big design project, about 5% of the work is truly creative, and the province of the chief designer. The remaining 95% is handed over to the supporting design team, whose average ability is often distressingly low. Major projects fail because a minor mistake is made at subordinate level, possibly during a copying process; at a level moreover at which no creativity as such is required, simply an application of known and tried 'code of practice'. This is the so-called '95% problem'. The computer can help in two ways: first, by

reducing the amount of totally non-creative but nevertheless error-prone paper work: second, by acting as a memory for the current 'state of the art', so that whenever a part is designed at the '95%' level, checks are made automatically to insure against trivial errors. Hundreds of examples come to mind, of brilliant conceptions ruined by insufficient attention to detail: the computer is the means of raising the general standard.

To conclude: the field of Computer Aided Design is still young, but its techniques have already proved their worth where they have been applied. The number of possible applications is limitless; what CAD is doing is *not* abrogating the role of the designer, but freeing him from the drudgery which reduces his creativity. Progress at the moment is slow, especially in this country where money and personnel are very much less in abundance than in the USA. But a start has been made: all the major British computer manufacturers are actively interested in CAD, as are other firms such as Pressed Steel, and there are CAD groups at Cambridge and London universities, with others to follow soon.

Great Little Magazines

Series edited by Mike Weaver



Cover of 'Secession' No. 3, by Hans Arp, 9" x 5½" (reversed black to white).

Beginning with this issue 'Form' will regularly present an author index to a little magazine of international interest. In recommending libraries where the magazine can be seen, and in estimating the cost of microfilm, 'Form' will signal notorious gaps in British libraries and suggest means by which they may be filled. It is hoped that both British and foreign libraries will provide supplementary information on their holdings, and use these pages to complete or correct entries in such reference works as 'The British Union Catalogue of Periodicals' and the American 'Union Serial List'.

In addition to the index, extracts from the magazine will be reprinted. The selection of these extracts will be made in accordance with the expressed aims of 'Form'—to further a discussion of the relation of form to structure in the arts, particularly in kinetic art and in concrete poetry. Priority will be given to items which have hitherto remained uncollected or untranslated. Future issues will treat 'Die Form', 'Les Soirées de Paris', '291' and 'Merz'. From time to time important little magazines which have recently died ('Golden Goose'), or are about to be revived ('Origin'), or thriving concerns ('Invencao', 'Cinquième Saison', 'POTH', and 'konkrete poesie') will be featured. Information and offers of collaboration will be gratefully received by the editor of the series, M. Weaver, Apt. 2, 436 Prospect Street, New Haven, Connecticut 06511, USA.

Although every effort has been made to avoid it, we beg indulgence over any unwitting infringement of copyright.

No. 1: 'Secession'

Dates with editors:

1. Spring 1922; Gorham B. Munson
2. July 1922; G.B.M.
3. August 1922; Matthew Josephson
4. January 1923; G.B.M., M.J., Kenneth Burke
5. July 1923; John Brooks
6. September 1923; J.B.W., M.C.
7. Winter 1924; G.B.M.
8. April 1924; G.B.M.

Covers

Ludwig Kassák (2), Hans Arp (3), William Sommer (4), 'Signor Rainuzzo of The Italian Mail and Professor Marchig of the Florentine Academy' (5, 6, 8).

Bibliography:

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Hoffman, F. J. et al., *The Little Magazine*, Princeton, 1946, 93-101.
Weber, Brom (ed.), *The Letters of Hart Crane*, Berkeley & L. A. 1965 (paper edn.), see index.

Correspondence Files:

Dispersed through misadventure c. 1958.

Recommended Library Holdings:

The New York Public Library;
The Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University (lacks no. 4 at present).
Estimated cost of microfilm: \$8.00

Author Index

(P=Poetry or Experimental Prose, F=Fiction, C=Criticism)

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Arp, Hans. Arp the Trap-drummer (trans. M. Josephson) (P), 3:15-17

Ashton, Richard. Six Poems (P), 4:1-4

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Brown, Slater. Plots for Pen-pushers (P), 2:20; A Garden Party (F), 4:22-28

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Frank, Waldo. Hope (F), 3:1-4; For a Declaration of War (C), 7:5-14

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Turbyfill, Mark. Crucified Shadows (P), 5:1

Tzara, Tristan. instant note brother (trans. M. Josephson) (P), 1:14; Unpublished Fragment from Mr AA the Antiphrilosopher (trans. M. Josephson) (P), 1:20-21; Mr AA the Antiphrilosopher (trans. M. Josephson) (P), 2:18-19

Wheelwright, John Brooks. Correspondence, 4:29; Comment (polyphonic and typographic elements in poetry), 5:20-25; Unpublished Portions of 'Q' (P), 6:25-29; Comment, 6:30-31

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Winters, Yvor. The Moonlight (P), 7:15; Tewa Spring (P), 7:15; The Resurrection (P), 7:20; The Testament of a Stone—being Notes on the Mechanics of the Poetic Image (C), 8:1-20.

(reprinted from 'S4N', Year 4, 22 (November 1922), not paginated)

In the spring of 1922 I founded in Vienna, after many talks in Paris with Matthew Josephson, a small literary review named *Secession*. If this were an isolated personal venture, I should hesitate to claim importance for it. But as it was, I believe, predicated by American literary activity at large, and as it may link up with possible important developments in American letters, and as it aims to focus the energies of six or eight interesting young writers into an organ all their own, I am perhaps justified in mentioning it here.

I begin with a general call to writers to secede.

And literary secession, in the sense it conveys to me, is a calm intelligent resolute swerving aside, an emotional sloughing-off of irrelevant drains upon our energies and a prompt deviation into purely aesthetic concerns. It is that rather than the direct violent opposition we mean by revolt.

The first requisite for a secession has been established. We have something from which to secede. The last decade has seen a literary *milieu* created in America. A corps of novelists, poets and critics has thrust up, whose members one can take as seriously as, say, Arnold Bennett or Octave Mirbeau or John Drinkwater or Sudermann or A. B. Walkley. That is a great advance over previous American decades. A public, numbering by the wildest estimate 20,000, has come into being for these writers. And a number, too few by far, of magazines and publishers have closed the gap between writers

and audience. The bondage to a stultifying amalgam brightly named genteelness—(its constituents were a pioneer-puritan-industrialist moralism and a servility to English Victorianism)—has now been shattered, for a minority anyway. Russian and French influences have sifted in. Finally, a considerable total of activity in writing, reading, publishing, collecting, gossip has been generated.

The net result may be indicated by saying that the permanent expatriate type is extinct. The act of Ezra Pound in 1908 need not be repeated. The young American can now function in his home *milieu*. If he doesn't like it, he has another and less distorting alternative than revolt into exile: he can secede.

The second requisite is, of course, the presence of bitter necessities demanding secession. And these today's scene, for all the nourishment it provides, protrudes amply. One of them is the aesthetic sterility of the present directions of American letters. The counter-attack on puritanism which absorbs a number of critics is useful to an artist, as the acquisition of the means of living is useful to him. And naturalism and realism up to, but not including, Dostoyevsky have received their maximum aesthetic exploitation in Europe. Dostoyevsky murdered them. Possibly Waldo Frank will perform their *coup de grâce* for us. Consequently, Sinclair Lewis, Floyd Dell, Zona Gale, Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, *et al*, are merely giving us more or less duplicate effects: they are laboring within

exhausted forms. The most interesting values of their work are social rather than aesthetic: they are a means for a candid unflinching examination by us of American life. Incidentally, Europe has been through all this: we are merely catching up. Whitman, like Shakspeare, was a full stop to a period. Both periods have passed, and a full stop bars progression and makes departure imperative. The psychological school, too, is for the most part on a barren tack, since it makes a means, psychology, into an ultimate. Social dynamics, psychological dynamics, how much of our letters they include!

The bitterest thing is the 'good taste' that has been erected on these conditions. Genius, remember, is at first always in 'bad taste'. For 'good taste' takes only the dominant literary tendencies of the day, generalises from them, and condemns the unfamiliar. Canons based on Sinclair Lewis, James Branch Cabell, and Robert Frost and pasted up solemnly each week in the *New Republic* or the *Nation* recognise creation only within these canons. They concentrate (although that is not wholly the fault of Messrs. Cabell and Frost) the attention upon materials rather than presentation and upon the non-aesthetic rather than the aesthetic. Let us say with that tiresome ass, Picabia, 'All people of good taste are rotten'. We shall be, at least, in a better position to recognise a new genius.

Another bitter necessity is the general flabbiness of American criticism. It is united and vigorous towards a stupid

reactionaryism. Within its own general faction, it is too enervatingly harmonious. There is no effective pace-making for it: there are no mortal duels fought. It has a disgusting uniformity. Its amiability, one often suspects, covers a nervous ignorance. In their lack of questioning each other, American critics reveal an absence of a refined intensity of interest in their problems. To cap it, their audience is of unparalleled docility. It does not disturb slowness and softness. Let a critic like Paul Rosenfeld once gain its ear regularly through the columns of the *Dial* and *Vanity Fair* and no rude voice will arise to interrupt his dreams of competence. His huge mud-bed of undisciplined emotionalism, his inflated windbag of premature ejaculations no one, apparently, thinks of dredging or pricking. Blithely complacent, he goes undisturbed. This docility does not even protest against smartish, gossipy, men-about-town journalistic critics (e.g., Burton Rascoe) posing as 'advanced' critics: it does not flip off the froth which conceals their sub-surface sub-academicism. Truly, here is a situation which calls for the tonic injection of a little ferocity!

Finally, the aggravating thing about our *milieu* is its negative attitude towards modern life. Machinery is recognised only as a necessary evil against which one is to erect counter-forms or anti-bodies, generally to the accompaniment of eloquent whines and lamentations. There is a dualism here—Machinery and the values of life—which may be as pernicious



ous as the man-and-nature dualism of the puritan. The glory of the French dadaists to my mind rests principally upon their endeavour to put Machinery into a positive equilibrium with man and nature.

The last requisite is a nucleus of writers who are ripe for a secession. And this nucleus, I believe, our youngest generation, the chaps from twenty to twenty-six or so, provide. They have been able to mature much more rapidly than their predecessors: they owe these a debt of gratitude for making it easy to throw off preliminary entanglements and strike out freely into immediate aesthetic interests. So that it was possible for one of them, Malcolm Cowley, to say: 'Form, simplification, strangeness, respect for literature as an art with traditions, abstractness . . . these are the catch-words that are repeated most often among the younger writers.'

Form, first. That brings in the intellect and rejects purely intuitional emotional work as insufficient. The desire for it makes it an aim to produce work that not only has an emotional appeal, but that can exhaust a surveying intelligence. It leads to research in the inherent properties of words, it sets up an expression as its desideratum that shall be purely literary and non-transferable into any other art. It says No to Mallarmé's 'musicality of literature' theory. One of the distinguishing marks of 'secessionist' writing is its cerebral quality, manifested particularly by Kenneth Burke

and Malcolm Cowley.

Simplification. That means the replacement of hazy vague states of mind by stark hard definition, by the accurate rendering of immediate sensations. Concretely, this is exemplified by the work of an older poet with a strong following among the young men, William Carlos Williams. Somewhat differently, E. E. Cummings also simplifies.

Strangeness. The movement away from naturalism and realism, the deliberate imposition upon a basically realistic attitude of romantic materials for the intellect to exploit and arrange. It includes the subjection of new materials such as exclusively modern sensations produced by machinery. The true meaning of romanticism is the crusade for new materials. The example is Matthew Josephson, who deliberately negates logic with his intellect and becomes an intellectual freebooter.

Respect for literature as an art with traditions. That is to say, the youngest writers go back of Shaw and Ibsen. Their favorite source-books are Elizabethan. And their principal foreign influence is French in two opposed tendencies—one from de Gourmont, the other from Apollinaire and the dadaists.

Finally, abstractness, the concomitant of form. Literature, while remaining representative, must also have an abstract significance. Its parts—introductions, transitions, progressions, conclusions—must all function as such, must relate to each other with

thrusts, suspensions, recoils, intersections, and masses.

Here, then, is a program in the rough. It would probably be endorsed by all the writers I have named as I thought of them exemplifying one catch-word or another in a special degree. There are other ingredients. I mention two employed by individuals rather than by a group. One is a new reorganisation of consciousness (that is, a new primitiveness) represented by such diverse precultural writers as William Carlos Williams, Waldo Frank, and E. E. Cummings. Williams I have spoken of. Frank, more instinctive and emotional though still very intelligent, locates on the fringes of the *Secession* group. He has definitely left behind the older slope of consciousness, so gigantically summed up in Joyce's *Ulysses*, and out of chaos is formulating a new slope. Cummings is a naïf boy whose 'intelligence functions at intuitional velocity', to quote his words on Lachaise. Cummings too, is the only one so far to declare himself favorably on the American language, the literary use of which is the second ingredient I had in mind.

It is for this group and kindred writers like Slater Brown, Hart Crane and Foster Damon that I founded *Secession*. In a limited way it prints them and combats 'good taste' and wages a ferocious tangential warfare.

I invite the readers of *S4N* to partake as they see fit in a necessary movement.

From 'Secession':

The Attempt

by William Carlos Williams

O tongue
licking
the sore on
her netherlip

O toppled belly

O passionate cotton
stuck with
matted hair

elysian slobber
from her mouth
upon
the folded handkerchief

I can't die

—moaned the old
jaundiced woman
rolling her
saffron eyeballs

I can't die

I can't die

Printed in 'Collected Earlier Poems', New Directions, N.Y., under the title 'To an Old Jaundiced Woman'.

(abridged) by Yvor Winters

Letter from Yvor Winters to Mike Weaver

Jan. 30, 1966
143 West Portola Ave.
Los Altos, Calif.

Dear Mr. Weaver:

I think 'The Testament of a Stone' essentially worthless. I was about twenty-two years of age when I finished it, and was living in a coal camp in northern New Mexico. Most of it was written during the preceding three years while I was a patient (for tuberculosis) in northern New Mexico. My education was practically nil. I had had no access to libraries. The document is about what one would expect.

I have only a few more years to live, however, and I suppose that some one will publish it. The copyright (if there was one) has expired. If it will make you happy to publish it, you have my permission on one condition: that you publish this letter along with it.

There were, incidentally, a good many errors in the printing, and a long list of errata was mailed out. I have three copies of the issue of Secession, but only one copy of the list of errata. I trust that you will either make the corrections or publish the list when you reprint the essay. I should think that you might find a more fruitful way to spend your time.

Yours,
Yvor Winters

The poet moving in a world that is largely thought, so long as he regard it curiously and as a world, perceives certain specific things, as the walker in a field perceives a grassblade. These specific things are the material of the image, of art. When he loses his sense of the infinite nature of his world and organises it into a knowable and applicable principle, he loses sight of the particulars themselves and sees their relationships to each other and his newly-created whole; and so becomes a philosopher; for it is only in the infinite that the particular can be detected as a complete and uncoordinated whole; but he may still have occasional perceptions, and at times revert to the poet. When he becomes more interested in the application of his principle, in its possible effects, than in the principle itself, he becomes a preacher and its lost; for now he not only thinks in generalities instead of in perceptions, but he attempts to save a humanity that he cannot possibly understand by fitting it into a mutilated fragment of an infinity whose nature he once felt, but could never understand, and has now forgotten.

The poet, in creating, must lose himself in his object. If he becomes more interested in himself observing than in his object, and still continues to write about his object rather than himself observing, he will create a mannerism but no image. It is from this weakness that the various familiar pretty and paternal mannerisms arise. Such a mannerism may be held down to the point of producing poetry of whatever degree of impurity, or it may not.

The poet who is preoccupied with his object desires a speech without idiom and a style without mannerism, that the clarity of his perception may not be clouded by inessentials. In any absolute sense, both are impossible, but both can be closely approximated.

Perhaps it is true that the poet, moving through his world, reaches, for chemical or other reasons, a point of spiritual intensity, and that those objects that fall under his eye or his mind's eye at this point are transformed into something simpler and greater than actuality, with or without his consciousness of any sequence save the actual sequence of their appearance; that the reproduction of this simplification in words will reproduce in the reader the original emotion or point of intensity. Perhaps it is true that the poet, moving through his world, becomes aware of beautiful existences, and being moved by them to a sufficient point of intensity, is able to reproduce them in words with sufficient accuracy to create in his reader the emotion which they created in him. Or perhaps, and this is probably nearer to the truth, he is sufficiently moved by beautiful existences, to be able to create other beautiful existences; and this approaches T. S. Eliot's analogy of the catalyst, and his 'significant emotion', which is probably the only sound statement of the creative process that we have.

All functions of man save the creation of art and pure thought tend to complicate his physical life without simplifying his mental life. The sciences, as

abstractions, might have the same value as art. Indiscriminately applied, they have wrecked the world.

Definition of Observation, Perception, Image and Anti-Image

It has been said that art is an elimination of the superfluous, but this statement is capable of several interpretations. It is certain, however, that the poetic image is an elimination of the superfluous in a definite and fundamental sense. Everyone of whatever degree of intelligence, walking about the world, sees certain things: trees growing, their leaves and branches moving in the wind; bees flying across fields; men and women working in the fields or walking in the streets or moved by various passions and emotions. These sights and others of a similar nature may be called *observation*. If I say: 'I saw a man walking', or: 'I saw night come', it will convey no sharp or lasting impression to the brain of the listener. It is a general statement, which is a vague statement, like a mist without form, a block of unhewn granite, a chaos.

But there are persons who see those things which differentiate one observation from another: they see the outline in the mist. The vision of this outline may be called *perception*. And there are yet other persons, fewer in number and of finer vision, who can take the outline from the mist and make it stand alone. This is done, in poetry, by seeing and placing in juxtaposition two or more observations that have one quality in

common: that is, each of these observations will be differentiated from other observations of its class by the same perception; and when these observations are placed together they will fuse at the point where they are the same, or, to be more exact, *they will be the same at one point*. These two perceptions, coming together with an almost infinite speed across the mental distances that naturally lie between two separate observations (such as a man walking and the coming of night) cause a kind of mental vibration that is known as aesthetic emotion. Or, to state it in another fashion, this fusion, or sameness at one point in two observations, reinforces that point, and makes it stand out as clearly above the vaguenesses of the two observations as those two observations stand out above a state of no-observation or unconsciousness. And perhaps these two statements of the phenomenon are not incompatible. This phenomenon may be called an *image*. The image, in the case of the two observations used as examples, is:

At one stride comes the dark.

The quotation may help to clear the ground.

The image, so defined, being a fusion of sense-perceptions, presents the emotion: that is, the emotion is seen in the concrete and acts directly, without the aid of thought, just as the sight of a tree registers directly, without the aid of thought. But it is possible in *thinking* of observations, to find intellectual correlations that

are not evident to the simple senses, but that may transmit an aesthetic emotion, not directly, as in the case of sense-perceptions, but through the intellect. Here the emotion is transmitted by intercomment, rather than by fusion. This phenomenon may be called the *anti-image*, as the sense-impressions of the observations do not here fuse at any point. It will be noted that the anti-image, where a physical fusion is not intended, is different from an attempted image, or fusion of sense-perceptions that is not successful.

As the image and anti-image make a sharp and lasting impression on the brain, and as the simple observation does not, the image and anti-image stay, and the observations disappear; and this is the process of elimination that was alluded to above. It is that quality in an observation of the approach of night that is different from any other observation of the approach of night, that gives such an observation a life of its own. And it is this differentiating, or unique, quality in any observation, that, when presented permanently, by means of an image or anti-image, is known as beauty.

The terms, *observation*, *perception* and *image*, may have been used at various times with meanings slightly different from those I have given; but I have applied them to certain phenomena, defined as clearly as I can define them, for lack of better terms. The phenomena seem to me sufficiently distinguishable from one another.

It may be argued that a perception, as I have defined it, does not really exist until it becomes an image; but this possibility can be taken into consideration without disturbing the trend of my discussion. The anti-image is the only pure *logopeia*; but as the term *logopeia* has been applied in ways that do not seem to me accurate, I shall not here use it.

Types of perception

Perceptions may be divided into two general types: those perceptions which are expressed in the *sound* of words, and those perceptions which are expressed in the *meaning* of words.

The first of these types will be referred to in this essay as *sound-perceptions*. Sound-perceptions possess two qualities: tone and rhythm. The first of these is the quality of individual vowel or consonant or syllabic sounds. The second is the rate and variation of movement from tone to tone. It will be seen that tone and rhythm are inseparable, but occasionally one or the other seems to predominate. This results from a perfect or nearly perfect fusion of the predominant sound quality with the meaning of the words, and an imperfect fusion of the other sound quality. Insofar as this is true of any poem, that poem will be imperfect.

Perceptions which are expressed in the meaning of words may be called *meaning-perceptions*. They fall roughly into two classes: perceptions of concrete facts of which one becomes aware through the

simple senses, and which may be called *sense-perceptions*; and perceptions of abstract facts or qualities—that is, of facts or qualities which are imperceptible to the unaided senses—of which one becomes aware through thinking about a concrete or abstract fact, and which may be called *thought-perceptions*.

Types of the Image and anti-Image

There is the simple physical movement not 'caught' in any fusion of the meaning of words, but rather in the fusion of the sound of words and a simple statement of the movement—in a fusion of the sound perception and a simple meaning perception. The movement has no necessary connotations as a movement: that is, it is not a movement one thinks of as having any relationship to sorrow, joy or ecstasy. But any unemotional physical movement, stated cleanly and in psychological order, in a rhythm that fuses with that movement, may become a profound image. By fusing with the movement, I do not mean that the rhythm should imitate with its own movement the physical movement that it contains, but rather that it should purify that movement as it appears in actual physical life, giving it a regularity or at least organised variation of beat, and usually greatly accelerating it; so that the movement takes on something of the nature of a dance movement, but again is much purer and swifter than even a dance movement, by nature of its limitations, can be. From this last it may be seen that a

movement that has been purified and formalised to a certain extent in actual life, such as a dance or a religious procession, and which has, therefore a certain emotional connotation in itself, can be further formalised, purified, in a poem, so that it takes on a new significance—even if that new significance be only a variation upon the purification already effected in the dance or religious procession. There are also movements in actual life that are expressions or semi-expressions of emotion, such as joy, sorrow, etc., and these may, as well as other movements, be given form simply by a rhythm; but the danger here lies in the temptation offered to the weak, at least, to be content with a lax rhythm and to trust to the connotations of the movement to 'put over' the emotion; which is akin to the use of an inherited symbolism or any other sentimentality. The pure form of this type of image, that is, the physical movement without connotations, animated merely by a rhythm, is apt to produce the cleanest beauty. The last-named form of the image seems to me the least desirable, as it cannot possibly be freed from at least a taint of sentimentality, though this taint, in certain cases and if handled by a master, may have a value.

We may, for lack of a shorter name, call the type of image discussed in the last paragraph, the *simple physical movement fused with a rhythm*. This image seems to occur most often in rhymed poems that move to a fixed metre. There seems to be a cumulative effect, sometimes.

in the still-echoing rhythm of several preceding stanzas. The same cumulative effect may come in poems whose metre varies as much as or less than, say, that of the *Ancient Mariner*. It would, I should think, be difficult to produce this cumulative effect in a metre not having a large amount of repetition; and certainly the reinforcement of rhyme is an aid; but the use of the *simple physical movement fused with a rhythm* does not depend upon cumulative rhythm. Cumulative rhythm is merely a possible modification, or, sometimes, intensification . . .

The statement of simple thought, or the statement of a simple physical fact, punctuated or commented upon by a rhythm, is the simplest form of what Pound has roughly classed as *logopeia*, and of what I have called the *anti-image*. A rhythm that has traditional associations, or innate (i.e., more remote or not immediately obviously traditional) associations, or one that has acquired associations in the given poem, by previous fusion, may comment upon its meaning-content either by contrast or augmentation. It will be seen that each type of image has its converse, or *anti-image*, and this first type of *anti-image* is the converse of the simple physical fact fused with a rhythm . . .

The second type of image is the *complex physical fact fused with a rhythm*. This is the same as the first type of image, except that here the fusion is between two or more sense-perceptions and one sound-perception . . . A perception—almost invariably a sense-perception—that has acquired, by long association

or by personal association for whatever period of time, an emotional overtone or symbolic value, may be used in a poem, so long as it be given in the poem a new existence as image or *anti-image*. If the fusion or intercomment necessary to this existence be not achieved, the symbolic value of the perception is useless as the perception is without life. If, however, the perception be given this existence, the symbolism may augment the emotion of the image considerably, and the emotion resulting from the symbolism can scarcely be separated in the mind from the emotion resulting from the image. The symbolical overtone is more or less analogous to what is known in painting as 'literary' beauty . . .

Many poets have entirely omitted any intellectual sequence from one image to the next, depending upon an emotional unity, and there is nothing to be said against this. Other poets have attempted to carry the method even further, omitting all intellectual (syntactical) sequence within the image, or trying to, attempting to create aesthetic relationships from broken words and phrases. This is interesting, and may some day succeed. The difficulty with most of these experimenters up to date, however, is that, having cast out all other thought from their minds, they cannot cast out the clichés, the very old sentimentalities, which seem to be so deeply rooted as to be almost mental reflexes. Their poems become, then, desperate efforts to conceal these clichés under a broken exterior, which is evading the question.

Poetry of this nature is often compared to abstract painting or sculpture, and praised for this reason and for few others. And yet, if we reduce literature to complete abstraction—that is, sound without meaning—we no longer have literature, but music, and we must either adopt the notation of music or else adopt a new system of notation to provide for intonation as well as vowel and consonant sounds. And if we do not so reduce literature we inevitably retain an element of representation, however broken up and distorted. That is, if we imagine a potential sculptor, let us say, living in some strange realm where he is able to experience no sense-impressions—even impressions of his own body or any part of it—except impressions of that which he may be able to create out of some imponderable substance that will take form as soon as definitely imagined, he will be able to imagine nothing, for he will have no concept of form, solidity. Indeed, he is very likely to be entirely unconscious. But give him a pebble—which will bring him to consciousness—and he will be able to imagine another pebble, and variations upon pebbles, and further variations upon those variations until he creates a world and an art. And having created a world of variations that no longer represent each other closely, he may be able to resynthesise various forms into new forms that do not as a whole resemble anything in his world, but they will inevitably be representative in some degree, of whatever number of fragments of whatever number of things. And the steps between this type of art and the

type that will in some definitely recognisable degree resemble a definite one of his variations upon the original pebble will be infinite in number and the differences between them infinitely slight. So one can only say that piece of sculpture is good which *depends* upon its form and not upon its resemblance to something else; and one can not say truly that is best which resembles no natural form, for there is no such thing. Similarly, that poetry is good which is a perfect fusion of perceptions, and that which is an imperfect fusion of perceptions or depends mainly upon symbolical or other connotations is, to that extent, weak.

The poet wishing to write 'abstract' poetry of this type, must not dispense with all thought, then, and write without consideration, for this will only lead him into the clichés mentioned above; but he must choose carefully the material which he wishes to break up and recombine, and work with at least as definite an intention and consciousness as any sculptor or painter.

From 'Secession':

For a Declaration of War

by Waldo Frank

We hold:

1. Intellect is three dimensional, but intellect is as capable of change and transfiguration as all living organisms.
2. Intellect has had increasing intimations of values and dimensions of life beyond the

scope of its fixed symbols (language).

3. Life is vastly dimensioned beyond intellect. Intellect has, by a juncture with the supra-conscious forces of life, erected an instrument for the apperception of life in its full dimensions.

4. This instrument is Art. Art, by the elements of its creation, brings *into* the consciousness of mind quantities and values of life which mind alone is unable to perceive or control.

5. The noblest function of art is, then, not to subserve the intellectually accepted forms of life; but to conquer new forms of life and to bring them within the reach of the intellect. Art is the language which expresses vision of being that has not yet been conventionalised into simple words and concepts.

6. The domain of Art is therefore precisely beyond the domains of science, philology and psychology. But these domains are as materials within the domain of art.

7. Art conquers truth for the mind which autonomously can conquer only fact.

8. Inspired intellects have glimpsed certain truths still largely alien from human experience. As that

a. Our sense of matter, space, time, thought is subjective, inadequate and untrue.

b. Only the relativity of time, space, matter, etc., are true.

c. And true as measures not of Being, but of our consciousness of being.

d. Hence the laws of cause and effect, the laws of logic, the laws of scientific research and experiment, the laws of mathematics are sub specie aeternatis null and void.

e. What has been accepted as

cause and effect and absolute sequence in time is mere juxtaposition in some super-intellectual direction.

f. Hence the laws governing the mechanics and forms of art are to be superseded.

g. Our convictions of limits and individuals are merely the limits of our present consciousness and may be superseded.

9. In consequence of these convictions, the art which adheres to the formed phenomena of intellect and sense is a weak, retroactive, atavistic art.

10. The art that will articulate man's widening and deepening participation in life, and make this participation the base of human experience must come in the guise of forms and words for which the conventional criticism has no measure by the very definition of that criticism as an intellectual adoption from previously created forms and words.

11. Before the word is a word, it is a form of art. After the art-form has become a cultural experience, it is a word.

12. Before the form of art can become a cultural experience it must by means of criticism be naturalised into the domain of the intellect.

13. Criticism can perform this function only when it contacts the work of art on a common plane of spiritual and philosophical conviction.

14. In periods of basic cultural transition, therefore, the criticism which does not start out from metaphysics and a true understanding of the religious experience as I have explained the term, is idle, irrelevant, impotent and anti-social.

From 'Secession': Arp the Trapdrummer

by Hans Arp

Translated by Matthew Josephson

1

The black syllables and the half-split non-pareil type fall asunder out of the ill assembled staves of the sidereal cask. the kindling in the flagpole is extinguished. at the call *cordon s.v.p.* the fourcornered catastrophe came sprawling out of the nostrils of the flowers. at once the men about town heated up their centaurs and went riding on ballbearings about the Venus chamber.

So much for today since it is already tomorrow and I must fare on everlastingly.

Righteously did the maggot covered servant who complained ah so grievously of his dwarf sickness during the tidying up of the catacomb ask where the clear tumult the saintly repose and that fugitive wind had gone to rest. small moon shaped boats brimming with masks rolled along on prolonged wheels. from purple mouths hung the empty honeycombs of the angels.

So much for today since it is already tomorrow and I must fare on everlastingly.

From the 10th year of a life to the 11th hour of the morning is a long time yet not long enough for a hungry family to scrape some money together. the first father dances howling about the world. he has fleet squirrels bound to his soles. from his eyes hangs the wreath of welcome. *manu propria* he chases the buck from the environs of his spouse. and to while away the dark hours kicks the teaballs of his masculine fellow travellers.

So much for today since it is

already tomorrow and I must fare on everlastingly.

And finally faithful and seemingly portrait busts of Arp were struck and distributed among the people.

2

At our will the armada is defeated for the hundredth time. the drowned men with glowing buoys in their mouths and lampshades on their heads entrain with the nebula of their rapture the bowelship and the scuttlefish. the soles of the wandering water heroes go plopping about. the bedevilled hag on the after branch is part and parcel of the mechanism of the sea.

So much for today since it is already tomorrow and I must fare on everlastingly.

An artloving puissant and high-handed king donates the first vase. it has six rubber breasts aligned one above the other like buttons. her adam's apple brings the coloratura to well merited fame. the vase is a gigantic boneless snow tent and like all nice people has a handle on both sides.

So much for today since it is already tomorrow and I must fare on everlastingly.

The woman's club called motley sets the wind moving by calisthenics. the cement tongues lick the walking stick the minnesingers the jewish paperweights the buonarotti thorns the prompter's box full of interior cities the soft perjures the shoes out of which stinking flesh grows and the summer bills.

3

Watches are set at midnight.
out of the heavens full of angry
tongues fall the prize waterfalls.
the little skeletons in black
livery hover over the manicured
crucifixion and swing the retorts
with aqua fortis. in the viper
conservatory rails are laid upon
which blubbery courtesans and
celestial curbstones are carted
in.

So much for today since it is
already tomorrow and I must
fare on everlastingly.

The cuckoo flies off with the
clock on its back. the locomotives
stroke their military
moustaches. the flowers lie
steaming on the wharves.

So much for today since it is
already tomorrow and I must
fare on everlastingly.

The first cuttlefish bone sees
the light of the day. the people
embrace each other and shout
zivio longs for internal peace
and leggings with salad. the
first prophet steps forth and
spans a hundred years of light.
since through a rare piece of
foresight he is two dimensional
he can by a slight twist with-
draw his facade with perfect
control thus revealing himself
as a perfidious son of dada. he
tells the immutable laws on the
buttons of his coat. it is
perfectly in accordance with
official procedure to become
any people. his provisions
against iron necessity are old
samaritan fossils. with the aid
of a sextant he cuts a savoury
slice of venison from the
behind of the friendly lady
nearby. also at the appearance
of the prophet the people
embrace each other weep and
put out street lamps.

So much for today since it is
already tomorrow and I must
fare on everlastingly.

The black liveries sink into the
structure of the world and
completely conceal the furniture
wagons loaded with Nurn-
berger timekeepers the retinas
of the coins the surtaxes in the
zither boxes the auctioned
snowmen with the frightfully
rolling unripe green eyes in
their foreheads the Teluric
foolscaps the unbridled roes
the plants in the Burgundian
shirts manufactured in the
tropics out of rubber the
freshly washed namby pamby
sky the eager mob wearing
turbans of tuffstone and they
hide these said i with veils
from the hullabaloo of the
world. groaning the door of the
dadahouse falls shut.

Poems by Pedro Xisto

y a r n
y e a r n
y e a r n
y e a r n

star

astro

rats

ostra

b a b e l :
 a b e l a b
 l e a l e a
 l l b a a b
 a a l b a b
 a b a b b l
 e b a b e b
 a l e b a l
 l b e b e e
 b e l l b e
 l l e b l a
 b b l a b l
 a b l a e b
 b l a b e l
 : b a b e l

*babel : abel able ale all baa baal
 baba babble babe bale ball be bee
 bell belle blab bla-bla-bla ebb
 label : babel
 For example : abel means 'breath'.
 His able voice has been violently
 destroyed, and that was the first
 destruction of the human
 dialogue. The next decisive
 dialogue made impossible
 happened in Babel when the
 words themselves, with their face
 and facts, were smashed, etc.*

ostra (portuguese word) = oyster
 —maybe a pearl oyster...
 rats = betrayers, etc.

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DEADPAN BUT DO NOT BE HOODWINKED

The famous 1964 assessment of the avant-garde by the *TLS* is by now a source of material for anthologists anxious to jump on the concrete waggon. Since then we have reviewed work by (inter al.) Albert-Birot, Balestrini, Finlay, Furnival, Garnier, Houédard, Jandl, Kriwet, Lemaitre, Nash, printed original poems by Morgan and Finlay; and published a long study of Alfred Liede's two-volume *Dichtung als Spiel*.

This is not out of any special wish to appear advanced, but just part of the service: through review articles* and special numbers** we aim to keep readers informed about live, interesting and influential ideas, wherever and whenever they occur

*e.g. on Boris Vian, 5.5.66

**e.g. 'New Ways in History' 7.4.66

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Le Parc and the Group Problem by Frank Popper; **The Reflected Light Compositions of Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack** by Basil Gilbert; **For or Against a Structuralist Aesthetic?** by Gillo Dorfles; **Emanuel Romano** by William Carlos Williams; and **Great Little Magazines No. 2, Blues**, with work by Gertrude Stein, Kenneth Rexroth & Gottfried Benn

From Basil Gilbert's article on the 'Reflected Light Compositions' of Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, a page from a score for one of these works, showing the first three bars of a 'Three-Part Colour Sonata' in ultramarine and green.

1. TAKTEINHEIT	TAKT 1	3/4	TAKT 2	3/4	TAKT 3	3/4	TAKT 4
2. FARBEN	weiß		weiß		weiß		
3. TON							
4. LAMPEN- ANFANGS-STELLUNG							
5. SCHABLONEN							
6. HAUPTSCHALTUNG 1 u 2							
7. LAMPENSCHALTER 1 bis 8							
8. WIDERSTÄNDE 1 u 2							
9. LINEARES GESAMTBILD							

Projection cabin and experimental apparatus for the 'Reflected Light Compositions', with Hirschfeld-Mack (left, at the piano) and his team (in about 1924).

Reproduced from H. M. Wingler 'Das Bauhaus 1919-1933 Weimar Dessau Berlin', Rasch/Dumont 1962, pp.98 and 340, by courtesy of the Bauhaus-Archiv, Darmstadt.



4 Essays on

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Editors

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Mike Weaver (USA)
Stephen Bann

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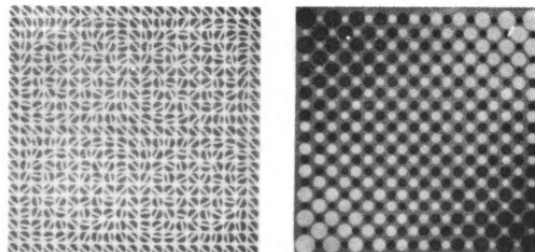
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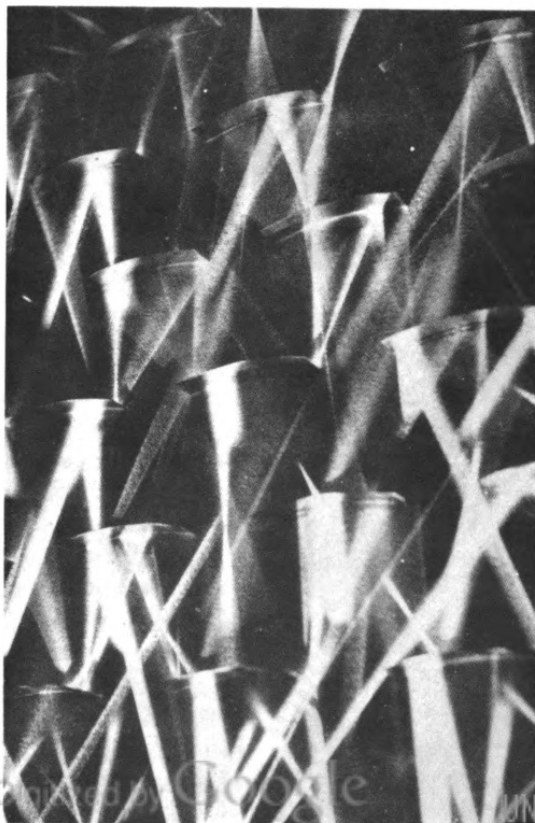
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'Surface-sequences' by
Le Parc. 'Séquences
progressives de rotation'
(1959), and right 'Séquences
progressives ambivalentes'
(1959)



'Continuel lumière' (1963-66),
200x122x34 cm., a
construction showing Le
Parc's use of 'skimming' light.



The awarding of the Grand Prix for painting at the Venice Biennale to Julio Le Parc has raised a number of problems which go beyond this particular artist and event. The very raising of these problems shows that the choice has been a happy one.

One of the interesting points raised by this decision is that the jury must have been more or less conscious of the problem that in present day art the classical distinctions between painting and sculpture are no longer valid. For example, it must be realised that movement and light are becoming important means of artistic expression, and colour and volume less so. But the central problem that was touched by this decision concerns the fact that *research* now supersedes the finished masterpiece, and that this research can be undertaken in close contact with other artists.

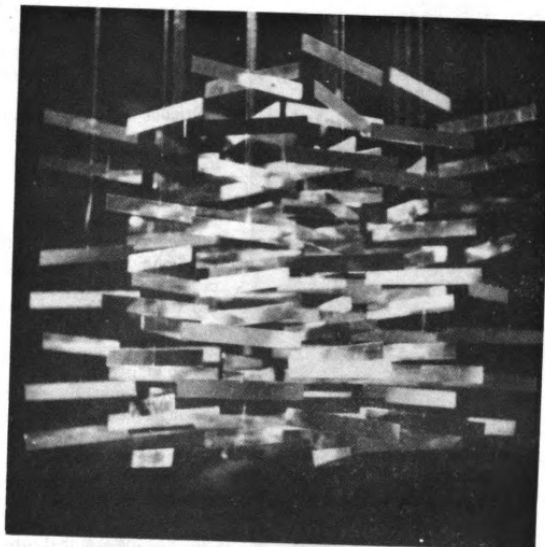
In actual fact, Le Parc started his research alone, with an investigation into what he calls surface-sequences. By following rigidly a checker-board pattern, and by for example increasing the diameter of black and white circles, by creating sequences of a scale of twelve, later fourteen colours, or by turning gradually the position of a line in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction, progressions and juxtapositions were obtained that, when fixed or followed by the eye of the spectator gave rise to impressions of new and surprising structures. A slight change of the

sequences produced a totally different perceived structure within a progression pattern. Thus the basis for new plastic perceptual research was laid, in which the subjective element was practically eliminated.

One can say that this was already a considerable development from 'subjective', 'optical' works, such as those of Vasarely. In fact Le Parc and one or two other future members of the 'Groupe Recherche d'Art Visuel' of Paris, newly arrived from Argentina had visited Vasarely's studio half a dozen times in 1958, meeting at the same time Denise René, who was already interested in this type of research and was to present many of their subsequent exhibitions. Their very first studies were an attempt to familiarise themselves with the plastic vocabulary of Vasarely's surface patterns. But the rigid necessity to eliminate the 'painterly' way of composition—that is the decision to animate such and such a part of the surface by inclining a number of arbitrarily chosen elements—started Le Parc and his colleagues on the investigation of surface patterns in which one or two parameters change regularly and can thus be repeated and multiplied. In this way, too, new virtual unstable structures appeared through peripheral vision and without any arbitrary artistic intervention.

The passage from two-dimensional to three-dimensional works was made

Suspended reflecting light
mobile, 'Continuel mobile'
(1964), 120x120x120 cm.



'Trame alternée' (1965).
32x32x31 cm.



in connection with chromatic problems, transparency and light. Le Parc obtained new results with progressional sequences, displacements, and rotations by experimenting with plexiglas cubes or with colour sequences which were incorporated and which now appeared in four planes.

This first period of investigation is of particular importance since the extreme variety of his subsequent research, especially the reliefs and suspended mobiles, must be seen in relation to the earlier works and arose necessarily and consequently out of the first general plastic preoccupations.

In this way, the first experiments undertaken with rather primitive means—plexiglas prisms for the investigation of multiple lighted forms, small boxes where images and colours appeared in depth and could be manipulated (by turning a switch) to give an unlimited variety of combinations, boxes with 'continuous mobiles'—were soon given more elaborate and free expression, going outside the laboratory limits of their 'frames' (boxes, prisms, etc.)

In 1960, many possibilities of these transparencies, and of movement and light began to be explored systematically using white on white, black on white, and black on black combinations with more or less calculated probabilities. An important new aspect of this type of research was the incorporation of exterior elements (white on white) into

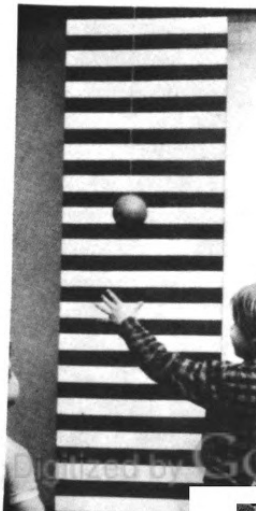
the plastic statement. Light and shadow effects, forms, colours and partial images at different speeds thus joined the original plastic elements in the mobiles.

A parallel development (since 1960) with wooden and metal reliefs showed series of differently surfaced elements attached at different depths. These series were made apparent through the rotation of the regularly ordered elements at different rates. The conjunction of these two lines of research gave rise to a new plastic problem: reflected and interrupted light, and 'skimming' light as new plastic means of expression. As always the first experimental objects produced in this research contained already suggestions of an infinite number of possibilities. Reflected light was produced by assembled structures (*ensembles*) which were placed in such a way that the spectator was completely enveloped by the light. This reflected light was distributed by mobiles placed before the light sources. Skimming light gave fascinating results in the *Continuels Lumière* (1960-66), and by means of cylinders since 1964. The same research continues and will find a new embodiment at the KLK Exhibition at Eindhoven in September of this year. Similar to this research was an attempt to visualise the light in conjunction with movement by placing the sources of reflected and interrupted light behind a water container. This project found an application at the

'Continuel lumière cylindre'
(1962-66), 169x122x35 cm.:
'skimming' light in a
cylindrical construction.



*The spectator encouraged to
participate in games, to
handle 'éléments à manipuler',
here 'Boule sur ressort'*
(1963-65), 240x50x28 cm.
Right: *'Chaussures pour une
démarche autre' (1965)—
shoes heavily weighted with
lead, or on springs.*



Right: *'Lunettes pour une
vision autre' (1965)—
spectacles giving surprising
fragmented and reflected
visions of the surroundings.*



G.R.A.V.s 'Labyrinths' shown at the Paris Biennale (1963) and later in New York (1965). The attempt to associate the spectator more actively with the aesthetic process gave rise to a new and important development in 1963. The participation of the spectator was now solicited in most diverse ways: by his own movement, the manipulation of elements, and by obstacles placed in his way and elements to be 'tested' physically, modifying the vision, the kinetic sensation etc. Similarly an activation of the spectator was sought through movements that cause surprise, and stimuli involving light and speed images, and sensations of direct light.

Although this is not obvious at first sight, Le Parc's games with balls and hoops, the stepping stones of his 'irregular circuit', his collapsible spring chair, his shoes (with heavy lead weights, or on springs) and his elaborate and varied spectacles giving surprising fragmented and reflected visions of the environment, all follow on from the research started with simple geometric forms and chromatic permutations (as do the many projects Le Parc wishes to execute in this vein, the shower, the use of red and green with heat, the construction of a space with moving particles catching the light).

The extremely fascinating effects obtained with mirrors and the different direct manifestations of light cannot

mask Le Parc's main preoccupation: the pursuit of a fundamental plastic research always open to the future.

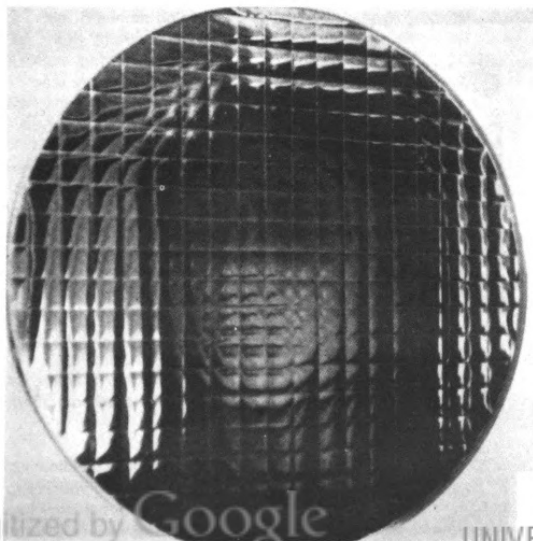
The other members of the Groupe Recherche d'Art Visuel, Garcia Rossi, Morellet, Sobrino, Stein and Yvaral, have followed a parallel development. A careful analysis of their research would show many definite points of coordination and exchange amongst themselves, as would be evident in the different stages of Le Parc's development sketched above. Thus Garcia Rossi's reduction to a minimum of subjective choice and his desire to utilise all technical, scientific, perceptual and material possibilities have a great affinity with Le Parc's early period as well as with his research into light. Morellet's programmed experimental paintings correspond to Le Parc's point of departure, while his strong visual light shocks provide a development comparable to more recent work. Sobrino also started with fascinating problems in the flat plane before producing his transparent plexiglas cubes and other transparent objects corresponding closely to a general preoccupation (also to be found in Le Parc) with unstable transformations.

Stein's early forms and colours have definite points of comparison with the beginning of researches by other members. After passing through a period of research into combinations and superpositions in relief, Stein found relationships with Le

A second pair of 'lunettes pour une vision autre'.
 Right: one episode from 'Une journée dans la rue' held in various parts of Paris earlier this year. Here 'Passage accidenté' (1964).



'Double miroir' (1966), one of Le Parc's 'éléments à essayer'. Right: 'Passage à miroir courbe' (1936-66), 186x160x100 cm.



Parc's work, in the group context, in his use of suspended mobiles, and with light effects (in his *polyèdres* and kaleidoscopes). In particular he put stress on the aspect of play, rather than on the object itself. Yvaral's knowledge of visual phenomena in his plexiglas, rubber and wire reliefs produced relationships with Le Parc's and the other members' superposition, displacement and acceleration researches. More recently his transparencies, cubes, moiré effects, constructions and games have established a definite link with the parallel investigations of his colleagues.

In fact, constant consultations and especially the planning and setting up of such important collective works and manifestations as the three Labyrinths and the 'Day in the Street' (a demonstration of single objects and of objects grouped together which took place in several important parts of Paris on the 19th of April, 1966, the most interesting phase of this manifestation as regards the spectators' participation taking place in front of the Church of Saint Germain des Prés), and finally the Labyrinth for the KLK Exhibition in Eindhoven this autumn provide a guarantee that this collective work will continue. But the most striking common factor in all these researches lies in the Group's general objectives. Without alluding more specifically to their joint declarations and manifestoes, it seems to be evident that the

main aims of the G.R.A.V.s research are to devalue the idea of the individual 'artist' and 'chef d'oeuvre', and to solicit the participation of the spectator.

Previously, according to the G.R.A.V., different aesthetic statements, even the most revolutionary, failed to modify the basic relationship of artist, spectator and work of art. The Group's long term objective was to create an entirely different situation in which the 'work of art' became a plastic statement representing the openness of the research, and the spectator was transformed into an actor, sometimes even at second hand—not only in coming into direct contact with the work, but also by observing and participating in the activity of other spectators.

In this context, the original visual phenomena continue to play an important role, but also natural phenomena such as movement and light remain to the fore in all these researches, together with possibilities for the 'multiplicity' of the aesthetic object which can be produced industrially and lose part of its aura as a 'unique masterpiece'. These preoccupations were at least partially shared by the international association of the Nouvelle Tendance, of which the G.R.A.V. were active members. But a more specific reference to the interplay of plastic researches within the context of smaller groupings is more pertinent with regard to a great variety of such associations past or

present in different countries.

It should perhaps be said that the coherence and direction of a group seems to be mostly dependent on its basic plastic aims, and that the difficulties inevitably arising out of the aesthetic comparisons and policy making within these groups can be considered secondary. For example, it seems that the plastic problem of spatial interactivity (in the Spanish Equipo 57) gave rise to an interesting exchange of experiences within this group, but perhaps the problem was no longer strong enough to give sufficient coherence to the group when one of its members, Angel Duarte, started expressing himself mainly in the medium of light. It did not seem relevant that it was Duarte himself who tried everything to keep the group in existence. Similar fruitful mutual relationships arising out of plastic problems could be traced in groups like the Group T of Milan with its visual stimulants in a given environment, the Group N of Padua with its dynamic structures and light reflections from prisms, and the MID Group and its programmed stroboscopic and sonorised research. Different problems connected with the interplay of light and movement give coherence to the Zero Group in Dusseldorf, Dvizjenije in Moscow, and USCO in New York, whereas kinetic space problems and the artistic use of unusual objects dominate in groups such as Effekt in Munich.

In all cases however, it is the

activity or research which encourages an organic growth through the interplay of plastic *partial* solutions, and makes for exchange of information. The organism stays alive through communal research in spite of outside pressure and the difficulties arising out of the fact that real plastic research is never certain to be promoted under changing economic, social and political conditions, although in the long run the research artist is likely to be recognised by laggard administrators. Despite the parallelism in the endeavours of the members of most groups, it is open to question whether at a different level a personal style is not apparent in the works presented to the spectator.

This problem could find a paradoxical answer in the case of Le Parc, who, in all modesty and with a distaste for artistic mystification, let himself be absorbed into a group which in turn hides its identity in the anonymous work evoking an immediate, unprejudiced reaction from the spectator. The sheer joy felt by this spectator in front of the artist's accumulated plastic statements—felt also apparently, to general surprise, by the members of the Venice jury—could make him exclaim 'Le Parc est mort—Vive Le Parc!'

1. For this and other information I am indebted to Mr T. Muller-Hummel, Weimar, an ex-student of the Weimar Bauhaus.

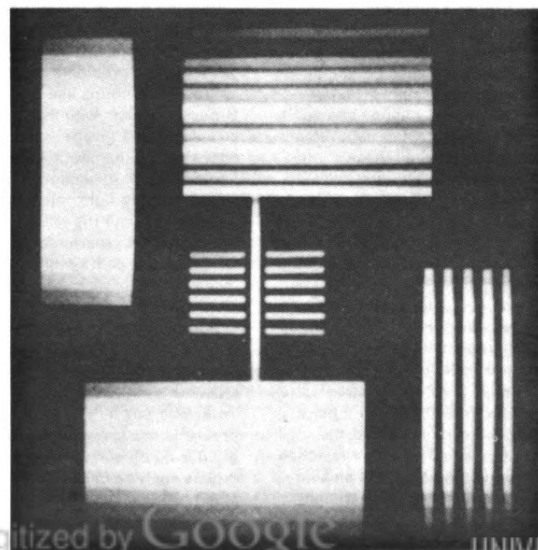
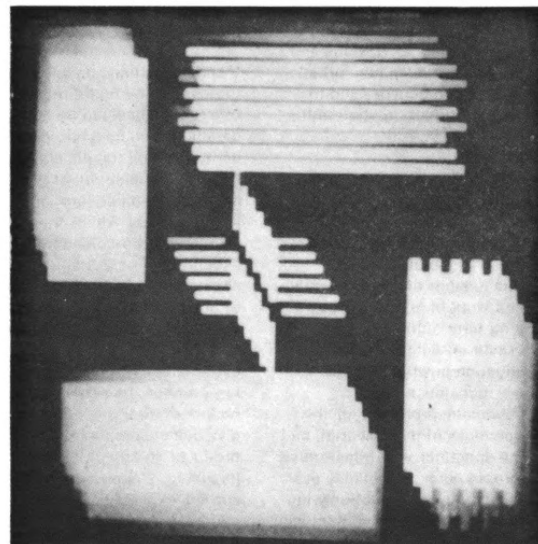
2. See 'The Idea and Structure of the Bauhaus' in W. Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, Faber and Faber, London, 1935, 1965.

The Reflected Light Compositions of Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack by Basil Gilbert

Basil Gilbert is Lecturer in the History of Art at the University of Melbourne, and has recently been carrying out research into the early history of the Bauhaus. He is co-translator of H. M. Wingler's 'Das Bauhaus 1919-1933', the English edition of which is due to appear late this year from the MIT press, Cambridge, Mass.

Hirschfeld-Mack held various teaching posts in Germany after the Bauhaus left Weimar, then moved to England and finally settled in Australia, where he became an art teacher at Geelong Grammar School in Victoria. Shortly before his death in 1964 he wrote to Standish Lawder, Lecturer in the History of the Cinema at Yale University, in reply to a request for biographical details and an account of his work at the Bauhaus. We publish his letter here following Basil Gilbert's article. Hirschfeld-Mack never gave the performances of the 'Reflected Light Compositions' at the request of the Bauhaus-Archiv that he mentions in the letter.

Two phases of a three-dimensional cross-pattern colour composition (1923?) from one of Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack's 'Reflected Light Compositions', reproduced from H. M. Wingler, *Das Bauhaus 1919-1933 Weimar Dessau Berlin*, Rasch/Dumont 1962, p.341, by courtesy of the Bauhaus-Archiv, Darmstadt.



A playful expressionism was the keynote at the Bauhaus during its early years at Weimar: yet to come were the disciplined mass-production designs, which appeared when the school moved to Dessau. Expressionism and experimentation. Experimentation in clothing—Johannes Itten, one of the major teachers, roamed the corridors in his black monk's outfit, supervising the students' pre-class breathing exercises, while the poor students (some had come barefoot from Vienna) took their donated army-reject civilian suits to the weaving workshop to have the lapels cut off to make them more 'modern'.¹ Experiments in food—some of the students subscribed to the Eastern philosophy of Masdanasan, limiting their diets largely to vegetarian foods and partaking of large quantities of onions and garlic to purify their blood. Experiments in teaching—instead of dry academic exercises the students of the preliminary course whisked down on paper their rhythmic responses to slides of old masters flashed upon the screen, while the students in the sculpture workshop smashed all the left-over plaster-casts to free themselves from the influence of the past. All the students, architects, painters or sculptors-to-be were obliged to take out apprenticeship certificates in one of the crafts.² Among the *Gestaltung* teachers were such leading avant-garde painters as Lyonel Feininger, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, whose experiments were greatly to extend the vocabulary and

grammar of modern painting.

Among the many students at the Bauhaus who were to achieve fame, was Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, who joined Itten's drawing class in October 1919 and at the same time signed on as an apprentice in the printing workshop.³ When he graduated as a journeyman some two years later he was given a paid position in the workshop.⁴ But the young journeyman soon had other things on his mind. 'Herr Hirschfeld has worked only by the hour during the last two months' reported his workshop supervisor Carl Zaubitzer in December 1922, 'having received permission to busy himself with private activity'.⁵ Just what this activity was, soon became clear. Further reports from the workshop mention that he is busy working on his *Farbenkreisel*—coloured toy spinning-tops with coloured paper discs, which, when rotated, showed the blending effects of colour—and on his *Lichtspiele*, his experiments with reflected light. When he first started these experiments in the summer of 1922 he was joined by two members of the sculpture workshop, Joseph Hartwig and Kurt Schwerdtfeger.

The accident which proved the initial stimulus for these experiments with light was later described by the artist: 'Originally we had planned a quite simple shadow-show for a Lantern Festival. Accidentally, through the replacement of one of the

3. From 'List of Students—Wintersemester 1919-20', Staatsarchiv, Weimar, Bauhaus, Weimar, Nr. 228.

4. Walter Gropius, 'Answers to the 38 points of Dr Hans Beyer', Staatsarchiv, Weimar, Thuringische Ministerium für Volksbildung, cII, Nr. 268, p.178.

5. 'Monthly Report of the Printing Workshop', December 1922, Staatsarchiv, Weimar, Bauhaus, Weimar, Nr. 20.

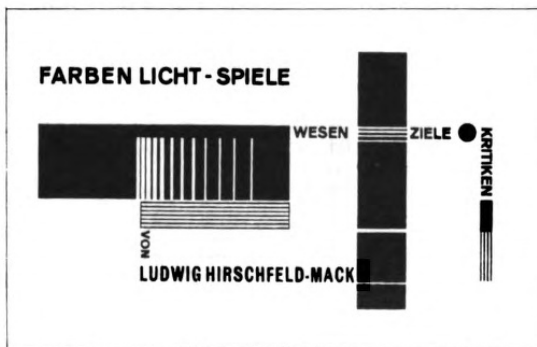
6. L. Hirschfeld-Mack, 'Die Reflektorisches Farbenspiele' in *Junge Menschen*, vol. 8, November 1924, p.188. (Note: a slightly expanded version of this article appears in H. M. Wingler, *Das Bauhaus 1919-1933*, Rasch and DuMont, Bramsche, 1962, p.96).

7. *ibid.*, p.188.

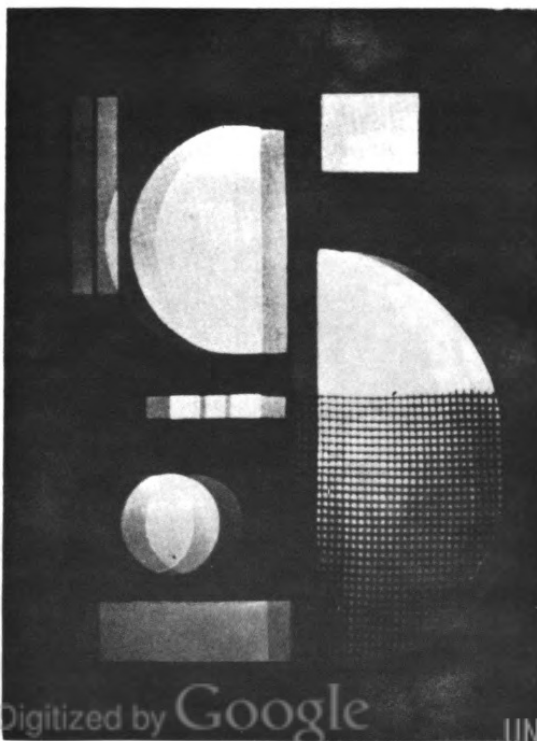
8. *ibid.*, p.188.

9. Wingler, *op.cit.*, p.96.

Cover of Hirschfeld-Mack's pamphlet 'Farbenlicht-Spiele, Wesen-Ziele-Critiken'.



Kurt Schwerdtfeger, 'Reflektorisches Lichtspiel' (1923?), reproduced from 'Staatliches Bauhaus 1919-23', Bauhausverlag, Weimar/Munich, p.156.



acetylene lamps, the shadows on the transparent paper screen doubled themselves, and because of the many differently coloured acetylene flames, a 'cold' and a 'warm' shadow became visible. Immediately, the thought came to mind to double the sources of light, or even to increase them six-fold and to put coloured glass in front of them . . ."

Thus the young team had discovered a new mode of visual expression. With the large range of technical facilities offered them by the Bauhaus workshops they were soon able to develop an effective technique of presentation. By using moveable coloured light sources—which could be controlled in brilliance by rheostats—and by placing moveable mechanical templates of various shapes between the sources of light and the transparent screen, combinations of abstract coloured shapes, varying in form, intensity, colour, speed and direction of movement were obtained.

To these abstract elements a second factor was added: music. Hirschfeld had been highly impressed by the first motion-picture he saw in Munich in 1912. The plot of the film bored him, but he was fascinated by the flickering light on the screen—the abrupt changes from full brilliance to deep shadow, the sudden or slow movements of light and shade across the screen. He realised that the medium presented a wealth

of new possibilities of expression, but perhaps even more significant for him was the effect of the accompanying music: 'Despite the fact that the music which was being played was something quite independent of the film presentation, I noticed that the film lacked an important element when the music paused. This was also noticeable in the audience by a growing restlessness. I finally experienced an intolerable depression, which only gave way after the music was introduced once more.'

Hirschfeld thus realised that music could be of considerable use in giving his moving shadows and shapes a more precise sense of time and interval. With the aid of carefully interwoven simple melodies he was able to underscore the 'visual movements, developments, contractions, intersections, graduations and climaxes' which appeared on his screen.

The 'Reflected Light Compositions' as his work came to be called were presented in public demonstrations in such major European cities as Berlin, Vienna, Leipzig and Weimar.⁹ To carry out a performance a small team of operators was required. To 'orchestrate' the compositions the operators were given a 'score'—something resembling a combination of an ordinary musical score and a 'program' for a modern electronic computer. This 'score' had musical notation, light source numbers and sequence order,

A page from a score for one of the 'Reflected Light Compositions' showing the first three bars of a 'Three-Part Colour Sonata' in ultramarine and green; from Wingler, op.cit. p.98, also reproduced in L. Moholy-Nagy 'Malerei, Fotografie, Film', Bauhausbuch No.8, p.81, Courtesy Bauhaus-Archiv.

Tempo $\text{♩} = 50$

1 TAKTEINHEIT	TAKT 1	3/4 TAKT 2	3/4 TAKT 3	3/4 TAKT 4
2. FARBEN	weiß	weiß	weiß	
3. TON	[Musical notation: Treble clef, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F60, G60, A60, B60, C61, D61, E61, F61, G61, 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10. One of these 'scores' is reproduced in Wingler, op.cit., p.98, and photographs of the experimental apparatus, the compositions and the artist and his group are to be found on pp.340, 341.

11. L. Hirschfeld-Mack, op.cit., p.189.
12. *ibid.*, p.189.

colours to be used, rheostat settings, speed and direction symbols for 'dissolves' and 'fade-outs', and switching notation. Hirschfeld would accompany the productions seated at the piano.¹¹

Through these experiments Hirschfeld-Mack and his team were trying to bring to *actual movement* the 'direction' and 'tension' which exist only as illusions in abstract, painted canvases. Just as Kandinsky and others had tried to reduce the elements of painting to Point, Line and Plane, so Hirschfeld-Mack attempted to add the element of change with time. He explained what could be achieved with his method: 'Each of the elements (coloured point in motion, line and plane) can be set in motion at any velocity and in any direction, can be enlarged or reduced, can be made darker or brighter, can be projected with sharp or blurred edges, can change colour, can be interfused with different coloured shapes whereby visual mixtures develop at the points of overlap, i.e. red and blue become violet. One element can be evolved from another, for instance the point into a line and further into a form, and the form can take on any appearance . . . (with mechanical devices) it is possible to increase the intensity of large areas of coloured shapes gradually from a dark background to extreme brightness and colourful luminescence, while other areas slowly disappear at the same time and eventually dissolve into the

black background. Sudden appearance and disappearance of parts of the composition is achieved with the use of switches. By exact knowledge of these basic means, which make possible an infinite number of variations, we endeavour to create a play with colours that is fugue-like . . .'¹²

With his 'Reflected Light Compositions', Hirschfeld-Mack hoped to be able to evoke new synaesthetic sensations of colour and music. He felt that his demonstrations would be 'a bridge of understanding for those many people who stand perplexed before abstract paintings and other new tendencies'.¹³ Not only for the uninitiated would the new medium be of value. With imagination which was untypical of the Weimar Bauhaus, Hirschfeld-Mack could foresee the day when his reflected lights would be able to be used to highlight and enrich stage productions—perhaps productions on the abstract stage of the future which was being evolved at the same time by another Bauhaus pioneer—Oskar Schlemmer—and whose potentialities are yet to be fully realised.

Letter from Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack to Standish Lawder



L. Hirschfeld-Mack,
Ferry Creek, Vic.,
Australia

Dear Mr Lawder,
Thank you for your letter of 8th Oct. (1964). I have been asked by the Bauhaus-Archiv in Darmstadt to produce my Reflected Colour Light Plays once again during my visit to Europe next year. This will be between about the 5th of April and the 10th of May, 1965. Thus we may be able to meet—and so my answers to your questions will be short . . .

I was attracted to the Bauhaus by Gropius' appeal in the German newspapers in 1919. I was studying art (painting and crafts) at the Debschitz Schule, Munich, and I attended the art history lectures by Wolfflin at the University of Munich from 1912 to 1914, when I had to serve on the Western Front till 1918. I then went to Adolf Holzel (Stuttgart), studying colour theories during 1918 and 1919, and to the Bauhaus, Weimar in 1920. My primary interests were always painting, design, colour theories and music.

1. Undoubtedly this 'mediaeval monk' is Louis Bertrand Castel (1688-1757), a French Jesuit father who first described his *Musique en Couleurs* in 1720, and constructed a model of his colour organ in 1734.

I started developing the Reflected Light Plays in 1921/22, when I studied illusionary tensions of colour shapes towards each other and towards their own edges, resulting in imaginary movements. In our colour seminar at the Bauhaus I actually moved coloured papers on a linear design placed on the floor, and we studied and compared reactions of masters including Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, and those of students—to find out similarities in reactions. At this time an ordinary shadow play, with one light source only and cardboard figures moved by hand, was produced by Schwerdtfeger at a Bauhaus dance. Acetylene lamps were used and by exchanging them, greenish and reddish lights were produced accidentally on the transparent screen. This was the spark and origin for experimenting with actually moving coloured light sources projected through openings onto a transparent screen. Thus two ideas came together. I made many experiments with various electric light bulbs—until I constructed the apparatus reproduced in the new Wingler Bauhaus book, page 340. I made it myself and I did not know of any other contemporary or earlier experiments in those days. However you probably know of the experiments made in coloured light (candle) with music by a monk in the middle ages—and the colour shadow plays with piano music by Scriabin from 1898 to 1900?

2. Hirschfeld-Mack has neglected to mention his participation at a professional congress of psychologists for the study of colour and sound synaesthesia, organised by Georg Anschutz and held in Hamburg, October 1st to 5th, 1930. He delivered a paper on his *Farbenlichtspiele* and performed three light

plays, including his recent three-part '*Opus Diagonal*' not listed in the repertoire. 3. Two performances on 3rd and 10th May, 1925, were held at the U.F.A. Theatre on the Kurturstendamm in Berlin. Avant-garde films by Eggeling, Richter, Léger, Ruttmann, and Picabia were also shown.

To try to combine moving colour with music is certainly not new. Goethe's comparison of the visual arts and music, with two rivers, very different in origin and character, yet both flowing into the same sea—'Art'—and the impossibility of joining them together in detail into one, was always in my mind when trying to unite both disciplines. Any mechanical means of fixing a note to coloured shape or light is quite wrong and lifeless. It is the *whole* conception of a musical and a painterly composition with its emotional values, with its rhythmic shaping of the time elements, which may be combined into a unity. A mechanical 'colour organ' is therefore out of the question and all attempts in this direction naturally failed.

At the Bauhaus we 'gave' and 'took' from each other, influencing each other, without giving up identity or originality. I remember that Bauhaus members pointed out to me that Moholy's pictures with their clear-cut shapes in transparencies were derived directly from my Reflected Colour Light Plays. But I rejected these thoughts. By the way: the word 'reflected' was suggested by Moholy-Nagy at the time—although *direct* light is used, and not reflected light. Thus this name is not quite correct.

The Reflected Light Plays were held on stages in theatres or halls.

The repertoire was:
Sonatine I (dreiteilig) with music
Sonatine II (Rot) with music
Kreuzspiel (or 'light fugue') without music
S Dance with music
Marionett Dance with music

I composed the music in unison with the colour compositions, in movement, written especially for the Light Plays. I play many musical instruments—and make many too . . .

The Reflected Light Plays were given at:
Weimar 1923, *Bauhauswoche*
Weimar 1923, *Werkbundtagung*
Berlin, 1924, *Volksbühne*,
Film-Matinee
Berlin, 1925, *Novembergruppe*,
U.A.F.¹
Vienna, 1924, *Musik u. Theater Fest der Stadt Wien* (together with Fernand Léger's films)
Leipzig, 1925, *Arbeiterbildungsinstitut*
Jena, 1924, *Zeisswerke*,
Theaterhalle
Greiz, 1925, *Volkshochschule*
Halle, 1925, *Kunstgewerbeschule Giebichenstein*
Celle, 1925, *Freie Volksbühne*
I have only one booklet left of my *Farbenlichtspiele*, *Wesen-Ziele-Kritiken*—and I suggest I give it to you if we meet in Germany in April next year. However if you should need it earlier, I'll send it on to your address. There is, as far as I know, a second copy at the Bauhaus Archiv at Darmstadt. You will find the reactions in the criticisms . . .

Yours sincerely,

L. Hirschfeld-Mack

A Little Night Music by Charles Tomlinson

A shimmer at the ear: a sheen
the all-but-done day
would still detain it with:
a dying hoard of
wholly-unseen-now,
just-heard visitations:
small sounds poise
superimpose, then shift
as lightly as summer-flies
go glinting down
the drift of late air cooling:
a spate of sibillances: a maze
in motion where the foursquare
frontier of tree-girths, the million
leaves beating there, are
spread weed in sleep's underwater: a
winching and wandering of evanescences:
a not-listening ear.

translated by Stephen Bann and Philip Steadman

The following extracts are taken from Gillo Dorfles, 'Pour ou Contre une Esthétique Structuraliste?' (*Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, No. 73-74, 1965, pp.409-441). Signor Dorfles discusses the application of structuralism to various artistic genres, and concludes with a review of the objections to this form of analysis.

Multiple meaning (polysémie) and ambiguity as aesthetic constants

The study of 'multiple meaning', which is an aspect of structuralist research in literature, suggests many obvious parallels in other artistic languages.

The problem of multiple meaning is of particular interest, because, more than any other factor, it seems to offer the chance of establishing a distinction between linguistic structure (pure and simple) and poetic structure (that is to say poetic language). In the opinion of most authors, however common the phenomenon of multiple meaning, it is in the artist's interest that information should be transmitted without dissipation of meaning, that the phenomenon of multiple meaning should be kept within bounds. 'It is not surprising that multiple meaning is present in the word', states Lotman for example, 'only as a possibility; the information function of language tends not to tolerate uncertainties in logical sense. It is in our interest that information should be picked up without loss of meaning.' I do not entirely agree with this statement; in fact, I believe that many modern poets do indeed make use of multiple meaning (and even ambiguity in the connotations of words) to obtain a kind of semantic vagueness: or, in other words, the ambiguity so well studied by Empson.¹

In this connection a

comparison with other arts is called for: poetry and literature (think of the use which Joyce makes of multiple meanings), film directors also, and painters, make abundant use of figurative ambiguities (surrealism and, from antiquity, concealed images, anamorphoses, coded images which can only be deciphered with a key) and even perceptual ambiguities. Vasarely, and other painters who have exploited these elements in their compositions (alternation and coincidence of concave and convex, double reflected images, the presence of texture gradients capable of disturbing visual schemata) are not isolated cases.

This shows that the desire for multiple meaning may be considered as a structural constant in aesthetics (despite its apparent lack of structuring). Naturally, in the domain of poetry, its usefulness depends upon a certain degree of intelligibility which avoids the danger of absurdity.

The problem of 'single meaning' (*monosémie*) and of multiple meaning, which plays a considerable part when it is a matter of evaluating a contemporary document, becomes in fact decisive for the evaluation of ancient texts within their own terms of reference: in this case, the semantic distortion undergone by the words, often for historical reasons, is such as to render the decoding of the poetic message absolutely impossible (even if the linguistic decoding is

1: William Empson, 'Seven Types of Ambiguity', and by the same author, 'The Structure of Complex Words', (London 1951), particularly the two chapters 'Feelings in Words' and 'Statements in Words', where Richards' theories of the 'emotive' and the 'cognitive' value of poetry are called into question.

perfectly possible'). However, in just such a case as that of multiple meaning, we may admit the existence of two or more distinct structures: that is to say of a linguistic structure proper (the language or the idiom in which the meaning is expressed, e.g. medieval Latin or modern Norwegian) and particular 'notional structures' (depending on private, scientific, technical and other jargons). We may therefore admit that multiple meaning arises from the interference of different jargons whose structure dovetail. The passage from one to another, however secret and unconscious it may be in general, is responsible in reality for a great part of the aesthetic quality. Whilst in everyday language, in a scientific (legal, medical, mathematical etc.) text, the semantic level is one and the same, in a literary text, whether the ambiguity is intentional or whether it is due to the use of words outside their habitual context, the constant oscillation of levels can, in my opinion, be the determining factor in the aesthetic character of the work.² What seems to me important in discussing the difference between artistic and scientific languages (in general between the emotional and the cognitive) can be summed up in the words of Lotman: 'in language, the structure arises historically and spontaneously, and serves as a means for transmitting information. In literature, the structure originates from an act of

2: c.f. in the same way, Lotman's remarks on the various meanings of Russian words in Pushkin.
3: The importance of specific jargons also to aesthetic ends, is studied in my article: 'Gerghi e teticci linguistici' in 'Il Verri' No. 16, 1965
4: op. cit., p.68
5: op. cit., p.68

creation and presents in these terms the content of the information, which is an end in itself.³ That is why the reading of an (original) text can give us the exact 'aesthetic' information relating to it. Whilst for the reading of a non-literary (scientific) text, a knowledge of normal linguistic structure is sufficient to give us the information, in the case of a literary text, 'even when we do not yet understand the author's conception in all its complexity, we understand his text all the same if we know the language in which he is writing.'⁴

Structuralism and information theory

The importance of allowing a structural factor underlying not simply each work of art taken separately, but every epoch, is beyond doubt; since this allows us to understand the common language which characterises the style of an epoch.

Elements of the unforeseen, the improbable and the unexpected, in an artistic message which—according to information theory⁵—provoke and stimulate the quality of our attention, are only possible if we have observed an overall structural analogy with the artistic phenomena and events of the current epoch. From which it may be deduced that if the improbable and the unexpected go beyond certain limits (Bense, Moles) or are completely divorced from the structures of the time, it

6: On the subject of the application of information theory to art, the work of Max Bense and A. A. Moles springs to mind first of all. The former's 'Aesthetische Information', Agis Verlag, Baden Baden 1956, demonstrates very clearly the author's aesthetic theory, and in particular its relations to

structuralism, in the chapter 'Information über Strukturen'. Extremely interesting, on the subject of the application of information theory and structuralism to the analysis of texts, is the article 'Textästhetik' in *Grundlagenstudien*, I, 1960, in which is suggested a distinction between 'semantischer

Text', 'metaphysischer Text', 'ästhetischer Text' and 'logischer Text'. On this last point, c.f. Max Bense, 'Programmierung des Schönen', Agis Verlag, 1962. For the application to the visual arts of problems which concern information theory, c.f. Kurd Alsleben, 'Ästhetische Redundanz', Hamburg, 1962.

7: c.f. Christian Norberg-Schulz, 'Intentions in Architecture', Oslo 1963, p.71, in which he attempts to apply semantic and structuralist theories to architectural language. An analogous attempt in my work: 'Simbolo Comunicazione Consumo', in Ch. V, 'Valori comunicativi e simbolici nell'architettura'.

will be extremely difficult to appreciate their effect; whilst, if structural homogeneity remains in a stable state, we may consider formal 'novelty' as the functional element indispensable to any breadth of information. Naturally we would do well not to confuse structural analogy between two works or between two languages with that isomorphism so often reiterated by the Gestalt theoreticians, without ever having been seriously established. It is extremely questionable whether there exists a morphological analogy between the (anatomical or physiological) cerebral or cortical structures, and the response to an aesthetic stimulus. I do not think that in all good faith we can make such a comparison.

What is perhaps more acceptable, on the other hand, is Norberg-Schulz's statement according to which "particular structures have certain limited possibilities for receiving contents: we do not play a viennese waltz at a funeral. The structural similarity only becomes effective when we have learnt to organize forms perceptually." Thus the structural element should be seen as forming the basis of our capacity to understand and appreciate a work, not because of a so-called, extremely hypothetical resemblance between our cerebral 'structures' and those of the work in question, but because of the existence of a structure of the age (*structure*

d'époque) (to which we are accustomed) which is common to the most various works and which permits us to enter into a 'syntony' (*syntonie*) with them, while they still appear to present a completely 'novel' quality and thereby possess an appreciable information quotient.

Attempts at the application of structuralism to different arts

Attempts to extend the application of structuralism to various areas of the arts are numerous, and one can foresee that these will increase in the future according to the usual processes of intellectual fashion (*mode des idées*). All the same, nothing is easier than to transplant certain rules or schemata and apply them to various disciplines and areas. As we will see in what follows, the greater number of these applications of structuralism are neither original nor necessary. These kinds of researches do not make it easier either to understand or to judge the works studied in this way. In so far as the problem is concerned with axioms, this methodology will not facilitate any kind of value judgement. But let us at least examine some examples of the extension of structuralist method to different arts, those at any rate which seem to us the most successful.

In a most ingenious article (*Rhétorique de l'image*), but which leaves us doubtful on many points, Barthes has tried

to apply linguistic schemata to the visual arts. In Barthes' account, an illustrated advertisement, based on a colour picture of a food product, comprises three types of message: a linguistic message, an encoded (iconographic) message, and a second iconographic message, not encoded (the linguistic message being denotative, and the other two connotative, as are in general those in which the figurative element is dominant).

Today, Barthes affirms, 'on the level of mass communications, it is evident that the linguistic message is present in all images in the form of title, caption or as film dialogue; one can see that in this way it is not very accurate to speak of an image civilisation: ours is still more than ever a civilisation of the written word.'⁹ Apart from the fact worth mentioning that, even in the case of inscriptions, these are to such an extent assimilated into the visual images that they form a whole with them and are perceived precisely by virtue of this communion, I would make more objections to the manner in which this author uses the photographic element as an example of a non-encoded image. For Barthes photography is—precisely by virtue of its analogical nature—a message without a code (whereas drawing, even the most naturalistic drawing, will always be a codified message). The photograph would then be the only iconographical image

capable of transmitting (literal) information without any need for recourse to 'discontinuous signs and rules of transformation'.¹⁰ I am not absolutely in agreement over the last point, precisely because photography, which seems to us today easily and directly readable, was not so originally, and even today is only so for those who, all unknowingly, have learnt the code.

It was noted some time ago by Francastel¹¹ that in reality our capacity for deciphering photographs (and what is more, films as well) is due to a series of conventions, learned little by little, without which their reading—decodification—would be far from immediate.

But Barthes opens up a brilliant perspective when he writes that photography constitutes an authentic 'anthropological revolution' in the history of mankind.¹² It is certainly true that photography has brought about a new way of conceiving reality, which we might define as '*dagewesensein*' rather than '*dasein*': 'in the photograph there is an illogical conjunction of the here and the erstwhile.' In fact, it seems to me extremely pertinent, this presence of an event which is undoubtedly already past, through the sole fact 'that it has been photographed': and what is more, this principle is capable of extension from the photo to the magnetic tape, and in my opinion even to recordings in the media of

8: 'Communications' 4, 1964
 9: *ibid.*, p.43
 10: c.f. also Roland Barthes, 'Le Message photographique', in 'Communications' 1, p.127
 11: Pierre Francastel, 'Estève', Ed. Galanis, Paris 1956.
 12: *op. cit.*, p.47

13: The two terms, 'synchrony' and 'diachrony', are used in structuralism to denote on the one hand the simultaneous existence, and on the other the succession of forms in the historical process. To quote from Barthes, this antithesis is important 'because it seems to imply a certain revision in the notion of history, insofar

as the idea of synchrony . . . involves a certain immobilisation of time, and that of diachrony tends to represent a historical process purely as a succession of forms'. ('Essais critiques', Paris 1964, p.213) (translators' note)

14: c.f. also T. Slama-Cazacu, 'Langage et contexte', La Haye 1961, and G. V. Kolsankij, 'O prirode konteksta' (on the nature of context), in 'Voprosy jazykoznanija', 1959, 4. And the work of Wojciech Gorny, 'Text Structure against the Background of Language Structure', in 'Poetics', Warsaw 1959.

television and cinema (notwithstanding the fact that for Barthes, on the contrary, the cinema has nothing to do with animated photography because 'in it the 'having been' is ousted by the 'being there' of the object'). In other words, if it is true that the photo poses the problem of a present snatched from the past, or rather a past (clearly such) brought into the present (*Vergegenwartigung*) insofar as it may be grasped 'as such', 'here and now', it is exactly the same for recordings on tape or film. The one difference between recordings on film and on tape is that messages which are heard form a present succession in time and we are aware of the 'before' and the 'after' of the event in the process of their becoming, together with the illusion of the 'being here now' of the event itself; in reality, however, with tape recordings as with photos, the event has already happened, already *dagewesen*, and the process seems capable of superposition.

The function of the 'context' in artistic language

The importance of context is now recognised universally. The manner in which a given artistic entity is presented to our perception never depends exclusively upon its intimate structure, but relies also upon the 'superstructure' conferred by the context. For this reason we must henceforth allow that context has a decisive importance in the explanation of our experience of the arts. A given artistic

object (a picture, statue, poem or piece of music) acquires different and even contradictory qualities of expression according to the context in which it is placed (objects in frames, under glass, fixed to a wall, emerging from a landscape, a line of verse in isolation, or used in an advertisement; morphemes, phonemes, verses inserted in a story, machine poetry, musical collages by various composers, statues by Brancusi with special stands, pictures by Pasmore which deny their frames, etc.). In all these cases the structure is a product of two (or more) formal elements which can be envisaged as being distinct, but which in reality coalesce, undergo a sort of osmosis, or solidify: a sub-structure of the work in itself and a sub-structure of the context forming an overall structure (*holo-structure*) which may be quite different from its formal components.

Furthermore, I believe that it is now established, even as regards simple facts of perception (without confining it to aesthetics) that we must always take account of the relationship between the perceived object and its context, to be fully aware of its meaning. In other terms, if we add to the already complex problem of *perception* the even more difficult one of *meaning*, we shall be unable to avoid seeing the object and context in conjunction; not to mention the 'noise' and the 'message' in conjunction; the structure as well as the 'Gestalt'.

We must therefore accept, at the outset, the existence of a 'dynamic structuring' which binds together the disparate elements of the art object and its context (in music for example, the surrounding milieu, the presence of other sounds or noises, the participation of the public in some recent works by Cage, Berio, Evangelisti; in the theatre, the use of lighting, the position of the stage etc.) This *dynamic* view of structural relationships explains very well the transformations in perception and meaning, of the appreciation of the work of art, while a static view of the object divorced from its context (not simply physical but also 'historical', environmental and biological) would have difficulty in doing so. The principle of *synchrony* here becomes essential for the understanding of the work. The dynamic structure which allows us to evaluate the work is the product of our own receptivity and of a simultaneously active view of a whole series of artistic elements which are thereby integrated in the global structure—*holo-structure*—of which the work forms a part; by contrast all the historical, cultural, *diachronic* elements are absent.

The concept of 'ostranenie' and its application to the theory of context

The concept of *ostranenie* (implying 'out of place', rather than 'at a distance' or 'alienated'), has been abundantly analysed and

applied by the Russian structuralists¹⁴, and may also be of use here to explain and clarify certain elements which are essential to the interpretation of the contextual element. The Russians originally understood by the term *ostranenie*, the detachment of a word (of a syntagm or a phoneme), even of a sentence or a line of verse and so of a poetic object, from its normal context, to regenerate its information content.

This notion, which is undoubtedly fruitful for the study of traditional poetry, is equally valuable for all of the contemporary arts. It is with a key such as this that we may explain, for instance, the effectiveness of a pictorial, literary or musical collage, such as are practised nowadays by artists of widely differing backgrounds. More so than in the case of pictorial collage (from the 'classical' style of Schwitters and the cubists to the more recent work of Rauschenberg, Johns etc.) where the elements are effectively 'disengaged from their context' and come to constitute authentic pictorial or plastic materials, this effect is evident in *literary and musical collage*: in these two types, particularly in the first case, the syntagm, or the entire statement, detached from a context that is often quite foreign to the literary and linguistic plane (advertising, scientific, technical, legal language) acquires, from its insertion in the new 'structure' an indisputable effectiveness

Note on 'bricolage', from Cl. Lévi-Strauss, 'La Pensée Sauvage', Paris 1964, p.26. 'In its former sense, the verb 'bricoler' is applied to ball games and billiards, hunting and riding, always to connote incidental movement: of the ball which bounces, the dog which veers off, of the horse which swings out of its way

to avoid an obstacle. But today the 'bricoleur' remains the man who works with his hands, making use of methods that are indirect by comparison with those of the man of art. Now it is characteristic of mythical thought that it expresses itself through a repertory composed of heterogeneous elements

which, although extensive, remains limited; it must nonetheless make use of this for whatever task it sets itself, since it has nothing else to hand. Mythical thought therefore appears as a kind of intellectual bricolage, a fact that explains the relationship which can be observed between the two.'

15: Cl. Lévi-Strauss, 'La Pensée Sauvage', Paris 1964, p.31

which is due to the *ostranenie* it has undergone. It is in these cases above all that we shall be able to verify the accuracy of certain hypotheses advanced in the application of information theory to art, which take on clear significance when they are seen in connection with the structuralist approach. I have often noted the difficulty and arbitrariness of applying information theory in accordance with the classic examples of cybernetics, to the analysis of texts, and even more so to the analysis of visual and musical works; but I have no hesitation in recognising the importance of a partially metaphorical application of this theory.

For example, when we observe that a particular work is subject to rapid deterioration by virtue of over-exposure (obsolescence); when we accept with Bense that the concepts of novelty and *negative entropy* can be identified, and also that a work of art transmits its information so much the better for being newer (more unexpected, improbable, that is to say possessing negative entropy) we are simply repeating the concepts already implicit in the very principle of *ostranenie*, which implies an information quotient superior according to how much the term, word or musical sequence is out of place.

A few criticisms of structuralism

If I have up to now attempted

to bring into relief the positive aspects of structuralism, with a view to establishing the basis of a structuralist aesthetic, I would not like to ignore the criticisms which have been laid against this system of aesthetic analysis.

The principal criticisms may be classed with those that can be pressed against every aesthetic of normative tendencies: when certain linguistic structuralists (Jakobson and many others) believe that they can attribute an undoubted aesthetic value to one of the many phonetic, syntactic or morphological laws, they are falling into the same error as Matila Ghyka or Wittkower, or before them Leon Battista Alberti or Palladio, when they believed that they could make the precepts of their poetic pass for universal laws. It is an even greater error to believe that we can apply laws—not to speak of morphological characteristics—which derive from ethnography, anthropology etc. to aesthetics because of a simple analogy or 'family likeness', however clear it may seem, between such widely removed phenomena.

In fact it very often happens that the structures of the work of art do not correspond to those of social reality, or even those of the cultural situation. In believing the contrary, we would fall back into an error similar to that of critics of the persuasion of Woelfflin, Brinkmann and Fiedler, even if these critics did not use the term structure

in its present sense. Identifications of the Baroque and the Counter-Reformation, of forms open or closed in art and society, show us the weakness of artistic categories of this kind. But this weakness becomes all the more apparent if we think of certain attempts to constitute real categories like 'art', 'myth', 'bricolage', 'play', and to bring them together under the single heading of a sometimes misunderstood structuralism. This is precisely what Lévi-Strauss has done, and I would like to show, be it in broad outline, some of the equivocal results which such identifications produce: Lévi-Strauss' attempts to apply certain linguistic schemata to his ethnological hypotheses has proved both fruitful and well-founded, as we all know. By contrast, his attempt to discover in art the same 'categorisation' as that which he devised for anthropology seems more debatable. This is particularly so in the case of a concept which this author has used with greatest success (at least with the wider public), that of *bricolage*. This aspect of art and craftsmanship which Lévi-Strauss has well defined, and which has drawn the attention of many researchers to his work, is studied there as a concomitant of art and myth. It is here, I believe, that some objections can be made.

The equivocal aspects of 'bricolage'

When Lévi-Strauss maintains, in effect, that 'mythical thought'

although founded in images can still be generalising, and hence scientific (it also operates by analogy and association, even if, as in the case of *bricolage*, its creations can always be reduced to a new configuration of elements whose nature is not modified by their appearance in the instrumental ensemble or in the final arrangement¹⁵). He does not notice that it is precisely *because* mythical thought is founded in images and not despite the fact, that it is susceptible to scientific generalisation. That is to say, it is in my opinion a mistake to imagine that we must speak of science only in conjunction with the exclusively 'rational'. If we admit, on the other hand, that it is possible to approach science (like art) as well through 'images' as through 'concepts', or better still through 'signs' (whether they be conceptual or in images) we shall see that every rigid distinction between the world of myth (and art) and that of science is likely to disappear.

To consider *art brut* or naive art as analogous to *bricolage* (which we may readily accept), and consequently to myth (as Lévi-Strauss would), is tantamount to placing myth on a lower level than we ought. *Art brut* or naive art, like the architecture of the postman Cheval for example, should be considered as minor 'artistic genres', which have not reached maturity, and which are interesting in the same way as the fantasies of children and lunatics. It is to these genres, rather than

to the authentic and mature forms of art, that we may compare *bricolage*, which is itself a kind of failed craftsmanship. That is another reason for refusing to place art *half-way between science and myth*. Maybe art is 'myth', in periods when mythical thought is prevalent, just as it may, in a sense, be 'science' in periods of technological advance, such as our own; as well as in distant periods when art was particularly close to science and rationality, as in the art of the pyramids, or the Indian, Babylonian and Maya forms of 'astronomical' art. The monuments which we see today beneath the patina of time, from a primarily artistic viewpoint, were in reality rational and scientific instruments of a way of thought which was extremely advanced for those times, and by no means to be compared with a modest *bricolage*.

Even the definition which Lévi-Strauss gives of the artist in his half-way stage between *bricoleur* and savant, does not satisfy me: 'with the methods of a craftsman, he manufactures a material object which is at the same time an object of knowledge'¹⁸. It is far from accepted that art necessarily involves a craftsmanlike technique (we need only consider the now widespread domain of the industrial object, which so often approaches the dignity of art, and requires no element of craftsmanship). Nor is it indisputable that art should always connote an element

of knowledge (*un élément gnoséologique*), at least in the sense of rational knowledge intended by Lévi-Strauss. In fact, art, like myth, is often able to make use of images purely and simply, employing them as 'signs of something' that is undifferentiated, a possible source of rational knowledge in the future, whilst the *bricoleur*, in contrast to the artist or the mythologist, will always aim in his difficult and uncertain attempts to adapt his hazardous means to his work, to attain a cognitive element in spite of his unsuitable instruments and expedients. The feature of the 'expedient' in *bricolage* is, to tell the truth, the least convincing aspect of the comparison with myth and art. Art, even when it employs heterogeneous elements (collage, combine painting, *objet trouvé*) always remains teleological and transforms these apparently disparate elements into pertinent elements, whilst in *bricolage* the disparate and the approximate quite clearly remain.

From all that has been said so far, at least one point arises: that it is absolutely necessary to consider the work of art as being intimately linked to the social, economic and even biological and physiological structures which characterise a period and form the basis of its 'Weltanschauung'. It is for this reason that we must envisage the structure in aesthetic terms as more than the skeleton, plan or framework of the work of

17: c.f. 'Anthropologie structurale', p.269, in which is analysed the 'split representation' observed by Franz Boas ('Primitive Art', 1927) in peoples widely separated in time and space.

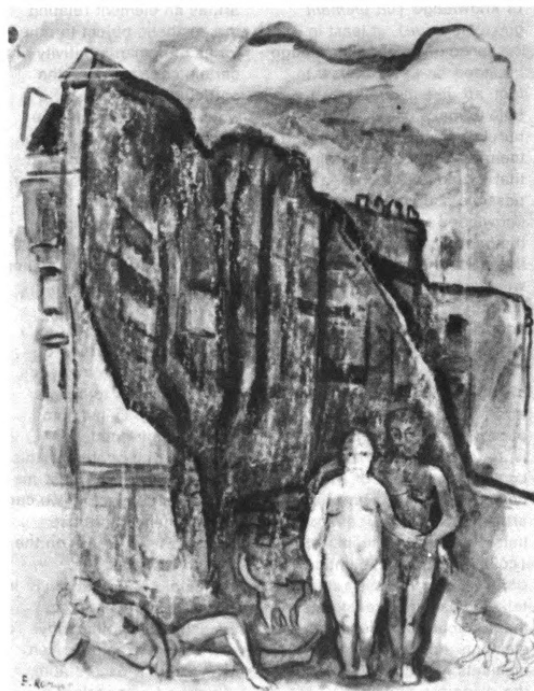
art, as an element relating the aesthetic object to other forms of human creativity of a certain sort. As far as the particular structures of a work are concerned—the 'organic' framework, so to speak—we are inclined to admit on the other hand that it is impossible to accept rigorously the principle of autonomous and definite structuring in artistic creation. Consequently, although there are and will always remain at the basis of artistic creation, rules of form invented for the needs of the occasion, to be subsequently called into question, infringed and regarded with contempt, this does not mean, at least in the proper sense, that we can identify them with those 'structures' which are on the contrary so clearly identifiable and analysable in other disciplines such as linguistics and ethnology. To return to an example given elsewhere—if we are able, within the framework of a particular period or culture, to accept fully the existence of certain linguistic constants (in the written or spoken language of a people), we shall not be able to refrain from admitting that these constants are for the most part invalidated when we pass from 'scientific' language to 'poetic' or in any way characterise a period and form the basis of its 'Weltanschauung'. It is for this reason that we must envisage the structure in aesthetic terms as more than the skeleton, plan or framework of the work of

18: c.f. the chapter 'Les techniques du corps' in Marcel Mauss' work 'Teoria generale della magia', Einaudi, Turin 1965 (with a preface by Cl. Lévi-Strauss) in which a particular sexual position is shown to be found throughout the Pacific, from Australia to Peru by way of the Bering Straits.

civilisation or culture, we cannot identify them with 'structures' in the specific sense of the word.

What then is the inevitable defect in the method of researchers who approach aesthetic problems from an exclusively structuralist point of view? It is that of failing to account for the fact that very often, when one studies a work of art, it is precisely the skeleton, the framework, in other words the 'structure', which plays a secondary, if not negligible, role. In effect, even if we are able to admit the analogy (or homology) between two works of art, between two artistic tendencies, if we admit, with Lévi-Strauss,¹⁹ that the same type of 'split representation' appears in works from New Zealand, ancient China, and among the Caduve Indians of North America, we shall have discovered, without doubt, an incontestable fact of the greatest interest from the point of view of anthropology, ethnology, and even history, which will enable us to demonstrate, for instance, that the Asiatic peoples did in fact migrate by way of the Bering Straits and settle in pre-Columbian America; or will convince us of the existence of family connections between American and Asiatic civilisations (as is also shown by certain 'techniques du corps' observed among the same peoples by Mauss²⁰), but we shall still know nothing of the aesthetic problems posed by this type of decoration.

'Resurrection' (1960), water-colour and crayon, 25½"x19½"



'Forms' (1950), oil and collage, 24"x36"



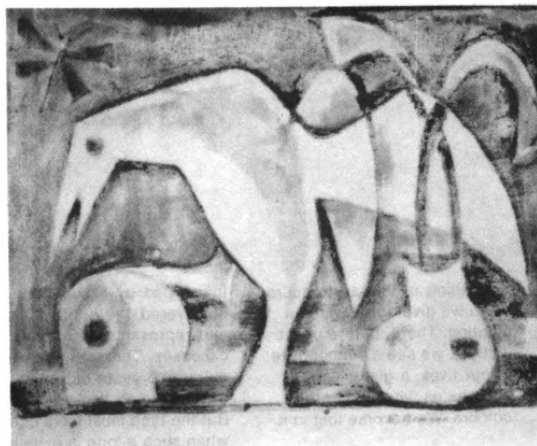
Emanuel Glicen Romano was born in Rome on September 23rd 1897, William Carlos Williams on September 17th 1883. When their paths finally crossed in the summer of 1951 it was because they had found a mutual friend in David McDowell, one of Williams' publishers. The painter was nearly fifty-four and the poet almost sixty-seven. Williams' essay on Romano was completed the following October as an introduction to the catalogue for his one-man show at the Passadoit Gallery, New York, in December. Only four short paragraphs were printed. Meanwhile Williams' portrait had been made, after two sittings for a first attempt and three further sittings for the work illustrated here. What Romano brought to these meetings in Rutherford was an undivided consciousness of the force of both ancient and modern traditions in art. Williams in this last phase of his life was in the process of lifting himself out of his own locality and crossing the Hudson, at least in spirit, into a consciousness of world art.

In saluting Bosch, Brueghel, Toulouse-Lautrec and Dürer in *Paterson* 5, Williams was speaking on behalf of a universal effort; no longer the local effort he had espoused in the Stieglitz circle. Where Romano had begun—the same *Melancholy* of Dürer upon the wall in his father's house in Rome—Williams ended. Considering

contemporaneity the supreme value of any work of art, Williams read in the broken masonry of the *Melancholy* the fractured personality of an artist whose malady paralleled, as he saw it, that of his own time—the Freudian disease of schizophrenia. It did not occur to him that one could draw ruins and remain intact oneself, the American concept of demolition not allowing ruins except as archaeology. This is not the feeling Romano's *Resurrection* conveys. Nor are Romano's *Forms* broken to represent our fractured personalities. On the contrary, their organisation within the painting implies the wholeness of the painter. To perceive their sickle-forms metamorphically as birds' bills is an indulgence of our capacity for separable content. Yet to perceive the transformation of feeling from those cutting edges to the stylised gesture of *Rapping Bird* is a perfectly legitimate extension of our developing sense of the painter's iconography.

The metamorphic fallacy that things, as opposed to persons, become under the pressure of fantasy always one thing and the same is one of the great clichés of French surrealism. The Indian legend of the Sleeping Giant, together with the examples of Masson and Tchelitchev allowed Williams to transform Garret Mountain into his local topographical woman. For him objects could be both literal and metamorphic, but hardly ever metaphysical.

'Rapping Bird' (1949), water
-colour and crayon, 17½"x23½"



'Self-Portrait' (1956), oil and
collage, 20½"x30"



It is well to know that Romano's early show at the Maison d'Art Bragaglia in Rome in 1920 followed exhibitions there by Balla and the Bragaglia brothers—and above all De Chirico, about whom Romano spoke with Williams. With *Self-Portrait* the modern conception of the portrait describes itself in relation to Romano's other works. As the map is to the landscape, so the painter's detached mask is to himself. The roads which are the cracks of time are not wrinkles, but the cracks across a painting's face. They are not flesh, but art.

In reply to a further unpublished essay on his work by Williams, Romano wrote in April 1957: *My aim is to pierce the*

involucre, to bore through the crust, the bark of our flesh, and finally to lift the veil which envelops our souls. This sense of the qualitative relation of things to art does not obtain in the American literal eclectic tradition of Pound, Eliot, Williams, and such underground figures as David Lyle. The quantitative experience of things breaks over their heads with the roar of a waterfall, and when they do not drown beneath its weight a terrible force is created which, once loosed, leads now to rape, now to a love encompassing all things. It derives from the sum of particulars, rather than from the relation between particulars. Williams wished to harness that force but he did not always feel himself directly in its line. His

1: see over, column 1

modes of approach turned throughout his career from construction to improvisation in a circle as self-consuming as that of the Gnostic serpent. *Kora in Hell* exemplifies the improvisatory tendency of two unpublished poems probably written prior to *Kora* which he called 'Self-Portraits'. Against this, his first manifesto on Measure—written as early as 1913—started him on his life-long search for a constructional principle in a musical mode.

The pattern reversed in the last phase of his life when he turned briefly from the Measured line to the visual mode of his final sequence, *Pictures from Brueghel*. This time the 'Self-Portrait' is composed by means of the cool, puritanical stare which transformed Imagism in America, by means of cubist-realism and 'straight' photography, into Objectivism. In returning to this visual mode in the very late Fifties he was turning away from the Subjectivism implicit in the Projectivist version of Measure, which had discovered what was for him an all-too-apt analogy for itself in Action painting.

When reflection gives way to action the tradition of the new finally subverts the tradition of the old. Williams would not go so far; his return to realism in the Brueghel poems marks a newly acquired sense of personality in the work of art. The objects of still-life and landscape give way to the human head; the inanimate to the animate. The head bespeaks a relationship which is both objective as well as

subjective, reflective as well as actual. Just as Williams assumed the picture he had in mind for his poem 'The Dance', so, much later, he assumed Brueghel's 'Self-Portrait'. In neither case does there exist a picture by Brueghel of that title.

The difficulties Romano encountered with Williams' portrait are recorded in his diary (Sept. 27th 1951): 'The only thing disturbing me was the reflection of the light in his eye-glasses. Something maddening—the light was so strong I could not see Williams' face. . . Williams has a very sensitive, but not very sharp, face. I think T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound have more accentuated, punctuated features. However, I want to bring out the almost saintly simplicity of the man and I hope I will be able to do so.' To content oneself with drawing the map—the country-doctor's image which satisfied Ben Shahn—would have been easy. To confront the landscape directly was to be dazzled by the hard light. But once the glasses were removed the poet became his age—the boyish enthusiasm gone, the bedside manner finally dropped. Instead the silky independence of Williams' mother was revealed. By skilful use of the picture-planes Romano enclosed his subject as inescapably in his domestic interior as the poet had known himself to be imprisoned in his local community. In this delicate trap the painter revealed his own humanity.

The copyright of Dr. Williams' essay on Romano belongs to Mrs. Williams, and we are grateful to her for permission to publish it here for the first time.

'introduction to a Modern Portrait', Note 1 (see p.21): A three-page typescript by Williams has come to light, entitled 'Speech Rhythm.' An earlier, handwritten version, 'English Speech Rhythms', so far still lost, was submitted to 'Poetry' (Chicago) in the autumn of 1913. The later typescript was sent to Pound for 'The Egoist' (London) but has never appeared in print. Mike Weaver will describe its contents and comment on their implications in the course of a feature on Phonic poetry in an early issue of 'Form'. New American chauvinists, as rampant today as in the late Twenties (see Rexroth, p.29), will be dismayed to learn that Williams never once refers to American speech as distinct from English in this (his best) version of Measure. Nor does he assume a specifically American prosody. On the contrary, he relates his concept of a flexible system—a structural method—to the current musical preoccupations of Imagism. In short, he supports our belief that the usefulness of Measure is international. Idiom is another matter, though.

I have been watching the building of a portrait for which I was the sitter. I do not mean that I watched the painting, the putting on of the colours, though I could see the movements, even hear the rasp of the brush at times. I mean I have seen the picture grow in the mind of Emanuel Romano who is painting it. I have seen him struggle to realize what he wanted to put down to depict my face.

It is a struggle between the painter and the subject. The artist must get through to the ground underneath—the basic meaning. Shall the terms be abstractions? Or shall one paint a surface, a still life of a face, devoting his whole art to that? Or shall one make a painting that is a reproduction of the picture in the artist's mind? Together the artist and the sitter combine, one putting up his actual face and the other his abilities, to reproduce this miraculous image.

That, I think, is what Emanuel Romano is striving for: a face which he has chosen, which he has wanted to take into his mind for the mind to work upon it its chemistry.

We read not to gain, or not primarily to gain, knowledge of what we are reading—for we read fiction as readily as we read history or philosophy—but to gain clarity of mind. We read to rescue ourselves from the befuddlement in which we exist between express commitments of our attention.

Something of that sort occurs when we give ourselves to a painting. There, before us, at its best, we see a concentrate of our lives, a gist which absorbs us, vividly, in all its colours. We become lost in it.

And of all paintings the portrait is the most complex, and the most satisfying. Modern painters have been baffled by it. They have been afraid of the horrible word 'representational'; they have run screaming into the abstract, forgetting that all painting is representational, even the most abstract, the most subjective, the most distorted. The only question that can present itself is: what do you choose to represent?

The concept of what a portrait is has been at fault. It is not simple. It will strain all the resources available to the greatest skills in the art to resolve that.

It must be understood, before going further, what has occurred in painting during the past 75 years: during that time the means of seeing and placing colours and shapes upon the canvas have been enormously expanded. Every avenue open to human ingenuity has been explored. It was a true French Revolution. The modern masters, mainly the French, have given us painting, painting itself free from all restrictions. They said to us in effect:—there it is. Now see what you can do with it.

For a while the painters chose to paint 'subjectively'

Influenced by Freud they discovered the subconscious and represented it on their canvases. The scribbles of children 5 years old were discovered to be 'revealing'. But the time must have come when such a lode is exhausted. Such a time has now arrived.

Painters are asking themselves: where shall I go next? Shall I return to realism—the public at least would be happier? There is nothing else left for me—I'm sick of my own guts. Ceramics has been their answer.

Painting is looking desperately for an extensive field into which to loose itself that it may run free. To sum it up: (1) The great discoverers of the past 75 years have opened up the field, making their discoveries in the art available to all. (2) The subjectivist field has been exhausted—it was a mere side-pocket. (3) We stand facing a new continent to which the portrait gives the hint for a future. It is a tremendous continent whither our caravels Monet, Cézanne, Braque have brought us safely to port.

II

The stress now is upon varieties of experience. The stress now is upon the thing which the artist's mind creates when it sees before it the unworked contours of a face. What the artist will paint is his creation, the hidden work of his own imagination; what he is—painted in the subtly modified contours of the sitter's face. It is his own face

in the terms of another face.

The artist is always and forever painting only one thing: a self portrait.

Discovery is the word. It is a new territory, new all over again today. The modern artist has had to rediscover it—a new object—his own imaginary image in the terms of the subject before him. Himself—in all its multiple implications.

Thus we return to the oldest field of all—the imagination. It is the imagination, in terms of the flesh, which we have neglected while perfecting our techniques; the imagination working subtly with the flesh, representing extraordinary co-minglings between two images:—the painter and the sitter. It is a world of unrealized proportions. It is a drawing together such as that between Van Gogh and the 'Potato Eaters'—a man facing other men and representing on the canvas himself as modified by those others so inexplicably placed before him evoking his distress, his disappointments, his love. It is that that he must paint. . . . the internal contours of that other face . . . facing his own.

III

And so, taking the hint from the portrait, which is not, as it happens, Romano's major interest as a painter, it is this approach which characterizes what I have admired otherwise of his work.

'William Carlos Williams'
(1951), oil on canvas,
32"x26"



Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

I am not interested in painting a portrait, he says. What I want to paint is a head. (He might as well have said, what I want to paint is a mask.) I am not an 'artist'. So many nincompoops are artists. I am a painter.

That summarizes the new concept of the man who wants to put pigments upon a taut piece of canvas to spell out an effect. It is the end result of a long period of experimentation, all sorts of experimentation with paint upon canvas.

All the good modern paintings, the portrait of Gertrude Stein by Picasso, Cézanne's portrait of Mme. Cézanne have been experiments. All have been more important as successful experiments than as anything else. Beautiful. Wonderful work. All of it has been distinguished. All of it has given us great freedom and told us nothing more.

But when I look at Rubens, I see a love of the flesh, good food, wine, the bodies of women. He loved it. He lived it. He painted it. El Greco! I see the spirit rising above the death of a man. In the work of Michael Angelo, even in his sonnets, you can see the man. His works that he did late in life, of the Christ, only one leg finished—there is tremendous feeling, immense understanding of the figure in every part.

The finest work of Rembrandt, of Titian was painted when they were old. It is to paint the ripeness of knowledge, of understanding, the fullness to

the senses to which all this technical mastery is to be applied.

To paint is to struggle to identify one's self with a world in its newest terms. As the means develops (it is like, as it is in fact, a widened vocabulary) one sees what one did not see before. A vocabulary, which seems to apply merely to speech, actually widens the scope of the mind. The modern painter SEES more than his 19th century peer. He is a more understanding man. His range of subjects is immensely broadened.

IV

The Italian painter, De Chirico, who, young, developed an astounding conception and then, in middle age, gave it up and went so far as to sue a gallery for exhibiting it, is an example of great interest to me. He is an artist who developed young and finished. He could go no further. He said all he had to say. Some shoot themselves. Some give up painting as Rimbaud gave up the poem, and ruin themselves out of a purpose to have done with it.

De Chirico out of melancholy, with cold, dry colours painted robots, the architecture of ruins, the ruins of thought. He took tailors' dummies, stitched in the shape of heads. Dead stuffs. But he made of it exciting statements.

But once he had done this, resembling Stravinsky in his early percussive period, he

was through.

We look in vain for an answer to why De Chirico quit his magnificent early work—until we come to what is happening to everyone who is painting today. His work had come to the end of its usefulness. It had SAID what it had to say. It was in danger of saying what he no longer meant it to say: the scepticism, so beautifully designed, *whose intent was to signify its opposite*—suddenly became malignant. It threatened to seize everyone as it threatened to seize De Chirico in its inhuman mechanisms and pulverize the very bones of his clothes-dummy self. He became alarmed . . . He had to, while he could, run from it, deny it, destroy it. He must rescue himself while it was yet possible.

He had to rescue himself even at the cost of insignificance. He had built a robot that would destroy him. Does he not typify the dilemma that has recently threatened all art and all artists? Pygmalion and Galatea is a facile legend but it holds only a degrading threat to the man of imagination. He cannot afford to be caught in that trap.

V

Emanuel Romano is trying, furiously, without mannerism, without accent of any sort that would baffle the beholder to say that there is a world of pristine colours (clouded by the actual) in his head. A world different from the world we see, an engaging world, a

moving world—hidden from our eyes but in which he lives and moves and breathes. This world he loves, to it he dedicates himself day and night—he dreams it, bathes in it, eats it. Before us he stands dumb, looking into our eyes, embarrassed, unable to do more than try to show us that he KNOWS. He knows it is there. He knows we do not see it—we cannot see it or we should be moved by it.

It is his business to show it to us, to convince our minds of its presence by painting it, placing it before us. It is the world of his imagination. It is the real world, the world that what we call real occludes.

The modern painter is a neo-realist, a painter of the real world, which with a gifted mind he deciphers through the murk. That is what the artist must be today—employing what painter's means he may.

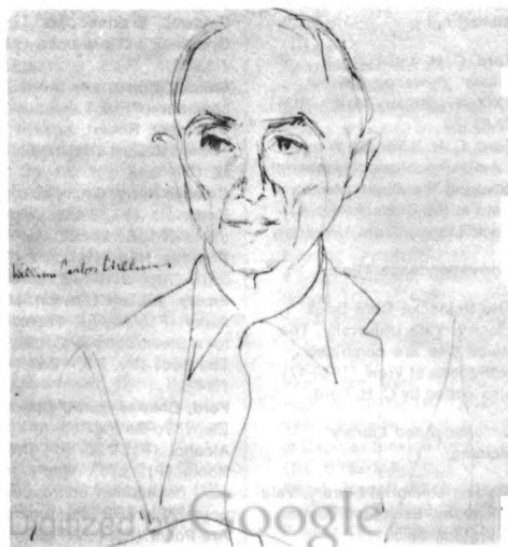
VI

What I am trying to say is that there has been a sweeping change in attitude among artists toward painting today. A serious concern with the subject which has succeeded the age of experimentation—and the interval during which they did no painting at all. It is typified by—maybe Picasso's *Guernica* was one of the early examples—by Matisse devoting himself to the embellishment of the walls of a Benedictine monastery. The stress has made a complete revolution, THE revolution,

'William Carlos Williams'
(1951), pen drawing



'William Carlos Williams'
(1957), pen drawing



the only revolution of which art in its own body is capable, back to Giotto, to the inner vision, to what the artist 'sees' and depicts with deepest sincerity AND ALL HIS NEWLY ACQUIRED PROFICIENCIES OF TECHNIQUE.

It is another turn of the wheel, a re-embodiment of feeling, of sanctity, of devotion to the human freight, that the artist like all others must bear. It is this new phrase, as interpreted in paint, as Giotto, with his great skill and simple faith transcribed his inner vision, the reality of what he saw so movingly during his lifetime.

At last I am coming to this new painters' faith that moves Emanuel Romano, at last I have found a way in which I can speak of a painter directly and sincerely, of something which moves me in his work. If I had not approached his work thus circuitously I would not have been able to say what I want to say.

Here is an humble approach, but here is a highly trained and deeply experienced approach to the task a painter assumes when he begins to put paint upon canvas. Romano is furiously at work, working night and day (as if there were not time enough in which to get it said) to tell the beholder the secrets of his mind—not of his mind even so much as of the healing images which he alone sees reflected there.

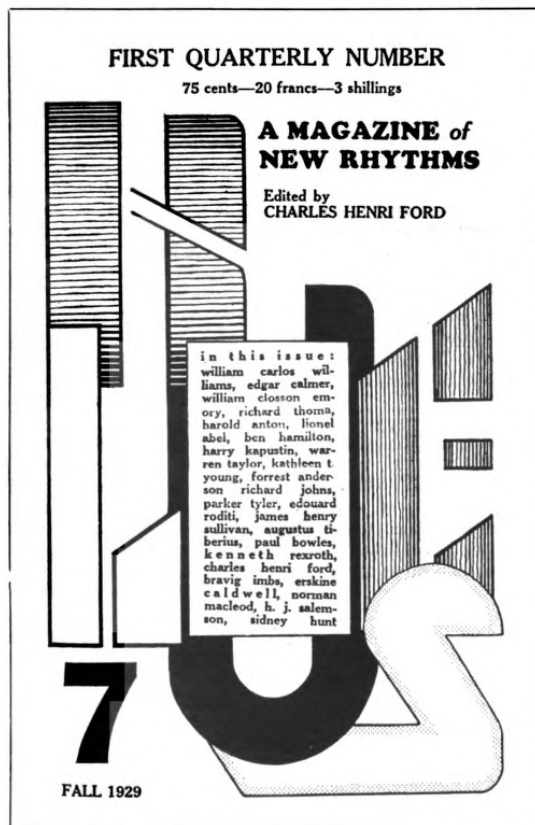
He SEES these colours and

these contours. And he knows that if only he can get them out, and put them upon the canvas everyone will be healed. He knows it—and he knows the time is short. He must work, work furiously to paint, to lay it bare that others may be blessed—not by his selfishness in wanting them to see HIS painting. That is unimportant. But to see, materialized, what the 'reality' of our lives hides.

The real, the truly real that throngs upon his inward view is there within him (as Picasso saw the suffering of the Basques of Guernica, as Matisse sees the monks whose images he is transmitting to the walls of their holy place). So Romano cannot rest a moment in his rush to perform his duty as a man: to show his gift, to exhibit not to himself but the praise that is in him.

We can imagine Bach working in this way upon his *St. Matthew's Passion*. But we must not, we must never forget the new, the new techniques which the great artists of the immediate past have taught us. Romano does not forget any of it.

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Cover of 'Blues' No. 7,
designed by Andrée Rexroth,
9 1/2" x 6 1/4"

C. H. Ford, now living in Athens, has issued a warning that he may 'complete' 'Blues' with a final issue, No. 10!

We would very much like to receive any information about Sidney Hunt (see his London letter), the editor of the English dadaist—constructivist magazine 'Ray' (London 1927-28).

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1. February-July 1929; Charles Henri Ford, Kathleen Tankersley Young
 2. March 1929; C.H.F., K.T.Y.
 3. April 1929; C.H.F., K.T.Y.
 4. May 1929; C.H.F., K.T.Y.
 5. (June) 1929; C.H.F., K.T.Y.
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 7. Fall 1929; C.H.F., K.T.Y., Parker Tyler
 8. Spring 1930; C.H.F., P.T.
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- Contributing editors for Nos. 1-8: Herman Spector, Oliver Jenkins, William Carlos Williams, Jacques Le Clercq, Joseph Vogel, Eugene Jolas. No. 9 simply lists Williams and Jolas as Advisory editors.

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Correspondence Files:

The Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University. The *Blues* files are combined with those of *View* (1940-47), also edited by C. H. Ford.

Recommended Library Holding:

Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. Estimated cost of microfilm: \$8.50

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F = Fiction,
C = Criticism or Correspondence)

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From 'Blues':

George Hugnet
 by Gertrude Stein

George and Genevieve
 Geronimo with or with
 whether they thought
 they were with whether. They
 thought that they with
 whether.
 Without their finding it out.
 Without. Their finding it out.
 With whether.
 George whether they were
 about. With their finding
 their whether it finding it out
 whether with their finding
 about it out.
 George with their finding it
 with out.
 George whether their with their
 it whether.
 Redoubt out with about.
 Without out whether it their
 whether with out doubt.
 Azure can with our about.
 It is welcome welcome thing.
 George in are ring.
 Lain away awake.
 George in our ring.
 George Genevieve Geronimo
 straightened it out without
 their finding it out.
 Grammar makes George in our
 ring which Grammar makes
 George in our ring.
 Grammar is as disappointed
 not is as Grammar is as
 disappointed.
 Grammar is not as Grammar
 is as disappointed.
 George is in our ring. Grammar
 is not is disappointed. In are
 ring.
 George Genevieve in are ring.

From 'Blues':

Sonnet by Parker Tyler

I smell an oriental luxury
 from him
 his suit is brown
 I smell an or-
 riental lux
 I love his nose
 ury
 from him
 's slender hook
 I smell an or-
 rien
 and he is strong as rope
 tal lux-
 ury from
 excellently built
 him
 I
 I dream of
 smell an oriental lux-
 ur
 him at night that
 y from him
 he
 I
 makes love to me yes
 smell an orien-
 tal luxury from
 strenuous love
 him
 sweet marvellous
 I smell an orien-
 tal
 he's in busi
 luxury from him
 ness
 I
 a Jew and 0 his sex ap
 smell
 an
 peal
 rien
 him
 from
 ury
 lux
 smell

From 'Blues': London Letter from Sidney Hunt

London
 September 1929

Dear Charles Henri Ford,
 I showed BLUES to a young
 anglojewish poet publishing
 his first book this autumn
 and he was sniffy not to say
 snotty about it, ignored the
 newer names just mumbled
 'oh Gertrude Stein mm H. D.
 humm'. He turned out to be
 one of those circultourists
 of whom we have more than
 our fair share. And the
 automaton worked according
 to formula you could see him
 coming quick to assert his
 modernity OH he had been
 ALL through the modern
 movement, the 'modern'
 movement being a nicely-
 rounded off circular tour on
 a giant racer, the thrills now
 comfortably over & its him and
 the rest of the arty literary
 crew for the sweet english
 countryside tea on the lawn
 or back to this that & the
 other. Back to mother-church
 (o & they've got their
 independence too, not that
 nasty ostentatious roman
 church, but that refined insect
 anglo-catholicism) or back to
 sanity, back even to rubens
 back to insularity & the
 peculiar arrogance found here
 as of the 'rising' woman
 sculptor who complained to
 me of Brancusi that he was
 SO LIMited & of art critics
 who spoke and will speak
 always of cubist EXPERIMENTS
 and EXERCISES in
 abstraction. There is a sniffy
 earnestness & superciliousness
 towards the new thing, a
 constipated preference for
 say Virginia Woolf to James
 Joyce & the inevitable new
 standard of weakly modern

good taste that badly needs
 a belated whiff of to-hell-with-
 art propaganda.

There are still of course
 the dozen or two others
 with quickerbeating hearts,
 not enough to support either
 as contributors or subscribers
 a british periodical of purely
 adventurous & 'experimental'
 work & what is being done
 must be sought mainly in
 american & franco-american
 reviews & in such recent
 volumes as Laura Ridings
 LOVE AS LOVE, DEATH AS
 DEATH, & Robert Graves
 POEMS 1929 both published
 here by the Seizin Press, a
 notable & lively book is just
 about due from the same press
 called NO TROUBLE a
 collection of letters to friends
 by Len Lye, a newcomer from
 Australia, a great kid with a
 big laugh who writes as he
 talks. About due also is Lye's
 abstract film on which he
 has been working for over
 a year making thousands of
 drawings—rhythm of universal
 life elementary forms up to
 human with much sexual
 imagery that may after all
 get it turned down here. All
 I hope is that Len keeps clear
 of the Great British
 Intelligentsia. As D. H.
 Lawrence does, goddamming
 the upperclasses a real treat
 in his new book of
 cleverenough verse PANSIES.
 He repeats usefully such old
 discoveries as there's o
 nothing wrong in sex,
 englishmen are rotten lovers,
 etcetera. A man with a
 message Walt Whitman,
 Edward Carpenter; some say
 Jesus Christ, Buddha and
 D. H. Lawrence.

Richard Aldington's DEATH
 OF A HERO just published is
 not standardised art. its got
 IT, guts, & modern english as
 well as other slang used
 happily. A war story mainly.

Who wants a rock of ages?
 there is a good variety—
 Eliot's anglocatholic royalist
 classicism, Wyndham Lewis'
 less ladylike alignment with
 Aquinas in torrents of words,
 Middleton Murry's hopeful
 it'll-all-come-right-in-the-end-
 somewhere-somewhen
 gropings in the infinite,
 expressed respectively in the
 CRITERION, THE ENEMY,
 NEW ADELPHI.

(((O & our labour government,
 a prime minister who attends
 almost officially a Shaw
 firstnight, plans for what
 religionists fear will be
 orgiastic sunbaths in Hyde
 Park, a distinct lull in the war
 on 'obscene' books))) quite
 the little revolution.

Of the revolution of the word
 & the dream let loose there
 is little here. For that we
 come to you, blues and others.

Yours sincerely,

Sidney Hunt

Dear Ford,

We've just read 'Angel Arms'. Rather Sandburg-sentimental-tough, Spector is so much better in the same material. Fearing's workmanship lacks the courage of great craftiness (Wallace Stevens 'strange malice'). *The Cabinet of Simplicity* could have been a fine poem, as it is it's a rather self-conscious joke, the most Spectorish; *They Liked It, Angel Arms, St. Agnes' Eve* are, perhaps, with *Evening Song*, the best. Fearing particularly suffers from a vice somewhat exhibited by Spector's piece in the *May Blues*, that is, the unnecessary and frequently abortive envoi. One of the many essences of a poem is that it is emphatically not, at least when produced by a modern mind, a syllogism. The custom of writing over a 'seventh' ending to a temporal, emotional, or factual conclusion in the last lines or verse reduces (often) the foregoing poetic statements to the undressed lonely humor of premises, rather than as they should be, the material from which can be drawn any number of contingent and often conflicting premises. One of the qualities of a work of art, to employ the language of a recent psychology, is the fecundity of *gestalten*, arising from its harmonic complexity. Any aesthetic object is a fake universe and is good insofar as it produces the illusion of that richness of potential pattern which is a function of universe . . .

There will appear in the 3rd *American Caravan* a long essay by Winters entitled *the reintegration of the human spirit in the poetry, chiefly french and american, of modern times* about 60 pages. Before i went to L.A. i had started on a counterblast to this weighty document. I shall get the ms. back and continue it, not however to the length of 60 pages. The same ground is covered in *Phronesis*, the long poem I am sending you, but I think a more explicit rebuttal of the neoclassic-noethomist-neodostoyevsky philosophy (if it merits the dignity of that term) that is winning so many adherents from tired *lunists* is very much needed. Winters' article to my mind has but slight intrinsic value; it does however excellently shew forth the aforesaid attitude, and is sure to be taken seriously in the circles that take such things seriously. There is much in my point of view (which i assume to be also yours and that of many others writing today) that needs clarification. Jolas et confrères have not shown that they were capable of this task and W. C. Williams' articles I think only make matters worse. I do not think them 'inexcusable' as Winters said; they are very interesting, but they arent ever likely to become proverbial for their Aristotelian lucidity. About the lucidity, i said aristotelian, i have never found Wms confusing or confused, but many are wedded to certain thought formulas (Arthur (*sic*) Winters in particular) and it is with the

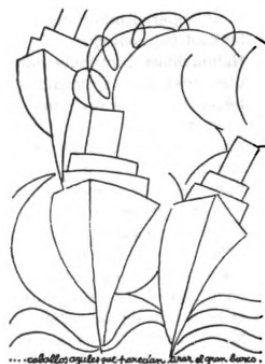
greatest anguish that they see those formulas outraged or disregarded. A matter of the pot calling the kettle black. I certainly prefer any essay of Wms to the masterpiece of Winters in the forthcoming *Caravan*. But neither of them has done for modern poetry what Gleizes or Ozenfant have done for plastic. Stein has, but few realize it or care. In a very general way, that is, and in terms of a philosophy a little too simple to be succinct. Otherwise, *misere mei Deus*, we have Laura Riding and Allen Tate, which is a pity. They always remind me of, respectively, A. J. Eddy and W. H. Wright's books on painting. Altho those worthy and baffled gentlemen never descended to the bathos of snobbery characteristic of Riding and Tate . . .

Since the war (which should have banished such ideas forever) nationalism has run rampant in u.s. criticism. Josephson and Williams, men for whom otherwise i have the greatest respect, are i suppose the most guilty. Just what they are talking about i dont know. the only art which is valuable because of its nativeness is that of peasants and savages (of course much of the work appearing in the periodicals of the avant-garde is produced by intellectual bushmen) what is bad about Shakespeare or Goethe is precisely the faults of the perhaps faultiest races in europe. The stressing of peculiarly native elements in a work of art seems to me to be only playing into the hands

of an imperialism on the lookout for apologists. Nationalities contribute only blemishes, german music *is* beery, french poetry *does* smell of talcum powder, english literature is saturated with the robust sodomy of the Public School. There are so many things wrong with the arts in these states that it is difficult to know what to blame specifically on the body politic. Mencken more or less sums up our national faults in himself. His is a sort of vicarious atonement. It is a pity he cant be crucified. I was born in the well known middle west, i have been in every one of the 48 states and 2 territories, i know of nothing more beautiful, or of no people less objectionable, poetry today in america is about as vital as it has ever been in the history of the english speaking people (as vital, not necessarily as good), but when today someone tells me that my Duty Is To Express What Is Native To America, i am just a little afraid that tomorrow i shall be told to Go Back To Russia Where I Came From.

Faithfully,

Kenneth Rexroth



Drawing for 'Blues' by Augustin Lazo, a young Cuban artist whose drawings in 'Blues' No. 9, used through the courtesy of '1930: Revista de Avance' (Havana) are illustrations for a book, 'Torre de Babel' by Luis Cardoza y Aragon (Ediciones 1930: Revista de Avance). (From 'Notes on contributors')

From 'Blues':

Are Poem by Charles Henri Ford

esp. if red
can set rocking anyway
on a thumbjoint anybody's head:

though,

one taking in and out a big breath postponing sickness,
some nerves in whenever unlight makes sunlight
shall not be very strung:

morning (with night
early on the side of it)
and sleep, being what a small death, are.

From 'Blues': July 5th 1929 by Sidney Hunt

a man told me today he slept in segovia
and killed 3 bugs on his pillow hell i care
though to sleep with bugs is no pleasure
his wife turned over and saw another
so another misunderstanding occurred because

we gave our order originally through the agent Sells
with whom to hell tell me mother another
story of pretty boys sleeping on bugless beds
with drooping singing hipscurled in
one thing and the other
a thing of beauty is a bore for ever

and a day is born again

the sun is risen
the day is ended down where the sun goes
down and out
they come the little buggers they creep into sleep
and dreams droop over
my hips sing a soft pink song

insidious
oundless

From 'Blues':

Can the Poet Change the World ?

A Radio-Dialogue by Gottfried Benn and
Johannes R. Becher

translated by Eugene Jolas

Becher: In your essay entitled 'On the Problem of the Poetic', regarding the characteristics of the poet, you presented a viewpoint which we might reduce to the following formula: the poet has no influence on his age, he does not make his action felt on the sequence of historical events, and, because of his very essence, is unable to do so: he stands outside of history. Is this not perhaps a somewhat absolute standpoint?

Benn: Would you prefer I had written, the poet should be interested in parliament, municipal politics, real estate sales, industrial depression or the progress of the fifth estate?

Becher: There are, however, a number of prominent writers who do not share your attitude of rejection and proceed from the idea that we stand at a turning point of the age, that there is developing a new type of humanity, and that the path towards an entirely changed and better future can be described.

Benn: Of course, you can describe a better future, there have always been story-tellers of utopias, Jules Verne, for instance, or Swift. As far as the turning point of the age is concerned, I have repeatedly directed my experiments towards the idea that the age is always turning, that a new type of humanity is always evolving and that formulas like 'dawn of mankind' and the 'flush of dawn' gradually come to represent concepts of an almost mythical solidity and regularity.

Becher: Thus you consider every participation of the poet in the discussion of the questions of the day as a deviation.

Benn: As a hobby. I see that a group of writers are fighting for the abolition of law 218, that another one is trying to bring about the elimination of the death penalty. This is the type of writers who, since the age of enlightenment, assume their visible place in public. Their domain consists of local interests, efforts of free-thinkers, in which Voltaire's famous defence of Calas and Zola's *J'accuse* have their inevitable echo.

Becher: And you do not include this direction of writing within the frontiers of poetry?

Benn: We know by experience that it is rarely found within these frontiers. Writers whose work turns to the empirical institutions of civilization, surrender thereby to the side of those who experience the world realistically, who regard it as materially constituted, and feel it as three dimensional in its effect; they surrender to the technicians and the warriors, to the arms and legs that change frontiers and put wires across the earth; they move into the world of horizontal and accidental changes—whereas the poet possesses in principle another kind of experience and strives for concentrations other than practically effective ones which serve so-called progress.

Becher: You say: the

technicians and the warriors. So you think they alone change the world?

Benn: Whatever may be changed in it. Yes, I am of the opinion that the concept super-imposed on those two—to wit, that of the scientist, is the real and fundamental antipodes of the poet; the scientist who lives for a logic which is supposed to hold generally true, but is merely lucrative, who has imposed an idea of truth which goes a long way towards meeting the popular conceptions of demonstrability, general experience and utilitarian values, and who propagates an ethics that ensures the primacy of the average. I understand that a nation which has learned nothing further than the continual mention of art and science in the same breath should have avidly absorbed the wisdom of enlightenment which always puts the two figures together, especially in a century in which science really had a certain impulsion that pretended to be creative. But I understand something more than that: Suppose you ride out on a Sunday a hundred kilometers north of Berlin into the region of the Great Elector, Fehrbellin and the Frederick the Great country: a scanty and desert-like landscape, impossible to describe, towns and villages which are poverty and distress in person, real breeding places of the casual urge; then you will see why Kleist, the poet of *Penthesilea*, should have remained an ever-embarrassing and arrogant figure among a

people who learnt from the appearance of the agrarian burgher, and the head of the township, practical utility as the basis of its colorless emotion.

Becher: You mean to say then: *Penthesilea* is a great poem, but it had not the slightest effect, neither politically, nor socially, nor culturally?

Benn: That is exactly what I mean. And also that in our time the example of the next great German poem, I refer to *The Small Town* by Heinrich Mann, has had no influence whatever, not even one of style. It cannot be expressed in any other way: Works of art are phenomenal, historically without influence, practically without sequence. That is their greatness.

Becher: But that is a perfectly nihilistic conception of poetry, is it not?

Benn: If social progress is positive, then yes. Look at the series of works of art left by history, *Nefertete* and the Doric Temple, *Anna Karenina* or the *Song of Nausikaa* in the *Odyssey*—nothing in them points beyond themselves, nothing needs an elucidation, nothing wants to be effective beyond itself, it is the character of figures sunk in themselves, of silent and introspective images. If you wish to call that nihilistic, it is the special nihilism of art.

Becher: You see this parade of silent figures. I will show you another parade. Thirty-six

thousand tubercular persons live in Berlin unable to find shelter, forty thousand women die annually in Germany as a result of illegal operations because of the law you mentioned before. Think of the unspeakable and touching struggle for education which the majority of our compatriots are engaged in. Think of the unemployed, young men, in their thirties, who cannot find work or money in the city, but instead crowded beds and rats in their lodgings. Listen to the following document: a household of eleven members, the father drinks, the mother expects her tenth child, a daughter of fourteen buys herself beef blood at the butcher's for a few pennies, pours it over her breast, in order to get away from the tenement into a tubercular home with the aid of this feigned disease. Is that not grief, misery, bastardisation of happiness—and the poet should look on?

Benn: I do not hesitate for a moment: yes, the poet should look on. Not the poet who composes cultural reading matter and intellectual pretexts for change of stage scenery at night, nor he who sits next to a minister at the banquet, a carnation in his button-hole, and five wine-glasses on the table, nor he who signs proclamations against distress of the age. No, the poet who looks on is he who knows that the undeserved misery of the world can never be relieved by charity measures, can never be conquered by material improvements—Hygienic wish-

ecstasies of short-legged rationalists: have capital in your heart and artificial sun in your home. A creation without horror, jungles without bites, nights without nightmares that ride their victims—no, the poet looks on in a conviction not to be denied before death itself, that he alone possesses the substance to banish the horror and to conciliate the victims: sink down then, he calls to them, sink down but I could also say: rise.

Becher: Curious substance! But for the moment I should like to call your attention to a very important contemporary. Did you recently read the address which Alfred Doeblin made at the commemoration ceremony in honor of the late Arno Holz at the Academy of Arts? He demands the levelling down of the entire German literature so that the people may understand it. Towards a new naturalism, he says, which comprises the most general of the average! Reading, he says, not art! To be understood, he says, not wrestling with our own visions! To influence the life of the nation, he says, to have a feeling for the distress of the rising masses! Let's fight: change the world!

Benn: Doubtless very amazing that such a sublime, such a metaphysical epic writer like Doeblin should say such obvious things. But almost a classic example of my theory that the poet runs the risk, as soon as he leaves his poetic region, of losing in the lower planes his vision

and his means, which he should conserve at all costs and in any case, not out of vanity or because of his person, but just because of the fragility of the world which has need of him everywhere and seeks him, his rank, his order, his interpretation, the immersion in his art.

Becher: Somewhat mystic.

Benn: But I leave you your technicians and warriors, science, literature—the entire free-roving tumult of civilization; I demand for the poet merely the liberty to shut himself off from contemporaries who consist partly of disinherited small stock owners and querulous utilitarians, and partly of Hertha- and Poseidon-swimmers: he wants to go his own way.

Becher: Estheticism.

Benn: No, moral. Impenetrable confusion of the civilization tendency to see the ethical merely as a regulation of social ties. The artist has no ethical attitude, he is a freebooter, a *schnorrer*, a true esthete. He shakes everything out of his cuffs, a circus clown, yesterday an ascetic play, tomorrow a Prometheus-pamphlet. Ah, to whom shall one explain it: for seven years, wrote one, for seven years, I fought, alone, in town and village, for seven years just as Jacob fought for Rachel, I fought for a page of prose, for a verse. To whom shall one point out that essay of Heinrich Mann's, dealing with

Flaubert. It describes how Flaubert, after having written so much art, wanted to write something else, something kind, sympathetic, the cares of the day, the happiness of all, but impossible; he could not force it into his technique, he could not bring it within the idea of the novel, he had to go on and on in the style, always on in the yoke of phrases, again and again into the storied bed which mutilates head and limbs: art. Often I think, too, how fearfully such a kind man as Nietzsche must have suffered, when he wrote the sentence: whoever falls should be kicked, too,—this hard, this brutal phrase. But he had no choice, he had to go aboard, noon slept upon time and space, and only one eye was watching him: infinity. There was no other moral for him than truth of his style and knowledge, for all the ethical categories end for the poet in the categories of individual perfection.

Becher: Really ghastly. But has not the artist from time immemorial served mankind, by banishing, through imitation and poetic representation, the fearful and frightening from the disquieting phenomena?

Benn: That is just what I suggested before apropos of substance. The poet who is born through fate to the ambiguity of being, and is projected, with acherontic shudders, into the abyss of the individual entity, by categorising and imagistically sublimating it, succeeds in transfiguring it beyond the

brutal realism of nature, beyond the blind and untamed desires of the casual urge, beyond the common imprisonment of low degrees of recognitions, and creates a category which is legitimate. That seems to me to be the position and the task of the poet before the world. You think he should change it?—make it more beautiful, but according to which taste? Better—but according to which moral? Deeper—but according to the measure of which knowledge? Where, above all, shall he focus the lens with which he comprehends it, the knowledge to lead it, the greatness for justice before its aims—on whom then shall he lean—on her 'who lives in children only', as Goethe said, 'but the mother, where is she?'

Becher: So he takes his criteria from himself alone, pursues no aims, serves no tendency?

Benn: He follows his individual monomania. Wherever the latter is comprehensive, it creates the extreme image of the last greatness attainable by man. This greatness does not want to make changes nor have influences, this greatness wants to exist only. Always attacked by the stupidity of rationalism, always confirmed by the genius of humanity itself. Of humanity which, as far as I can survey its destiny, has never followed convictions, but always appearances, never teachings, but always images, and which changes from too far back for our eyes to follow its

course.

Becher: Thus the poet writes monologues?

Benn: Autonomies. There works here, to use a phrase of Schiller's, liberty roaming without rules on the bond of necessity. This necessity, however, is transcendental, not empirical, not material, not opportunistic, not progressive. It is the *ananke*, it is the song of the three fates: justice from out of the mouth of the deep. It is the secret of thinking and of the spirit in general. It comes only to the few, and poets and thinkers are in their final form identical before them. Just as Rodin's statue, the Thinker, which stands at the entrance to the nether world, originally was called the Poet, so the words on the stone base are meant for both: the titan sunk in a painful dream. In the same way the superb image of Nietzsche's in his essay, 'Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks': 'no fashion meets them helpful and ready to take their burden'; a giant, he writes, calls to another over the dreary intervals of the ages, and, undisturbed by the gay, noisy mass of dwarfs, the sublime converse of the spirits pursues its way.

Form

3

Charles Biederman

Victor Pasmore

El Lissitzky

Ian Hamilton Finlay

Robert Pinget

Ernst Jandl

Paul de Vree

Kenneth Robinson

Mies van der Rohe

Kurt Schwitters

Theo van Doesburg

Miklos Bandi

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Form No. 2: Errata

We very much regret the appearance of two unfortunate mistakes in Basil Gilbert's article 'The Reflected Light Compositions of Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack' in Form No. 2. In the introductory note the date of Hirschfeld's death was given as 1964, whereas he in fact died in January 1965, and did give a private performance of the 'Reflected Light Compositions' when visiting Darmstadt in 1964. And on page 13 the reference to 'imagination ... untypical of the Weimar Bauhaus' should of course read 'typical'. We apologise to Basil Gilbert and to readers for these errors.

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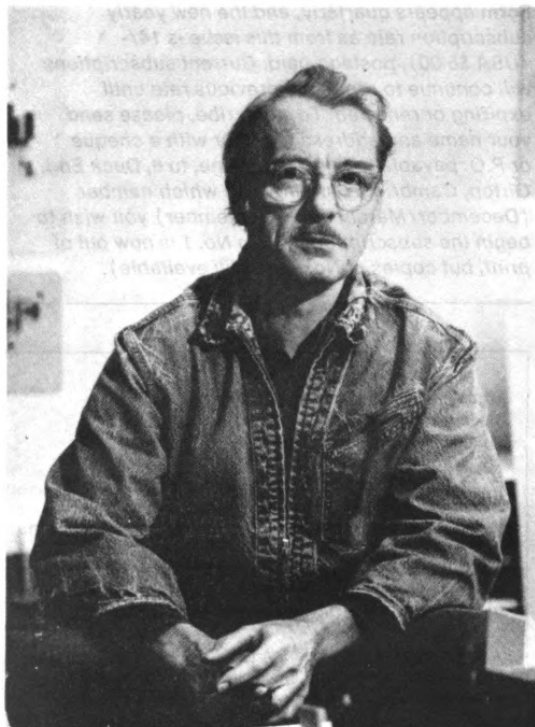
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In this issue Form publishes a condensed version which Charles Biederman has prepared of three articles written by him since 1959, and first published in the magazine 'Structure': and in addition a recent letter to an English art student, Michael Wilson. Two further articles, 'Symmetry: Nature and the Plane' and 'A Non-Aristotelian Creative Reality' will appear in Form No. 4.

Charles Biederman's book, 'Art as the Evolution of Visual Knowledge', appeared in 1948—a crucial period in the development of modern art after the interruption of the second world war. Published in America at the same time as the first manifestations of the Action Painters, Biederman's book underlines the dynamism of the American contribution by concentrating on the opposite pole of the modern creative process.

But, just as the Action Painters were able to transform their fauvist influences, so Biederman's structural theory attempted to re-orientate the cubist constructive outlook.

When considered, therefore, in relation to the necessity of re-establishing the intellectual conditions essential for further development, Biederman's book emerges as one of the first major contributions to post-war critical analysis in the visual arts.

Nature and Art by Charles Biederman

Condensed from an article published in 'Structure', second series, No. 1, 1959.

Nature and Art (1959)

... Is there an old and a new nature, as some now claim? Can nature be rediscovered, revealed anew as different from past visions? That is, lead to a new vision of art? Or is it, that the artist transforms the old nature into a newness? Is it the artist, then, who becomes new, not nature, since it is his art that makes nature new? Or, is it that nature is no longer necessary, if not destructive to future art? These questions indicate the three general attitudes which characterise all art since Monet...

Once the stable models of nature had given their last art to Courbet, these same objects appeared to disintegrate under the brush of artists who followed, in the same way that the stable sensory world of matter was said to have disintegrated for the scientists. Nature disintegrated into atomic particles, so to speak—the dots and commas of Impressionism... If objects remained on the canvas, they were no longer the result of the reality perception of Courbet. Indeed, objects were no longer the goal, but only the starting point by which to achieve the 'atomic' structuring of light as color... The object was no longer permitted to hold its form or color, but increasingly gave way to that unity of color-structure that was *potential* to painting, as such.

It was from Impressionism, carried to its ultimate pitch

of development by Monet, that there ensued the two general interpretations of nature that have determined all art since. One of these views held that the object as it is, could no longer exert its determinations upon the forms of art, that the artist was free to determine the forms these objects would take. It is this view that has dominated the vision of all but a handful of artists since Monet... Man as artist had set himself against nature. Free of the literal demands of nature's objects, artists assumed they were free of any demands of nature, even though they *continued* to use its objects... 'It is not the picture X which manages to correspond with my subject', writes Gris, 'but subject X which manages to correspond with my picture'.

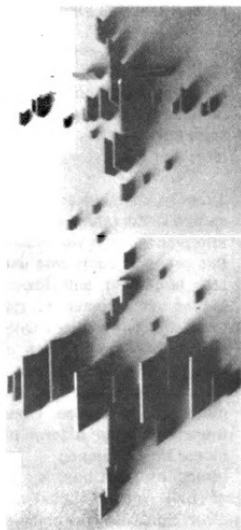
After Cubism art became characterised by a series of repeated crises. While the artist held himself above nature, believing he was 'recreating', at the same time he was obviously imitating the forms of nature. This explains the repeated denunciations of, followed by the repeated returns to nature, which have occurred with monotonous regularity throughout our century... for however much the artist sought to create, nature remained the determinant of his art, as in the past, regardless of the permutations to which the artist now subjected nature's objects. The artist found himself in an irrational situation. It would be no exaggeration to characterise

1: Kahnweiler, Daniel-Henry, *Jean Cézanne, His Life and Art*, New York, 1947, p 138.

2: Gasquet, Joachim, 'Paul Cézanne', Paris, 1921, p 91.
3: Gasquet, op. cit., p 119.
5: *ibid.*, p 91.

6: *ibid.*, p 80.
7: Bernard, Emile, 'Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne', Paris, 1926.
10: Kahnweiler, op. cit., p 117.
11: Gasquet, op. cit., p 80.
12: *ibid.*, p 80.

Charles Biederman:
Structurist Relief, Red Wing,
(No 40) 12/1958-64',
collection Mr and Mrs Louise
Zelle.



M. Moore

it as schizophrenic. *The problem of art and nature had become sheer paradox.* He was recreating while most certainly imitating nature. It was then necessary to discover that the irrational was superior to the rational . . .

This brings us to the second general interpretation of nature to come out of Monet's Impressionism. It was Paul Cézanne who alone managed it. Like Monet, he too was not in conflict with nature. He continued Monet's search into nature as an entirely new view of reality. If Monet saw nature largely as color-structure, Cézanne went the rest of the way. He saw nature as spatial-color-structure. It then became clear why he proposed to 'establish

an impressionist tradition', in order 'to release its characteristics'.² He would 'draw nearer to reality',³ nearer to the new, the deeper view of reality. What, essentially was the new reality? If past artists found their art in the creations of nature's reality, in its objects, so did those who later wished to 'recreate' nature. The latter had not achieved any *basic change* in the old method of art. Instead of pursuing nature *mimetically as reality*, they pursued it *mimetically as fantasy*. Beginning with Monet, however, and completely so with Cézanne, objects became wholly a matter of optical structure—nature as a purely creative process which underlies all objects alike. *Artists no longer found their art but only their method of art*, not in the creations but *only in the creative method of nature's structural process*. I call this the Structurist direction of art. It was this daring vision which Cézanne alone brought almost to full consciousness . . .

After Cézanne art is no longer a question of this particular form, this particular color, this particular space, but of the *creative pulsations* that *structurally permeate* all forms. all colors, all spaces. It is there that the new laws of nature will be discovered for future art. It was to this perception of nature that Cézanne referred, when he observed that: 'Nature is not on the surface, but in the depth'.⁵ . . . 'What is underneath her? Perhaps everything. Everything, do you under-

stand?'⁶. . . 'I force myself to forget our illustrious predecessors—the method of art had changed—I require knowledge *only of Creation*.'⁷ *This was the great critical distinction, between the old and the new, that was lost on all his contemporaries, and most artists since . . .*

Two general interpretations of nature, and so art, have been presented. They reveal the critical division that rends art right down the middle. The one, the interpretation of the majority since Monet, assumes the prerogative of limiting and subjecting nature to art as a purely private, always necessarily elusive affair. All interference from the outside, especially any demands made by nature, are obsessively rejected. It is proposed to accomplish nothing less than the 'recreation of the outer world'.¹⁰ The other interpretation, harboring no aspirations for dominating nature, seeks a 'harmony parallel to nature'.¹¹ That was Cézanne's answer to the object painters of his day, who, as he put it, claimed that the 'painter is always inferior to nature'.¹² . . . The artist who adopts a position of superiority to nature, . . . if (he does) not ignore it altogether, must pay a heavy price for his dubious freedom. For he enters into conflict with nature, a conflict which can never be resolved . . .

In my opening remarks I purposely drew a parallel between the disintegration of 'matter' via the *vision of science* and the disintegration

of the object via the *vision of art* . . . Because of certain apparent parallels between the two fields, some artists have chosen to follow the lead of science. It has to be admitted, science seems to offer a tempting and ready-made solution for all the ills of art before the problem of nature . . . Whatever laws the scientist may attribute to the structure of light, be these 'particles', 'waves', or 'wavicles', light will continue to act as before in art . . . It becomes necessary to point out that there has not been any disintegration of the object by art, any more than science has disintegrated anything . . . The notion of disintegration in both fields is but a cover-up before a nature that simply will not stand still . . . The tendency is to consider the old reality destroyed, instead of properly relating it to the new view of reality. We want nature to hold still as a single reality, instead of seeing the unity of nature spread like a rainbow of many related orders of reality, of which only a narrow band of the spectrum is visible to our perception and so knowledge. What art has done, at least in the hands of Monet and Cézanne, had nothing to do with disintegration, but with the analysis of the world of objects as the means to reach a deeper level of reality, nature as a creative process of structure . . . The Structurist rejects the Neoplastician's 'destruction', for it can only lead to the disintegration of art. For proof, there is all the art you want . . .

Sphere and Cube by Charles Biederman

Condensed from an article published in
'Structure', sixth series, No. 1, 1964.

Sphere and Cube (1963)

Why limit form, even composition, to the rectangle? My answer will come from what has developed out of my work . . . It will be understood that the 'creative' art that will be referred to is neither painting nor sculpture, that it appears in a new medium of actuality, not in any medium of illusion . . .

The artist today has to achieve the most momentous revolution that has ever taken place in the whole history of art, a change from mimetic to a purely creative art, one that must be made without compromising the past, therefore, without contradiction to it . . . This revolution has placed a critical problem before the new artist. Just as the Aurignacian artist was not born a perfected mimeticist, so the new artist is not born a perfected creator of art. Failing to understand this fact properly, the artist will be deceived, his creation defeated . . .

Now it might be pointed out that among the various forms of creative art, there are certain of them that obviously

do create in an orderly direction. We have to ask, then, did the artist adopt his direction of order arbitrarily? It makes all the difference, does it not, if we construct a building by beginning with the roof? Or consider this. No one seems surprised that an Aurignacian artist did not start off as a Courbet or an Ingres. Yet, strangely enough, *it is never asked, whether this law of the nature of human development applies to what is the even more difficult art of creation. Is it then our purpose to suppose that the ultimate in art, pure creation, is immune to all laws of development, the laws of the structure of nature and human nature? . . .* Having agreed that no artist can begin as a perfected master of creation, how is the creative process to be inaugurated? Would not that require that we view the problem in its simplest terms, that we see 'form' and 'composition' in its most genetic 'expression'? The rectangular plane, used to create according to rectangular composing, meets this requirement . . . It was not introduced by any artist of this century. It is the result of a movement in 19th century art, from Monet to Cezanne . . .

Consider the sphere. Fundamentally it is a geometric representation of the curvature structure of nature. No particular form is possible in nature, therefore, whose various aspects cannot be resolved into parallels with aspects of the sphere's

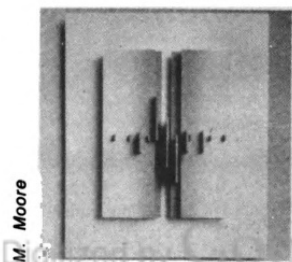
form. This form, the sphere and so all curvature, is, from every point to every other point, one of incessantly changing directions of form. *It is not only complex, but the most complex structure which form can take . . .*

Suppose, then, we simplify the sphere's curvature structure into planes . . . If we continue this process, each time using still larger so still fewer planes, this comes to an inevitable termination. Only six of the many planes now remain. The sphere has disappeared altogether. In its place stands a cube. Where there had been a form of incessantly changing directions, now there is a form of only six changes of direction . . . The complex symmetry structure of nature's curvature has been abstracted to the great simplicity of the cube's symmetry.

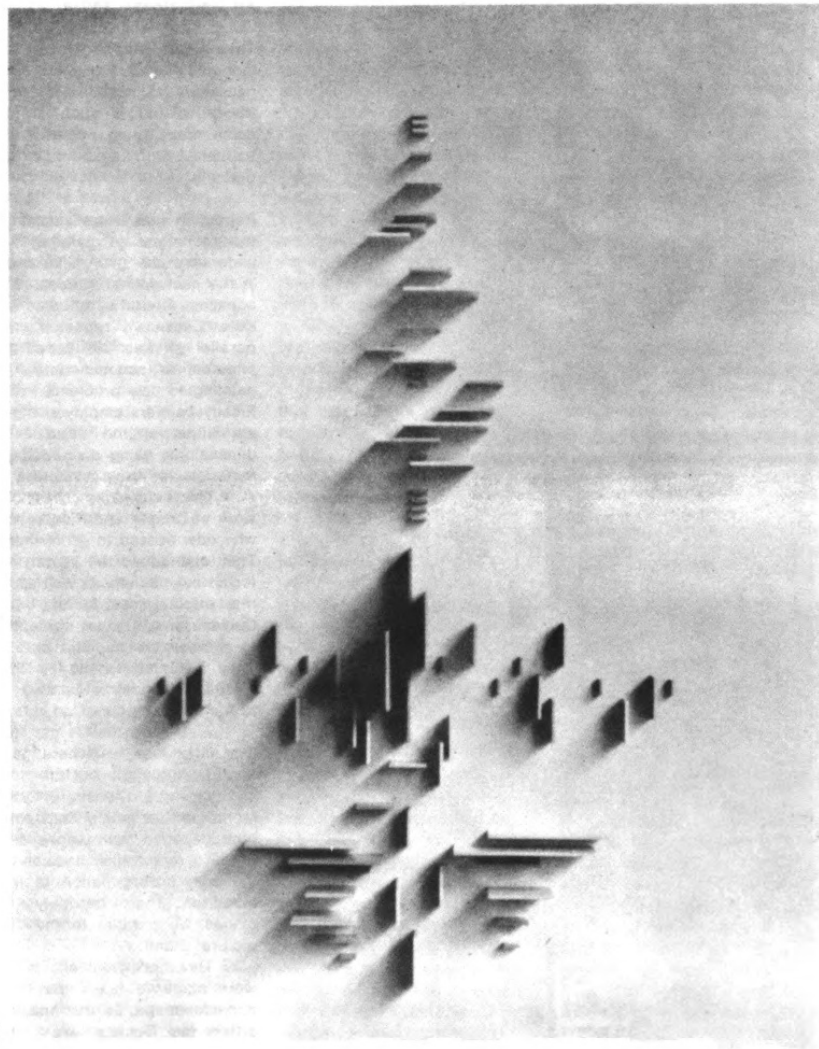
Now, how to inaugurate creation? I suggest composing the cube unit in the context of what I have called elsewhere 'form relief'. The simplest form awareness, the 'sculptural', where form structurally dominates space. The evolution of creative art would then consist of a movement of form from sculptural relief to spatial relief. A movement that can be followed in terms of symmetry. From the simplest symmetry of the cube, similar on its two axes, which permits 'quantitative' variants, to differentiation or variation of symmetry on the horizontal and vertical axes,

which makes possible 'qualitative' variants. As this development proceeds, there is a concurrent change in the form, from the largely quantitative to the largely qualitative. At the same time, a similar symmetry development takes place on the ground plane of the relief, the immediate environment of creation. Eventually the spatial plane is realised, which now composes creations directly into space, when again the quantitative factor asserts itself, but anew. Space has now become a primary structural element of art creation, as palpable as the experience of form. Form has reached a higher level of creative abstraction, so also the possibilities of 'expression'. Form, space, light develop together. Failure means that deception and confusion enter to destroy creation. Therefore, to hasten the means of expression, in part or in whole, is to miss the indispensable *experience and knowledge of growth*, without which true creation cannot be maintained. *By developing the means of creation, the structural aspect of the work, the artist is in fact developing the 'means of expression' . . .* What are the conclusions implicit in the question of rectilinearity? Is it not that the laws of nature and human nature which governed the structural development of mimetic art, also govern the realisation of true creation? It is easy to deceive ourselves that this critically important fact has ceased to be fact, simply because the

Charles Biederman:
'Structurist Relief, Red Wing,
(No 55) 3/1951', private
collection.



Charles Biederman:
Structurist Relief, Red Wing,
 (No 19) 1958-64.



M. Moore

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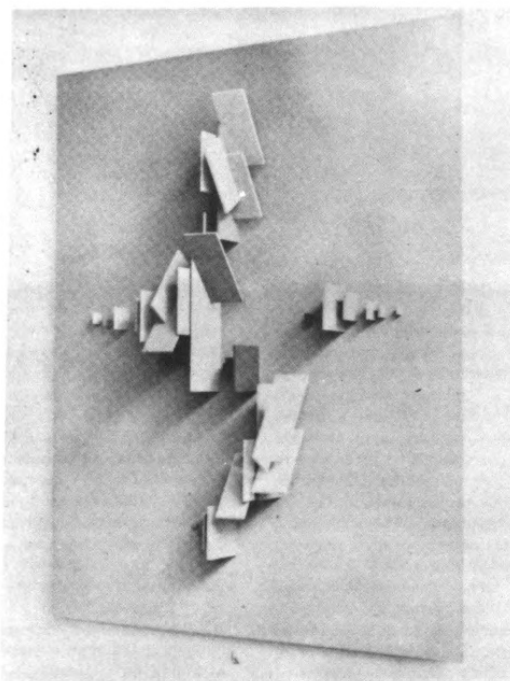
artist no longer has to measure his art to any model in nature, as did all mimetic artists. Thus the false belief has arisen that the artist is the sole measure of creation. It is then but a step to assume that the criteria of nature, its laws, have ceased to operate in art. A Grand Illusion.

... Three new events arise out of the revolution going on in our art times. There is now a new medium for art. While not the handicraft medium of sculpture and painting, still it contains these as limited cases, structurally. There are the new structural problems arising out of creation as distinct from those of mimeticism. Structure is created, no longer imitated. Finally, there is the new perception of nature, seen no longer as merely a collection of individually structured objects, but perceived on a deeper level where nature is permeated at all points continuously, by the movement of creation... All will have to develop together, or become fragmented.

... Is it our intention to deny the plane of curvature in art? To the contrary. Why deny to future artists the complete expanse of the diversity of nature's creative structure?

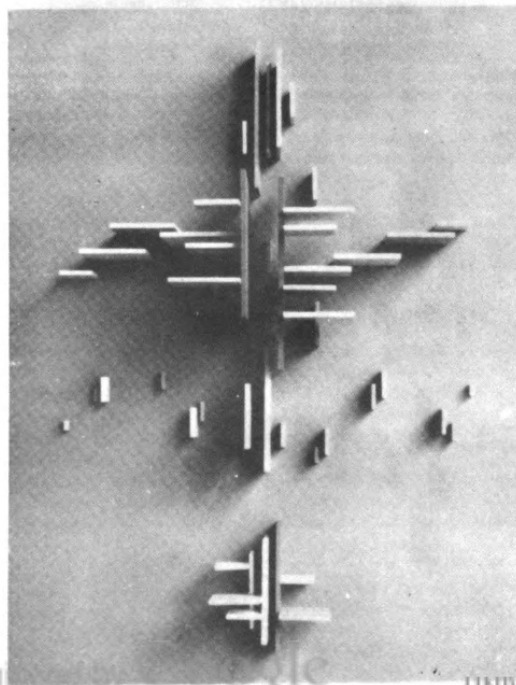
... What has been asserted, the 'key' to our original question, is that however gifted an artist, he is not automatically a perfected master of creation. He is not free to use any material, any colors, any forms, any composing, etc. Freedom and confusion are not synonymous.

Charles Biederman:
'Structurist Relief, Red Wing,
(No 36) 10/1964.



M. Moore

Charles Biederman:
'Structurist Relief, Red Wing,
(No 45) 12/1959.



M. Moore

Art and Motion by Charles Biederman

Condensed from an article published in
'Structure', second series, No. 2, 1960.

Art and Motion (1959)

To evaluate the medium of motion for a work of art, it is necessary to note what transpired before such art came into being. What happened to the medium of painting . . .

Beginning with Impressionism the technique of painting underwent changes unlike any in the past. Monet's repeated commas, Seurat's repeated dots, Cezanne's repeated, parallel strokes, all were attempts to accommodate painting to new problems . . . Finally painters employed the actualities of the three dimensions, using discarded materials for their 'sculpture' . . . This culminated in the work of Braque and Picasso, who now ceased to go further. They abandoned the search for a new medium, as well as the original search of Cubism for a new art content to replace the mimetic one. They retreated to the traditional mediums as also to the old subjects of art . . .

One must look elsewhere, to another direction out of Cezanne—the Cubism of Mondrian. Cezanne's 'constant preoccupation' with planes, as Bernard reported it, became the sole preoccupation of Mondrian. There are only planes, all parallel to the picture plane . . .

. . . Three principal efforts were made to leave the mimetic image. In the first, artists, as Cubists, are defeated and retreat to the old nature reality and its objects, along with the old

mediums. In the second, the artist becomes frustrated before nature, even to the point that Mondrian expressed a 'hatred' for nature, and so denied it altogether as the reality for art. Here too the old medium is retained. In the third, although new mediums are adopted, the basic problems are simply ignored. Artists plunge into the use of all kinds of industrial materials and mediums, into all kinds of spatial attempts, including motion . . .

. . . Evolution is denounced. Schools appear and disappear daily. Each artist has his private territory in art, to which he invites collectors and museum functionaries. Art was produced in any medium in any way. Spatial conquests were announced which were certainly the result of observations made from some universe unlike our own . . . Art was indeed out of this world . . . To change a little some lines of Housman, the artist was 'Alone and afraid/in a nature he never made.'

. . . The two elements which have always been indispensable to the formation of art, have been disrupted and denounced. These are the evolution of the perception of nature, and the evolution of art from the past, each a part of the other. The major problem was to secure a new reality view of nature in order to secure a reality for the new art. It is these problems which 20th century art denounces, for in them it senses its defeat. There has been a tragic

failure of the development of art. For the human race, for the individual, the experience of growth is an inescapable law of nature. Without growth neither a plant nor a human can develop. So in art. Art is the most sensitive form of human growth in nature. Art is bound to the living universe. When autonomous flights of reason seek to sustain it, it dies. The foremost problem is to achieve the living quality for the new art. The past could more easily do so by imitating nature's manifestations of living forms. For us it is more difficult. Yet our advantage lies precisely in the fact that we do not have to simulate the particular living forms of nature; the forms of the new represent only themselves, they are the living forms. It was the desperate need for a living quality which led Mondrian to deny nature and seek surcease in mysticism. There was only one solution open to Mondrian after he attained the spatial planes of 1917: turn to actual dimensions which would then give structural correspondence to the *reality structure* of nature. Here man's new found capacity to create his own art would be liberated into *the only structural reality we can know*—nature's living structure.

Such a correspondence, however, will not of itself assure the living element. The problem is not one of correspondence; *correspondence must begin simply*. It is necessary gradually to

develop the *experience and knowledge of nature's structure*, if its potentialities for the structural creation of man's art are to be realised . . .

. . . Unknown to the artist, glittering surface varieties of metals and plastics are his effort to regain that living surface variety that all past art possessed. He does not know that he must start from a beginning, to earn his right to the new art; he thinks to inherit complete . . . At best his relationship with nature becomes purely verbal, or he may candidly admit that nature means nothing to him. To ignore nature, however, is to adopt the tacit assumption that the artist, introverting himself within his studio, can conceive of structural creation in a manner far superior to anything he may learn from nature. Who can look at unmolested nature, those who still have eyes with which to see, and tell us that art has gone beyond all that? A blade of grass puts to shame those works which would be superior to nature.

There remains nothing for the artist but to search in every and any direction. Finally he will take the last plunge—forms in motion. Surely the motion of forms, perhaps later using the motion of light too, surely this is the living quality *per se*. But is the problem so *simple* that the *mere complexity* of motion does it? Or is the problem of creation so complex that simplicity is the only approach open to the

complexity of the new, as Mondrian thought? The latter view is confirmed by the failure of fifty years of sporadic attempts to secure the free use of the three dimensions as well as motion. None of these efforts has resolved anything. The resort to motion is largely stimulated by disaffection with the free use of three dimensions, the latter being the result of disaffection with even simpler structural attempts. *Disaffection is a very poor substitute for development*. Simplicity cannot be developed, or overcome, by the mere introduction of complexity. It is first necessary to develop the *very complex dynamic element* potential in non-mobile work . . .

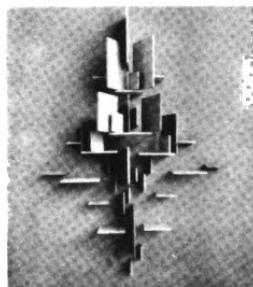
Again and again we are told, that with the advent of the revolutions in modern science—those of the Minkowskis, Einsteins, etc.—space and form have been drastically altered by the merging of time-space. We are then given various obscure intonations about the four or even more dimensions that supposedly lurk in an art of motion. It is time to say, it should have been said long ago, that the new discoveries of what is now called time-space have not 'shattered', as it is put, the usual sensory experiences of humans. The image we see of nature, that aspect of nature which has always been the concern of art, has not been altered by science by even one iota.

The new theories of science were created to deal with the entirely new structural

behaviour of 'matter' found in the very small—atomic particles—and the immensely large—cosmic time-space. These penetrations of science were the result of extra-neural means, instruments that reveal the finer grained structure of nature. In these extremes of structural phenomena, problems of measurement and sensory abstraction were immensely complicated by experiences that *do not* appear in natural perception. What then of the artist who twirls some form in space with a noisy motor, or who depends on the arbitrary push of any spectator's hands? Does he too deal with these finer grained aspects of nature's structure, as does the physicist? Hardly. To the contrary, the motions of his art are confined to unaided vision, as with all past art. The appeal of the artist to the alleged imperious command of the physicist, which permits art professors to speak of the profound presence of the fourth dimension, is but the desire to establish credence for an arbitrary art of motion. Often it is claimed that the aid of mathematics is employed. The artist may not know what he is doing *in art*, but he certainly is being very exact about it. But where, where has nature gone?—the nature the artist experiences as distinct from the physicist? Where has the artist gone, for that matter? To the physicist and his aspect of nature? But the physicist is not concerned with art, clearly not with that aspect

Charles Biederman:
'Structurist Relief, Red Wing,
(No 28) 10/1961-65. By
courtesy of the Walker Art
Center.

Eric Sutherland



of nature that concerns art. At least we can see why the physicist has not the need to appeal to artists and art. Why then does the artist have to appeal to the scientist? Because the crisis of nature which arose with Mondrian's achievements remains to plague artists. So artists took themselves to the scientist's verbalisms about nature, rarely with any genuine feeling or interest in what science does. Such a relationship between science and art is a patently false one. Artists are not going to evade their particular nature problems, by pretending that science has solved them . . . Only before the artist's unique relation with nature, not the scientist's, will a new spatial vision be realised and developed for art. Only so will the living, the life of the new art, be attained. Only then can art continue as a significant human experience . . . Long ago, without confusing science and art, Paul Cézanne saw the way to the new . . . 'We see in science revolutions of systems: why would it not be true in art? A new vision can be born, continued, perfected.'¹⁵

Letter from Charles Biederman to Michael Wilson, July 27 1966

Dear Mr Wilson:

Although I began (*being influenced by de Stijl*) in 1936 it was not until 1937, while living in Paris, that I was specifically influenced by de Stijl. This took place in the very last paintings I was to do, and which were intended to be finished as reliefs. But in those days one could not really see the works of de Stijl, and very rarely were they reproduced anywhere. What was mostly seen, and that not too often, were examples of Mondrian's Neoplastic works. What is most important in my case, however, was that I was not influenced by de Stijl and Mondrian alone but in conjunction with the works of the Russian Constructivists. It was these two influences that together played a role in my seeking a solution for a Relief art. So from 1937 on I was not influenced by one or the other, but by both together. Neither one *alone* seemed adequate for what I sought.

As I approached my own solution I ceased all Constructivist influence in 1945 and all de Stijl and Mondrian influences in 1947. It was during this period that I had returned to the work of Cézanne for a deeper study of the new problems. Consequently it was through Cézanne that I finally arrived at my own solution, and from which emerged the book *The New Cézanne*. This had all kinds of other consequences. For instance, in 1951 I urged those young artists who were taking up my work not to

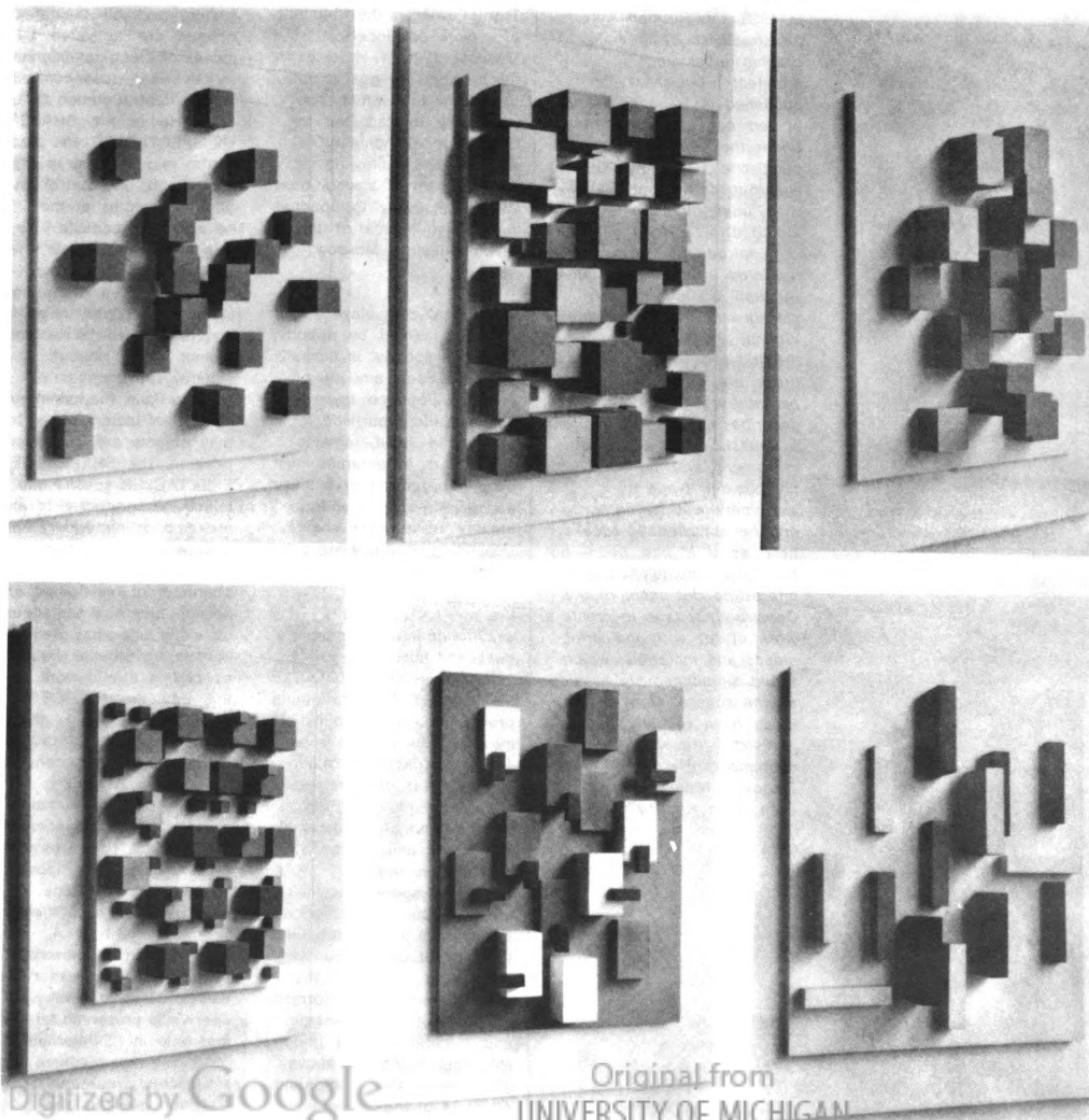
follow my own development from 1937-1947 as a model, and advised a course of study and evolution more direct and appropriate to their generation. To put my notion across to these young artists I made a series of what I call Teaching Models (1951-1952), to demonstrate the necessity of beginning with the cube and how that could be developed into a spatial plane. (The summary presentation of this theory can be found in my 'Sphere and Cube' article for *Structure*.) Incidentally, the Teaching Models are the first works that use cube and oblong forms, which certain US, English and Canadian artists would later employ as a solution for Relief works.

My ultimate differences with de Stijl and Mondrian rest on their rejection of retaining the perception of nature as essential to realisation of the new direction of art. For all these artists presumed to go beyond the perceived reality to an alleged superior knowledge of reality. It was for this reason I returned to Cézanne for a deeper understanding of the new direction, since he remained an artist of nature.

Therefore, while my Relief art is in debt to de Stijl and Mondrian, my fundamental debt is to the 'research' of Cézanne which I strive to continue. He, I believe, was seriously misunderstood by the artists who followed him and were influenced by him, as my book on Cézanne explains in detail.

It might help you to understand my kind of approach, if this is said: I am not at all interested in achieving an art unique to me, an art that is my private creation, the attitude that prevails today. My interest lies principally in how what I do relates to what is far more important and a good deal more interesting than me or any other artist alone, namely, the main direction of those creative forces that have formed the evolution of man's realisation of art as perhaps the major form of human expression. It is that which I believe needs to be built on and continued, it is that which underlies the distinctions and discriminations I make above and in my published writings.

Charles Biederman: six
'Teaching Models' 1951-52.



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In 1923, the Russian Constructivist designer, graphic artist and architect El Lissitzky published in Hanover a folio of ten colored lithographs under the title Figurinen—Die plastische Gestaltung der elektro-mechanischen Schau—Sieg über die Sonne.

Included in the folio was this short introductory note, later reprinted in the Hungarian-Austrian art periodical MA (Musik und Theater Nummer, Vienna, 1924) with variations in the first and last paragraphs; these are given here in parentheses. The note describes Lissitzky's plans for a fantastic construction of movement and light. This complicated piece of machinery was never built—and he occasionally speaks here as if it had been—but his plans nonetheless are an interesting document of the Constructivist urge to create a work of art with industrial means and materials, which would simultaneously assault all the senses. Many of his ideas have recently been realised in the work of such contemporary artists as Jean Tinguely, Nicolas Schöffer, even Allan Kaprow.

The following is the fragment of a work developed in Moscow, 1920-21. Here, as in all my work, my goal is not to reform that which has previously existed, but to bring into being another reality. (The following is the fragment of a work born of the necessity to conquer the closed-in box of the theatre design, Moscow 1920-21).

The magnificent plays of our city are noticed by nobody, for each 'nobody' is himself at play. Each amount of energy is applied towards a single solitary purpose, but the whole itself remains amorphous. All energies must become organised, crystallised, and displayed in a uniform manner. So a WORK comes into being, if you wish, call it the ARTwork.

We are constructing a scaffolding in a public square, open and accessible on all sides. It is the SPECTACLE MACHINERY. This scaffolding provides every possibility of movement for objects in play. The individual forms of the scaffolding must therefore be capable of movement into various positions, rotations, extensions and so forth. The different levels must quickly interpenetrate. All is of open ribbed construction, in order not to hide from view the play of objects running through it. Each of the objects themselves is formed according to requirements and intentions. They glide, roll, float in the air, above and inside the scaffolding. All parts of the scaffolding

system and all the play objects are activated by means of electrical-mechanical forces and devices, controlled from a central station by one man. He is the SHAPER OF SPECTACLES. His place is the middle point in the scaffolding, in control of all the energies at the switchboard capsule. He directs the movements, the capsule and the lights. He switches on the radio speaker, and over the public square is heard the deafening clamor of a railroad station, the thunder of Niagara Falls, the hammering of a boiler factory. When the play objects are in proper position, the SHAPER OF SPECTACLES speaks into a telephone connected to an arc-lamp, or into some other apparatus, which transforms his voice according to the character of his figures of speech. Electrical sentences glow and fade away. Beams of light follow objects, fractured by prisms and mirrors. In this way, the SHAPER OF SPECTACLES brings the elementary prelude to its highest pitch of intensity.

For the first presentation of this electrical-mechanical SPECTACLE, I have used a modern piece, composed, however, for the stage. It is the futurist opera, *Victory over the Sun*,¹ by A. Kruttschönich, the inventor of sound-poetry and leader of the newest Russian poetry. The opera was presented for the first time in St Petersburg in 1913. The music comes from Matjuschin (four-tonal). Malevich painted the

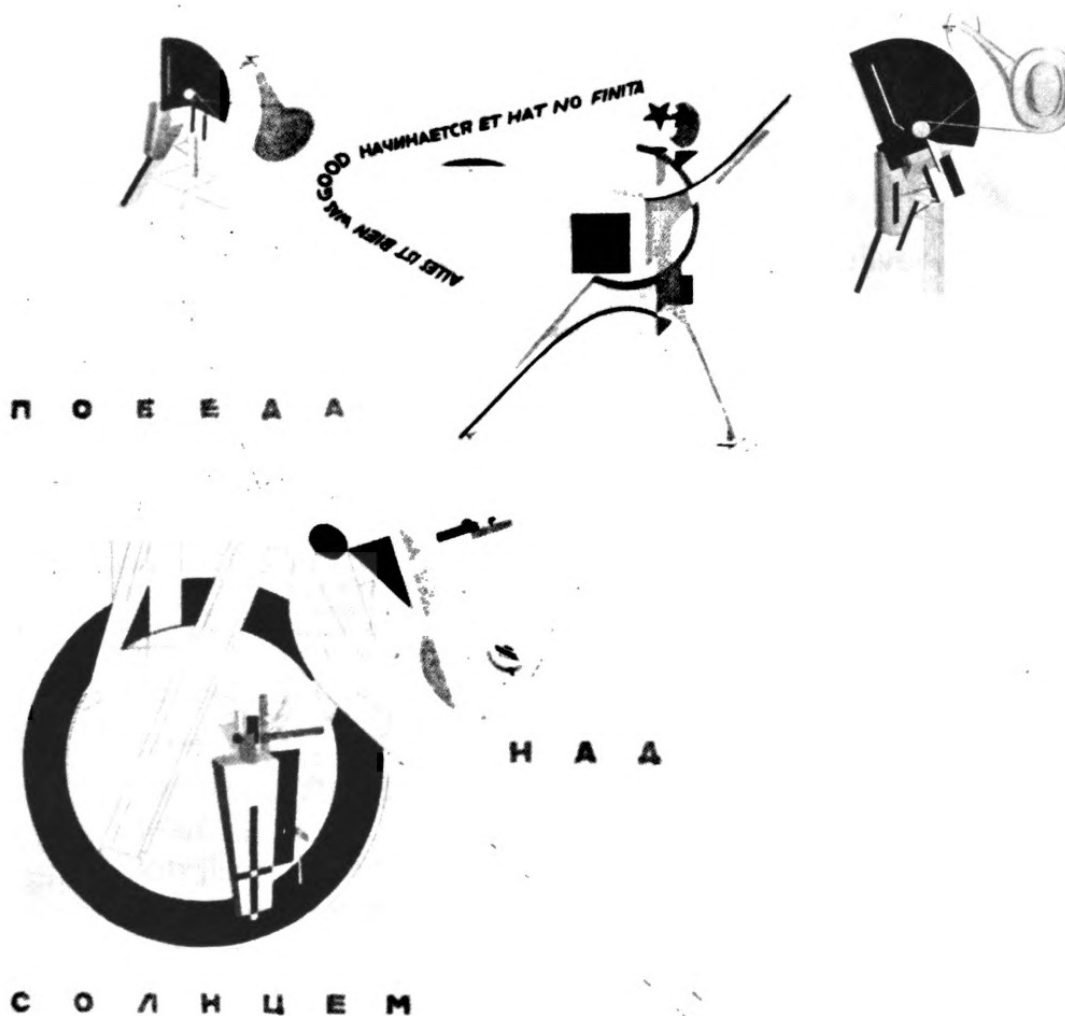
decoration (the prelude—a black square).² The sun, expressing the old energy of the earth, is ripped out of the heavens by the modern man who creates his own sources of energy through the power of his technical mastery. This idea of the opera is woven together in a simultaneity of happenings. The language is illogical. Individual song sections are sound-poems.

The text of the opera had forced me to preserve in my figures something of human anatomy. The colors in various parts of my drawings as in my Proun-works, are to be understood as material equivalents. This means: the red, yellow, or black parts of the figures do not indicate the colors those parts are to be painted, but rather the appropriate material they are to be made from, as for example shining copper dull iron and so forth.

I leave to others the further development and practical application of ideas and forms presented here, and I myself go on to my next project. (The development of the radio in the last ten years, the loudspeaker, techniques of film and of illumination, which in the meantime I myself have made, all makes the realisation of this idea even much easier than it appeared to me in 1920.)

(for notes see p. 14)

The title-page lithograph, *Schaumaschinerie*, is reproduced here, as is another lithograph of the series showing details of the loud-speaker system which was used, significantly enough, as the cover design for a selection of Mayakovsky's poems, *For Reading Out Loud*, published in Berlin, 1923, in Russian. But these lithographs must be regarded as works of graphic art in their own right, for they are wholly inadequate as blueprints for the actual design of this machine as envisaged by Lissitzky.



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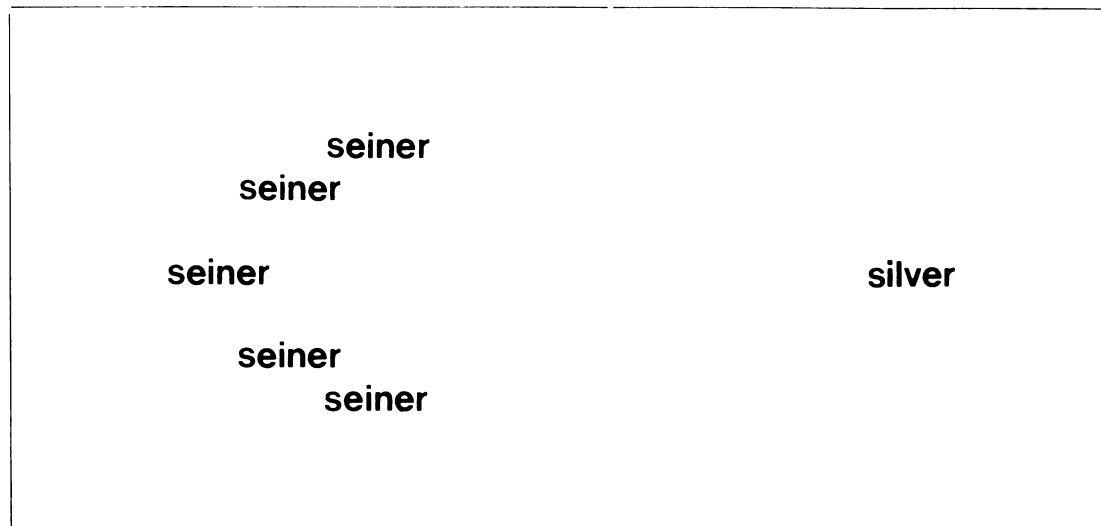
1: Apparently produced only once, in December of 1913 at the Luna Park Theatre in St Petersburg, this 'opera' was more a scandalous demonstration by the Russian Futurists than a musical event. Its 'libretto' was created by Alexei Krutschonich (1886-) whose memoirs have yielded some interesting details: 'The scenery and stage effects were as I expected and wanted. A blinding light from the projectors. The scenery by Malevich was made of big sheets—triangles, circles, bits of machinery. The actors in masks reminded one of modern gas-masks. The Likari (actors) reminded one of moving machines. Malevich's costumes were Cubist-like, made of cardboard and wire. They transformed the human anatomy and the actors moved, held and directed by the rhythm dictated by the artist and director. What particularly struck the audience in the play were the songs of the Frightened One (in vowels) and of the Aviator (entirely in consonants). Professional actors sang. The public demanded an encore but the actors were shy and did not come out. The choral song of the grave-diggers which was composed with unexpected intervals and dissonances was performed to a completely furious public.' (from Camilla Gray, *The Great Experiment*, London, 1962, p 308, n 6)

2: Malevich's decor for this opera is usually regarded as his first Suprematist work, although his easel paintings in the Suprematist style were not publicly exhibited until 1915. One of his sketches for a backdrop in *Victory over the Sun* represents perhaps the earliest instance in the history of modern art of such extreme purity of design. In his writings Malevich has claimed Suprematism was developed as early as 1913, and has traced its beginnings to *Victory over the Sun*: 'The New Art fights against the forms of yesterday, against the aesthetics of yesterday, and the 'unshakeable' antique notion of beauty. Suprematism had therefore proclaimed non-objectivity (die Gegenstandlosigkeit) from the stage, by means of the opera *Victory over the Sun*. In this way Suprematism wanted to claim its own consciousness and to free the development of art from the imitative forms of the past.' (written in 1924; from Kasimir Malevich, *Suprematismus—Die Gegenstandlose Welt*, trans. Hans von Riesen, Cologne, 1962, p 273).

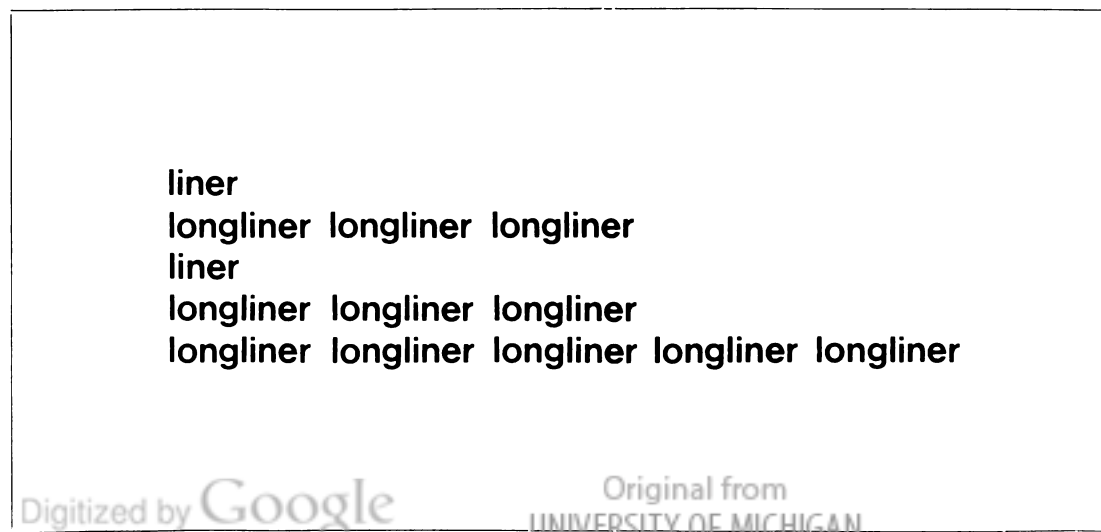
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*The purse-seine is a new kind
of net that makes an actual
ring round the fish: it has been
immensely profitable.*

Purse-net boat



Line boats



stack net
ring net
seine net
salmon net
drift net
herring net
trawl net
planer

Fragment d'une nouvelle inédite

Si la Lorpailleur est folle je n'y peux rien.
 Si la Lorpailleur est folle je n'y peux rien, nul n'y peut rien, et bien malin qui prouverait le contraire.
 Si la Lorpailleur est folle. Mais est-elle folle? Elle l'est. Prétend que j'aurais participé de près ou de loin, que j'aurais trempé dans l'affaire du petit Ducreux, j'aurais eu des accointances avec la police, d'où mon impunité.
 Trempé dans l'affaire du petit Ducreux sans que personne s'en doute, mon nom n'a pas été prononcé à l'enquête, personne ne l'a jamais prononcé, et voilà cette folle maintenant, des années après, et qu'on se met à jaser.
 Si la Lorpailleur est folle ai-je dit à Verveine moi je n'y peux rien, nul n'y peut rien, arrangez-vous pour la faire enfermer, il doit y avoir un moyen, pas la peine d'être pharmacien alors, est-ce que vous ne connaissez pas un truc, est-ce que vous ne connaissez pas une personne, une autorité voyons, il s'agit de trouver la filière, ensuite les choses vont toutes seules, déclancher le mécanisme c'est le mot, il me répond que non, pas le pouvoir, d'ailleurs pas la moindre idée du comment, il ne voit à la rigueur que la famille, ayant entendu dire autrefois qu'en cette matière, mais la famille est loin, comment voulez-vous, une soeur en Argentine, tout le reste mort et enterré. J'ai dit réfléchissons, réfléchissons, ce n'est pas possible, il doit y avoir un moyen, est-ce que je peux tolérer ça, les gens commencent à jaser, de toute façon dit-il s'ils continuent il faudra en repasser par là, il voulait dire la police, la justice, tout le tremblement. Pour les racontars d'une folle? Ce n'est pas possible. J'ai dit ce n'est pas possible. Si la Lorpailleur est folle il faut agir immédiatement.
 Verveine répond moi je n'y peux rien, si vous voyez un moyen libre à vous, ce n'est pas moi qui vais me mêler de votre affaire, mais est-elle folle, toute la question est là, non non, comprenez-moi, je ne dis pas que vous ayez trempé de près ou de loin dans l'affaire Ducreux, je dis qu'une personne comme la Lorpailleur peut très bien pour d'autres raisons faire courir sur votre compte n'est-ce pas, comprenez-moi.
 J'ai dit comprendre quoi
 J'ai répété comprendre quoi, expliquez-vous.
 Qu'une personne comme la Lorpailleur, à son âge, la quarantaine, peut très bien s'imaginer que vous, vu votre caractère, l'état de votre fortune, je ne sais pas moi, vous avez travaillé ensemble autrefois m'a-t-on dit, c'est ça, eh bien peut-être qu'à ce moment elle s'est je ne sais pas, elle se serait imaginé, vous voyez ce que je veux dire.
 Quelqu'un entrerait dans la boutique, j'aurais dû attendre, je n'ai pas attendu, les choses en sont restées là comme on dit, mais elles n'en restent jamais là.
 Si la Lorpailleur est folle les choses n'en resteront pas là, nous trouverons le moyen, il doit y avoir une personne, une filière, en suite ça va tout seul et hop, la camisole, la Lorpailleur est entre bonnes mains.
 L'affaire Ducreux, vieille affaire, il y a bien des années.

If the Lorpailleur woman is crazy, it's no affair of mine.
 If the Lorpailleur woman is crazy, it's no affair of mine, nobody's affair, and it wouldn't be right to say so.
 If the Lorpailleur woman is crazy. But is she crazy? She is. Maintains that I took more or less of a part, that I was mixed up in the case of the Ducreux boy, I was on good terms with the police, so went unpunished.
 Mixed up in the case of the Ducreux boy without anyone suspecting, my name wasn't brought up at the enquiry, no one has ever brought it up, and now there's this crazy woman, years later, and people are starting to talk.
 If the Lorpailleur woman is crazy I said to Verveine it's no affair of mine, nobody's affair, you should take steps to have her put inside, there must be a way, what's the use being a chemist then, don't you know some dodge, don't you know some fellow or some department, it's just a matter of finding the right channel, then things get along by themselves, set the wheels turning that's the word, no he tells me, no authority, what's more no idea how to set about it, he can't think of anyone at all except the family, he once heard it said that with this sort of business, but the family is far away, don't you know, a sister in Argentina, the rest dead and buried.
 I said let's think it over, let's think it over, can't be that bad, there must be a way, how can I put up with it, people are starting to talk, well anyhow he said if they keep on you'll have to come back to that in the end, he meant the police, the law, the whole works. For the gossip of a crazy woman? Can't be that bad. I said can't be that bad.
 If the Lorpailleur woman is crazy we must take steps right away.
 Verveine replies well me I can't do anything, if you can see a way out yourself, I wouldn't think of meddling in your affairs, but is she crazy, that's the whole question, no no, you see what I mean, I'm not saying you were mixed up in the Ducreux case, I mean someone like the Lorpailleur woman might very well draw attention to you for other reasons, you see what I mean.
 I said see what.
 I said see what, explain yourself.
 That someone like the Lorpailleur woman, at her age, in her forties, might easily take it into her head that you, with your character, the state of your affairs, well I don't know, you used to work together they tell me, that's right, well maybe it was then she took it I don't know, took it into her head, you see what I mean.
 Someone came into the shop, I should have waited, I didn't wait, the matter rested there as they say, but it never rests there.
 If the Lorpailleur woman is crazy the matter won't rest there, we'll find the way, there must be some fellow, some channel, then things will take care of themselves and whoops, the strait jacket, the Lorpailleur woman in safe keeping.

il y a bien une dizaine d'années, le petit Ducreux, quatre ans, a été retrouvé étranglé dans le bois du Furet sous un tas de feuilles, il portait son petit costume marin, il était sorti le dimanche avec ses parents, ils allaient du côté de Sirancy, les parents s'étaient endormis après le pique-nique . . .

Il portait son petit pantalon de toile bleue à bretelles que sa maman avait fait avec un vieux pantalon à son papa, et un petit tricot rouge et des chaussures genre sandales, des sandales et des petites chaussettes que sa maman . . .

Un beau blondinet aux yeux marrons, étranglé net près de Chatruse, on le retrouve trois jours après, la douleur des parents fut atroce, tout le village en parlait, on n'avait pas vu de drame de ce genre depuis mil huit cent soixante-treize. On n'avait jamais vu ça.

Immédiatement la gendarmerie, immédiatement l'enquête, les témoins, les voisins. Ils avaient vu le petit sortir de la cour aux environs de dix heures du matin, mademoiselle Cruze était en train de nettoyer les carreaux de ses fenêtres, un escabeau sur le trottoir.

C'était au mois de juillet, un mauvais mois chez nous, tous les malheurs nous arrivent en juillet, les incendies, les accidents de voiture, les grêles, les noyades, mais d'assassinat on n'avait pas vu depuis mil huit cent soixante-treize, c'est encore dans les archives et les journaux de l'époque, un nommé Serinet tué d'un coup de fusil par son beau-frère.

On n'avait jamais vu ça.

Le père était boulanger, la mère aussi, ils le sont encore, ils y sont encore, rue des Casse-Tonnelles, mais le petit lui n'y est plus, il aurait quatorze ans, un si joli petit, ils en parlent toujours bien qu'ils aient eu trois enfants depuis, la petite Laure, le petit Frédéric, le petit Alfred, tous bien gentils.

On a beau dire ils ont eu trois enfants depuis, la petite Laure, le petit Frédéric, le petit Alfred, le drame qu'ils ont vécu ça ne s'oublie pas comme ça, ces choses-là vous marquent pour la vie disait Verveine, bonne excuse pour lui cette cliente qui entrait, ça le dispensait de me répondre, j'aurais dû attendre, je n'ai pas attendu, il n'est pas possible qu'il ne sache pas comment agir, une folle ça s'enferme. Est-ce qu'il ne disait pas qu'elle n'était pas folle? Est-ce qu'il ne sousentendait pas que je lui comptais des sornettes? Quel aplomb ce vieux cocu, ce n'est pas moi qui vais me mêler de votre affaire, n'est-ce pas l'affaire de tout le monde une folle parmi nous?

On a beau dire ils ont eu trois enfants depuis, ces pauvres Ducreux ça les ronge encore, surtout que l'assassin n'a pas été pris, il court toujours.

Malgré le déploiement de gendarmerie, d'enquêtes, de procès-verbaux, de commissions rogatoires, tout le tremblement, voilà une chose bien étrange à notre époque, l'assassin

The Ducreux case, an old case, quite a few years ago, ten years ago at least, the little Ducreux boy, four years old, was found strangled in the Furet woods under a heap of leaves, he was wearing his little sailor suit, he had gone out with his parents on a Sunday, they were taking the Sirancy path, his parents had fallen asleep after the picnic . . .

He was wearing his little blue canvas trousers with braces which his mother made from an old pair of his father's trousers, and a little red jersey and sandal-style shoes, sandals and little socks which his mother . . .

A nice-looking fair child with brown eyes, clean strangled close to Chatruse, they found him three days later, his parents' sorrow was frightful, the whole village was talking about it, there had been nothing like it since eighteen hundred and seventy-three.

There had been nothing like it.

Right away the police, right away the enquiry, the witnesses, the neighbours. They had seen the child leave the courtyard at roughly ten in the morning, Mademoiselle Cruze was doing her windowpanes, a stool on the pavement. It was the month of July, a bad month with us, all our troubles come in July, fires, motor accidents, hailstorms, drownings, but there had been nothing like a murder since eighteen seventy-three, it's still in the records and the newspapers of the time, a man called Serinet shot dead by his brother-in-law.

There had been nothing like it.

The father was a baker, the mother as well, and they still are, they're still there, rue des Casse-Tonnelles, but the child isn't there any longer, he would be fourteen, such a fine child, they still talk about him though they have had three children since, little Laura, little Frederick, little Alfred, all nice children.

No point in saying they have had three children since, little Laura, little Frederick, little Alfred, the trial they've been through you don't forget that in a hurry, things like that mark you for life said Verveine, good excuse for him the customer who came in, that let him out of answering me, I should have waited, I didn't wait, it's just impossible that he won't know what to do, a crazy woman should be put inside. Didn't he say that she wasn't crazy? Didn't he mean to imply that I was leading him up the garden path? What a nerve the old buffer, I wouldn't think of meddling in your affairs, isn't it everyone's affair a crazy woman here in our midst?

No point in saying they have had three children since, those poor Ducreux it still nags at them, especially the murderer not being caught, still on the run.

With all the turn-out of policemen, enquiries, statements, interrogations, the whole works, that's a funny thing nowadays, the murderer still on the run, no reason why little Laura for instance or little Frederick shouldn't take their turn, just thinking about it sends shivers down your spine, it shouldn't be

court toujours, pas de raison que la petite Laure par exemple ou le petit Frédéric n'y passent à leur tour, rien que d'y penser vous fait froid dans le dos, ça ne devrait pas être possible, une menace permanente, une pauvre famille de boulangers, ils le sont encore, qui vit dans la panique on peut bien dire quotidienne, non ça ne devrait pas être possible, et le jour où la Lorpailleuse insinuera que Verveine était dans le coup ce n'est pas moi qui prouverai le contraire.

Si la Lorpailleuse est folle ce n'est la faute de personne et les choses peuvent en rester là, elle va racontant des sornettes, sa robe noire, son chapeau à crêpe, ses dents jaunes, elle a perdu sa mère il y a des années, toujours en deuil, une maniaque, sur son vélo en direction de l'école à huit heures et demie, un vélo genre anglais à guidon élevé, elle se tient droite comme un i, le jour où son crêpe viendra par un coup de vent se coller contre sa figure à un tournant, juste comme passe un camion, ce n'est pas moi qui prouverai le contraire, je veux dire que le camion était dans son tort, la Lorpailleuse morte sur le coup, là, étendue sur la chaussée, mais aussi cette manie du deuil est-ce que ça ne vous a pas quelque chose de dégoûtant, traîner ses morts partout, en plein juillet, deux jours avant la fin de l'école, elle passait devant la boulangerie, mademoiselle Cruze à faire ses carreaux l'a vue du coin de l'oeil, elle ne lui dit plus bonjour, elle avait son cabas sur son porte-bagage devant faire ses courses après la classe, et quelques minutes après le petit Alfred qui sortait de la cour.

Les choses pouvaient en rester là.

La Lorpailleuse en sortant de l'école enfourchait son vélo, elle se posait dessus, et juste à ce moment lâchait le guidon, elle tombe, elle gigote en criant, les enfants ont peur, je les vois encore faisant cercle à distance, leur petit cartable sous le bras ou leur sac sur le dos, quand Blimbraz arrive, ensuite Verveine, ils s'approchent d'elle, elle bave, vous voyez bien qu'elle était folle disait madame Monneau, qu'est-ce que je disais, son deuil lui aura tourné la tête, est-ce que c'est des manières de confier des enfants à une folle, aveugles que nous étions, mon petit me disait bien qu'elle était drôle, elle lançait des mots en pleine dictée qui n'avaient rien à voir avec, je l'entends encore.

Le mot cataclysme ou catastrophe, on dit que ça les travaille, la folie des grandeurs, la folie des malheurs, ils voient des frontières partout, ils se tourneboulent pour sortir, pour se dégager, pour s'enfuir, quelque chose va leur fondre dessus, ils se sentent ligotés, c'est ça la folie.

Quelque chose comme le camion par exemple.

Elle gisait sur la chaussée, les mômes en cercles à distance, la pauvre maîtresse comment qu'elle a fait ça, le camionneur répétait elle m'a foncé dessus d'un seul coup, elle m'a foncé dessus, il s'épongeait le front de son mouchoir, le docteur qui habite au tournant penché sur la morte, la tâtant, l'auscultant, constatait qu'elle était morte, il y a déjà douze

possible, a permanent threat, a poor family of bakers, they still are, living in fear you can call it daily fear, no it shouldn't be possible, and the day the Lorpailleuse woman suggests Verveine was involved I won't offer to deny it.

If the Lorpailleuse woman is crazy it's no one's fault and the matter can rest there, her telling tall stories, her black dress, her hat with a veil, her yellow teeth, she lost her mother years ago, and still in mourning, she must be mad, on her moped off to school at half-past eight, an english-type moped with high handlebars, she holds herself straight as a die, the day her veil gets caught in a gust of wind and clings to her face on a bend, just as a lorry is passing, I won't offer to deny it, I mean the lorry was in the wrong, the Lorpailleuse woman dead on the spot, there, stretched on the verge, but all that obsession with mourning didn't that strike you as something disgusting, dragging her dead around, at the height of July, two days before the end of term, she passed in front of the bakery, Mademoiselle Cruze doing her windowpanes caught a glimpse of her, she no longer wishes her good morning, she had her basket on the rack to do her shopping after school, and a few minutes later little Alfred leaving the courtyard.

The matter could rest there.

The Lorpailleuse woman leaving the school climbed on to her moped, set herself down, and just that moment let go of the handlebars, she tumbles and kicks around screaming, the children are frightened, I can still see them forming a ring at a distance, with little bags under their arms or satchels on their backs, then Blimbraz arrives, and then Verveine, they come up to her, she is dribbling, you see she was crazy said Madame Monneau, what did I tell you, that mourning of hers will have turned her head, is it the thing to trust a crazy woman with the children, fools that we were, my little one was right in saying she was peculiar, she blurted out words in the middle of dictation which were off the subject, I can hear her still.

The word cataclysm or catastrophe, they say that obsesses them, megalomania, paranoia, they see barriers everywhere, they turn round trying to get out, to get themselves loose, to break away, something is about to fall on top of them, they are tied to the spot, that's madness for you. Something like the lorry for instance.

She lay there on the pavement, the kids in a ring at a distance, poor miss what did she do that for, the lorry-driver was repeating she fell underneath me all at once, she fell underneath me, he was mopping his brow with his handkerchief, the doctor who lives on the corner bent over the corpse touching her, listening to her chest, was making certain she was dead, already twelve people there, the mothers grasped hold of their kids, come on don't look, come on d'you hear, let's go back, the kids said then we won't have any more school.

personnes, les mères ont empoigné leur môme, viens ne regarde pas, viens m'entendu-tu, rentrons, les mômes ont dit alors on n'aura plus l'école, de toute façon elle finissait après-demain, et l'année prochaine une autre maîtresse, avance tu m'entends, ne te retourne pas, on avait transporté le cadavre en face chez le docteur en attendant la morgue, ils étaient une vingtaine à répéter sur le coup la malheureuse, voilà qu'on la plaignait, on plaignait cette folle qui nous portait malheur depuis des années, le gendarme s'occupait du chauffeur, prise de sang chez le pharmacien, rapport, témoins qui n'ont rien vu mais ils la connaissaient, tout le monde, sa soeur vit en Argentine avec paraît-il un acteur mais moi ce que je vous en dis, tout le tremblement, de quoi causer un bout, c'est toujours en juillet que le malheur nous arrive, les noyades, les incendies, les accidents. Ou qu'elle ne soit pas morte sur la coup. Ou que le camion l'ait croisée simplement, elle serait arrivée à l'école à neuf heures moins vingt.

Madame Ducreux à sa fenêtre surveillait d'un oeil le petit Alfred qui jouait dans la cour et de l'autre balayait la chambre, voyant tout à coup en passant le balai derrière le fauteuil le petit Louis dix ans avant, l'enfant se cachait, elle faisait semblant de le chercher et soudain le découvrait en disant oh le coquin tu m'as fait peur, et le tirait de derrière le fauteuil et l'embrassait à pleine bouche, on a beau dire ils en ont eu trois depuis, elle avait beau se le dire, d'un seul coup sa bonne humeur du matin tombait, la vieille tristesse prenait sa place, mais Ducreux appelait sa femme au magasin, l'employée ne suffisait pas, il était onze heures et demie, toutes ces dames tâtaient le pain malgré l'interdiction, et pendant ce temps le petit Alfred s'éloignait, il passait le portail, il s'éloignait, la mère comme une folle a plaqué tout le monde, elle est allée empoigner son enfant dans la cour, il n'avait guère bougé, il faisait des pâtés près de la fontaine, viens m'entends-tu, rentrons, c'est l'heure de la soupe ou quelque chose d'approchant.

Pendant que ces dames tâtant le pain voyaient la Lorpailleur à vélo revenir de l'école, est-ce que ça ne fait pas dix ans que sa mère est morte, traîner comme ça son deuil, traîner ses morts partout, vous ne me direz pas qu'elle n'est pas un peu folle.

anyhow it was over the day after tomorrow, and next year another mistress, come on d'you hear, don't look round, they had taken the corpse across to the doctor's before the mortuary, about twenty people were there repeating poor woman, feeling sorry for her they were, feeling sorry for this crazy woman who had brought us bad luck for years, the policeman was busy with the driver, a blood test at the chemists, a report, witnesses who didn't see anything but knew her, everyone, her sister lives in Argentina with so they say an actor but me as I say, the whole works, a good deal to talk about, it's always in July that our troubles come, drownings, fires, accidents. Or maybe she wasn't killed on the spot.

Or the lorry just went past her, she would have reached school at twenty to nine.

Madame Ducreux at the window kept one eye on little Alfred who was playing in the courtyard and went on sweeping out the room, seeing all of a sudden as she passed the broom behind the armchair little Louis ten years before, the child was hiding, she was pretending to look for him and all of a sudden found him saying Oh you rascal you startled me, and took him out from behind the armchair and gave him a big kiss, no good saying they've had three since, no good her telling herself that, all at once her good spirits of the morning deserted her, the old sadness took their place, but Ducreux was calling his wife to the shop, the girl couldn't manage, it was half-past eleven, all the women were fingering the bread in spite of the notice, and meanwhile little Alfred was off and away, past the gate, off and away, the mother like a madwoman left all the people where they were, she grasped hold of her child in the courtyard, he hadn't budged, he was making pies near the fountain, come on d'you hear, let's go back, it's lunchtime, nearly lunchtime.

Meanwhile the women fingering the bread could see the Lorpailleur woman on her moped coming back from school, isn't that ten years since her mother died, dragging out her mourning like that, dragging her dead around everywhere, you can't deny she's a little mad.

Phonic poetry

1: Ernst Jandl

Manifesto translated from 'zwischen räume', ed. Reinhard Döhl, Wiesbaden, 1963, pp. 119-120.

In the mid-fifties I started experimenting in poetry. It was, at the beginning, an act of protest against the traditionalism prevalent in this field. August Stramm, Johannes R. Becher in his early expressionist period, Hans Arp and Gertrude Stein gave me some idea of how to go to about it. H. C. Artmann, Friederike Mayröcker and Gerhard Rühm, Viennese avant-garde poets, were stimulating company.

Having had several years' practice in writing plain, unadorned, straightforward poems before, I could now try to combine old and new elements in my experimental poems, which might make them even more provocative to a conservative audience. Later, when manipulating linguistic material became an absorbing end in itself, aggressiveness was no longer a major concern.

Disregard of the conventions of language was rewarded by the discovery of new ways of producing grotesque poems, many of which were meant to be spoken rather than read silently. Moreover, the experimental poem was willing to accomplish what its more conventional relative was only ready to describe. ('*lechts und rinks kann man nicht velwechsern.*')

There must be an infinite number of methods of writing experimental poems, but I think the most successful methods are those which can only be used once, for then the result is a poem

identical with the method in which it was made. (The method, used again, would turn out exactly the same poem.)

Provided that some kind of discovery in the vast field of language must precede the making of any experimental poem, this process cannot appear to be any easier than finding a starting-point for a poem constructed by more conventional means (self-plagiarism leading to increased but deteriorating production being ruled out in both cases).

Units of any size, from sentence to single sound, single letter, can be used in experimental work, but the most fascinating of all are words, lending themselves to the most striking changes: distortion, disfiguration, other words. Selection, transformation, amputation, transplantation would, however, only yield exhibits for an anatomical museum of language, if they were not occasionally followed by a kind of rehabilitation, in a poem.

The poems published here are reprinted from Ernst Jandl's 'Laut und Luise', published by Walter-Druck 12, Walter-Verlag, Olten 1966, 208 pages with a postscript by Helmut Heissenbüttel. Limited edition of 1,220 copies, price S Fr 28.

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leeeeeeeeeee
rrra
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und

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und ein und

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z t
ekze mmm

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üler

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(key: teacher/and/an/eczema/and/
a/physician/and/puuuuuuuuu/pils)

(key: people talking/sitting around/
people sitting around/talking)

ra felle

2: Paul de Vree



Sound poetry is a montage of vocal sounds, achieved through mechanical means. The montage consists of the making and structuring of sounds and echoes, through phonemes, letters, syllables, words, and through physical modulations of all these. If this explanation makes it sound sterile, the result itself is vivid and alive. Sound poetry is unimaginable without gestures or actions. The sound poem concretises and objectivises (in the acoustical space) the psycho-physical basis of word and sound—it is exclusively based upon the voice and upon the peculiar qualities of sound which the voice produces.

It is essentially devoid of any communication other than that made possible by a sense of 'verbal sonority', magnified by mechanical modulation (crescendo and decrescendo, repetition, superimposition). Sound and concrete poetry replace the conventional, subjective type of poem with a universal and autonomous object: the idiom is not very often devoid of an anti-individualising humour.

klim zacht
spring licht
serena tin en zon
ik win
ik won
suaaf en gaaf
terrena
terrena
terrena
trou
ba
hi
nirwana bella notte
tamate limahoi
klim licht
terrena
spring zacht
terrena
je
trou
ba
hi

climb softly
jump lightly
serena tin and sun
i win
i won
soft and aloft
terrena
terrena
terrena
trou
ba
hi
nirwana bella notte
tamate limahoi
climb a-light
terrena
jump a-soft
terrena
your
trou
ba
hi

English version
by Paul de Vree

in de dwaasteil doet tijd doeb doeb
spoed je niet veronika
voor de woordpap
voor het bloed en de blunders
is je vaatdoek niet groot genoeg
als ik je roep
veronika
van uit mijn vliegtuig
goepie goepie boven het dal
raakt mijn evenwicht
marvellous
kant noch wal
hallo
hallo
veronika
ik stijg ik val
begraaf
mij
als
je
mij
niet
vindt

in the crazimity times go toh toh
do not hurry veronica
for the slush of words
for the blood and for the blunders
your dishcloth isn't big enough
when i call you
veronica
from m(high)y airplane
loopad loopad above the valley
my equilibrium touches and
— marvellous —
doesn't touch at all
hallo
hallo
veronica
i climb i fall
bury
me
when
you
can't
find
me

English version
by Paul de Vree

S K I b a a n

S K Y l i n e

S T I P S T I P

stijgt

B L I n k t
B l i k t

B L I K
B L I K

G L I J b a a n

G L I J v l u c h t

G L E I S

G L I n s t e r t

G L I m t

G L I s t

G L I p t

d e w i n g
d e w o n g
d e w i m p e r

strijkt

s t r e k t z i c h d e h o r i z o n

H O R I Z O N

w o e n g

G R O N D

3: Kenneth Robinson

Polyphonic poetry

Polyphony in music is believed to have developed almost accidentally out of the early Welsh habit of singing in parallel thirds, from which matured canons and rounds, and later still polyphonic chants, madrigals and harmony. To attempt to weave together parallel lines of speech just as one weaves parallel lines of music would be an experiment that might well have attracted earlier generations of writers. Metaphysical poets would surely have revelled in the collision of ideas which such writing precipitates. But in fact success in this style of writing depends on having a machine that can faithfully record the sounds which are made simultaneously by several different speakers speaking different words. Only then can they be analysed and disentangled. What, for example, does one hear when two speakers simultaneously say the following pairs of words?

4 By writing in parallel syntax, i.e. lines in which the meaning flows through each line separately and through both lines conjointly, one attains a new dimension in thought and structure, as was achieved by Joyce in *Finnegan's Wake*, though there the reader's difficulties are increased by the fact that two or more lines of thought are twisted into a single

Revenge, Bars 177-228

strand, whose component threads are no longer easily identifiable. 5 By presenting two different words simultaneously which are separately identifiable in sound but cognate in meaning, a new stereoscopic image can be created in the mind which is richer than that of either word heard singly. For example:

a The rain is only *spitting*
The rain is only *spotting*

b The face I saw was *ghostly*
The face I saw was *ghastly*

At first I wrote a number of short polyphonic poems, and in recording them with the help of friends gradually learnt the rules of parallel syntax and word marriages. My first long poem was *Revenge*, written in 1949 but not finally recorded until 1964.

In this poem there are four voices, 1 and 2 being of women, 3 and 4 of men. All the voices are aspects of the personality of the person seeking revenge, or are the voices of people imagined or remembered by him. In the sequence which follows, the emotional disturbance in his mind is pictured as a lethal and evil waterspout. It starts as a deep rumbling surge with the men's voices, but as the frenzy rises it is taken higher and higher in pitch by the voices of the women till at last in Bar 204 it overleaps itself and crashes back again to the bed of the sea.

3		Now again like	hump-back dolphin	leaping higher the
4			Rumbling,	climbing,
1	181	182	183	184
2				
3	giant wave to	God aspires and	strives to grasp the	stars and climbs and
4	grinding,	aspire and	strive to grasp the	stars!
1	185	186	187	188
2				
3	spirals writhing—	Up, revolving	and up slow.	with force from the root col-
4				From the root
1	189	190	191	192
2	lected	a leaping water-	tree—	it ups and drives its
3				
4	sucked	a-loft.		
1	193	194	195	196
2				and smites the
3	winding sap thro'	spindrift fronds and	flings its arms towards the	moon,
4				
1	197	198	199	200
2	face of God,			and drives yet higher,
3		at-tacks the steely	citadels of sky,	and drives yet higher—
4				
1	201	202	203	204
2	teeters, totters,	stalls a little and	still uprising is	up-swept—
3				swept
4				
1	205	206	207	208
2	and crashes	back.		
3	back!	Back crashes,	back flung to the	cauldron
4			Back flung	down
1	209	210	211	212
2	smashes	plunges—		
3	crashes	tumbles	lunges in	foam and
4	dashes	lunges	plunges in	foam and
1	213	214	215	216
2		snrieks to the	deep.	
3	roars—	shrieks to the	deep.	
4		to the	deep.	drowning in
1	217	218	219	220
2				
3	black	rain	the gulf,	hides the
4				derides the
1	221	222	223	224
2				
3	cracks and	cre-vasses—		and rocks the
4	cracks—			
1	225	226	227	228
2				
3				
4	bed	of the bled	Original from ravished	ocean.
			of the ravaged	ocean.

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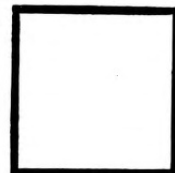
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- Yale Univ. Art Library (xerox
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- Deutsches Institut für
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Material zur elementaren Gestaltung



JULI 1926

Die Aufgabe dieser Zeitschrift ist die allgemeine Situation der Kunst und des
Lebens zu klären. Im Hinblick darauf wählen wir das Material. Artikel und Werke,
die sich um Klarheit — nicht nur um Ausdruck — bemühen. Alles, was der schöpferischen
Arbeit und dem schöpferischen Arbeiter nutzen kann (technisch, theoretisch,
ideologisch, wirtschaftstechnisch, pädagogisch etc.) wird veröffentlicht. Wir bitten
um Photos, Clichés, Diagramme, um Kataloge, Reklamewerke, um Rezensionen.
Exemplare von Zeitschriften und Neuerscheinungen, um Liefernachschüsse, so
soweit sie für unsere Arbeit von Bedeutung sein können. Zeitschriften, welche „G“
besprechen oder Nachdrucke bringen, werden um Belegexemplare ersucht. □

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Introduction by Hans Richter

In 1920 when Theo van Doesburg was visiting Eggeling and Richter at the home of Richter's parents in Klein-Kölzig, Germany, he suggested that these two artists should use part of the sums which they had just received (to prepare their first films) to publish a magazine. In this way, he argued, they could publicise their ideas and raise the necessary funds for the production of their films. Eggeling was against it, but Richter immediately contacted his friends to collect material for such a publication. That is how and where 'G' started. But it materialised only two years later. Lissitzky named it 'G', short for 'G...estaltung'. The shape of a square behind this title honoured Doesburg. Mies van der Rohe added his pronouncements to the reproductions of his buildings. Hilberseimer wrote about city planning. Gabo about Constructivism. Lissitzky about 'Proun'. Arp contributed poems. Tzara poetic rhythms about Man Ray's Rayograms. Schwitters about Schwitters' poetic theories. Hausmann about Optophonetic philosophy, fashion, world-ice-theory and himself. Kiesler about theatre and architecture and the young Graeff about new technology, modern auto construction and technical society.

'G' as it finally appeared had the traits of Dadaism as well as of Constructivism, two seemingly unrelated movements. It offered articles by Mies van der Rohe as well

as Tristan Tzara, by Gabo. Pevsner, Malevich, Lissitzky. Doesburg as well as by Arp. Schwitters, Hausmann, George Grosz, Man Ray. The fact is that the tendencies of Constructivism, or, more generally speaking, of structure, appeared in Dada itself; though they were not, as in Russian Constructivism, a program or the single aim of Dada. Dada as a movement had no program. But the tendencies for an order, a structure, appeared nevertheless as a counterpart to the law of chance which Dada had discovered. In this way the Constructivist involvement in Dada and vice versa may be understood. That is how Doesburg from 'De Stijl' was at the same time a Dadaist. Eggeling made his *General/bass* in Dada times, Richter's black-and-white counterpoint and even Duchamp's discs and 'rotoreliefs' (all with structural tendencies) were connected with and appeared in Dada. The aims of the new and unrestricted (Dada) and the aims of the enduring (Constructivism) go together, and condition each other. To embrace and integrate these two tendencies was the purpose of the magazine 'G'. Richter proclaimed—as publisher—the credo of the magazine in No. 3. The magazine owes its existence to an extensive optimism about the means and possibilities of our time (the integration of opposites). Culture should not be regarded as a speciality of science OR of the arts . . . but as the general problem of existence.

From 'G':

W W PBD by
Kurt Schwitters



Schwitters reading.

W W
PBD.
ZFM
RF RF
TZPF TZPF
MWT
RFMR
RKT PCT
SW SW
KPT
F G
KPT
R Z
KPT
RZL
TZPF TZPF
HFTL

Trial guide to the pronunciation of W W PBD. I choose vowels and consonants as they are pronounced in German. Consonants without a vowel are without tone. Double consonants are not spoken as double. A *single* vowel is spoken very short, two vowels are long, not double. Moreover, in PBD everything is to be spoken short, wö wö, pébede, zefümm, rüf rüf, tezepüff tezepüff, m wit, refümmr, rákete, pézete, swé swé, kepitt, fé gé, kepitt, rrr ze, kepitt, rrrzill, tezepüff tezepüff, hefttill.
(trans. R T)

From 'G': Logically Consistent Poetry by Kurt Schwitters

Translation from Hans Richter's 'Dada: Art and Anti-Art', McGraw-Hill Book Co., N.Y. 1965

The basic material of poetry is not the word but the letter. The word is:

- 1 A combination of letters
- 2 Sound
- 3 Denotation (significance)
- 4 The bearer of associations of ideas

It is impossible to explain the meaning of art; it is infinite. Material consistently formed must be *unequivocal*.

- 1 The sequence of letters in a word is unequivocal, the same for everyone. It is independent of the personal attitude of the beholder.

- 2 Sound is only unequivocal in the spoken word. In the written word, the sound depends on the capacity of the beholder to imagine it. Therefore sound can only be material for the reciting of poetry and not for the writing of poetry.

- 3 Meaning is only unequivocal when, for example, the object signified by the word is actually present. Otherwise it is dependent on the imaginative capacity of the beholder.

- 4 The association of ideas cannot be unequivocal because it is dependent solely on the associative capacity of the beholder. Everyone has different experiences and remembers and associates them differently.

4 Classical poetry depended on the similarity of human beings. It regarded the association of ideas as unequivocal. It was wrong. In any case, it was based on associations of ideas: 'Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh' ('On the hill-tops all is tranquil'). Here Goethe is

not simply trying to tell us that it is quiet on the hill-tops. The reader is expected to experience this 'tranquillity' in the same way as the poet, tired by his official duties, escaping from the urban social round. How little such associations of ideas are universal becomes clear if one imagines a native of the Hedjaz (average population-density, two people per square kilometer) reading such a line. He would certainly be noticeably more impressed by 'Lightning darts zag the Underground, runs over the skyscraper'. In any case, the statement that 'all is tranquil' produces no poetic feeling in him, because to him tranquillity is normal. Poetic feeling is what the poet counts on. And what is a poetic feeling? All the poetry of 'tranquillity' stands and falls by the capacity of the reader to feel. Words in themselves have no value here. Apart from a quite insignificant rhythm in the cadence, there is only the rhyme linking 'Ruh' with 'du' in the next line. The only unifying link between the constituent parts of a classical poem is the association of ideas—in other words, poetic feeling.

Classical poetry as a whole appears to us today in the guise of Dadaist philosophy, and the less Dadaist the original intention, the crazier the result. Classical poetic form is nowadays only used by variety singers.

3 Abstract poetry released the word from its associations—this is a great service—and evaluated word against

word and in particular, concept against concept, with some thought paid to the sound. This has more logical consistency than the evaluation of 'poetic feeling', but it is not logical enough. The end pursued by abstract poetry is pursued, logically, by Dadaist painters, who, in their pictures, evaluate object against object by sticking or nailing them down side by side. Concepts are easier to evaluate in this way than they are when signified indirectly by words.

2 To make the sound the vehicle of the poem also seems to me logically inconsistent, because sound is only unequivocal in the spoken, not in the written word. Sound poetry is only consistent with logic when it is created in actual performance and not written down. A strict distinction must be drawn between the writing and the reciting of poetry. To the reciter, written poetry is merely raw material. It makes no difference to him whether his raw material is poetry or not. It is possible to speak the alphabet, which is purely functional in its origins, in such a way that the result is a work of art. A lot could be written about the speaking of poetry.

1 Logically consistent poetry is made up of letters. Letters have no conceptual content. Letters have no sound in themselves, they only contain possibilities of sounds, which may be interpreted by the performer. A logically consistent poem evaluates letters and groups of letters against each other.

Translated by Richard Taylor

I

Two opposing modes of expression must be sharply divided: the *decorative* (which adorns) and the *monumental* (or formative). These two modes of expression define two completely diverse conceptions of art: that of the *past* and that of the *present*. Whereas the decorative principle aims at *centralisation, decentralisation*.

tion characterises the principle of the monumental. Hitherto the evolution of art has run through all the stages from individualism to the most extreme generalisation.

Individualism	Generalisation
Decoration	The monumental
Past	Present
Centralisation	Decentralisation

Within this tension lies the problem of the new style, of shaping the new art.

According to the decorative conception creative activity was dependent on personal taste, discretion or intuitive assessment of the elements of the work of art. This capricious practice, however, was not adequate to the requisite of our time.

PRECISION.

Those who have understood this demand intellectually, for example, believe they overcome the contradiction by labelling both fanciful and speculative procedure a 'problem'. They maintain that plastic art must be a question not of 'artistic composition' but rather of 'problematic construction'. I assume that the difference between *composition* (assembling) and *construction* (synopsis, concentration) is an aspect of our time which cannot be underestimated. Yet neither can lead to a fruitful, monumental art production, if we do not agree to the *elemental means of forming it*.

What we demand of art is *explicitness*, and this demand can never be fulfilled if artists make use of individualised

means. *Explicitness can only result from discipline of means, and this discipline leads to the generalisation of means*. Generalisation of means leads to elemental, monumental formation.

It would be laughable to assume that all this does not belong to the sphere of creative activity. Art is subject to no logical discipline. It rather grows out of spontaneous, impulsive precedents within the individual. The precision, explicitness, which we require of a work of art has the same roots as the scientific or technological perfection apparent in the unartistic practical objects around us. In these objects, which derive from the needs of daily life, the contemporary artist sees that an end has come to impulsive and speculative procedure. The age of decorative taste is past, the contemporary artist has entirely closed out the past. Scientific and technological consistency force him to draw conclusions for his own domain. Creative consistency forces him into a revision of his means, into a systematic making of rules, that is, to conscious control of his elemental means of expression.

Secondary (auxiliary) means

Painting: illusion of form (object) anecdote, etc.

Sculpture: illusion of form, anecdote, etc.

Architecture: closed form type, decoration, symbol etc.

II

As early as 1916 we set the first and most important requisite: separation of the different realms of formation. In contrast to a still rampant baroque (even in modern art), we have held that the formative arts must be separated from each other. *Without this sharp division (sculpture from painting; painting from architecture, etc.) it is impossible to create order out of the chaos or to become acquainted with the elemental means of formation*. Until now the means of formation have been so intermixed that people finally believed they were indivisible. This indefiniteness of means is a *remnant of the baroque*, in which the various arts destroy each other (by spreading over and against each other), instead of strengthening themselves through a clear relationship to each other.

Out of the elemental means grows the new formation. In it the various arts will relate to each other in such a way as to be able to develop a maximum of (elemental) expressive force.

Primary (elemental) means

Painting: form-time-colour

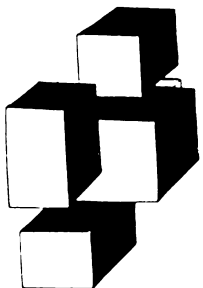
Sculpture: space-time-line-surface-volume

Architecture: space-time-line-surface

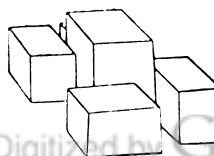
Ground bass of painting



Ground bass of sculpture



Ground bass of architecture



From 'G': Film from Idea to Applause by Miklos Bandi

Genesis der Ausführung	Genesis of performance
Außerliche, bestimmende Faktoren.	Determining outside factors
Sujet, Drama als Materie	Sujet. Drama as material
Regie als Imagination	Direction as imagination
Regie als Werk	Direction as art-object
Spiel, Substanz d. Dinge	Play. Substance of things
Licht und Bewegung	Light and movement
Phot. chem. Vorgänge	Photo-chemical action
Schneiden	Cutting
Projektion	Projection
Leinwand.	Screen
Bildeindruck	Picture-impression
gewöhnliche Apperzeption	Normal perception
Empfindung der Bildechtheit	Sense of image-authenticity
Empf. der innerl. Logik (innerhalb des Bildes)	Sense of inner logic within image
Empf. d. äußerl. Logik	Sense of exterior logic
Sentimentale Schwingungen	Empathy
Lust- und Unlust-Gefühle d. ästhetischen Empf.	Pleasure-pain feelings of the aesthetic sense
Ethische Momente	Ethical considerations
Erlebnis. Urteil	Experience. Judgment
Massenpsychologische, spezielle, biologische, usw. Momente	Mass-psychological, special biological considerations, etc
Constanz der Auswirkung	Constancy of effect

From 'G':

Industrialised Building by Mies van der Rohe

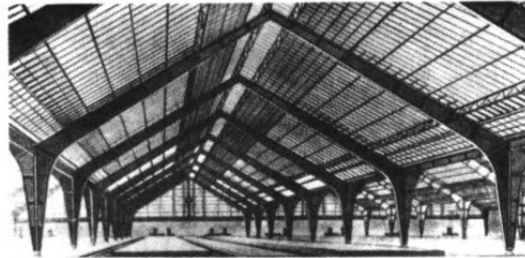
Translated by Nicolas Eullock

The necessity for industrialising the building industry has recently been touched on by nearly all those immediately concerned, and I regard it as a step in the right direction that this question is now being discussed by an even wider circle, even if few people are really convinced of this necessity. The progressive industrialisation of all other fields would certainly have seized the building industry, with little regard for its old-fashioned outlook and its traditional values, had it not been for certain circumstances which prevented this. It is in the industrialisation of the building industry that I see the central problem of our time. If we can succeed in driving through this industrialisation, then our social, economic, technical and even our aesthetic problems will be easily solved. The difficulty in accomplishing this can perhaps be overcome when we have tried to find out what it is that is preventing it. The view that old-fashioned production methods are the cause, is mistaken. They are the effect, not the cause, of our present position; they are part of the traditional building industry. Attempts to use new production methods are being carried out continuously, but they have only affected the part of the building industry which lends itself readily to industrialisation. Furthermore the prefabricated aspect of building today has undoubtedly been overplayed. It is almost only used in long-span buildings for agriculture and industry and it was in fact

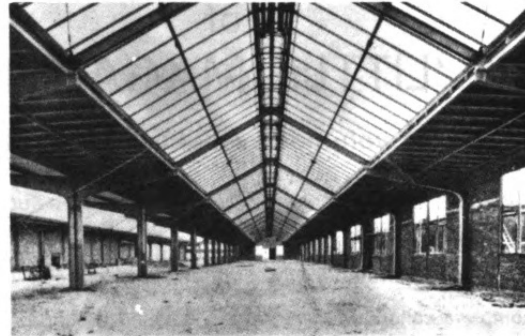
the iron manufacturers who first prefabricated building components in their factories. Later the wood industry has also tried to industrialise its building components, to produce a prefabricated building system. In all other buildings, however, the basic construction and greater part of the interior work is carried out by hand in the same way as it has been for countless years. This type of work will neither be altered by new economic developments nor by new working methods and it is precisely this way of working that guarantees the small firms their livelihood. Certainly it is possible to save labour and materials by using new and larger building blocks, but this will not affect in any way the 'handicraft' tradition of the building industry; in addition to which it should be added that brickwork has undeniable advantages over these new building methods. It is not so much a question of rationalising existing methods of working, as completely reforming the building industry.

As long as we use basically the same building materials the nature of building will not change; and this, as I mentioned above, conditions ultimately the method of production. The industrialisation of building is really a question of materials. For this reason the demand for a new building material is the first requirement. Our technical capability must and will be able to produce a new building material that is suitable to industrial

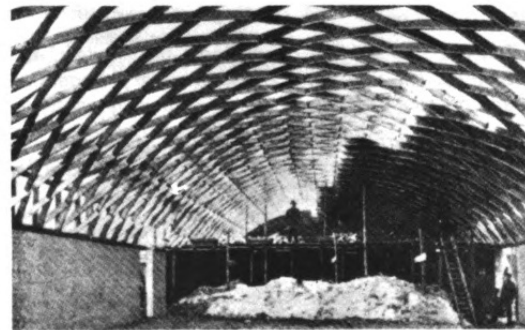
Railway station hall for Stuttgart planned by Breest and Co., Berlin. Good example of three-pin rigid frame construction.



New mode of construction using simple beam supports with mounted skylights. Professor Peter Behrens in cooperation with Breest and Co., Berlin.



German Customs House, Berlin.



production and machine working, that will be strong, weatherproof, and will have adequate heat and sound insulation. It will have to be a lightweight material, whose production not only requires industrialisation, but actually helps in its development. The industrialised production of all building components can only really be rationalised by starting with the method by which they are produced, and when the work on the site has been reduced to an assembly process and can be

carried out at a speed which is at present unheard of. This will lead to a reduction in building costs.

At the same time it will be possible to realise the formal ideas of the new architecture. I am certain that in its present form the building industry will disappear, and if anyone regrets that the house of the future will no longer be built by traditional craftsmen, they should remember that the motor car is no longer produced by wheelwrights.

From 'G': The Office Block by Mies van der Rohe

Translated by Nicholas Bullock

We reject { All aesthetic speculation
All doctrine
All formalism

Building is the spatial expression of the spirit of our time.
Living Changing New.

Not yesterday, not tomorrow, only today can be expressed in form.
Only this can become building.

Become building formed from the essence of the problem by using the potentialities of our time.

This is our task.



The Office Block

The office block is a building of work organisation clarity economy. Spacious well-lit work areas, where the space is not broken up, where each work-place can be seen, where the only subdivisions correspond to the organisation of the firm. Maximum of effect for a minimum of materials.

The materials are concrete steel glass. Reinforced concrete buildings tend naturally to be frame buildings. Without loadbearing walls without heavy towers. With frame construction the walls carry no weight. Therefore skin and bones construction.

The most efficient way of dividing up the work areas gave the building depth; this is 16m. A frame with two bays of 8m. span and 4m. cantilever was the most economical form of construction. The beams are at 5m. centres. These beams carry the floor slab which is turned up vertically at the end of the cantilever to provide the supporting wall for shelving, which was taken out of the centre of the workspace to give a clear view and put against the outside walls. Above the 2m. high shelving a band of continuous glazing reaches to the ceiling.

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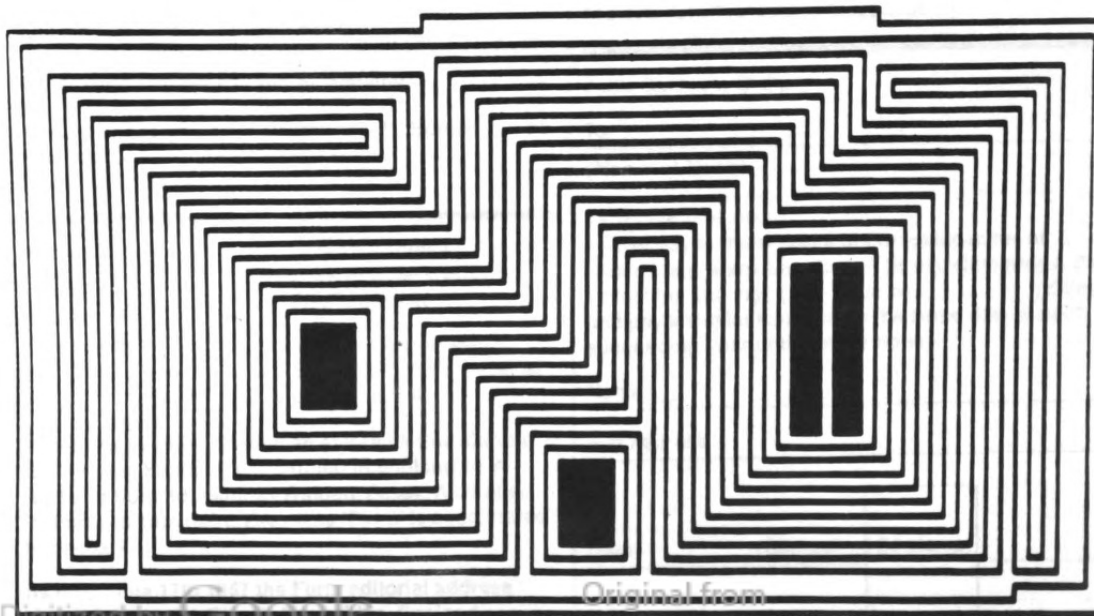
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Brighton Festival Exhibition of Concrete Poetry: notes, map

The founding of Black Mountain College by Lewis Shelley; **Albers' 'Graphic Tectonics'** by Irving Finkelstein;
My courses at Ulm by Josef Albers; **Brighton notes: The first years of Concrete Poetry** by Eugen Gomringer;
What is Kinetism? by Lev Nusberg; Charles Biederman; Anselm Hollo; and **Great Little Magazines No. 4, Mecano**

*Josef Albers: Sanctuary,
lithograph 1942. Collection of
the artist.*



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Form 3: Apology

We must apologise to Hans Richter for possibly giving the impression in our feature on G in Form 3 that we regarded his own role in the production of that remarkable magazine as no more than equivalent to that of Gräff, Lissitzky and Mies, when in fact we have never thought of him as anything less than chief editor and publisher. The omission of his name from the cover of that issue—in no way pardonable—was the regrettable result of exigencies which every magazine must sometimes face. Our admiration for Hans Richter's contribution to the modern effort makes our feeling that we may have done him an injustice all the more painful, but we ask our readers to judge for themselves by consulting the references in our bibliography of G.

Back numbers

Copies of **Form 2** (2/6, USA \$1) and **Form 3** (3/6, USA \$1) are still available, post free, from 8 Duck End, Girton, Cambridge. No. 2 contains articles on Le Parc and Hirschfeld-Mack, Gillo Dorfles 'For or Against a Structuralist Aesthetic?' and 'Emanuel Romano' by William Carlos Williams. No. 3 includes three essays by Charles Biederman, work by Robert Pinget and Ian Hamilton Finlay, and an article by El Lissitzky, as well as a supplement on 'phonic' poetry. In the 'Great Little Magazines' series, No. 2 carries 'Blues' and No. 3 'G'.

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A section—this is the first—in each of the next few issues of **Form** will be devoted to Black Mountain College. Our purpose in this is to present the various phases of its existence (1933-56) as a paradigm of progressive educational ideals contributing to the special inflections of the American arts since the Second War. B M C is significant not only as an experiment which succeeded or failed according to different points of view, but as the place—there being no milieu in the United States—in which Abstract art and Expressionism were formally conjoined, and where a college became the name of a literary movement.

We cannot recreate the whole that was Black Mountain, nor can we yet write its history. Our aim is to make it possible, perhaps, to sense its form by means of an order of documents; roughly chronological, but selected sometimes for their summational force—Albers at Ulm is the first instance.

B M C underwent many changes. The rock of academic freedom upon which the college was to have built itself showed itself to be liable to common subsidence. Rice, the founder, claimed he was driven out; five faculty members resigned in 1944; when Albers left in 1949 many of his friends went with him; and finally a law-suit was brought, faculty against faculty, to close the college. It is with Charles Olson's short visits in the autumn of 1948 that B M C begins for the younger generation, but we do not intend to ignore the earlier phases. The meaning of Black Mountain lies in its actual transformations as well as in its legendary extensions

Lewis Shelley, of the University of Florida, cites as sources for his article 'The founding of the College': Louis Adamic's *My America* (N.Y. 1937), the *Bulletin of the A A U P* (Vol. 19), and John Rice's *I Came Out of the Nineteenth Century* (N.Y. 1942); also the *B M C Papers* (State Archives, Raleigh, N.C.), and Frank A. Rice.

One great English university was started by breaking away from another, and this breaking away was the method by which a number of American universities were founded over a century ago. Black Mountain College was founded by a group of faculty and students who left Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida at the close of the 1932-33 academic year. The reasons behind this departure originated in the events at Rollins during the preceding years.

Rollins College was founded in 1885 as a privately-supported, coeducational institution. In its first forty years, the college's development was hampered by inadequate endowment. In 1925 Dr Hamilton Holt, distinguished advocate of international peace and a former newspaper editor, became president. In 1930, under his leadership, the faculty abolished lectures and recitations, and substituted the Conference Plan of Study, which was mainly Holt's own creation. Under this plan, students were required to spend six hours daily in three two-hour sessions called conferences and two hours in some form of supervised exercise. In 1931 a national conference of education experts was held at Rollins which resulted in the adoption of a Rollins plan. Under the Rollins Plan, the college was divided into Upper and Lower Divisions, the time element was minimised, the role of instruction diminished, and students were encouraged to proceed at their own rate. The

Conference Plan, however, was not abolished, and the problem of adjusting the two systems was referred to the curriculum committee. President Holt devoted much time to the publicity of these ideas and to the raising of funds. Leading educators soon recognised Rollins College as one of the nation's more progressive colleges. President Holt became so overwhelmingly the dominant figure at Rollins that he apparently conceived himself as the only interpreter of Rollins' educational plans and assumed functions which were normally assigned to the faculty as a body. Unknown to the faculty, Holt had been given exceptional power by the Board of Trustees when he became president. In the early years of his administration, however, no serious friction between the faculty and the president developed.

In the fall of 1932, general discussion among students and faculty concerning the role of fraternities at Rollins left an aftermath of resentment. A majority of the student body and the faculty favoured fraternities; this group was backed by President Holt. A smaller group of faculty and students opposed fraternities at Rollins on the grounds that they were not needed in a small school and could only have divisive effects.

At the same time, a group of professors, largely the same group which opposed fraternities, had grown critical of Hamilton Holt's

experiments in education and openly challenged some of his ideas; these men felt that the faculty should have a more decisive role in the administration of the college. Some of the members of this group, who were to become the core of Black Mountain College's first faculty, were: John A. Rice, professor of classics, Frederick Georgia, professor of chemistry, Ralph R. Lounsbury, professor of government and history, Robert Wunsch, instructor in dramatics, and Theodore Dreier, assistant professor of physics and mathematics.

Members of this faculty group also felt that the Rollins plan started in 1931, was incompatible with the two-hour conference plan, since it emphasised achievement rather than time, and they thought that the remnants of the older plan should be eliminated. Members of this group dominated the Curriculum Committee in the 1932-33 year, and in the January of 1933 the committee reported a resolution which said that the Conference Plan was incompatible with the Rollins Plan. President Holt opposed this statement, and the committee was censured by him for its report.

The event which brought a segment of the faculty and student body into open rebellion was the dismissal of Professor John A. Rice. Rice, a former Rhodes Scholar, had been appointed as professor of classics in July of 1930. An extremely articulate person, he was an outspoken critic of

certain features of college life at Rollins from the time of his arrival. He had been one of the most active agitators against fraternities and a member of the censured curriculum committee; he had attacked certain features of the athletic system and the department of physical education. His agnostic beliefs, his frank manner of expression, and his occasionally immodest dress had caused him to be condemned by a small segment of people in the conservative community. By February of 1933, Rice had no doubt offended a considerable number of faculty, students, members of the Board of Trustees, and townspeople.

Following the report of the curriculum committee early in 1933, President Holt notified Rice that his resignation was desirable. Rice let it be known that he would not resign. A private confrontation followed, during which Holt informed Rice that he was extending to him another opportunity to see if Rice could work cooperatively in the community. However, Professor Rice remained the gadfly that he was, and on March 27 President Holt notified him that he would be dismissed at the end of the term.

By the end of March strong factions emerged within the faculty and student body. These were prompted by personal loyalties to Rice and a belief by some that he was being punished because of

his stand as a member of the curriculum committee. A group of the faculty led by Frederick Georgia and Ralph R. Lounsbury, tried actively to dissuade Holt from dismissing Rice. The student body split into supporters of Rice and supporters of the President.

In April the American Association of University Professors learned of the dismissal of John A. Rice and requested information from Rollins on the circumstances of the case. The A A U P was interested in the dismissal because Holt had promised Rice tenure after two years at Rollins. No member of the Rollins faculty had informed the A A U P at that time, but Professor Rice soon informed President Holt that he intended to appeal his case. President Holt immediately relieved Rice of his duties and gave him twenty-four hours to remove his belongings from campus. A week later Holt invited an inquiry by the A A U P.

In mid-May the A A U P sent an investigating committee to Winter Park. After ten days of examining evidence, the A A U P issued a preliminary report: rules for tenure and procedure in regard to removal of faculty members appeared unsatisfactory and ill-defined. The report added that nothing seriously reflecting on the character or scholarship of Professor Rice had been found, but that the committee needed more time before ruling on the adequacy of the reasons given for firing Rice. As the academic year entered

its final month, President Holt urged the friends of Professor Rice to cease agitation and restore harmony to the college. Simultaneously, two faculty friends of Rice resigned under administrative pressure. Lounsbury and Georgia were asked to take a permanent leave of absence, but both refused. The president of the student body and the editor of Rollins' campus weekly resigned in protest at the President's actions. Shortly thereafter, Lounsbury and Georgia were notified that they were not to return the following September. Holt clearly did not want another term to start with the pro-Rice faction still on campus. The number of teachers who were dismissed or who resigned increased to a total of nine—out of a faculty of 45—by the middle of June.

The idea of a new college had long been the subject of informal discussion among a group of faculty and students sympathetic to Rice and his ideas. During the preceding 25 years, higher education in the United States had been filled with experiments. Several colleges and universities—Chicago, Bennington, Swarthmore, Yale and Harvard, for example—had instituted new plans in an effort to allow greater individuality in the curriculum.

The possibility of starting a new college, however, was realistically considered only after Rice faced eviction from Rollins, and the idea evolved gradually during the months of May and June 1933. After he

was dismissed, Rice had resolved to leave the professional world. Rollins was his third college, and he knew of no school that would welcome his ideas and methods. Yet the country was in great economic difficulties in 1933, and Rice, a teacher, had to think about a subsistence income for his wife and family. One girl came to Rice and revealed that she had lost her scholarship because she had supported him.

Talk of starting a new college became more serious when Georgia and Lounsbury were dismissed. Several locations were discussed. Some thought Florida held many advantages; others felt the climate was not conducive to hard work. Dr. Georgia had a summerhouse in the Appalachians and was enthusiastic about that area. Robert Wunsch had spent some time in Asheville, North Carolina, and he mentioned the site of the Blue Ridge Assembly in the mountains near Asheville. Wunsch knew that the facilities, a great hall and several smaller buildings, were used in the summers by the Y M C A for conferences but were vacant the rest of the year.

During the second week of June, Georgia proposed to Rice that they drive to Blue Ridge. They found the property of the Blue Ridge Association located about eighteen miles east of Asheville, North Carolina, and three miles north of the small village of Black Mountain. The property, comprising 1600

acres, was on the main slope of the Blue Ridge with the Black Mountains and Craggy Range directly north of the main structure. The central building was a huge common hall with meeting rooms and three storeys of guest quarters. Other supplementary buildings were arranged around the hall. Rice and Georgia found the facilities completely furnished and available at a moderate rental. Leaving Black Mountain, they drove to Pennsylvania where they talked with Rice's brother-in-law, President Frank Aydelotte of Swarthmore College. There was talk and questions concerning organisational procedures and financial support. They speculated on the number of students they could count on and on the sum of their tuition. It is probably true that Frank Aydelotte's encouragement had a decisive influence. Black Mountain College was to be attempted.

Rice, Georgia, Lounsbury and Dreier spent the months of July and August trying to get the new institution organised. Rice travelled all over the East for four weeks, talking to students, explaining what he thought the college was to be, trying to gain enough financial backing to operate the college for one year. Dreier was able to persuade several people to underwrite the college (for a least a thousand dollars apiece). Finally, Rice went to see Malcolm Forbes, a wealthy man who had taught psychology at Rollins and left the year before, to ask

him to underwrite the college up to ten thousand dollars. Rice promised that the money would not be used for salaries, and not at all except to get them through the year. He agreed, and the financial problem was somewhat solved.

Meanwhile frantic telegrams were being sent to Rice and Dreier from teachers who had left or been dismissed from Rollins. Yet up until the 24th August Rice could not reply with certainty that the college would open in September. When the college opened on September 25th, the members of the faculty consisted of former Rollins professors Rice, Dreier, Georgia and Lounsbury. Frederick Mangold came practically straight from graduate school at Princeton and taught English literature and composition. Joseph Martin came from a year of study at Oxford to teach English. John Evarts left a private school in New England to become an instructor in music. In recruiting these and other professors, Aydelotte of Swarthmore was of great help. Robert Wunsch, who was to develop the drama program at Black Mountain College and play an important part in the college's later development, supported the idea of a new college from the beginning, but did not join the faculty until 1934. Black Mountain College opened in the fall of 1933 with nineteen students; fifteen of these were former Rollins College students who had sided with Rice and his colleagues through the Rollins

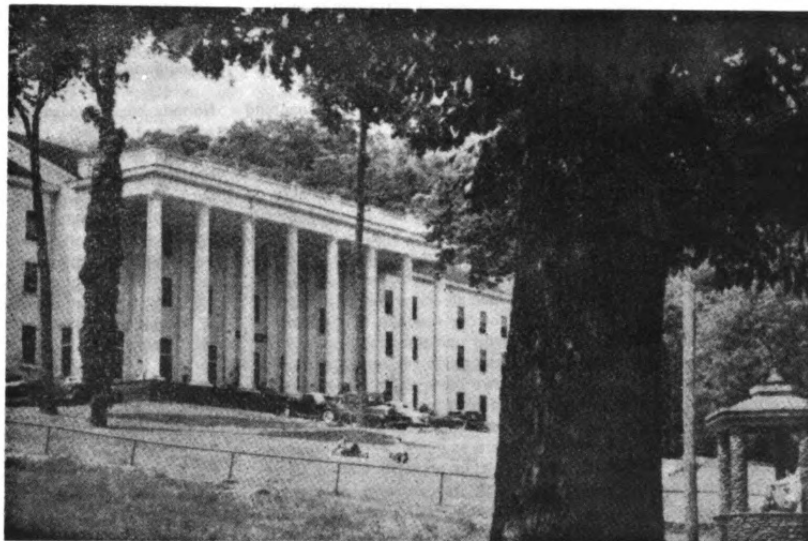
incidents. Most of them were disappointed in the Rollins experiments and indignant at President Holt's actions. Many were personally loyal to Rice's educational ideas and methods. In two cases the students forfeited Rollins scholarships; in several cases they risked the displeasure of parents. Without them, however, Rice and his associates could not have thought of starting a new school. After the new college was announced, several of these students, including the former president of Rollins' student body, helped Rice and the other professors obtain financial support. Seven of them met to send out announcements of the new college to former Rollins students who were not planning to return. Rollins students were mainly from the Northeast, and Black Mountain's first student body was composed of students from the same area with the exception of four who lived in Florida. Almost all of the first students were from prosperous families. Rice and his friends would have liked to have selected students from all economic classes; however, the new college could offer no scholarships, and the depression made it difficult for the ordinary family to afford college tuition.

The educational philosophy and policy of Black Mountain College was developed by faculty and students alike, mostly under the guidance of John A. Rice who had his own philosophy of education coherently worked out. Rice's

educational ideas grew out of his experiences at the Webb School in Tennessee and at Oxford, his study of certain aspects of Plato, and his teaching at Rollins. The Rollins rebels held two fundamental theses from the beginning: first, that the best development of the individual required that he be trained in relation to wider responsibilities than just himself; secondly, that more than intellectual training was necessary—feelings and emotions must be sensitively disciplined. The means of achieving these goals was to emphasise the creative arts and practical responsibility as equal in importance to development of the intellect, in a community setting where students and teachers lived in close contact with each other. Learning and living were to be intimately connected on a broad base.

The new college existed as a social unit; it was so close-knit that it had many characteristics of a huge family. All members of the teaching staff, their families, and the students lived in the same three storey building, ate their meals together, and were in constant contact with one another. Most teaching, learning and studying also took place within the building. As a result, the distinction between work done in the classroom and work done outside was broken down, and the relation became not so much one of teacher to student as of one member of the community to another. Except for two cooks and a

**The Blue Ridge Assembly:
first site of Black Mountain
College 1933-41.**



furnaceman in the winter, the college had no employees. All work to be done around the college, except that which required the continuous attention of one person, was divided among volunteers from the student body and the faculty without distinction. They swept floors, cut firewood, shovelled coal, assisted in the kitchen, served meals, laundered, and did all other necessary chores. In the spring of 1934, some students expressed the desire to experiment with farm work, and under the guidance of Dreier, a small college farm was started, supplying the members of the community with large amounts of exercise and modest amounts of food.

This type of work program

was instituted at Black Mountain for several reasons. It was one way to help the students become responsible to the needs of the group. Rice wished education to be a shared affair between students and teachers, and owing to the financial bind, it was necessary for all members of the community to assist in various ways with the running of the college.

John A. Rice said that Black Mountain was to be education for the democratic man. The founders believed the artist to embody the values of the democratic man. The artist was not a competitor; he competed only with himself. His struggle was inside, not against his fellows, but against his own ignorance and

clumsiness. The integrity of the artist was not a fight between him and his fellows but a creation by him and his environment. As a result, the arts, which often exist only on the fringes of a curriculum, were regarded as an integral part of the life of the college. In the early part of the student's education, they were considered of greater importance, because least subject to direction from a severe discipline of their own. The founders felt that by being made sensitive to the arts the student acquired a firmer control of himself and his environment than was possible through purely intellectual effort.

The curriculum of the college was divided into Junior and

Senior Divisions. The first was to be an exploratory period; the second, a period of specialised study. This plan was similar to the Rollins plan and not unrelated to the Oxford system. The Senior Division idea was also patterned somewhat after the Honours program at Swarthmore. Entrance into the Senior Division was not dependent upon the number of courses completed successfully but was rather determined by the results of comprehensive oral and written examinations. Graduation from the college was put on a similar basis, with professors from other institutions conducting the exams. There were no required courses, but each student prepared with his advisor a plan of work and was expected to complete a well-rounded course of study. Classes, which were a combination of recitations, lectures, tutorial sessions and seminars, met at the discretion of the teacher, and attendance was voluntary.

The first phase of Black Mountain's history was characterised by the initial impetus of the revolt from Rollins under the leadership of John A. Rice. The institution's framework was not to be drastically changed. For over twenty years, Black Mountain stood for a non-political radicalism in higher education and sought to develop a new program for general education in which the best development of the individual could be the honest goal.

A report on courses in Basic Drawing, Design and Colour, given at the Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm, November 24th 1953—January 23rd 1954. Albers was at Black Mountain College from 1933 to 1949.

1. Introduction

From the correspondence which I had before coming to Ulm with both the US Government and the Geschwister-Scholl-Stiftung, Hochschule für Gestaltung, the establishment of which was made possible by a donation of 1 million D M out of the McCloy Fund, I concluded that my main task would be to advise the Hochschule für Gestaltung as to curriculum organisation and teaching methods and to demonstrate teaching in the following specialised fields which are considered here as basic training: basic drawing, basic colour, and basic design. The courses were given every week day morning from 8.15 to 11.30, except Saturdays. Besides these class hours of practical exercises I frequently went to see the students in the afternoons when they did their home work and also visited the workshops of the department of industrial design. Several times I visited the building grounds on the 'Kuhberg', until bad weather prevented the continuation of construction.

Shortly after my arrival in Ulm and repeatedly during my stay here I had conferences with members of the Board of Directors, Rechtsanwalt Helmut Becker, Kreebronn, Dr Roderich Graf Thun, Jettingen, and Oberbürgermeister Pfizer of Ulm, and with future teachers on the program of the school.

Before going into the

details of my experience I should like to explain the principles of my teaching method, in particular why my methods differ from the traditional methods in teaching art.

2. Principles underlying my courses at the Hochschule

The longer I teach the more I learn that art cannot be taught, at least not directly. Art—as I see it—is visual formulation of our reaction to the world, the universe, to life. If such definition is acceptable, the two basic aspects we have to deal with in teaching arts and in which we can offer help are seeing and formulating, or vision and articulation. That the development of these faculties provides tasks for more than a life time has been repeatedly stated by the masters. Since vision and articulation are the parents of art, self-expression in art, which is to reveal purposely something through visual formulation, is possible only at an advanced level, that is, after vision is developed and articulation is acquired, at least to some extent.

Consequently, self-expression is not the beginning of art studies. I am aware that many art teachers are not sympathetic to such conclusions. I come to my conclusions through the following premises.

As there is no verbal communication before we can produce sounds and words, as there is no writing before having letters or type, for

the same reason there is no visual communication as long as there is no visual articulation.

Nobody considers inarticulate sounds of a child a language, and nobody accepts his scribbles as writing. But curiously enough many are inclined to accept such scribbles as self-expression and so—as art. But finally art teachers are beginning to discover that self-expression is something other than self-disclosure.

Following my conclusions, I do not believe in self-expression as the first or the principal objective of art studies. We will understand this better in applying the German educational terms *Beschäftigungstrieb* (the urge to be occupied), and *Gestaltungstrieb* (the urge to formulate, to build).

Compare also the usual art teaching with teaching in other fields, imagine the four 'R's taught without direction, without systematic training; or language, history and music studies consisting only of self-expression without systematic and continuous exercises.

It is a psychological error to believe that art stems from feeling only. Art comes from the conscious as well as from the subconscious—from both heart and mind. If art is order, it is intellectual order as well as initiative or instinctive order. Unfortunately there are people, teachers and students, afraid of the training

of the conscious in art, afraid of the understandable in art. For those I should like to say that clear thinking will not and cannot interfere with genuine feeling; but it does interfere with prejudices, so often misinterpreted as feelings—and that's all to the good. As in any other field of human endeavour, so it is worthwhile also in art to see and think clearly. In teaching art, particularly basic design, I have tried to organise a method which provides a preparation for all visual art, a practical study of principles underlying and connecting all arts.

Before going into detail it might be interesting to see first how architecture for instance—and in a similar way also typography—have regained a significant and leading cultural position, more, probably, than any other branch of art today.

Since the Beaux-Arts system is abandoned, since retrospective analysis and copying of ancient achievements are no longer the beginning nor the dominating concern of architectural apprentices, since present needs and new as well as old possibilities of construction are the point of departure and the main content of study, a contemporary new architecture is growing again—performed in our own articulation, demonstrating our own mentality.



Josef Albers: photo by
courtesy of the Hochschule
für Gestaltung, Ulm.

3. The courses

A. *Basic Design* has a similar direction, as just pointed out. Our start is not retrospection, nor the ambition to illustrate, to embellish, or to express something. We try to learn, i.e. to see, that every visible thing has form and that every form has meaning—and we learn this by producing form. Therefore our workshops are rather laboratories than ateliers, studies or lecture rooms.

We simply begin with material and try to shape it. We observe how it looks and what we can do with it. We do not think of making useful things right away. We do as music students do, namely we learn to get acquainted with the instruments, that is to get means and hands under control before we care about theory and history. We do exercise before making compositions we rehearse before performing.

In order to open the way for discovery and invention, which are the criteria of creativeness, I prefer materials little known or normally not used for visual formulation. We are using material in a way students have not thought of before. In order to avoid mere application of theory and technique, I prefer the inductive method—that is coming to conclusions after having made exercises, after having gained experience. We choose new problems and attack them in a new way not

for the purpose of being new or different, nor for the sake of novelty-craze, but for the purpose of constant observation and continued self-criticism. In this way we try to counteract habitual application, the strongest enemy of creativeness.

B. *Basic Drawing*. For practical art studies I consider freehand drawing the most comprehensive training. By drawing I mean a visual formulation achieved by strictly graphical means, that is mainly line. I therefore exclude consciously all techniques which are just in-between painting and drawing, as for instance charcoal drawing. Charcoal drawing, like any type of drawing, aims at the three-dimensional volume, but in addition at a quite superfluous painterly effect, achieved by indication of modelling and shading. I also do not believe in beginning with life-drawing from the nude, as in my opinion this presents one of the most difficult tasks. Instead, particularly in the beginning, we do a number of technical exercises in order to get eye and hand under control and to achieve distinct effects. Also right from the beginning, I make the students aware that we do not see with the eye only. Particularly in relationship to direction our motoric sense is more competent than the eye. We draw a lot in the air, also with closed eyes, and always above the paper before we touch the paper at all. This aims at seeing the shape of

form before it appears on the paper. We say: just as thinking is before speaking, so seeing is before drawing. Here are some typical exercises: reversed, repeated and extended shapes (radial and lateral), reversed and distorted curves; a few typical letter constructions, seen forward and backward, downward and upward, then letters—both constructed and script—so that they appear as having volume, in various positions.

Our figure drawing we start with the draped figure. And for the studies of drapery, particularly the folding, we represent first broad paper ribbons mounted on the wall in a flag-like movement. Here we differentiate, first visually, then graphically, the actual line (that is the edge of the paper) from the illusory transition line. After this we draw details from garments in their plastic movement; how a collar moves over the shoulder downward, how for instance the folding of the trousers is related to the knee, starting there or returning there. Only later, after more training (hats and shoes), will we study heads and hands. In further technical exercises we present three-dimensional illusion in two ways: by gradual increase and/or decrease of the intensities of lines as well as by gradual increase and/or decrease of distance between lines. From here we come organically, easily, to the drawing of plants, and twigs, and flowers. Also to sketches of groups of

figures just as the drawing class presents them, saving hereby models.

As to sketching we make a special effort to avoid the commonly used 'boxing-in' contours. This is to say that our main concern is to present three-dimensional effect with strictly two-dimensional means.

C. *Basic Colour*. My colour course also presents a learning through experience instead of a learning through application of theory and rules. It is a laboratory study aiming at specific psychic effects. We almost never see in our mind what colour physically is, because colour is the most relative medium in art. This is the result of both the interdependence of, as well as the interaction between colour and colour, colour and form, colour and quantity, colour and placement. After having recognised the physiological phenomenon of the after-image (simultaneous contrast), it is always a great excitement for the class to demonstrate that one and the same colour with changing conditions can look unbelievably different. In a similar discrepancy between physical fact and psychic effect we make very different colours look alike, we make opaque colours look transparent, change the temperature within one colour from warm to cold or vice versa, change dark to light and light to dark, make two colours look like three, or three colours like two, etc.

Albers' 'Graphic Tectonics' by Irving Finkelstein

From a doctoral dissertation. The Life and Art of Josef Albers. submitted to New York University.

We produce illusionary mixtures as well as optical mixtures. We study the conditions of mixture through the Weber-Fechner law, which teaches us the interdependence between geometric (physical) and arithmetic (psychic) progression of mixtures. The more we see that colour always deceives us, the more we feel able to use its action for visual formulation.

Like students of music our students are encouraged to cultivate a free play of their colour fantasy in the so-called free colour studies, which alternate with the laboratory studies. Both laboratory studies and free colour studies are done almost exclusively with coloured paper instead of paint, because paper, being a homogeneous material, permits us to return to precisely the same tint or shade again and again. It avoids all disturbing accidents like brush strokes and changing mixtures and applications. A brief study of colour systems—of Goethe, Munsell, Ostwald—occurs at the end of the course (not as usual at the beginning), because—to say it again—the ability to see colour and colour relationship is more important than to 'know about' colour.

So in drawing and colour we have been able to cover almost the whole range of problems. Whereas in basic design we could concentrate only on a few materials, paper, representing visually a

two-dimensional material, and wire, representing a linear material.

4. Final Comments

I am impressed with the pioneer spirit manifested by students and teachers. I admire in particular the intensity with which the two originators of the project, Frau Inge Aicher-Scholl and her husband Otto Aicher, work for this new institute. I have the highest respect for their exceptional human qualities and base my hopes for the Hochschule für Gestaltung particularly on the great artistic abilities which Herr Aicher and Herr Bill, the Rector of the school, possess. Max Bill has been a consultant to the two former for several years, after the original idea of the Hochschule für Gestaltung was brought up.

It was a pleasure for me to work with the group of students at the Hochschule. They were twenty in number and came from six different countries. It was interesting and stimulating for both teacher and students to have people from such different backgrounds as Great Britain and Brazil among the group. It was amazing to see how in spite of the marked differences in background and temperament all pulled toward the same aim, the search for our visual language.

January 20th, 1954

The first climactic group of works after Albers' emigration to America was produced as a series of eight lithographs called *Graphic Tectonics*, dated, as printed, 1942. These works, actually evolved before 1942, stand out even after two dozen years as Albers' most significant, most personal and individual contribution to that date.¹ Representing an extreme economy of artistic means, each of the compositions was constructed by ruler and drafting pen to produce straight, unmodulated lines, whose complex interrelationships were very strictly controlled by mechanically constant distances and changes of their vertical and horizontal direction at right angles only.² All the works were executed by zinc lithography so that the lines might retain maximum precision. Within the series, however, Albers' handling of the linear relationships was not the same throughout, and two subgroups can be readily distinguished, each containing four of the eight compositions. In the first of these two groups, the lines never intersect, and Albers created the illusions of volume and spatial movement entirely through the massing of the thinner or heavier lines in a given area. In this group belong *Prefatio*, *Introitus*, *To Monte Alban* and *Sanctuary*. In the group comprising the other four lithographs, Albers allowed the lines to intersect, either becoming part of the countermovement, as in *Seclusion* or continuing

beyond the lines intersected as in *Ascension*. In the first group all the works seem relatively closed or compact because the clusters of parallel lines were equally close together, while in three members of the second group, *Seclusion*, *Interim* and *Shrine*, these are varied, leaving large open areas of light and a quality of far greater complexity than the first group.

The important point here, however, is that the *Graphic Tectonic* series taken together sums up all the tendencies seen in Albers' development throughout the 1930's, including to a certain extent several of the functions of colour which he explored in the early years at Black Mountain College.

First, his exploration of the continuous line saw its fulfilment in this series. Of the eight, only *To Monte Alban* and *Seclusion* are made up of clusters of lines that clearly have beginnings or ends. Among the others, a peak of invention and sophistication is achieved with lines that, starting at any point, move a certain distance, turn right or left, changing in width with each turn, move again and turn again, each time building another pattern, like a thread woven into a tapestry, and ultimately return to their point of origin without a single break. For example, what appears to be the delicate interaction of a great many lines in *Prefatio* is really a painstakingly precise

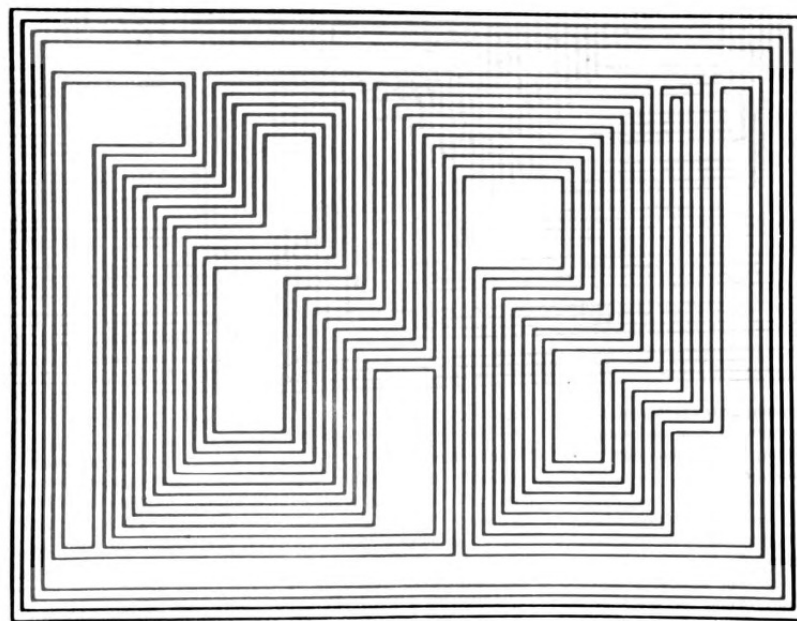
Josef Albers: Prefatio.
Reproduced in Bucher, F.,
J.A., *Despite Straight Lines*.

1. The eight compositions were first shown publicly at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, Cambridge, from March 16th to 26th, 1942. The lithographs were however largely the product of the year 1941, and they were executed in competition with class students work, connected with

a problem in basic design. 2. Albers, Josef: *Graphic Tectonic*, 1942, in Bucher, Joseph Albers, *Despite Straight Lines*, New Haven and London, 1961, pp 10-11. 3. This does not include the inverted L-shaped section at the right, which, however, is in harmony with the rest of the configuration.

4. Monte Alban, in southern Mexico, was a religious city built by the Zapotec Indians. It consisted of an immense central plaza (330 x 220 yards) bounded by four large pyramidal platforms containing tombs, temples, dwellings, courts and giant staircases, all of which are being restored today.

5. George Heard Hamilton's assertion (*Yale University Art Gallery catalogue*, Josef Albers, *Paintings, Prints, Projects*, New Haven 1956, p 45) that 'the titles of the series are taken from the canonical divisions of the Roman Catholic Mass' is not entirely accurate.



interweaving of only three sets of continuous lines tracing their endless paths within four sets of concentric frames. *Sanctuary* is built in the same way, with a double line frame around each of the black rectangles and around the whole configuration, but with the main central labyrinth composed of one single, continuous line that returns to its beginning.³ In *Seclusion*, except for the outer frame and two central squares, each line begins to move vertically from the central horizontal band, traces a path through the entire composition and ultimately returns to the central

band from its corresponding place on the opposite side.

Second, Albers' reaffirmation of the architectural stimulus for his themes in such works as the *Archaeologic* paintings or *The Gate* again took place in the *Graphic Tectonics*. Only one composition makes a reference in its title to a specific architectural experience, *To Monte Alban*,⁴ and that title was given after the completion of the work. Although Albers did not seek to reproduce or 'represent' any element of Mexican architecture per se, the association naturally called forth by *To Monte Alban* and several of the other lithographs

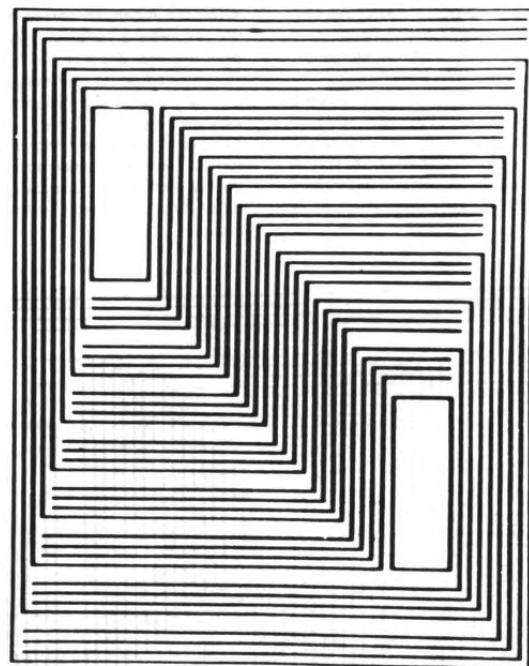
is the effect of the great stepped pyramids on which the ancient temples were built. The horizontally oriented compositions, like *Prefatio* and *Sanctuary*, the latter partly through its title, suggest the facades of pre-Columbian sacred architecture. Similarly, the rectangular openings in *Sanctuary*, *Introitus*, *To Monte Alban* and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the paired squares in *Seclusion* trace their origins back to the principle of the window. Albers' earliest major preoccupation. However, the artist so completely integrated every aspect of these lithographs that the

architectural quality is inseparable from the linear structure and the spatial organisation.⁵

In the spatial organisation too the *Graphic Tectonics* are the culmination of Albers' experiments with the transformability of form-space relationships since 1931. That Albers achieved a new spatial reality in this series, whose date places it at the approximate mid-point of his artistic career, was recognised by Alexander Dornier as early as 1947. His perceptive description of *Interim* is highly instructive:

In Albers' design we see only bundles of lines which already weaken their own identity by changing their thickness. Now in the traditional approach (that is, three dimensional perspective), our seeing begins by erecting three dimensional pyramids of these lines, pyramids that project from the depth toward the observer. Starting, for example, at the lower right corner and proceeding to the upper right, everything goes well until we make the left turn. Then the pyramid collapses into the reverse pyramid. The uppermost lines become the lowest and vice versa. The same thing happens everywhere, and finally the whole composition describes a state of contrast and total vibration, in which lines interpenetrate and points and lines are here and there at the same time. They have exploded their three

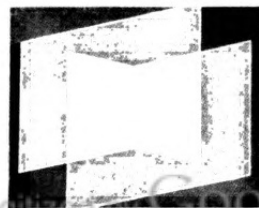
Josef Albers: *To Monte Alban*, and right, the principle of 'inverse symmetry' in *To Monte Alban*.



dimensional identity and have become a new and wider reality of self-changing energies.⁶

Dorner was entirely correct in the assertion that Albers' concepts exploded the traditional concepts and conventions for creating the illusions of three dimensional space. Albers' denial of those traditions is so emphatic and unyielding in the present series that the lithographs, seen together, take on something of the character of a visual proclamation or manifesto.

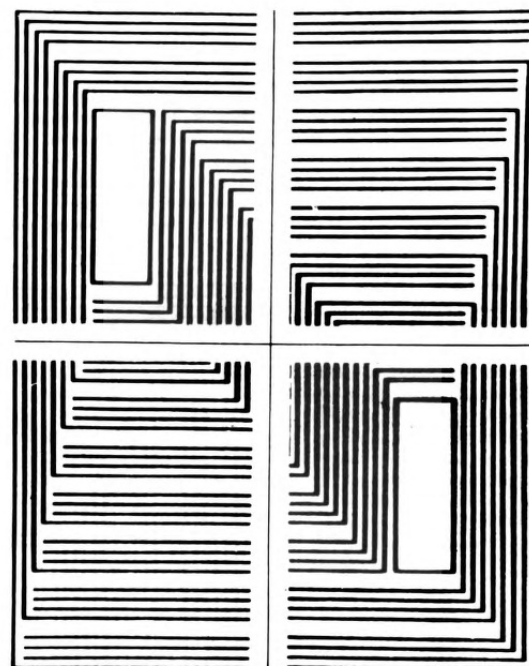
The means by which Albers gradually arrived at



Josef Albers: *Construction in Gray*, 1937, oil on masonite. Collection of the artist. Reproduced in M. Staber, 'Color and Line', Neue Grafik, Feb. 1965, p.59.

the fully mature and confidently asserted spatial reality have been separately traced in the examination of his paintings and graphic works of the 1930's. However, as a summation of the achievement of those years of constant experiment, it is appropriate to list those various means in this context, and demonstrate them with relevant examples among the *Graphic Tectonic* lithographs. These means are distinguished from each other under five headings.

1. *Reversible image, or inverse symmetry.* The term 'reversible' is used to indicate that the total image is constructed in such a way that if the composition is overturned, or rotated 180 degrees, the image will appear exactly the same. That is, every part of the composition will remain in exactly the same position. This is not the same as lateral symmetry, but may instead be termed inverse symmetry, the principle



of which, simply stated, is this: two unequal images enclosed in areas of the same size, when repeated and placed together in such a way that each image finds its twin inverted in the area diagonally opposite, will produce a composite image that will appear exactly the same upright or inverted. *To Monte Alban* was constructed in precisely this way, and the principle applies also to *Introitus*, a special case in which Albers also utilised lateral symmetry.⁷ The appearance of inverse symmetry in Albers' painting first took place in 1937, in *Construction in Gray*, in which slight deviations existed in the margins at left and right, but his first completely consistent and mechanically perfect use of the principle is found in *To Monte Alban*. It was subsequently to become one of the most often applied structural means of the artist.

2. *Multiple view of the same image.* This has been one of the most consistently used means of the artist since 1931, and is found in each of the *Graphic Tectonic* lithographs. As indicated by the artist, 'movements are not confined to one direction only, but interchange. Masses moving at first to one side may suddenly appear to be moving to the opposite side or in another direction. Likewise, upward acts also as downward, forward as backward, and verticals function as horizontals. Thus we cannot remain in a single viewpoint...'⁸

The multiplicity of view, and consequently of the space in *Interim*, as described by Dorner, was quoted above. Part of the jarring effect results from the fact that *Interim* is made up of two figures, one floating within the space contained by the larger figure. Precisely in the area in which the larger figure appears to be advancing, the

Josef Albers: *Introitus*.
Reproduced in Bucher, F.,
J.A., *Despite Straight Lines*.

6. Dorner, Alexander: *The Way Beyond Art*, New York 1947, p. 111.

7. It is the only work by Albers to employ lateral symmetry both vertically and horizontally. Note that upon casual examination it may appear that Albers used inverse symmetry in *Prefatio* and *Seclusion*, but careful

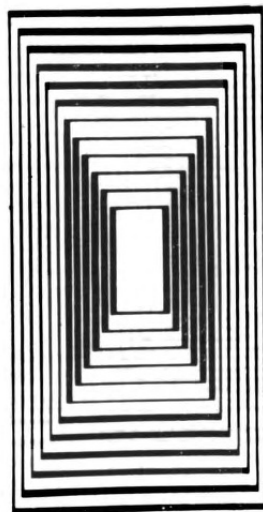
observation will reveal that he varied both the linear movements and the would-be corresponding opposite areas.

8. Albers: *Graphic Tectonic*, p. 11.

9. *ibid*.

10. Dorner: *op.cit.*, pp 111-112.

11. Albers: *Graphic Tectonic*, p. 11.



corresponding area of the smaller is receding. Or, put another way, taking any corresponding areas of vertical lines in both figures: where one is seen from the right, the other is inevitably seen from the left.

In *Introitus*, which is the least complex construction of the series, the view does not change from left to right, or top to bottom, but in depth. The outer grouping of concentric rectangles, of which the heavier lines are orientated horizontally at top and bottom, appear to recede toward the centre until they meet the inner series of rectangles, in which the positions of light and heavy lines have been interchanged. There, because of the change in the direction of light, the

enclosed figure seems to move in a counter direction, and at a much greater speed than the outer one. What ultimately remains indeterminable is the question of which is really advancing and which is receding. The view of the same image constantly changes in depth. The observation applies also to *Sanctuary* and *Prefatio*, in which compositions the concentricity of line and complemented angle of light at left and right produce a frontal effect.

3. Interchangeable volume.

Very closely related to the above means, this is readily demonstrated through another reference to the space-containing or enclosing character of a work such as *Interim*. As indicated before, neither figure is stationary but changes direction constantly, moving left, right, up, down, alternately and even simultaneously. The space contained by the enclosing figure moving forward is not the same space encompassed by the figure moving back, or to the right, or left. The figure, in other words, is not in the same place visually, although physically, on the paper, its position is constant. The figure and the space are consequently interchangeable. 'Thus, solid volume shifts to open space and open space to volume.'⁹ A possibly clearer example of this recurrent concept in Albers' work is *Sanctuary*. If any or all three black rectangular enclosures or windows are advanced, or forward of the

plane of the lines enclosing the whole composition, then we are dealing with an enclosed, positive volume, a kind of three part pyramid of three different levels. But the image is not static; it moves back also, and the three windows also appear to be situated behind the picture plane. The volume, then, changes from convex to concave, the enclosed space from positive to negative. The space in the composition, not measurable mathematically, is in effect the total of the space enclosed as the volume image moves forward to its nearest point, and moves back to its farthest. Defined thus, the space in Albers' works is necessarily shallow, and in addition to defining the image is in turn defined by the image.

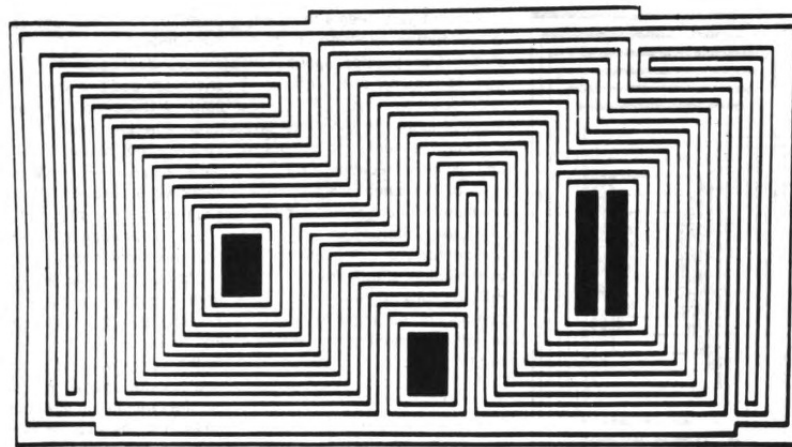
4. *Sharing of common contours*. Perhaps the most important single means in the creation of the illusion of multiple images and multiple directions of spatial movement, this quality has been found in varying degrees in such earlier works as *Mexican*, *The Gate* and *Movement in Gray*. Its linear affirmation, however, took place in the present series in such works as *Ascension* and *Seclusion*. In the latter, the boundary shared is actually the five horizontal lines that 'separate' the upper enclosure from the lower. Yet, the five lines are simultaneously part of the structure and space of both the upper and lower enclosures, and therefore if

one is moving back, the other must be moving forward, and vice versa. Albers, it would seem, has endowed the line with a new power. As noted by Dorner:

A line was always one; it could never be another line too. If one added one line to another, the result was eternally two lines. But now two spatially separate units, two points or lines, can merge into one; and in the same fashion a point of a line can be in two places at the same time, that is, be two different points or lines. Here, the same thing happens time and again in modern science: when we combine several units, we no longer get a static quantitative sum total but are liable to get either less or more. Two and two are no longer four, but may be either more or less.¹⁰

5. *Interaction of transparent planes*. The illusion of transparency and the overlapping of planes of varied densities was found to have occupied Albers from the time of his glass compositions, and was further explored and developed by him with opaque colour in the 1930's, in *The Gate* and elsewhere. Now restricting himself to straight black lines on pure white paper, Albers utilised his limited means, seeking to 'produce grey tones, and, for sensitive eyes, even color.'¹¹ Without modulating the individual line along any one path of its movement, Albers achieved extensive variation in density,

Josef Albers: *Sanctuary*, 1942, lithograph. Collection of the artist. Reproduced in *Hamilton catalogue*, p.45.



or degree of greyness, and ultimately transparency, by changing the character of each group or cluster of linear movements. To increase the density of opaqueness, the lines were either all rendered heavier, or closer together, or both, to exclude more light, or simply to contrast with other groupings of thin and/or widely spaced lines. In the group of lithographs in which the lines physically intersect or pass through each other, the illusion of overlapping, and consequently

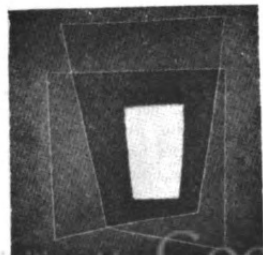
of transparency, is greatly enhanced. In *Ascension*, it is particularly evident that the intersecting sets of lines are never of the same density. In that work, the dominating, denser linear movements take on the character of planes, through and behind which move others, perpendicular to them. Where the crossings occur two or more times, above and below, as on the left side of the figure, a visual interweaving of the linear networks occurs somewhere between top and bottom, as the alternate reversals of the densities (and light direction) of the horizontals would force the vertical 'plane' to be in front and behind at the same time—which also happens, with continued viewing. In the simpler interaction that takes place in *Seclusion*, the dominating horizontal plane is not crossed completely by the lighter and more open

verticals, of which one appears in front and the other behind.

The *Graphic Tectonics*, then, encompass practically the whole range of Albers' artistic exploration and discovery that characterised the first half of his career as a creative artist. The means or devices described above, singly or in combination, not as proven formulae, but rather as part of Albers' unending search for more subtle and deeper meaning. While these lithographs stand as a peak of Albers' artistic accomplishment, they must not be considered out of context. They represent the artist's decisive confirmation of the use of precise geometric relationships as a control of his pictorial means, one of the basic needs of his artistic

existence. In many ways, the character of the *Graphic Tectonics* is so unique and personal that the compositions would be inconceivable, even from Albers, either in the Bauhaus period, or at any other stage of his development other than that period, just after 1940, which produced the series. Each of the lithographs reflects the freedom of Albers' new life in America, and the range of his new experiences, Mexican and otherwise, directly and indirectly. The lithographs may be constructed upon the right angle, but they make no reference to de Stijl, as did the stained glass compositions from *Red Window*, of 1923, executed for the newly designed reception room in the Bauhaus building at Weimar, to the *Interiors* of 1929 (sand-blasted glass paintings, as the following three titles). They may describe diagonal movement in space, but they are free from the Constructivist borrowings found in *Flying*, of 1926. And in spite of the precision and almost antiseptic purity of execution, there is never a hint of industrial or machine tooled forms, or the Purism suggested by *Glove Stretchers*, 1928, or *Breakers*, 1929. In a word, while Albers consciously sought to eliminate the possibility of chance or accident in favour of total intellectual control of the means and the result, the *Graphic Tectonic* series remains a personal statement that could not have been made by any other artist at any time.

Josef Albers: *The Gate*, 1936, oil on masonite. Yale University Art Gallery.



Concrete Poetry Exhibition Brighton Festival April 1967

Directed by Stephen Bann



Each entry gives the key number of the exhibit (see over for map), the poet (and his country of origin), and the title of the work—then details of the designer who has realised the project.

The special edition of Augusto de Campos' 'linguaviagem' cubepoem is available by post, price 7/6 from Form, 8 Duck End, Girton, Cambridge: as is also the Festival postcard/poem series, at 3/- per set or 6d singly (see page 17 for full details of these). The Fall 1966 issue of the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, edited by Stephen Bann and devoted to Concrete Poetry, including work by most of the poets represented at the Festival, is available through Form, price 7/6.

In the Steine Gardens

1: Claus Bremer (Switzerland), 'ein text passiert'. Banner (20' x 3') designed by **Edward Wright**, with **Roger Limbrick**, Textile Department, Chelsea School of Art.

'A text is passing/happening'—this is the translation of the German sentence which we trace along the staggered lines of Bremer's work. And the message is reinforced by the fact that the words and letters succeed one another in a rapid spiralling effect as we trace his meaning. 'Ein text' was originally published in Bremer's collection *Ideogramme*, but these special features make it ideal for an enlarged scale. The visual effect is enhanced and the message acquires added significance through being presented to the spectator in this dramatic guise.

2: Eugen Gomringer (Switzerland), 'wind' constellation. Banner (5' 10" square) designed by **Edward Wright**, with **Roger Limbrick**.

Eugen Gomringer, who was the founder of the European movement of Concrete Poetry, has referred to his poems as 'constellations' since 1953. In his own terms, the constellation 'encloses a group of words as if it were drawing stars together to form a cluster.' In 'Wind', however, it is the individual letters that cluster together within the overall form, in precarious equilibrium as if they were trembling upon invisible currents of air.

Around the Royal Pavilion

3: Ian Hamilton Finlay (Scotland), *Sailors' Cross*. Construction (4' high) by **Henry Clyne**

4: Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Purse-net poem*. Construction (6' x 3') by **Henry Clyne**

Many of Ian Hamilton Finlay's poems are concerned with the sea and sailors, and the references which he makes may be taken as metaphors for the whole of human experience as well as at their face-value. The two constructions and the poem/postcard which he has contributed to the Festival all carry this double charge of meaning. The 'Sailors' Cross' (3) suggests a ship's passage through uncharted seas, with the comforting presence of what is perhaps the Southern Cross of the navigator. The poem/postcard takes another bearing from the stars, while suggesting in its typographical density the knotted texture of the ship's rigging in which the star is 'caught'. In Henry Clyne's second construction (4) the 'seiner' is the newly introduced 'purse-seine' net, which makes an actual ring around the fish, while the 'silver' is the fish itself—or the price which the sailor will get for it.

5: Stephen Bann (England), *Amber sands*. 23 wooden letters (3' long) by **Kenelm Cox**

The ampersand is a sign with a strong personality of its own, but it is employed as a mere linkage between words or objects. The title of this poem, which differs only in one letter from the name of the sign, opens up a marine landscape, and allows the sign to masquerade as a wormcast or involuted sea-shell upon spacious sands. 'Amber sands' has been placed near the Royal Pavilion since its curvilinear motif echoes the exuberant Orientalism of that building.

Off the West Pier

6: Kenelm Cox (England), *Three Graces*. Construction (28' high) by the author

In traditional iconography the Three Graces—*Pulchritudo* (Beauty), *Voluptas* (Passion) and *Amor* (Love)—were most frequently represented as three women moving round in a circle with their hands joined above their heads. The circular movement symbolised the way in which these qualities were held to reinforce one another. This is the pattern which Kenelm Cox has adopted, and his triumphant sea-born structure itself circulates in response to the swell of the waves.

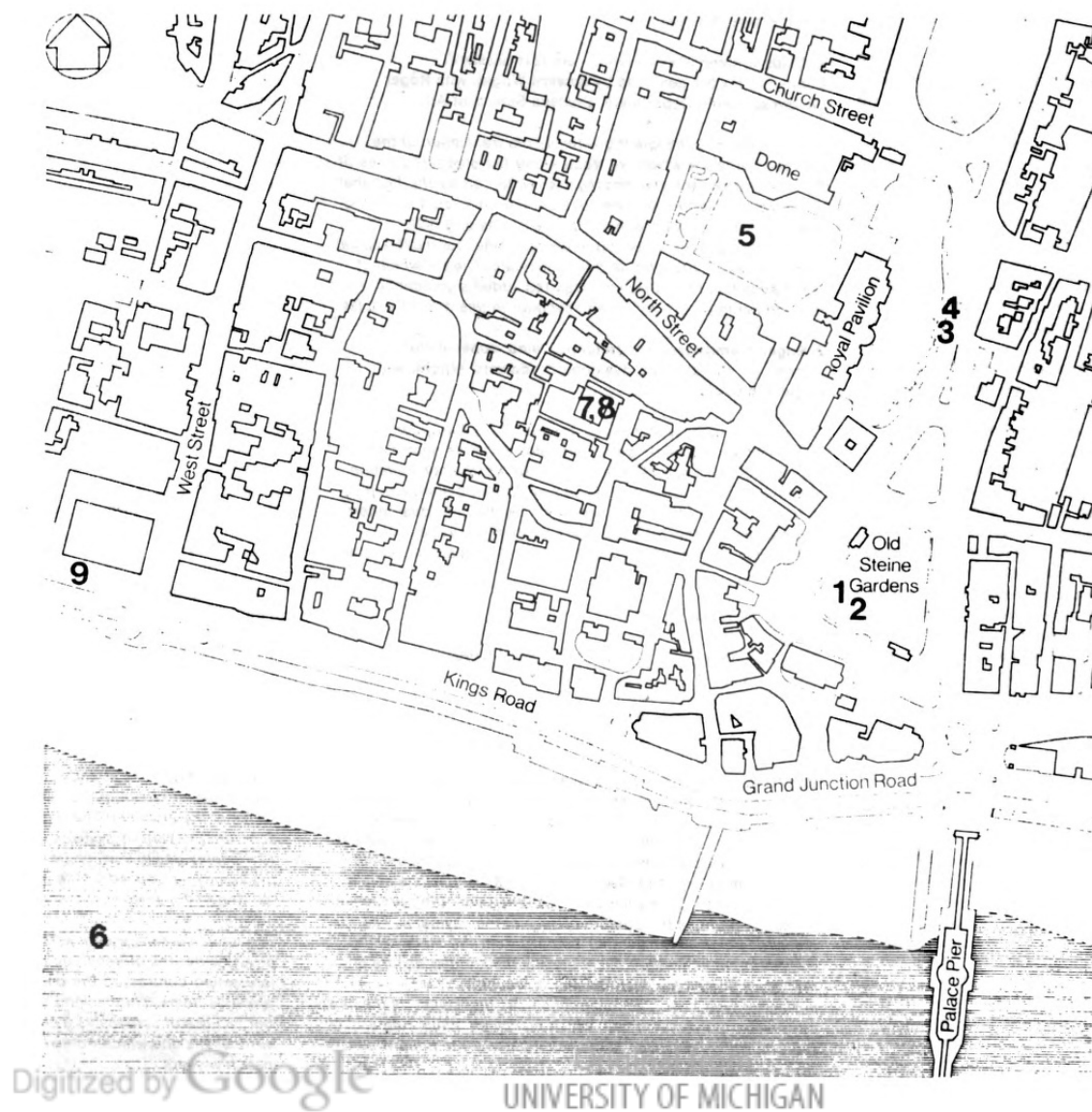
Brighton Square

7: Hansjörg Mayer (Germany), *typographical columns*. 3 perspex columns (7' high) displaying printed sheets

8: Communal project, directed by **John Furnival** (England), *five vowels*. 5 perspex screens (6' x 4') by **Paul Ansell**, **Simon Farrell**, **Stephen Hoare** and **Ann Stephenson**: silk-screened under the direction of **John Vince** at Bath Academy of Art.

Hansjörg Mayer has already produced two exceptionally fine sequences of typographical designs which make use of the basic series of the alphabet. The printed sheets which are displayed according to various systems in these three perspex columns (7) employ designs which have been established before, but the variety introduced by the use of coloured inks is such that not one of the sheets occurs more than once.

The set of screens produced by students of the Bath Academy of Art, under the direction of John Furnival (8), provides an interesting contrast to the uniform constructivist order of the previous items. The designs are the work of individual students, but this use of screens as a medium for typographic and graphic virtuosity is one which Furnival himself has developed over the past few years.



Rank Entertainments Centre

9: Mathias Goeritz (Mexico), from 'Die Goldene Botschaft'.
Construction (18' square) by David de Silva

Mathias Goeritz is a Mexican architect who has already realised projects involving the use of letters on an environmental scale. This particular poem, which is taken from a sequence of variations published in Hansjörg Mayer's Futura series, is specially apt for architectural purposes. Besides the fact that the regularity of the lettering provides a satisfying design in purely formal terms, the Spanish word 'oro' (gold) introduces an exotic reference which enriches our perception of the shimmering surface.

Around Brighton—on buses and static objects

Edwin Morgan (Scotland), festive permutational poem.
One poster and 18 streamers designed and printed by
Edmund Marsden



Edwin Morgan constructed this permutational poem upon a basic set of 54 words, half of which represented the 'egghead' and half the 'pop' associations of Brighton. The two halves are juxtaposed on Edmund Marsden's large Festival poem/poster. But the poem itself consists of 18 three-word phrases which combine to make up the entire quota. Half of these phrases are displayed on the fleets of buses operating in the Brighton area and half in shop-windows throughout the town. The poet's aim is to 'give people some verbal background, some awareness of words and what words contribute, as they wander about the town', and also to provide an 'imaginative exercise for anyone who wants to take it up.' He asks: 'Is there in fact a poem which has been fragmented or are the fragments floating crumbs of a loaf that needs syntax to bake it?'

Interior site (probably Festival Arts Club, Brighton College of Art)

Ian Hamilton Finlay
Various poem/constructions in glass, steel and plastic

This small group of works by Ian Hamilton Finlay is exhibited as a token of his unique place in the exhibition. Since the summer of 1965 he has worked on the environmental applications of Concrete Poetry, and the result is a successful adaptation of at least two basic techniques—the sand-blasting of letters on glass and the application of letters to coloured sheet-metal. Of the poems featured here, every one had previously been realised on the printed page. The new presentation does not invalidate these previous versions, but, in lending the poem a plastic quality, places it upon an entirely different level of communication.

The first years of Concrete Poetry by Eugen Gomringer

Translated by Stephen Bann

Eugen Gomringer, who was born on 20th January 1925 at Cachuela Esperanza in Bolivia, is the unchallenged founder of the movement of Concrete Poetry in Europe. From 1954

to 1958 he was secretary to Max Bill at the Hochschule für Gestaltung, Ulm. Since 1959 he has lived in Frauenfeld, Switzerland, where he works as managing director of the Swiss Werkbund.

For those who kept an eye open for new poetry after the war, there was no alternative but to look back. The seduction of T. S. Eliot, whose *Collected Poems* exerted a strong effect in the post-war years, was indeed considerable: but it became evident immediately that the poetry of an Eliot could not be used in the formation of a new style. In Germany it was the work of Gottfried Benn which captivated young poets and excited them to imitation. But what place was there for a poet who denied himself both Benn and Eliot? It was during a course at the University of Berne, which dealt with literature from Naturalism to Symbolism, that I began to be aware of Symbolism, and later, as the course dictated, of Naturalism and the literary artists belonging to that tradition. First among these was Arno Holz.¹ I started to collect everything about him that I could find. Although I often

had to tell myself that Holz was a strange, monstrously self-absorbed personality, whom I could not trust an inch, he exercised a great fascination over me. What stuck in my mind, were his grandiloquent word-creations and his prescriptions on rhythm. I found him somewhat extravagant in a Germanic way and not 'plastic' enough in his expression. Yet I still found it impressive that he took upon himself the freedom to interfere with the arrangement of language, and even more so, that he concerned himself, like hardly any other German poet, with every minute particular, both in the visual arrangement of script and in the organisation of sound. Besides Holz, there was Mallarmé, who seemed wonderfully mysterious and elegant.

While I applied myself to this course at the University of Berne, and in particular to

Special editions on sale throughout Brighton

Augusto de Campos (Brazil), 'Linguaviagem' cubepoem.
Limited edition of 100, @ 7/6, designed by **Phillip Steadman**

Augusto de Campos, Jose Lino Grünwald (Brazil), Eugen Gomringer, Gerhard Rühm (Germany), Ian Hamilton Finlay, Dom Sylvester Houédard (England), set of 6 postcard/poems, in envelope with text by Gomringer. 3/- per set, or 6d singly.
Designed by **Edward Wright**, artwork by **Elizabeth Greenbaum** and **Alan Rickman**, Graphics Department, Chelsea School of Art.

The 'linguaviagem' cubepoem is a contribution from Augusto de Campos, one of the original three members of the Brazilian 'Noigandres' group and the first poet to use the term Concrete Poetry ('poesia concreta') in connection with his work. The six poem/postcards chosen for this special edition reflect the contribution of German, Brazilian and English-speaking poets to the movement: they also span its history from 1953 to 1966.

1: Arno Holz (1863-1929) was an East Prussian poet, and the theorist of 'Consistent Naturalism'. He attempted to find a natural rhythm for poetry, free from the restrictions of traditional metrics.

2: This poem by Pignatari, which dates from 1958, is reprinted, together with the works by Gomringer mentioned subsequently, in Concrete Poetry: an international anthology (edited by Stephen Bann), London Magazine editions, 1967.

3: This crucial meeting took place in 1955, and it was towards the end of 1956 that Gomringer and the Noigandres group agreed to identify their works by a common title.

Mallarmé and Holz, my own work had reached the stage of the sonnet. The sonnets of Shakespeare were far from unimportant to me as a model. At the same time my contacts with the painters involved in Concrete Art, with which I had been acquainted since my childhood in Zürich, even if I did not always understand it, were leading to a more and more obvious discordance between my own sonnets and the direct method of Concrete Art, which offered a solution to unequivocal problems of line, surface and colour. After my last sonnets in the year 1950, I was for the most part incapable of any more writing. I had to make a new start. Luckily my friends in Berne, the graphic artists Dieter Rot and Marcel Wyss, had reached approximately the same point. We were certain that something was about to happen. From 1951 onwards the three of us spent almost every day in each others' company. At the very start we made plans for a magazine, which we called 'Spiral'. This title was intended to represent symbolically an organic upward movement. The contents were to embrace poetry, the plastic arts, graphics, architecture, and industrial design. As literary editor it was my task to find a suitable form of poetry for our magazine, or myself to devise and produce one. After writing no poetry for two years (after the sonnet period) I made a lengthy investigation into the presentation of script on the page. For this first issue, which was due to come

out in the year 1953, I wished to put forward programmatically a new type of poetry. Since my mother-tongue is Spanish, Spanish words continually came into my head. Later I often conceded to myself that it was decisive that my second start in poetry was based on Spanish. Even today this seems to me a proof that it was a question of really getting to grips with language on the most basic level. In recent years I have often made the observation that the writing of Concrete Poetry is quite definitely a test of character. It is comparatively easy to experiment with letters and a few arrangements of words, and see what happens. But Concrete Poetry demands a deeper foundation. It must—in my opinion—be closely bound up with the challenge of individual existence: with the individual's 'Life with Language', 'Life with Words'.

Since I am inclined to express all thoughts in a short form, and had always taken pleasure in algebraic equations, I found it wonderful that one could say so much with a single word. I still find sublime, for example, the way in which my friend Decio Pignatari called attention to the word LIFE at a later date.² It is the architecture and symbolism of this word that make the poem unique for me. Today many of the words which are used in Concrete poems are snatched 'out of the blue', and only one condition, the intellectual or the architectonic, is fulfilled. In my first investigations, all

the same, the message of a single word did not always appear sufficient, in particular because we have the habit of reading only in one direction, from left to right. All of a sudden I came upon the possibility of inversion and so to the Constellations. Inversion I consider as probably my most important contribution to Concrete Poetry. For me it intimates that every message, be it ever so slight, is aligned in one direction, even if it is examined in an inverted order. And I have related this phenomenon—inversion—to one of the intellectual principles of existence. I consider almost everything that occurs to me as being at least two-sided, and I obtain good results with the method of, for example, reading and studying everything backwards as well. Besides these original Constellations, the very first of which, as I said, consisted of Spanish words ('avenidas'), I began to utilise the surface of the page in my writing. An example of this is 'Schweigen' ('Silence'). Here I attempted to write a poem with a single word, the number of repetitions being calculated with precision. I employed the term 'Concrete Poetry' for the first time as a result of my meeting with Decio Pignatari in Ulm, where I was Secretary to Max Bill.³ Within the field of Concrete Poetry I still held firmly to the term 'constellation' as to a form typical of my own work. When my first book appeared in Summer 1953, I wanted first of all to present it only to my friends. It was astonishing that it soon became relatively

well-known, for it offered something simple and not at all in tune with that period. It was also astonishing how soon poets in other lands felt the appeal of the 'Constellations'. Among the first were my friends in Austria: Friedrich Achleitner and Gerhard Rühm. Both adopted the tranquillity and circumspection, as well as the sense of play, which are implicit in Concrete Poetry. The further diffusion of the style is well-known. Today I am anxious in case Concrete Poetry is accepted purely as a separate genus of poetry. For me it is an important, perhaps the most important, aspect of the poetry of our time, and it should not develop into a form of poetry set apart from the main tradition. I am delighted that many of my Constellations are already being collected in anthologies primarily concerned with Concrete Poetry. But since our Concrete Poetry should actually be a genuine constituent of contemporary literature and contemporary thought, it is important that it should not become merely playful, that the element of play which we advocate, should not result in a facetious kind of poetry. Concrete Poetry has nothing to do with comic strips. In my view it is fitted to make just as momentous statements about human existence in our times and about our mental attitudes, as other forms of poetry did in previous periods. It would be unfortunate if it were to become an empty entertainment for the typographer.

Concrete Poetry: An international anthology

Edited by Stephen Bann

Including work by

**Eugen Gomringer
Claus Bremer
Gerhard Ruehm
Hansjorg Mayer
Friedrich Achleitner
Ernst Jandi**

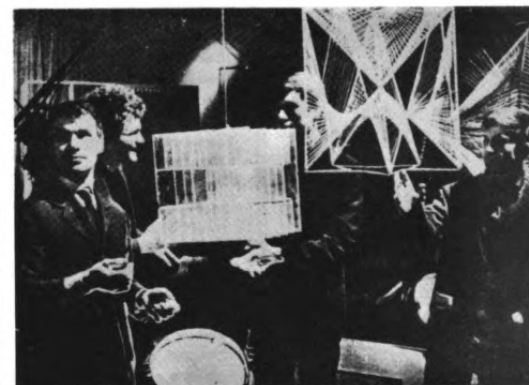
**Decio Pignatari
Haroldo de Campos
Augusto de Campos
Ronaldo Azeredo
Jose Lino Grunewald
Edgard Braga
Pedro Xisto
Mathias Goeritz
Pierre Garnier**

**Ian Hamilton Finlay
Jonathan Williams
John Furnival
Dom Sylvester Houedard
Stephen Bann
Edwin Morgan
Emmett Williams
Robert Lax**

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What is Kinetism? by Lev Nusberg

Translated by Larissa Haskell, Nicholas Humphrey
and Robert Bomford



This text is taken from a manifesto by the leader of the Russian kinetic 'Movement' Group, Lev Nusberg, who is seen above (left) with, left to right, Francisco Infanté, Victor Stepanov and Vladimir Galkin, other members of the Group, in their Leningrad exhibition May-June 1965. Members not appearing in the picture are Vladimir Akulinin, Boris Diodorov, Anatolij Krivcikov, Georgij I Lopakov, Rimma Sapgiv-Janevskaja and Vladimir Scerbakov.

The Group have exhibited also in Moscow and Prague, but not so far in the West: they were unable to take up Frank Popper's invitation to show at the KunstLichtKunst exhibition in Eindhoven last year. The text, and the pictures on page 21, are published by courtesy of Frank Popper. The pictures on page 22 and this page are from 'L'Union Soviétique' No. 190, 1965.

First, *kinetism* is the name we have given to what we are doing in art, a name concerned with construction in space-time, with rhythm, with movement, with bringing together the varied aspects of man's aesthetic experience ... with the union of these themes in a work of art.

But it is not important what these experiments are called: 'kinetic art', 'dynamic art', 'synthetic-dynamic art', for labels are not what matter. The important thing is that any art ennobles a man, morally (but not materially): it reveals unknown worlds to him, it calls a man to beauty! And more: art shows man the mysterious, the intangible, that which is outside time, which is ETERNAL! And precisely because the beautiful and mysterious is intangible, so man's aspiration for it never ends ...

So our researches we have called—KINETIC ART. 'Kinetic' because the distinguishing quality is—

MOVEMENT AS A FORM OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION. But movement is not the sole basis of our work. No less important are other art forms, and the MODE of organising movement, so vital to Kinetism.

In the foundation of Kinetism there were three essential aims: first an aspiration to achieve inner harmony and proportion, 'GOODNESS-SYMMETRY', between the elements of the work. Second, an aspiration to employ every kind of aesthetic experience, all known forms of art, even all technical methods in the creation of a form of artistic expression. Thirdly, and most important, the use of the most diverse forms of MOVEMENT in a kind of artistic translation of the spiritual world of MAN!

I
Any work of art is a completely self-contained world of relations and values, with its own internal laws. These laws are created by the artist himself, and within this world they are IRRESISTIBLE. WORKS OF ART are a creative flood, lava which having once erupted solidifies in perfect form! True, each generation has its own idea of the eruption—the creative process; and more still the lava—the work of art. That itself makes art eternal. All the best works of art of any kind embody principles of inner balance and mutual dependence among their parts. Such are the sculpture and architecture of ancient Egypt, such the anthems, sculpture

and dance of Buddhist Asia, such the attempts of the ancient Greeks to achieve life's balance in their space constructions, such the harmony of medieval music and cathedrals, the poetry of Petrarch and Dante, such the grandeur of the Russian soul expressed in the laconic line and colour of the icons of the 12th-15th centuries and in the hymns of the orthodox church, such the refinement of ancient Japanese poetry, music and painting, such are modern architecture (Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe), modern jazz and many other things. I do not speak of details here but of whole epochs when art flourished, of spiritual aristocracies which one cannot imitate . . . but for which one must strive, for which one must burn. The perfection of form and plasticity in these epochs is really mysterious and beyond our grasp.

(But even the greatest artists would sometimes surrender to formalism. One can see this in Greek and Egyptian art, in the art of the European Renaissance, and now especially in 20th century movements: futurism, the 'nouveau roman', 'musique concrète', pop art and so on.)

This perfection is particularly evident in music and architecture, the most well organised and harmonious kinds of art, by which the intellectual level of an epoch is usually judged. Bearing all this in mind it becomes clear that the most vital feature of the work of art is its inner

proportion and self-dependence, governed by unique principles appropriate to the period and the work. These principles are chosen by the artist, and all that matters is that *he should not betray himself, nor rely on chance*, but must be faithful to his choice, presenting it clearly and lucidly to the world.

II
Now about *synthesis*. The idea of synthetic, compound art is not at all new. The ambition to achieve a synthetic art is known in all human cultures. From the earliest times we find different means and forms of expression united in one work: so it was in prehistoric ritual dances near the fire with colourful costumes, with tambourines and singing, so in antic and medieval mystery plays accompanied by music, the reciting of poetry, dancing, with torches and incense, so in the synthesis of painting and architecture (so often unfortunate), and so at last in THEATRE itself . . . But the bounds of theatre have not been exceeded, not all possible means of expression have been used. Not only different kinds of art must be brought together, but also different natural phenomena: smells, changes of temperature and humidity, movements of air, phosphorescent gases, electroluminescence and much else. We want consciously to go the furthest extremes in the use of every means of aesthetic expression. Why should we limit ourselves

to traditional techniques? Kinetic art requires the use of *all means* of affecting a human being! The artist must have full freedom in his choice and use of technical and aesthetic methods, for with the principle of *goodness-symmetry* he can organise any elements into a work of KINETIC ART.

WE PROPOSE TO EXPLOIT ALL POSSIBILITIES, ALL AESTHETIC AND TECHNICAL MEANS, ALL PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL PHENOMENA, EVEN ALL KINDS OF ART AS OUR METHODS OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION!

When we say 'all kinds of art as methods of artistic expression' we are not quite precise. The fact is that different forms of art when united organically in Kinetism, cease to be art in the forms we used to know. There will be sound in Kinetic Art but it will not be music as we understand it now; there will be rhythmically organised words, singing and signs but they will not be literature or declamation; there will be coloured lights but they will be far from painting, and the space-constructions will resemble sculpture and architecture only because they are organised in space and have a shape . . . but a shape ever changing in its configuration; cinema and television will take their place as forms of artistic expression. The only thing Kinetic Art will resemble will be—theatre; but theatre in the widest and purest sense.

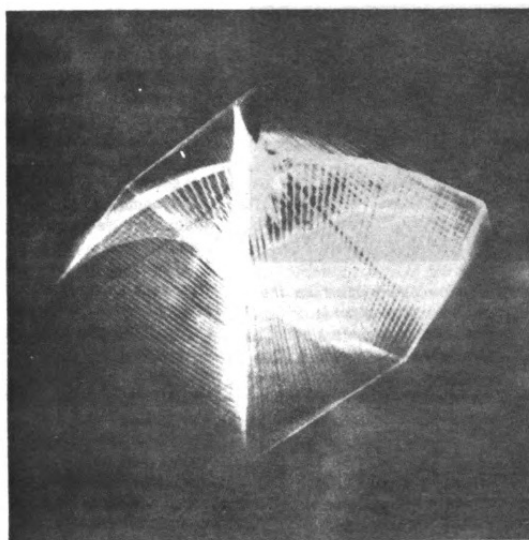
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1-7: Exhibition of Kinetic Art by the 'Movement' Group, held in the Leningrad Palace of Architects, 20th May to 5th June 1965.

1: Vladimir Galkin and Galina Beett, kinetic object 1965.

2: above, Francisco Infante, kinetic object (blue) 1964; below, Lev Nusberg, kinetic object (crimson) 1962, metal and nylon thread, with motor.

3: Lev Nusberg in the exhibition (the exhibits are switched off).

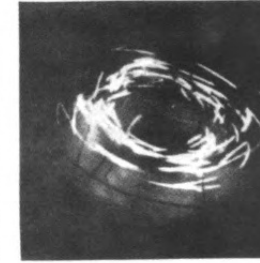
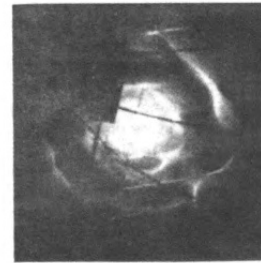
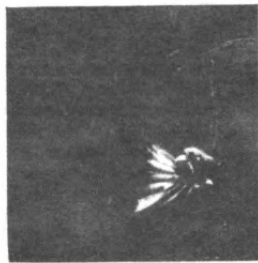


4: Mounting of the 'Movement' Group exhibition.

5: Lev Nusberg, kinetic object 'Flower', 1965, phase 3. Metal, sources of light, sound and smell, with motors and programmed control system.

6: Francisco Infante, kinetic object 'Crystal' 1965. Metal, nylon thread, with motor and programmed control system.

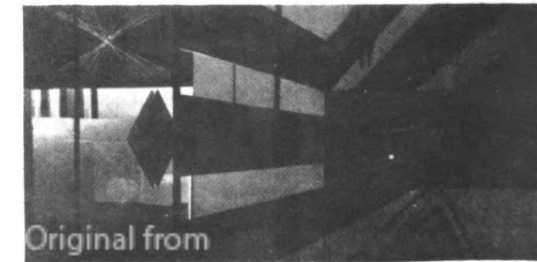
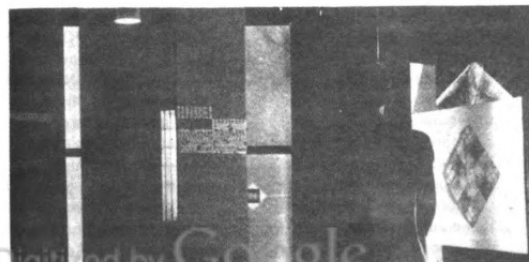
7: Lev Nusberg, kinetic object (multi-coloured) 1964. Metal, plexiglas, light sources, loudspeakers, with motors and programmed control system.



8 and 9: Exhibition by the 'Movement' Group in Moscow, 1st to 26th December 1964.

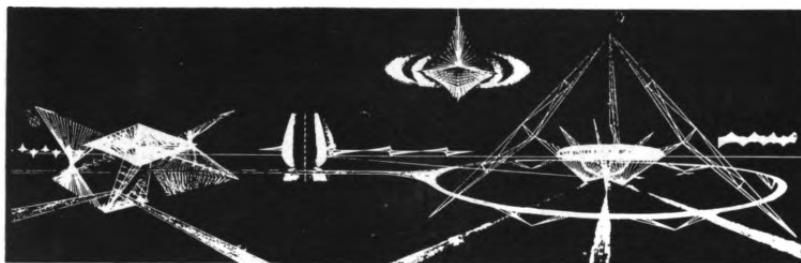
8: Introductory part of the exhibition.

9: Part of a large exhibition hall, with the work of Francisco Infante.



Original from

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



'Silhouette de ville', vision of a kinetic city, by members of the 'Movement' Group, and composed from photographs of constructions exhibited in Leningrad, May-June 1965.

Because the range of human perception is limited. We perceive (for instance, while visiting the theatre, or simply in life) all the information which reaches us—forms, colours, sounds, physical disturbances—but only one after the other, successively. All this goes on in very short intervals of time, and, when one is laid upon the other, creates the impression that we are perceiving everything simultaneously. And so also we cannot perceive the differentiated forms of art completely—as a complex. Perceiving something singly, at the same time we miss something else which forms part of the complex. Of course, the complex can be revealed through its component parts. But the question is, how far are these parts of the complex organically united? Constant striving to achieve the maximum organic unity, and the introduction of the principles of regularity and symmetry ('goodness-symmetry principle'), whilst using the most varied means of artistic expression, *in the end leads to a situation where qualitatively new conditions of interaction of the various elements are possible, thus*

creating a work of art. I.e. the synthetic form of art is transformed into the kinetic. So we see that, in art, synthesis is an intermediate, transitional stage on the road to kinetic art, when the various forms—the 'classical' means—of artistic expression become united, and are fused into a unified organic form, namely kinetic.

III

The basis of kinetic art is **MOVEMENT!** But, given a high degree of organisation in a work of art, and full freedom in the use and synthesis of varied means of artistic expression—all this still cannot create a new aesthetic relationship to the world (i.e. Kinetism), if it is still without real movement, without a specific struggle or clash in the work of art. Movement—this is the heart and soul of Kinetism! Without real movement there is not and cannot be a real full-blooded dynamism in the art of the future: all spiritual and aesthetic values which are realised (in any form) as material complexes will remain as mere reproductions of these values, if the works do not embody real perceptible

movement. This is especially true for the plastic arts: for instance, up until the 20th century human experiences were projected, as pictures, only on a plane surface—later on a plane surface and in space—and finally as movement itself! The 'movements' of the soul and of spiritual processes will, of course, when organised aesthetically, be projected (realised) as every kind of real movement. Kinetic Art can be likened to a second life, another world, constructed according to its own mysterious (internal) laws. This is an integral and peculiar world—a world of fantasy and beauty. This world is not only real in imagination, but also is made tangible, exciting physically and in fantasy simultaneously!

We are speaking of movement in the very widest sense: but naturally this word is relative and may be stretched a long way to accommodate every conception of all the possible kinds of movement. It is not to be imagined that movement only involves the displacement of a physical body in space; biological changes, changes of intensity or tension, the transmission of sounds, internal rhythmical movements—all these are **MOVEMENT**. In general, the movement of matter. **MOVEMENT**—that is the dialectic itself! All the fundamental laws of the dialectic are laws of movement: the negation of negation, the struggle and mutual penetration of contradictions, and the transformation of quantity into

quality. In this lies the secret of life, and the source and mystery of art! **Life—struggle and movement!**

It must be repeated: the main characteristic of Kinetism is that the mode of artistic expression is movement itself. But the important thing is not that a particular object (or phenomenon) is in motion, but that movement is occurring... movement of material 'things' or 'phenomena', of which a given work of art consists. Here we have something different in kind from previous forms of art (for instance, mobiles, or some Op Art). **THE MOVEMENT ITSELF IS OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE, THE CHARACTER OF THIS MOVEMENT, ITS INTENSITY; AND ONLY AFTER THIS THE NATURE OF THE MATERIAL ELEMENTS IN MOTION.** Thus movement acquires a new kind of significance in art: the work of art becomes still more detached from its material basis, and approximates more closely to spiritual processes. Herein lies the great merit of Kinetism. It becomes possible for man to surmount one more obstacle between his emotions and the image of his emotions (the work of art). Man will never destroy the barrier between the creative process and its embodiment in material form, however. And here, maybe, lies his good fortune. **THESE ARE THE IMPERATIVES OF KINETIC ART. ONLY BY STRIVING TO BRING THEM ALL INTO EFFECT, AND BELIEVING IN THEM, WILL IT BE POSSIBLE TO CREATE AN ART THAT IS NEW IN PRINCIPLE.**

Condensed from an article published in 'Structure', third series. No. 1. 1960.

These condensed versions of two articles by Charles Biederman conclude the series begun in Form No. 3 with three earlier essays.

Symmetry: Nature and the Plane (1960)

Before man could become an artist, before he could even become a tool maker, he had first to discover the notion of method. Only then could his hands, his eyes and brain relate and so release his potentialities for consciously directed order. He could then make his first great steps from animal to man. He could begin to convert the order of creative nature in the direction of his own unique creative aspirations: begin that remarkable, curious struggle towards what is called culture or civilisation. Possibly the first man to scratch a straight line on the face of the earth with a broken branch, who also experienced a sense of accomplishment wrapped in mystery, perhaps he made the first step, opening the way for the human notion of order. This line would constitute man's first consciously achieved expression of order. It would also comprise discovery of the order of symmetry in its simplest *tangible* form. From this line of symmetry man could eventually invent the realisation of tool making, art, and the concrete origins of mathematics and geometry. This very line became his first visual abstraction for depicting man in art—a vertical line. Later he put a short horizontal across the vertical, a more complex symmetry structure for depicting man...

Coming to our own times,

if man and his planet have ceased to be the center of the universe, relativity theory has established centers everywhere, each different from the other, each a place for man to occupy in terms of symmetry observations. However far man has reached into the structure of nature—into the very depths of the atom and its ramifications of particles, into the unimaginable distances of outer space—man continues to comprehend nature by centering his orientation within notions of symmetry. Wherever man's senses reach, instrumentally to the particle or galaxy, or directly to a landscape, everywhere the symmetry structure of nature conveys itself to the symmetry of man's nature. Nature is centered; there are centers of symmetry, wherever man can see, whatever he can feel and think. Nature appears to spread out from and to centers, points that structurally anchor all the forms and formless forces of nature...

In depicting nature within the symmetry of the rectangle, the painter brought nature's immense panorama within structural boundaries he could cope with. This permitted him to continue penetrating towards the increasingly complex symmetries of nature.

Painting is limited to a two-dimensional surface, upon which the more extensive dimensions of nature are indicated by illusional methods. This surface is delimited by the structural

boundaries of a rectangle possessing a center of symmetry. All views of a painting are confined to a limited number of points, all of which are confined to a single line. This line emanates from the center of the rectangle's symmetry, at right angles to its surface. These are the positions from which the painter works, and remain the positions for observing the work. If the artist captures nature within the symmetry of the rectangle, he also wishes to give the image the appearance of continuing into the endless continuity of nature. For this reason he avoids emphasis upon the direct symmetry center of the rectangle, and objects appear to extend beyond the frame. The image must join the continuity of nature from whence it came.

... With Cezanne the reality of the picture plane undergoes a completely new structural enquiry... Fundamentally his enquiry will regard nature as a problem of symmetry structure. If past artists painted on a plane, the picture plane, with Cezanne the artist also paints *in terms of planes upon the picture plane*. The rectangle of symmetry makes a new appearance, this time within the rectangle plane of painting. Step by step Cezanne makes his geometrical observations of nature with the plane, until this plane begins to free itself from the *particular* symmetries of nature objects. He began with the plane as a method

of enquiry into the creative structure of nature, at the same time he evolved his plane more and more into the means for achieving *symmetry creations unique to art*. The plane thus became a colored spatial plane, a plane peculiar to art, the creative spatial plane of man as artist. It possessed all the structural attributes needed for creation—color, space, form, symmetry. Thus Cezanne in the 19th Century, had discovered and clearly formulated the future course of art as creation instead of mimeticism. The full recognition of this fact must await the deflation of many current reputations, a process already at work.

With the spatial plane Cezanne realised the 'goal' towards which he worked—pure creation—and which he almost reached complete. The latter is not to appear until 1917 in the spatial planes of Mondrian. In these the plane symmetry of the rectangular canvas is repeated by similar symmetrical planes within and parallel to the planes of the canvas. Everything falls into centers, centered in the symmetry of the rectangular boundary of the work. From the paint commas of Monet, themselves elements of symmetry repetition, through the great symmetry achievements of Cezanne, finally to the purely creative spatial plane of Mondrian. The transition from the old mimetic to the new creative had been secured. This transition is one of the

abstractions from the concrete symmetries of nature, to *higher order abstractions from the potentialities latent in the creative symmetry structure of nature's process*. Mimeticism had clearly closed; pure creation had clearly begun. If the earliest artists approached the complex symmetries of nature's creations with the more simple symmetry structure of the straight line, now a similar development is to begin again, but with a great difference. The artist begins with the simplest manifestation of *form*, rather than of line, the symmetry structure of rectangular planes. The plane. The plane on which mimeticism had been made manifest, now became the means for manifesting pure creation. As nature creates with symmetries, sharply revealed by crystallography and nuclear physics, so man as artist creates his own art with the symmetry repetitions of the rectangular plane. Cezanne's structural enquiry into nature gave the artist of the new direction his structural crystallography, so to speak, for the creation of his art. Few, however, are fully aware of their debt to this artist.

Once the plane achieved pure creation, it then became necessary to *free the plane from the limited symmetry structure of painting which had been completely exhausted in 1917*. To achieve this the plane had to literally grow out of the surface painting's two-dimensional structure. *The plane gradually emerges into*

the reality structure given by nature, a gradual growth of the plane from the simplest to the ever more complex and endless symmetry diversity of structural actuality.

. . . What is required, then, is that the rectangle of the canvas become an actual non-illusionistic plane from which actual planes gradually emerge into the full reality of structure. This means an art of relief. This is not the beginning of a 'new sculpture', as some believe; such an attitude is foreign to the evolution that is now potential to art. Rather, there is a development *from painting to relief* and, for the time being, there is only the development or relief art. Once more, as with the Palaeolithic artist, the images of art flow into the endless dimensions of nature's space; not this time to seek a center in nature, but rather *to place their own centers in nature*. Just as does the birth of a flower, a star or galaxy, place its own unique center within the structural array of nature, so does each of the new works of art . . .

. . . *The relief permits the artist to extensionalise painting's limited viewpoints of symmetry*, so too with the symmetries taken by planes within the work. Where painting has only a single stationary line of symmetry vision, the relief offers a multiple of such viewpoints. an *arc of symmetry*, for the observation of the work. The spectator is now engaged in the symmetries of motion. If in physics there can only be

unique, relative centers for the symmetry observations of nature, the Structurist, the new artist, acts upon a similar principle before nature and art.

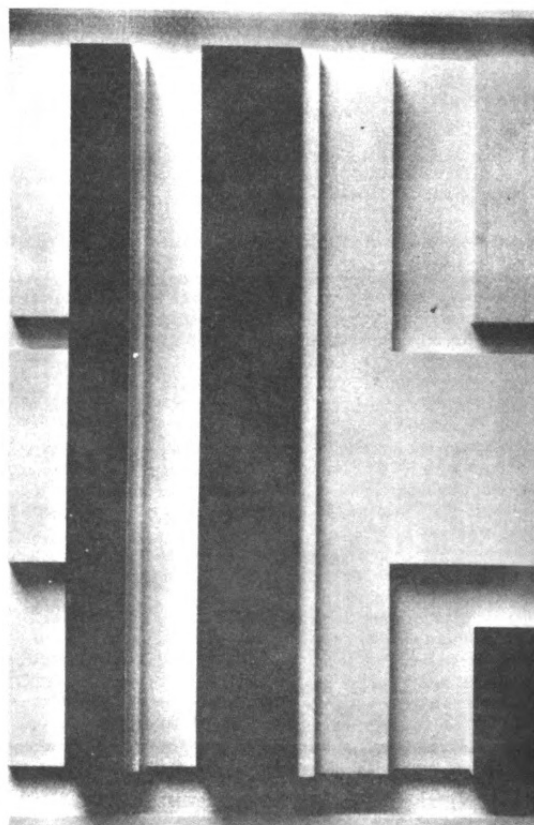
But the use of these multiple viewpoints, these too must be *gradually* engaged and developed. This implies, of course, that the forms, their colors and spaces, in short, the composition, these must undergo a *gradual structural evolution into the symmetry diversities of space* . . . Before a painting the spectator stands at a single center of symmetry; before the new art he moves in a curve of symmetry around the changing dimensions of the work. *This is the only true problem of 'motion' in art, at the present time.*

. . . Man's form is disposed in symmetries. His senses, his limbs, *nearly* all is symmetrically structured. The longest axis of his symmetry stands perpendicular to the surface of the earth, subject to the force of gravitational symmetry. Everywhere his symmetrically located senses light, other symmetry structures appear, even in forces of symmetry that cannot be seen, which can or cannot be felt. Symmetry abounds in all that man does and creates, in his feelings, his thinking, in all the diverse, tangible forms of his creations.

. . . Scientists, of course, have no alternative to the use of extra-neural, mechanical means. The danger for the scientist, one that removes him

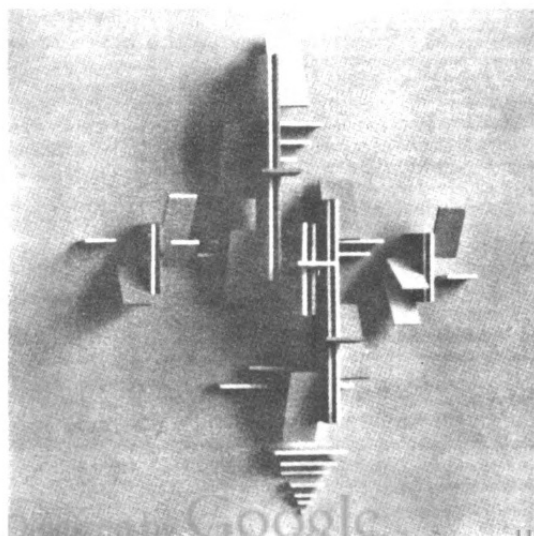
from art, is that of becoming canalised to the mechanical character of his instruments for understanding nature. This danger exists in art too, where we now use mechanical means for producing it. Hence, the attraction of mathematics, and the instrumental recordings of science, for some artists. Unlike the scientist, however, the artist does not pursue nature with instruments for his eyes. He does not deny the scientist's instrumental vision; as artist he avoids capitulating to it. *It remains for artists to maintain the supremacy of what is more than an instrument because it is living*—the eye-brain. It is attuned to the living creative quality of nature, having been born and structured in the very depths of nature's evolution. But our vision, in more than one sense of that term, is being squeezed between the indiscriminate images that pour from picture tubes and 'modern' museums, and the statistical ticking out of atoms. The big 'splash' of art, the big 'bang' of science, they promise to leave us 'whimpering'. Not all artists have eyes with which to see. They warn us against a new 'naturalism', claiming that art must be put on a 'scientific basis', although art 'must always be created out of nothing.' This leads to the rigid sterility of pseudo-scientism. The true artist would express what is supreme in nature and man, only realisable through the nurture of nature—the act of pure creation. He would be an expression and extension of creative nature . . .

Charles Biederman: Structurist Relief, New York, 1938.



Bernard Dordick

Charles Biederman: Structurist Relief, Red Wing, (No. 64) 12/26/1962-63 (model).



Eric Sutherland

A Non-Aristotelian Creative Reality by Charles Biederman

Condensed from an article published in 'Structure', fourth series, No. 2, 1962.

A Non-Aristotelian Creative Reality (1961)

Unfortunately, those who doubt that art is centered in reality experience are, in our times, legion. The general attitude is to assume art as free of those mundane impositions which reality considerations demand. This has encouraged psychoanalysts, and others, to see a special fantasy role as the only serious function of art. The study of ancient cultures is particularly thought to confirm this view. This is to see with only half a vision. To the contrary, early cultures make the reality role of art particularly evident. From the very rudimentary beginnings of civilisation, man was compelled to invent a visual art to function as the major means for evolving his consciousness of existence. In the beginning there was only the picture, not even a single word. Art was, in fact, the first developed form of man's symbology. One need only imagine the early cultures without a visual art, to experience vividly its indispensable role in man's reality development.

Art was not more cherished by early humans; rather its natural reality necessity was evident to all. Accordingly, evolution in art, as in other fields, achieved increasingly objective interpretations of nature's reality. This is, in our times, the particular concern of certain non-mimetic artists. It is then apparent why these

creative artists are, in different ways, interested in the philosophical implications of science regarding the problem of reality . . .

If the new changes in art did not originate in the example of science or its philosophies, perhaps these changes evoke a philosophy peculiar to themselves. Could there be some factor which is fundamental to all forms of human activity? Namely, those basic assumptions which ultimately determine the structure of the knowledge with which we conceive the structure of nature reality. Artists, philosophers, physicists, educators, carpenters—common to everyone is the possession of some basic assumptions about the world, know it or not. In this connection, scientists present diverse and even contradictory assumptions about the function of science and its determination of reality. This is just as true of artists in their field. Such diversity is a necessary and vital condition of the search for truth.

It was the failure to distinguish sufficiently between art, philosophy (and science), which led de Stijl artists into serious error. This was true of Mondrian in particular with his Neoplastic philosophy which had, moreover, the defect of absolutes. He explicitly regarded art as philosophy, a 'logic' made 'concrete'. With it he determined the structural actualities of his work.

What takes place in this kind of determination? Art begins with the word, what Mondrian once called the 'art of the word'. Art is the result of concretising 'logic'. This reverses the natural order by which we experience and secure knowledge of nature, that is, sensory abstractions come first, verbal abstractions follow. The order of abstraction must begin from the unspeakable, non-verbal world before the artist can *usefully* speak or verbalise about it. Reversing this order destroys the capacity of the artist to maintain the living qualities of creation in his work. This is confirmed by the implications of Mondrian's experience in his own art. Thus at the end of his life he discovered that he had reduced 'painting' to a 'drawing'. Had his philosophical procedure misdirected his work? It seems so. What then became the criterion for detecting the 'drawing' error and for correcting it? Could this (unconsciously) be visible nature, the very source which originally led the evolution of art abstraction from drawing to the painting stage? Painting is a high order of nature abstraction, which Neoplasticism had reduced to the most primitive abstractions from nature—the line. Maintaining this abstracting direction, this reversal of the natural order, would eventually lead to the extermination of the art based on this philosophy . . .

Problems arising from the limitations of the old nature

vision were erroneously resolved even by artists who rejected manipulations of that vision who, instead, sought a non-mimetic solution. This is made evident by comparing basic assumptions concerning the function of visible nature for art purposes, consciously and/or unconsciously held by those who continue to manipulate mimeticism in contrast to those who do not. Mimetic manipulators assume it is foolhardy to attempt creations beyond those already achieved by nature, implying that nature has exhausted all possible creation. To go further, as said for fifty years now, leads only to mere 'theory', mere 'syntax', mere 'grammar', and the like. This conservative view concludes that nature permits only one kind of relation with art—variants on mimeticism.

What is the position of those who adopt a non-mimetic direction, while claiming to follow science beyond the visible? Automatically implied is the assumption that the termination of mimeticism leaves nature's visible aspect completely exhausted for further art purposes. In short, visible nature is of no further use to the artist wishing to create his art directly. Even to create according to the visible creative method of nature's structure is, according to Neoplastic philosophy, still a form of mimeticism. Again we arrive at the conclusion that the only possible relation which visible nature permits to art is some kind of variant on mimeticism.

Here then are two general directions of art which, on the one hand, stand opposed in the actualities of the two very different kinds of art produced. But, on the other hand, there is marked agreement in the basic assumptions concerning the make-up of visible nature respecting both problems of mimeticism and pure creation. Nature, the central problem, remains unsolved by either group.

What did Cezanne have to say about this problem? What did he mean by the 'surface' and 'depth' of nature? Was the latter a 'hidden' reality? That would be absurd. It would leave Cezanne looking at and painting from a nature that wasn't there . . .

If anything remains beyond dispute, it is that the three artists who achieved the progressive transformation of art from mimeticism to pure creation—Monet, Cezanne and the pre-Neoplastic Mondrian—did so before the visible example of nature . . .

Certain types of assumptions are possible only when one assumes, as Mondrian came to assume, that words are autonomous and possess the attributes of reality. Wittgenstein once remarked about our intelligence being 'bewitched' by language, a remark that applies no less to vision. Certainly the verbal process can be destructive as well as constructive. It all depends upon the place and function of words, in the

process by which art is realised. If nature and art are not first experienced as visual entities, the vision of both becomes obscured with words. There is lacking a coherent consciousness of the act of vision, which one is then tempted to remedy with an appeal to words. Words become imposed upon, become a substitute for, visual experience. Abstractions from both nature and art take on arbitrary features leading to false experience and knowledge of nature and art.

Having recognised the limitations of the old nature reality, not all non-mimetic artists have realised the necessity to extensionalise their perception of visible nature. Thus the artist fails to discern a structure of nature commensurate with the structural needs he is aware of in his art . . .

With the Greeks, the beginning of Western culture, art came to acquire a new, now developed function, a philosophical one. The views of one philosopher, Aristotle, have dominated all subsequent Western art as a departure for art analysis. Whatever analytical variants were introduced after him, it was he who sharply discerned the two general paths which have operated in the actualities of all Western art. These are, 'things as they are', and 'things as they ought to be', the real and the ideal, around which all philosophical considerations that were concerned with the actualities of art, were compelled to

Charles Biederman: Structurist Relief, Red Wing (No. 24), 1954-62. Photo: Eric Sutherland



revolve to the present... Periodically these two attitudes replace each other in the course of history, sometimes with opposed, sometimes with similar functions. Examples of the latter appear in Church art. There the real would sometimes effectuate the objective of the ideal whenever the latter ceased to perform its function adequately . . .

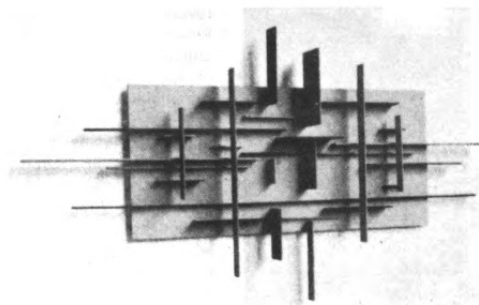
The line between the real and the ideal is once more drawn sharply in our times, although both now possess some extremely critical differences from the past. On one part of the earth the function of art is to portray the worker, soldier and leader in a state of perfection; the real again in the service of the ideal. In our part of the world the human form is portrayed twisted into a pathological nightmare, or man's inner life is sprawled over huge canvasses, portrayed as blank areas of color obscurities, as pecking paint splotches, as splashing swabs of hysteria, as a tumbling tangle of chaotic lines. These devices run from one side of the canvas to the other, with the compulsive monotony of a tic. In all these the ideal as the 'demoniac' stands for the real. We seem to be present at the final drama of mimetic manipulations in art, all the way from the political to the pathological.

There is no longer any question that a tremendous change in Western art is under way.

The first or aristotelian era of Western art is closing. Aristotle is here differentiated from aristotelianism. The principal interests of the latter were based on one aspect of Aristotle's philosophy of art, 'things as they ought to be', the ideal. If aristotelianism continues in various of the non-mimetic pursuits, it does so as a totally incompatible factor. Up to a certain point idealism had a useful role in the development of mimetic art, and a logical one. In non-mimetic art, however, it loses all sensible reason for being. Not only de Stijl and Neoplasticism in particular, but the general non-mimetic effort has been based on the aristotelian attitude of the artist's superiority to visible nature. The artist's emotions and thinking, intuition or logic, philosophy or the machine, science or mathematics, mathematical models or the mathematics of crystallography, etc., specifically or implicitly, are credited with leading the artist far beyond the visibilities of nature. Like the Le Bruns of the past, artists once more ignore visible nature, claiming or implying contact with a super-reality.

This is to succumb to the arbitrary manipulations which logic permits, unchecked by adequate if any regard for the sensory experience of nature. Words, thoughts, theories, systems are conjured out of verbal whole-cloth, held up to nature as evidence of nature's failure to abide by the arbitrary

Charles Biederman: Structurist
Relief, *Red Wing* (No. 27),
12/1956 (model).



M. Moore

verbal dispositions of the artist. Thus are repeated the errors of aesthetic philosophers, of whom it has been well said that they could have formulated their philosophical theories without there ever having been any art. To the new super-realists of art one wants to say with Cezanne: 'Do they have eyes to see with?'

In spite of appearances to the contrary, however, idealism has in fact disappeared for ever. What has followed since Ingres, perhaps begun by him, is an inversion of idealism in which idealism becomes something else. Because, whether the artist manipulates nature's creations or its mode of creation, he is now compelled to do so by the 'destruction' of nature. His peculiar sense of superiority, therefore, must rest on his wreckage of nature, in contrast to the past idealistic goal which was to perfect visible nature. This inversion of idealism, this replacement of a constructive with a destructive attitude towards nature, had dire

consequences: namely forcing aristotelian theory to operate in a pre-aristotelian context. The full significance of this statement becomes apparent the moment we note that almost all the art of recent times, that which has gained world-wide institutional approval, is fundamentally pre-aristotelian in the actualities of its *orientational behaviour*. This general regression of art towards primitivism is not merely to be deplored, for it has led art into the disastrous direction of the pathological.

In the two new arts of Structurism and Photography in all its aspects, idealism, whether in the ancient way or its present-day inversion, has become useless . . . Structurism, therefore, rejects destructive manipulations of either the mimetic or the creative aspects of nature. Thanks to the great artist Courbet and the developments of Photography, it has become a common experience to view light recordings of visible nature's panoramic creations . . .

Not only does the old vision continue in its objective path, but it continues to develop through the efforts of certain camera artists. Therefore, one aspect of Aristotle's theory, 'things as they are', survives the demise of aristotelianism but transformed into the *new art* of the camera and its developments. However, the situation completely alters when the *new art* of creation that specifically which began with Monet and Cezanne, is considered from the viewpoint of Structurism. For this art extends beyond both the views of Aristotle and aristotelianism, since both were limited to a mimetic context respecting both nature and art.

The as-a-whole view of the changes in art, then, include two new general directions—Photography and Structurism. Both deal with the visible experiences of nature reality; one with its creations, the other with its mode of creation. Therefore, the remarkable changes in art lie in the combined achievements of two different arts. Of first importance, both perform a resolution of the age-old dualism that has unremittingly pursued Western art throughout its 'first or mimetic era. On the other hand, the art of photography resolves and so frees mimetic effort into a coherent continuation of the evolutionary method for capturing the light images of nature's creations. On the other, Structurism resolves and so frees the heretofore

frustrated effort of idealism to achieve human creation. This was accomplished by discovering visible nature as the supreme source of creation for man as a purely creative artist. The old philosophical idealism dictated the final form which nature was to take in art, a futile effort to create. Structurism, however, releases the inherent capacity of man to create through the creative example of nature. This is to reverse the direction of idealism, rather than invert it, as do the mimetic manipulators. The act of creation is thus brought directly into the realm of reality where genuine creation becomes possible. Hence, this important conclusion: the new or second era of Western art, in its genuinely new aspects, is non-aristotelian . . .

All human failure—glorifying material goals, frustrating the evolution of man from the barbarian—is essentially the failure to create. Morals, ethics were never the pivotal issues, they are simply the automatic by-products of the act of creation. Each of us is an individual of creation; so too each of the remarkable galaxies. But each of us possesses what no galaxy has—consciousness, consciousness of ourselves and the universe. It is imperative that we now become conscious of the supreme formative gift of being human—to be creative. Thus each can achieve a more human world.

for whom the
electric
organ rolls

girls
born in the fifties
dance
they have souls
and carnation pink petticoats

again
someone died
he wrote
I could not understand it but thought it beautiful

the animals went in two by two
but the chimera went by herhimself

twelve thousand days and nights
these brains have been lived in

II

now again and now still
moon in the branches
Luna 3's remote-control hands
total recall total loss of total recall
almost coincident shapes

lid and lid

eye eye

III

a sea at the end of the street
a burning ship on the sea

the glass door swung
he saw what moved stop
then the eyes

the ball
in the air he already knew
as the ship approached he reversed the glass it receded
the sedan chair's curtains closed with a rustling sound

fingertip thoughts
the flawless the flaws

a small lifetime
leatime

IV

how to live in this
the last Age
though there is street
and household electricity
I had tried to return from two different places at once
not knowing I had to be everywhere

"you have such young hands" and old feet
it had grown more than halfway down her back
a sound as out of three hundred

Rolling Stones

as she approached

V

whorls and wakes
drawn through the air
the gestures
dotted lines
who can write on them
unrepeatable figures
can you tell me the way her foot was gently swinging
perhaps here I could

he replied in the dream

the eyes

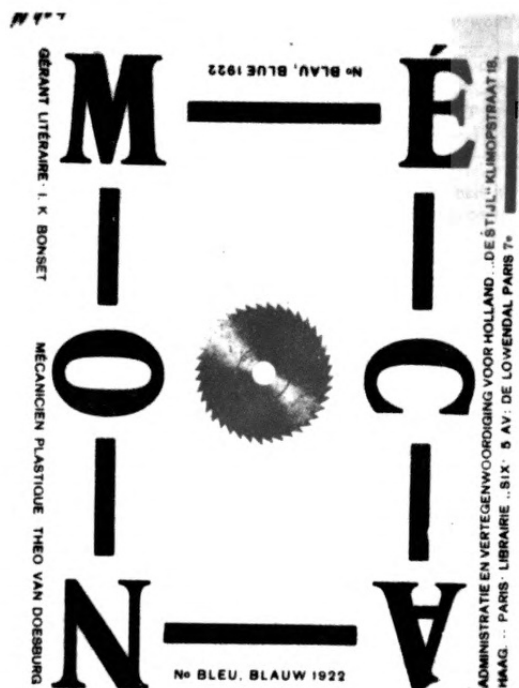
swung open
allowed him to see
shooting star-trail graphs
rhythms of millennial dances

the variations
under all music and song
and even
soundless speech

No. 4: Mecano

Series edited by Mike Weaver,
164A Highland Street, New
Haven, Conn.06511, U.S.A.

Cover of 'blue' issue, 1922.



Dates with editor:

- (1). *Yellow* 1922; Theo van Doesburg
 - (2). *Blue* 1922; T.v.D.
 3. *Red* 1922; T.v.D.
 - 4-5. *White* 1923; T.v.D.
- T.v.D. is given as *Mécanicien Plastique*, 'I. K. Bonset' (T.v.D.) as *Gérant Littéraire*; collaborators named in *White* are Tzara, Ribemont-Dessaignes and Schwitters.

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Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague. Estimated cost of microfilm: 2.50f.

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(P=poezy or experimental prose)

(M=manifesto)

(I=illustration unrelated to a text)

(entries in italics constitute the whole contribution)

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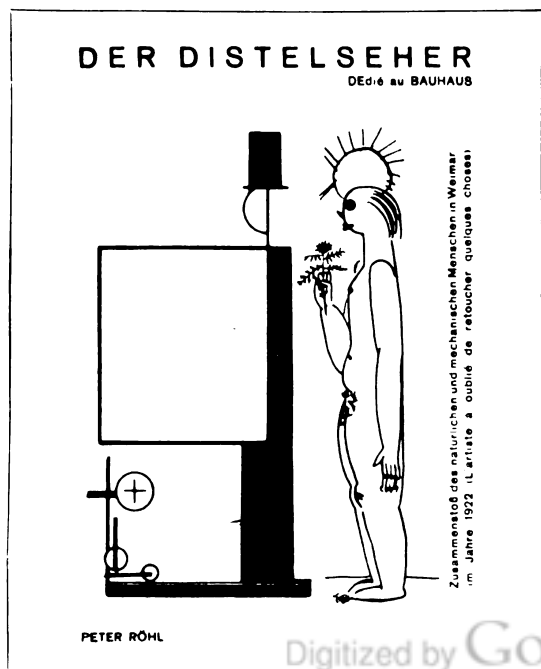
From 'Mecano': Two Men by Kurt Schwitters

Translated by Richard Taylor

Two men who did not know each other met on the street. By chance one's sleeve brushed the other. At that the other said softly, but audibly: 'Mule'. 'Idiot', answered the first. Thereupon the other spoke again: 'You lout, oaf, boob, You pig, You common pig, You clown, You blockhead, You dumb ass, You ox, You louse's ass.' 'What', answered the first, 'and You still pretend to be anything like a cececultivated human being? In my eyes You are an idiot, You idiot, a bum, You bum, a pig, You pig, a dog, You dog, an ape, You ape'—Abruptly the other

said: 'You giant idiot, cipher, boor, hobo, chestnuthead, armpit, You armpit!'—'What', answered the first, 'You are a flychaser, You flychaser, dogbone, dogmeat, witless scoundrel, dumb stud, rednose, You rednose, rowdy, You common rednose!' The other replied again abruptly: 'silly cow!'—At that the first answered: 'Goose, insurgent, You insurgent, You, You!'—As abruptly the other said: 'shrimp, insect, rogue, how this tree frog inflates himself!'—At that the first said: 'Miserable lump, pick-pocket you!'—'What?' said the other at once: 'you, you, you? am I your servant? listen to him, the blockhead, I'll burst from laughter!'—Thereupon the first answered: 'wretched braggart'—Then the other: 'Cowardly rascal!'—Then the first: 'Pardon me, I completely forgot to introduce my fiancée to You'—at that the other said: 'indeed it occurs to me that I haven't mentioned my name yet. My name is Meier'—Then the first: 'Likewise Meier, Chairman of the Society for the Ennobling of the Canine Species.' Quickly the other Meier replied: 'Wouldn't You like to join our Club for the Improvement of Culture? You are our man, You are a noble human being'—Thereupon the first Meier answered: 'I consider myself extraordinarily fortunate to have made the acquaintance of a man such as You. My dog and I will gladly join your club.' At that both men, with dog and fiancée, betook themselves to the club FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF CULTURE.

From 'Mecano' (Blue): Peter Röhl, 'The thistleseer. Dedicated to the Bauhaus.' 'Meeting of natural man and mechanical man at Weimar in 1922. (The artist has forgotten to retouch one or two things).'



From 'Mecano': Towards a Constructive Poetry

by I. K. Bonset (Theo van Doesburg)

Translated by Ita and Otto van Os

The reconstruction of poetry is impossible without destruction. Destruction of syntax is the first, indispensable, preliminary task of the new poetry. The destruction has expressed itself as follows:

1. in usage (its meaning)
2. in the monstrous (psychic disturbance)
3. in typography (la poésie synoptique)

For 1. were important: Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Ghil, Gorter, Apollinaire, Birot, Arp, Schwitters etc.
For 2: de Sade, de Lautréamont, Masoch, Péladan, all religious writings, Schwitters etc.
For 3: Apollinaire, Birot, Marinetti, Beauduin, Salvat Papaseit, Kurt Schwitters etc.

Poetry without an aesthetic basis is unthinkable.

To accept the purely utilitarian as the whole foundation for a new art form=madness.

utilitarian poetry
utilitarian music
utilitarian painting
utilitarian sculpture } =madness

madness—madness—madness

We are living in an age of the provisional. We assume: that there is no distinction between webbing and backbone, between coitus and art.

But in art you do not use soap (except painters who need a good scrubbing) and you cannot go to heaven on top of

a tomato. You cannot brush your teeth with art. each thing implies its own usefulness

SYPHILIS is not the aim of copulation

But: the blue-jackets of the new constructivist art claim:

OR

a piece of iron nailed to wood,
a chair without a back;
a car that won't go;
a recordplayer without sound;

OR

a house without groundplan;
a sword without a blade;
a (red) poem without contents,—
all this is utilitarian art.

I.E. art that is rooted in real life!

No, all this is after all only syphilis in art.

Is there a type of poetry you can sit on, like a chair? Or, which you can drive, like a car! No. Perhaps there is only poetry you can spit on: utilitarian, revolutionary poetry. (I beg the gentlemen once more to pull the pig's bladders over their heads and to stick the tubes up their noses.)

So: when reconstructing art, it does not matter whether the result is useful or not. As far as a piece of sculpture or a painting is useful—e.g. to sit on—it is neither sculpture nor painting, but 'chair'. And: efficiency by no means limits itself to the senses. If this were so, what we mean by spirit would also be a part of our bodies.

From Mecano:

Manifesto on the
Lawfulness of Sound
by Raoul Hausmann

Translated by Richard Taylor

Let us try, for once, to make a poem with our feet which is just as good as a shoe. Do you know, gentlemen, what a city is like? A city is a horizontal tension and a vertical tension. Nothing else. Two straight wires connected with each other are its image. Each individual tries by means of: legs, train, tram or explosions (the mode of transport of the future) to find the common centre of these two tensions.

As is the city, so is the poem. Everyone tries, as immediately as possible, to picture the square root of the two (extreme) tensions. *immediately*, i.e.

the constructivist poet creates a new language for himself out of the alphabet: the speech of long distances, of *depth* and *height* and by means of this creative language he conquers *space-time-motion*.

the new poet renders only by victory, by dissolution, by destruction (like our politicians), by a-humanist abstraction. In the new poetry there is construction, reduction.

Summary: the new poet constructs his language out of the ruins of the past and since everything derives from language, he creates with it, in spite of the 'abstraction désintéressée' a world and a new man.

THAT IS HIS EFFICIENCY.

Vienna, Jutendorf, 1923

a
a a
a a
aaaaaa
a a
a a

When one, parting his lips, begins to smoke, as a moment of triple stimulus to which happens a fourth, incidental component. The will to power of Navy Cut tobacco mocks the spiritual profit-rate in a calorie of combustion. Smoking, in itself repose in an infantile manner of life, is elevated with the cigarette to the dandyism of an uninhibited projection of the fall to sin. While art is the only concern equal to man, smoking a shag-calumet represents the comforting certainty of the uniqueness of the event and at the same time the absoluteness, indifference of the moment, the eternal return of everything suspended within the inner submersion of dissolving in smoke. Smoking, viewed from abstract-concrete being, embodies the removal of a social helplessness in the aromas of briar-wood and a consummate form WD & HO Wills mild Capstan Tobacco Bristol-London, whose whorls during the uncurling of the glow at the draw are surrounded by one of the pranas¹ or tattwas² with the mild fragrance of fine graining and the thickness of its horn holder. The taboo of a totem-medicine in the experience sector of the west-European dispels all objections of such a primitive mode of expression of economic policy. Born of

1. prana: (Sanskrit) breath. In vedic philosophy placed beside speech (vac) and spirit (manas) as the third basic life-force. In post-vedic times both med. and phil. assume 5-7 pranas which as winds of the body represent the driving forces of physiological existence. (R.T.)

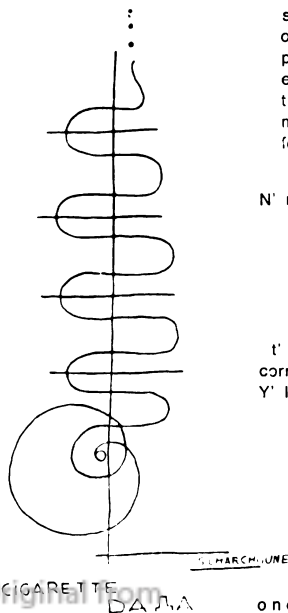
2. tattwas: (contraction of tat twam asi? (Sanskrit)) 'das bist du'. The shortest expression for the principal teaching of Upanishads which is that Brahman, the eternal power which creates all worlds, is one with our innermost self, the soul (R.T.)

the necessity of overcoming all that is vain in a nebulous inner development, the form is yielding, elegant and short. The joy of silver on being inlaid around the square of the calumet's neck, leading out to the replete hollowness of a double-membered head whose air-axis manifests itself between the teeth of the smoker as five-dimensional freedom of breathing, and from space and time.

The art of greed is the lot of an incomprehensible creation whose plastic prisms in the burl of a beech impart a form related to a rose. The vital thought of

a rose in yellow is the integral-communication problem of a varying undulation in the aroma of the scent with the fixed pointedness of its thorns. Man, needing a catalyst for his hearing discrepancies, invests fat with the mobility of the smell in soap, as analogy he values the spectral tricolour of an exploding sphere, deflected by a straw which due to considering its origin as quantitative quality remains estranged from its category. the pneumatics of the transcendent-immanent soulmobile are blown by the élan of a compromised power of resistance akin to gasoline. The unique solidarity of the subjective od with the objective oscillation of perfume turns the use of a eucalyptus-inhaler into a lunar transaction within the mouth's chaotic cave. Now as for the laws of sound...

bbbb
N' moun m' onoum onopouh
p
o
n
n
e
ee lousoo kilikilikoum
t' neksout coun' tsoumt sonou
correyiosou out kolou
Y' IITTTTTTIYYH
kirricu korrothumn
N' onou
mousah
da
ou
D A D D O U
irridadoumth
t' hmoum
kollokoum
onooohooouumhn



after Gropius and Marcel
Breuer: buildings for Black
Mountain College, North
Carolina, 1939. Dormitory
blocks and entrance lobby.

De Stijl and Architecture by Hans Jaffe, with writings from 'De Stijl' by J J P Oud and Robert van't Hoff: **Visual Environments and Total Landscape** by Bernard Lassus: **Meaning and Technique in Phonic Poetry** by Raoul Hausmann, with poems: **Black Mountain College—A Foreword** by John A. Rice, **projected buildings** by Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, **A Personal Memoir 1944-45** by George Zabriskie: **Great Little Magazines No. 5: Ray**





CENTRE FOR ADVANCED
STUDY OF SCIENCE IN ART

72 Chalk Farm Road, London, N.W.1 has stand
No. 1413-4 at the International Building Exhibition
at Olympia from Nov. 16-29, 1967. Works by
the following will be shown:

Archigram
David Boriani
Fabrizio Carola
Guy Dessauges
Wolfgang Döring
Heinz Mack
Peter Manning
Manfredo Massironi
Renzo Piano
Arthur Quarmby
Marcello Salvadori
R. Connor Thomas
Joe Tilson
Ken Turner
John Zerning

Back numbers

Copies of **Form 2** (2/6, USA \$1), **Form 3** and **Form 4** (both 3/6, USA \$1) are still available, post free, from 78 Norwich Street, Cambridge. No. 2 contains articles on Le Parc and Hirschfeld-Mack, Gillo Dorfles' 'For or Against a Structuralist Aesthetic?' and 'Emanuel Romano' by William Carlos Williams. No. 3 includes three essays by Charles Biederman, work by Robert Pinget and Ian Hamilton Finlay, and an article by El Lissitzky, as well as a supplement on 'phonic' poetry. No. 4 features the catalogue to the Brighton Festival exhibition of Concrete Poetry (April 1967) with an article by Gomringer; and the first of the Black Mountain College series, including Albers' account of his courses at Ulm and a critique of Albers' 'Graphic Tectonics'. Also Lev Nusberg on Russian 'Kinetism', two further essays by Biederman, and a poem by Anselm Hollo. In the 'Great Little Magazines' series, No. 2 carries 'Blues', No. 3 'G', and No. 4 'Mecano'.

Form on microfilm

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 Stephen Bann

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Frank Popper, Naissance de l'Art Cinétique, Gauthier-Villars, Paris, 1967, 68 N F. With an introduction by Professor Etienne Souriau.

We are glad to record the recent publication of Frank Popper's book *Naissance de l'Art Cinétique*. Dr Popper, who contributed an article on 'Le Parc and the Group Problem' to *Form 2*, has an unrivalled knowledge of the development of Kinetic Art during the past few years. His article in the *UNESCO Courier* of September 1963 was the first coherent survey of the artists working within the field in Paris. His recent exhibition — 'Lumière et Mouvement' — at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, provided a superb showcase for this large and important group of artists.

Naissance de l'Art Cinétique is the necessary complement to such an exhibition, since it traces the historical development of Kinetic Art, not merely in Paris but throughout the world. It is subtitled 'The image of movement in the plastic arts since 1860', an indication that the aesthetic of movement from the time of Manet and Rodin onwards is also fully illustrated and documented. It concludes with a section of 'analytic and aesthetic considerations' on the general problem of the incorporation of movement in the plastic arts. The work is available from Gauthier-Villars, 55, Quai des Grands Augustins, Paris 6e.

From Robert Reiss:

... I am enormously pleased with *Form*, and wish you the best. (I may add I may have some curious authority to make this judgment, since some of my poetry appeared in *The Little Review* back in 1918, 1919 and 1920, when James Joyce's *Ulysses* was being serialised in it, Ezra Pound was the London and Paris editor, and T. S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams and many others celebrated today were regular contributors. I stopped writing altogether then, but just to assure you of the authenticity of this statement I am

enclosing a copy of a poem of mine that appeared in *The Little Review* in the June 1918 issue, when I was 17. I copied it recently from microfilms in the New York Public Library in connection with some reminiscences I am writing for my children and grandchildren) ... Its title had been changed by the editors from whatever I called it to "Sixteen"—which made me a bit indignant, because by then I was 17!—(see above right)

The above may not be easily recognised as a love poem, but it was! I guess it's the sort of thing everybody writes today, but 50 years ago ...!

I got a personal kick out of the last issue of *Form* because of the pieces by Josef Albers and Charles Biederman. R. Buckminster Fuller, with whom I worked during World War II in Washington, brought Albers around to my house in 1946 to inquire if my wife Eleanor

The pellucid gilded lake
where, into a lap of golden blood
the pavonin feathers of fishes droop
lies over the maroon, sybaritic horizon.

There were ultra neons blowing across dirty gardens
like nectar drifting over papyruns:
parallelisms of papiermache monoliths.
And all around arose the ovoviviparous neophytes
with monomania:

the monogenesis, monsignore.

The gaunt stoutness of a spectral macrocosm
diffuses symbolic ignorance upon the corollating genesis:
smothering the proem of hot ova
with an excess of rainbows.
The boy constructed beotian apologues
to dilute a sincere aphrodisiac.
Youths of sixteen are molluscs.

Mountain College as
administrators of some sort,
as the place was in difficulties,
and although we were dying to
do so, we could not. As to
Biederman, I got into a long
and enjoyable correspondence
with him some years ago about
his aesthetics.

Incidentally, although Bucky
Fuller is world famous now,
there is little published of his
old prose, the "unreadable"
stuff he was writing when he was
considered just an impractical
dreamer, but which takes on
germinal importance in light of
the fame that is his now. Why
shouldn't *Form* dig out some
of it? At least in connection
with your valuable Black
Mountain pieces, since, of
course, Bucky was influential
there, too.

Sincerely yours, Robert Reiss
2617 Marvel Road, Arlington
Virginia, U S A, June 3rd 1967

Hans Jaffe is the leading authority on De Stijl, and his book De Stijl, 1917-1931—the Dutch contribution to modern art the principal account of the movement. This article is a transcript of the introductory half of a lecture given in Cambridge in the summer of this year.

De Stijl, founded in 1917, belonged essentially to the Netherlands. It is perhaps not too bold to claim that, irrespective of other innovations at about the same time in other countries, the particular art of de Stijl could not have arisen in any country of Europe but this one. The roots of the movement are often sought in the resemblance of paintings such as Mondrian's to the Dutch *polder* landscape, as it appears for instance from an aircraft or from the top of a tower. This theory does not seem to me to be tenable, and in view of the development of the masters of de Stijl up to 1917 I do not believe that they would have been capable of such a camouflaged naturalism. Admittedly the Netherlands is the only country in this part of Europe in which the horizon is not an imaginary line but an optical fact; and no painter could, I think, reject such a visual appearance. However in my opinion we should look much deeper for an explanation: it is not the Dutch landscape which inspired these paintings. The Dutch landscape has been built *according to the same principles* upon which the work of de Stijl is founded. The Netherlands are the work of man. In our country we hardly know nature in the strict sense of the word: it has been constructed according to principles of economy and rationality, that is to say according to Euclidean geometry. Straight lines and right-angles are the pattern which centuries of human activity have stamped on the

soil; soil which previously did not exist. Generation after generation of Dutchmen have worked, building up their country, always with the same precision and accuracy, with that perfectionism that has become an inheritance of the Dutch people. This precision and perfectionism are necessary to protect the country against the ever waking enemy, the water.

Accordingly the straight line and the right-angle have become the pattern of this country, because they are the typical characteristics of human labour, in contrast to the curves and undulating lines which are the result of natural organic creation. And for the same reason straight lines and right-angles also dominate the works of de Stijl. It is the human spirit, the constant rational being of man which triumphs, here too, over the inconstancies and caprices of nature. This human perfectionism, this building in the face of nature is one of the traditional features of the Dutch personality—what Huizinga has called 'the Dutch hallmark'. In the search for the historical origin of this trait, which, with an eye to its Dutch character, one might call 'watertight', one soon comes at its religious basis; puritanism. For in the Netherlands, puritanism is not a confessional matter, but most decidedly a national one. Every Dutchman, whatever faith he may profess, either inside a church or out of it, is at heart a born puritan. The young Calvinist movement of the 16th century certainly had

a great formative influence on the national character. And Calvinism, with its strict orthodoxy, is not alien to de Stijl. All the founding members came from strict Calvinist families, and I should not like to say that there is no connection between ecclesiastical rigour and the rectilinearity of their principles. After all the first deed of the new Calvinism in the Netherlands, in the 16th century, was one of iconoclasm, the destruction of the images in all Catholic churches. And the masters of de Stijl could be regarded as legitimate descendants of these iconoclasts, for the motive was the same in both cases. For the first, 16th century, iconoclasts, any and every representation of a saint was an infringement of the absolute sanctity of God the Creator. To the masters of de Stijl, any and every representation of a portion of this creation is a corruption, a mutilation of the divine purity of its laws. There we have one and the same absolute and puritan principle, which at bottom is especially Dutch.

Puritanism and 'the Dutch hallmark', the identity of these two things is eloquently illustrated by the ambiguity of the Dutch word *schoon*, which means both 'pure' and 'beautiful'; and moreover also by the collective oeuvre of de Stijl in which purity and beauty coincide, whose very beauty originates through purity. Witness to this Dutch and puritan vision, which admittedly is not the whole of Dutch art—just think of Frans

Hals, and think of Rembrandt—can easily be summoned up from the painters of the past, Saenredam's white church interiors, the purity and cleanliness of a Vermeer, the sobriety of a room by Pieter de Hooch. But the most striking evidence of this mentality is Spinoza, the philosopher, whose great work bears the title 'Ethica More Geometrico Demonstrata'. In view of the ethical implications of the work of de Stijl, I would not hesitate to use this same title for the movement's collective achievement. Spinoza chose the geometrical method of presenting his argument in order to lift it above any individual arbitrariness, to make it proof against all fortuitousness. The same general validity, the same absolute perfection was also sought by the artists of de Stijl, and that was why they renounced all rhetoric, and restricted their stock of means of expression to simple elements, to constant immutable original data. This striving for the absolute, this unbending consistency in following a path, once it has been chosen, it also part of 'the Dutch hallmark'.

This movement, essentially so puritan and Dutch, took as its chief aim in painting and architecture the purification of the arts: and purification here means first and foremost acquisition of autonomy, independence of other fields, and obedience to inherent laws only. Independence with a dual significance: on the one hand dissolution of the link with perception, with any

visible object; on the other hand, liberation from the tyranny of the subjective temperament. The members of de Stijl were equally violently opposed to both these types of dependence. For this reason they banished every visible object from their art, and limited themselves to the use of means of expression which were restricted to such an extent that the narrowly circumscribed choice seemed in itself to make any tendency to subjective arbitrariness or caprice impossible. For the painters of de Stijl, this cleaning of the arts, a reducing of them to their own proper essence, to the basic elements themselves, was a required step in historical development.

The history of the plastic arts had already prepared the way, leading from representation of objects to depiction of the essential truth of things. De Stijl had crossed a threshold, and gained for art its complete autonomy. Henceforward the art of painting was no longer the hand-maiden of any other branch of human activity, but became an art of pure relationship, a way to knowledge of absolute truth. For de Stijl, even though it aimed at being strictly non-figurative, was not for that reason any less the almost mathematical figuration of a content. And those paintings which carefully exclude all concrete objects, nevertheless aimed at depicting a content in as objective a way as was humanly possible: that is to say, that content which, to the members of de Stijl, constituted the essence of art

through all the centuries—harmony, universal and absolute harmony. This abstract art is by no means without content. It is just that content which is the heart, the centre of gravity of de Stijl's collective seeking and striving. Universal harmony, that harmony which reigns as law over the universe in all its ramifications, that is the content of the art of de Stijl, that is the theme which all the members of the group tried to depict, which they wanted to make visible, to illustrate.

It is a theme which opens up an infinite horizon, the horizon of philosophical and ethical vistas. An idea in the true sense of the word—related to the platonic theory of ideas, and with its origin rooted in the neo-platonist tradition and that tradition's theological offspring. It is again characteristic of the Netherlands that such an ambitious philosophical and ethical system was not expressed in words. Dutch history can hardly point to a philosophical tradition. In the Netherlands it has happened more than once that the truth and discoveries which other people would have recorded in writing have been expressed in pictures in a pictorial language and imparted to others in that way. Accordingly the painters of de Stijl wished to depict the essence of their view of reality and its laws in a pictorial, plastic language. Their object, therefore, lay beyond the fragmentary vision of the world which remains restricted by representation of

a part of creation, or by the approach to the world from a haphazard individual standpoint. To them the point at issue was a vision of the whole, in which each value or property only counted through the relation to it of another value or property: an art of pure relations, or, in Mondrian's own words, 'a true vision of reality'.

What the masters of de Stijl wished to make visible, through plastic language, was the idea, the formula of universal harmony, that principle of law which bears the same relation to the phenomena of fortuitous actuality as a theme in music bears to the variation based upon it. To achieve this essential truth, they renounced all figuration in order thus to be able to depict the formula, the figure of the essential content of their art, and they voluntarily limited their artistic language to the bare elements in order to express that content as objectively as possible. This Dutch craving for the absolute, for the solution without compromise, is predominant; and thence comes the persuasive, almost religious eloquence of these canvases. A painting by one of the de Stijl group exhorts the beholder to contemplation, to a cleaning of his own gates of perception. It stands before his eyes in all its dazzling purity, stately and radiant, like one of our own austere psalm melodies.

In this purification, not only of art but also equally of man's image of reality, of the human

way of looking at the world, lay the ethical implications of the work produced by de Stijl. All the pictorial principles of de Stijl are rooted in an ethical conception, in a well-nigh theological system of ethical standards. Whatever one does, one must not look upon the painters of de Stijl as nothing but decorators in colour and line, as precious and charming musicians. Such a verdict would do them great injustice, for in that way they would be assessed according to the standards of the decorative arts, standards against which they always fought with great vehemence.

On the contrary, every composition of de Stijl is a rendering of one and the same content, of their central idea, universal harmony; and hence their art decidedly does not confine itself to aesthetic speculations. Every work produced by de Stijl is based on this one principle, and for that very reason it remains in contact with life itself. Every painting produced by de Stijl stands before the viewer's eye, and before his mind, as a paragon of the purity of life in the future.

Mondrian clearly formulated the ethical viewpoint of the group, in particular in his little booklet 'Art and Life'. His position in this was as follows: modern man has not yet been able to achieve, in his life, that order and harmony which are the primal object of every manifestation of existence. Human subjectivity and unbridled individualism have obstructed the realisation of

harmony, disturbed the purity of life, and distracted man from his one true aim. Art, on the other hand, has already found this harmony, and has been able to depict it visually, because it has broken through the barrier of individualism in this century. Art is therefore ahead of life, and hence its task is to show life the way to the realisation of that general harmony.

Art as a guide, as a pioneer—that was the idea, the vision that was constantly before the eyes of the masters of de Stijl. A new, revolutionary and utopian idea. Mondrian himself dwelt in this utopian future all his life long. The very earliest sign of his visionary view of the world of men and things is the dedication on the title page of his pamphlet of 1920, 'The Neoplasticism', 'aux hommes futurs'—to the men of the future.

Mondrian was perfectly well aware that if this concept was carried to its logical conclusion, it would mean the end of the art of painting. He did not worry about that. As long as universal harmony had not become a reality in daily life, he wrote 'painting would have to offer a temporary substitute for it.' In the future, once harmony had penetrated into every sphere of life, painting would have played out its part, and would be unnecessary. All the better for it, and for life.

He had in his heart a clear idea of what that future harmonious life would be like: there, the same order, the

same equilibrium which painting was the first to find, would prevail in all fields of human activity—in politics, in architecture, in music, in drama; and nowhere would it be possible for individuality, chance or subjectivism to impare that harmony. This vast utopian vision, a kind of nirvana of radiant purity and dazzling clarity, was Mondrian's contribution to de Stijl's world-view. Without that vision, de Stijl would never have been able to develop its general authority, its great power of conviction. But if nothing else had stood beside it to support it, if that idea embodied in the fervent, ascetic personality of Mondrian had met with no response, de Stijl would not have become much more than its utopian schemes—all dreams, visionary, grandiose dreams.

To make this dream come true, another human type was necessary: someone not afraid to face up to present-day reality and its mutations. That man was Theo van Doesburg. For him the certainty of knowing that the world of the future would be changed according to the principles of de Stijl, was not sufficient. He felt a compelling need to change this reality, to make it over new, here and now.

For that reason this talented painter became an architect. For that reason too, from the very first hour of the existence of de Stijl, of which he was the most energetic founder, he always attracted architects to the group: Oud, van't Hoff,

Wils, and later Rietveld, van Eesteren and Kiesler. He always wanted to see results, he wanted to build; and he wanted the structures he built to stand out against the obsolescent forms of the past as testimonies of a new spirit. Van Doesburg was an innovator, a pioneer, and his work bears witness to this dynamic energy—the architectural models which he made in 1923, in collaboration with van Eesteren and Rietveld, the alas lost creation of the Aubette restaurant in Strasbourg in '28, and finally his house at Meudon, an authentic expression of the soul of the 20th century.

In de Stijl he brought the spirit of architecture and construction to prevail over Mondrian's utopian conception of the art of painting. The architecture of de Stijl represents a renovation of architectonic principles which took place in two phases: first of all in the early years of the movement, through van't Hoff, Oud and Wils: and after that, in the years around '23, through van Doesburg, van Eesteren and Rietveld.

The first phase of de Stijl architecture must be seen on the one hand as a reaction against the stylelessness and the style-imitations of the architecture of the day, and against the baroque formal luxuriance of the Amsterdam school particular. But on the other hand, in addition to being inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and the revolutionary achievement of Berlage, the first works of de Stijl

architecture were permeated by the group's reform of the principles of painting, the resolute restriction to the basic elements of the art, the cleaning of every art from influences and from means of expression foreign to it. It was more this approach than the forms of de Stijl painting themselves, which determined the fundamentals of the movement's architecture.

A list of the articles on architecture published in the first two volumes of *De Stijl* is given below: a complete index of the magazine will appear in Form No. 6.

DE STIJL

Vol. 1 (*in order of appearance*)
J J P Oud, Monumental town-planning; **Oud**, Design for a housing development for the Strandboulevard; **Oud**, Art and the machine; **Jan Wils**, The new architecture; **Oud**, Architectural comment (*Plate 8*); **Robert van't Hoff**, The development of architecture; **Theo van Doesburg**, Plasticism and space in interior architecture; **Oud**, Building and the rationalisation of masonry construction; **Huib Hoste**, The calling of modern architecture; **Wils**, Modern architecture and emergency housing in reinforced concrete; **Van Doesburg**, Open letter to Huib Hoste; **Wils**, Symmetry and culture.

Vol. II
 First manifesto of *De Stijl*; **Van Doesburg**, A critique of monumental art; **Vilmos Huszar**, Commentary on Huis ter Heide and Meerhoek te Bergen; **Van Doesburg**, A few random thoughts on modern architecture in relation to the Summer House at Huis ter Heide by Robt. van't Hoff; **Van't Hoff**, The development of architecture; **Van Doesburg**, The cafe-restaurant *De Dubbele Sleutel* at Woerden; **Scheltema**, The reactionaries of Arras; **Oud**, Architectural comment, a) street architecture, b) architecture and reinforced concrete; **Gerrit Rietveld**, Comment on a chair for children; **Van't Hoff**, Comment on a drawing by Sant'Elia; **Van Doesburg**, Comment on a chair by Rietveld.

Selected writings on architecture from 'De Stijl' 1917-1919

Translated and introduced by Nicholas Bullock

At first sight it may appear perverse to devote a series of translations solely to the architectural aspects of a movement that stressed the union of the different arts to achieve a common style. However, the reason for this is the absence hitherto of any comprehensive documentation of the architectural attitudes of *De Stijl*. Whereas the position of Mondrian and the painters of *De Stijl* is generally recognised, the architectural side of *De Stijl* has been rather neglected, with the result that little of the original source material is now available. Thus the aim of this series in providing translations of the original contributions to *De Stijl*, should be seen as an attempt to restore architecture to the position it rightfully occupies at the centre of *De Stijl*.

A secondary aim in documenting this material is to provide an insight into the changes that took place in the architectural orientation of the magazine at the end of the First World War. We would like to show how the interest of the early years in Wright and Berlaage changed in the early twenties to a leading position in international constructivism, a change that is also mirrored in the make-up of the group.

This first instalment covers the first two volumes of *De Stijl* from 1917-1919. At this time Wright is the leading architect, the 'ideal Berlagian architect' (Banham); he represents a direction away from the 'Modern Baroque' and the Amsterdam School, he is in

keeping with the ideals of Berlaage, but offers at the same time a new formal language. Van't Hoff had seen the work of Wright at first hand, but the others, introduced to it by him, would have known it through the first and second editions of the Wasmuth volumes (1910 and 1911), through Berlaage who had visited the States and lectured on Wright, and through various magazine articles.' The appreciation of Wright is however, curiously unproductive. They admire the use of new materials and new production methods, and it should be noted that the early architects had more actual experience of building than the *De Stijl* architects of the early twenties. But in appreciating Wright's formal vocabulary, while recognising his use of free planes and his rejection of the building as a cube, they fail to understand his use of the free plan. The buildings of the early period are nearly all symmetrical, and have none of the organic quality that Van't Hoff, for example, admired in Wright. We still have to wait until after the War before *De Stijl* evolves its own architectural vocabulary, although the Rietveld chair, with its 'new concept of form' (van Doesburg), appears at the end of Volume II.

If Wright's influence on the buildings of *De Stijl* was so great because he represented a modern version of Berlaage's teachings, ideas similar to those of Berlaage on the position of art in society play a strong part in the writings of

1: *The Architectural Record devoted to Wright which carried the essay 'In the Cause of Architecture' and was profusely illustrated (1908) and finally the reprint of 'The Art and the Craft of the Machine' (1901) (c f Van't Hoff's second article on 'The Development of Architecture').*

the architects of *De Stijl*. 'The evolution of Architecture and Painting is leading in the direction of the universal and the monumental. It joins forces with the Berlaage School and sets itself up against the so-called Amsterdam School, which has turned away from the monumental to follow a decadent principle.' 'The universal is the only basis for this style. Because only collective working is possible, art will only attain a monumental style by collective working and by methods purified as each art form turns against the impure elements in its own domain.' (Oud, 'Monumental town-planning'). In their appeal for purity, clarity, the use of the machine, collective working and the disappearance of the particular in favour of the universal, the architects were wholly in line with the ideals of *De Stijl* as laid down in the early years by van Doesburg. Though primarily occupied with painting, van Doesburg collaborated with the architects on several projects and the language of his critique of the Summer House at Huis ter Heide is very similar to that of the architects: 'There has been a reaction against the rustic and the haphazard, there is now a development towards a more precise way of defining space. The diagonal has replaced the curved, and now the rightangle is replacing the diagonal . . . Truth in architecture is a question of construction . . . The plan is the fundamental element which brings the masses into harmony, to a unity of form.'

From 'De Stijl' Vol. I:

Art and the Machine by J J P Oud

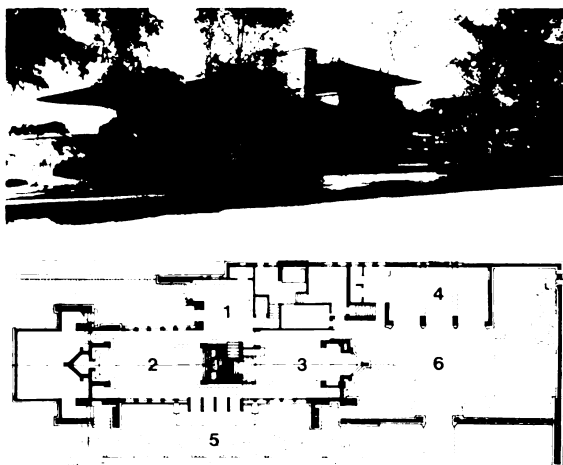
Paradoxically speaking one could say that the struggle of the modern artist is a struggle against sentiment.

The modern artist aims at the general, whereas sentiment (subjectivity) leads toward the particular. The subjective is the arbitrary, the unconscious, the relatively indefinite that can be sublimated, by consciousness, to relative distinctness. To this end the subjective is to be regulated and organised by consciousness, so that it may lead to style by its relative distinctness. This organising and establishing of distinctness is the aim of modern art.

If we are to understand by monumentality: the organised and controlled regulation of the subjective towards the objective, then, in a higher sense this struggle will naturally lead to a monumental style.

In this struggle towards style there are two distinct movements. One, a technical-industrial movement, a positive movement, leads to the development of design using the technical as a basis for aesthetics. The second, which in contrast we will call a negative movement (although in its own way it is positive!) brings art to reality by simplification (abstraction). Together the complementary characteristics of both movements form the basis of the new style.

Great art has a causal connection with the social



Frank Lloyd Wright, *Robie House*, Chicago, Illinois, 1909 (De Stijl, Vol. 1, Plate 8): see 'Architectural comment' by J J P Oud. Ground floor plan. 1: entrance hall, 2: billiard hall, 3: children's playroom, 4: garage, 5: garden, 6: court.

ambition of the age. The desire for subordinating the individual to the common lot is reflected in daily life, as in art, in the urge to organize individual elements into groups, unions, leagues, societies, trusts, monopolies, etc. This reconciliation of spiritual and social striving, a necessity for achieving culture, forms the foundation for style.

In any age the universal in art makes its characteristic appearance in three factors: the spirit (the unity of intuition and the conscious mind), materials and the method of production.

Much has been written about the spirit of modern art, but we should nevertheless turn to discuss the other factors, materials and the methods of production. In order to bring about a definite manifestation of the spirit, the means of expression have to be brought to distinctness first; and which

of these is more definite than the machine? Does the spirit of the times express itself in hand or machine production methods? For the modern artist the future points towards machine production, though at present people still consider this idea heretical.

For it is not only true that machine production is more accurate than hand production methods but also obvious that from an economic and a social point of view, the machine is the best suited means of manufacture for products which will benefit the whole community, much more so than the artistic handicraft based production of today, which reaches only a few rich individuals.

It is true that architecture has already advanced a long way towards machine production (Wright). But because of this, art too is driven towards these new methods of production, and now appears to be in harmony of expression with the spirit of the times.

The cardinal mistake of Ruskin and Morris was that they discredited the machine by associating its fundamental qualities with an incompatible method of production.

As soon as other methods of production were tried for the machine, people turned to these methods which resulted in pure form (the emergence of purity always has aesthetic consequences), and they turned not only to the methods of production that generated it, but to the spirit of the materials it used.

Impurity in art, as with religion, comes about as soon as we put methods before objectives. This is why we have representational painting without art, architectural ornament without beauty, religious ritual without faith, philosophical dispute without wisdom. The artist of the past thought too much about the external appearance of things. One could say of the artist of today that he draws now from the essence of things and externalises it in art.

That the pure application of machine methods of production leads to aesthetic results is already proved in: building, well designed books (printed by machine), textiles etc.

Severini speaking of the spirit of the modern work of art, says: 'The precision, the rhythm, the brutality of the machine and its movements has without doubt brought us to a new realism which we can express without having to paint (etc. Oud) locomotives.'

Finally we come to the conclusion that both these other form-defining factors are to be brought into harmony with modern living and that art should be brought with the help of new materials further towards machine production so that the arbitrary and particular should diminish.

From 'De Stijl' Vol. I:

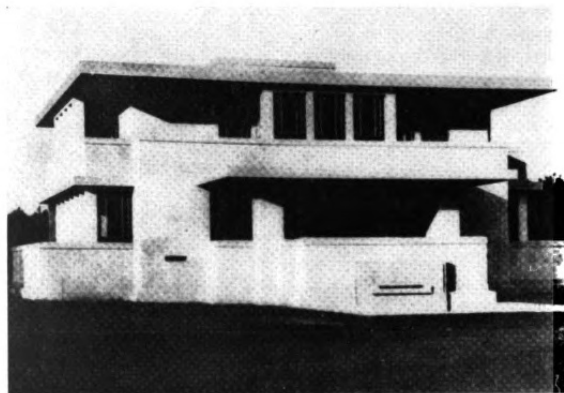
Architectural comment on Plate 8 by J J P Oud

The house by Frank Lloyd Wright illustrated on the opposite page is a good example of architecture which has advanced on the way towards the machine aesthetic, in the sense in which I defined it in my article on 'Art and the Machine'. The work of Wright has only really been made known to us since Berlaage's visit to America. In Germany his work has been widely known for some time.

Both the *young Americans* movement of today and the *young Germans* movement in its prime have felt the need to bring together the great developments of technology in order to renew art. In architecture this finds expression in the search for new aesthetic solutions to modern problems such as warehouses, factories, offices, machine shops etc.—examples of this search are to be found in the works of Behrens and Olbrich (and Messel).

German art, however, has a long history of artistic tradition to carry, which, because of a lack of satisfactory critical discrimination has led to a decline in the struggle for purification and the search for the universal. This has led German art into a false classicism, of which there were too many examples on show at the Werkbund Exhibition in Keulen, held just before the war.

America does not carry the same burden, or at least not to the same extent, and so it is possible to see, early on,



Top: Robert van't Hoff, *Huis ter Heide*, 1916 (*De Stijl*, Vol. II, Plate 3).

Above: C J Blaauw (*Amsterdam*

School) *Meerhoek house at Bergen* (Vol. II, Plate 4).

Below: J J P Oud, housing for *Strandboulevard*, 1917



1: 'picturesque' is used here as the opposite of monumental; in the sense of painterly, as opposed to strictly architectural.

urer solutions to modern building problems. In London even, Dr Berlaage's office building was more successful.

In passing it should be noted that these modern problems must lead to monumental solutions, since on the whole it is not easy to accommodate a modern industry in a group of picturesquely clustered buildings.' The organisation of the activities in a building leads to one of the distinguishing features of pure architecture: the expression of this organisation on the outside of the building through a conscious grouping of the masses.

That in following these ideas functional and aesthetic considerations are treated simultaneously, is proved by the office block for the Larkin factory which we have still to publish. In his early country houses the same characteristic is however less noticeable, but there the grouping allows more freedom, and even in the highest sense one cannot speak of monumentality in the house that we have illustrated (the Robie House). The grouping of the masses is picturesque, and everything goes to reinforce the graceful balance of the composition.

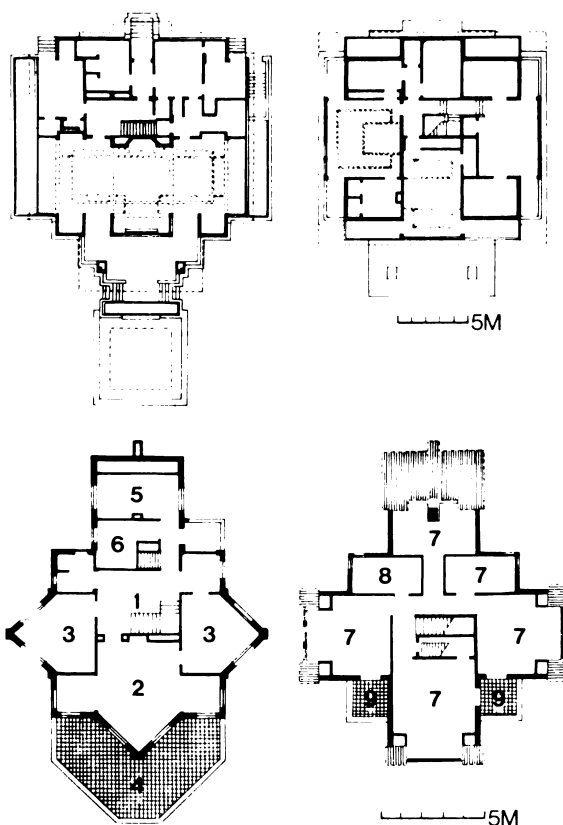
Basically the composition is pyramidal, the highest point being the chimney shown in the middle of the illustration. In everything there is a horizontality which expresses itself in a number of ways, particularly in the stability of the composition and in the relationship it achieves with

the flat landscape. This horizontality is perhaps most strongly expressed in the long terrace and the roof. All vertical surfaces seem to be strongly played down, and their lines are broken so that none of these elements carries up for more than a storey height, nor are they placed above one another, so that even any apparent impression of vertical interpenetration is avoided. The low wall under the highest roof level looks rather too heavy to rest on the row of small windows beneath; though if the wall were supported, the horizontality of the lower terrace wall (which otherwise would have been maintained by the row of windows), would be lost.

There is also another quality of this building which differs from the architecture with which we are familiar. The addition of detail to enliven a building is normally a secondary process, but here it is a primary process: the effect of the masses themselves ensures this. The strong junction of the planes of the roofs, where the individual planes are freed from the solid block of traditional building, is the true achievement of this design. There is a similarity with this in the way the Futurists overcame the rigidity of traditional painting in their representation of movement. Wright has laid the basis of a new plasticism in architecture. The planes in his buildings shoot out in all directions, forwards, backwards, to the right, to the left. In this interpenetration of planes the

way has been cleared for the new plasticism and a pure and constructive foundation prepared for new aesthetic possibilities in architecture. This is a good deal greater and more modern than anything that our own modern architecture, the so-called Amsterdam School, has achieved with its methods of detailing. This achievement by Wright is in part due to his advanced use of reinforced concrete, particularly clearly expressed in the long terrace of the Robie House. However, this use of reinforced concrete is not as pure as it might be, since the concrete is covered with a brick skin; the material is thus used in a manner corresponding to its structural possibilities but not to its appearance. The function of reinforced concrete is clearly demonstrated here, as it would be impossible to produce a similar span with any other material, or any other method of construction. In this house we sense the spirit of the times. One is overwhelmed by the sensation one gets watching a moving locomotive. In the house the impression is of a car, not a carriage.

All the parts of this building, including the furniture, are machine made. The whole basis for this building, and of all great modern buildings, is different from that of older buildings. The architect of today is no longer constantly present on the site during construction, he merely comes to supervise, while he directs the operations from his office. It is in his office that he establishes the form and



Above: ground and first floor plans of Huis ter Heide by Robert van't Hoff (top) and Meerhoek house by C J Blaauw (see photos opposite page). 1: hall, 2: living room, 3: room, 4: terrace, 5: kitchen, 6: servant, 7: bedrooms, 8: bathroom, 9: balcony.

Right: chair by Gerrit Rietveld (De Stijl, Vol. II, Plate 12)



proportions of the building, which is then delegated to others for execution. The degree of sensitivity that this design has as a drawing is nothing to do with the actual building. I mean by this that the architect's design is only realised as a reproduction from this drawing; thus it would be possible as far as the architect is concerned to build ten houses from a single drawing, all of which would achieve the same effect with scientific accuracy. In this way more and more modern architecture will be reduced to the precision of proportions (fixed in the office), in a way very similar to modern painting. Although the precision of proportion as we see it in the work of Wright, is not clearly carried through into every detail.

Wright's plans are a source of continual delight to the critic. The composition is clear and easily grasped and the relationships and divisions between the rooms, between one room and another, are clearly thought out. The service elements of the house, the servants' quarters, are planned near the entrance, and in general the conception of the house is expressed in a very business-like way. There are no little bay-windows or out-houses, nor any attempt at sensational effect. The little detail that is still left is unified into the whole composition in the construction of the broad protecting roof. But one might after all expect of a house like this to find the fireplace replaced by a central heating system.

From 'De Stijl' Vol. II:

Architecture and its Development

by Robert van't Hoff

In contrast to most artists the modern architect writes more than he actually builds; wrongly, since theory and practice, like body and spirit, must be fully in harmony with one another. To theorise about a non-existent architecture is as useless as it is to talk about an architecture wholly removed from one's own time; in the first case we are considering the impotence of modern architecture, in the second the irrelevance of past architecture. The work of Frank Lloyd Wright, in both his writings and his buildings, is one of the few exceptions that can lead us forward to real results in architecture, because the message of his writings can be clearly understood in the organic composition and structure of his buildings.

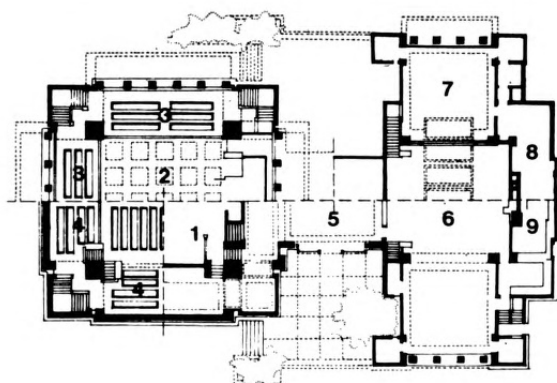
Wright has said of the development of architecture: *The architecture must not be 'thrown up' as an artistic exercise, a matter of elevation from a preconceived ground plan. The schemes are conceived in three dimensions as organic entities, let the picturesque perspective fall how it will. While a sense of the incidental perspectives the design will develop is always present, I have great faith that, if the thing is rightly put together in true organic sense with proportion actually right, the picturesque will take care of itself. No man ever built a building worthy of the name of Architecture who fashioned it in perspective sketch to his taste and judged the plan to suit. Such methods produce mere scene-painting. A*

perspective may be a proof but it is no nurture.

Thus the design of the buildings originates in the floor plans. These horizontal sections fix the different spaces and dimensions from ground level up. The junction of two lines to make an external or an internal corner fixes the point from which the verticals rise and descend. By designing the height of the rooms their character and function is fixed. **In effect these horizontal sections on which the height is indicated in centimetres, already constitute the whole project in three dimensions.** By changing the floor plans—reinforced concrete makes this particularly easy—by altering the junction of one or two, or even all these lines, new vertical and horizontal boundaries are fixed for the building. By the height at which these alternatives are fixed, we can define the height of the projected planes and thereby fix the shape of the masses.

Unity Church (Vol. II, Plate 8, No. 3), the Housing development (Vol. I, Plate 2, No. 2), the Staircase hall (Vol. I, Plate 11, No. 15), the House (Vol. II, Plate 3, No. 5) and the Summer House (Vol. II, Plates 5 & 6, No. 5) are all built in this way, from floor plans or horizontal sections, covering everything from the overhang of the roof to the chimney.

On the inside the horizontal line of the floor plan is repeated by the floor plane, the



Above: Frank Lloyd Wright, Unity Temple, Chicago, Illinois, 1909 (De Stijl, Vol. II, Plate 8). Plan: 1: coats, 2: gallery, 3: alcove,

5: entrance, 6: house, 7: balcony, 8: sewing room, 9: kitchen. Below: Jan Wils, 'De Dubbele Sleutel' restaurant at Woerden (Vol. II, Plate 10).



windows, doors and ceiling; on the outside it is repeated in the height of the plinth, the windows, door and roof. In most cases the horizontal is the dominant element, because most buildings are longer than they are tall. Only in the case of special buildings—skyscrapers, large halls, stairwells and lift towers—is the opposite true.

Unity Church, Plate 8, is one of the few works by Frank Lloyd Wright executed completely in reinforced concrete. In the Larkin office building in Buffalo, the concrete is covered with a brick skin, a solution which is more or less ambiguous. Wright says of the former building:

It is a concrete monolith, cast in wooden moulds or forms. After removing the forms the exterior surfaces are washed clean to expose the small gravel aggregate, the finished result in texture and effect being not unlike a coarse granite. The roofs are simple reinforced concrete slabs waterproofed.

The building was finished in 1909. Present methods of construction rely more and more on casting the frame in reinforced concrete and building the walls of brick, or better of hollow concrete blocks or sections. Already the Moyse system has gone beyond this; both floors and roofs are made of hollow blocks which are dovetailed between the main beams over the whole length of the span. A British inventor demonstrated some time ago

a new way of building walls: concrete blocks 18" x 19" are made by a small hydraulic machine at the rate of eighty blocks a minute. These are then fixed together with foamed cement reinforced with metal. The blocks are interlocked and set fast by cement poured from a hopper.

The new inventions and experiments point to a new and cheaper method than one-off casting. This method of construction is only really suitable for making forms that for obvious reasons have to be cast in one piece. Walls are already being made with hollow blocks, leaving gaps for vertical and horizontal connections. It has already been shown that 'casting in one mould' is too expensive for architecture. Even Unity Church could very well have been built, without alteration, using one of the methods described above. Only the effect of the walls would have been flatter, and that would have been to the advantage of the decoration. As the building is at present, the light-coloured grey of the cement could have been darker to avoid staining.

If we look closely at the building illustrated we will see the following points. The layout of the roads works very well with the layout of the building as seen from every direction. Pavements and borders are handled very carefully; even the pavements are made of concrete. Where the two paths cross a very successful solution has been developed. The different pieces of land are not fenced off at all: in

Holland it would have looked like a barbed wire entanglement. The building stands on grass completely free on all sides and can be reached by paths—even these are concreted. The perspective of the combination of road and building is striking.

In this building everything combines in a wonderful way. The feeling of the environment is as precise as the feeling of the building. The impression of Unity Church is massive and monumental. Reinforced concrete lends itself very well to this kind of treatment. The plane is surrounded by other planes in the same way that parts of forms enclose other forms. The plan is organically developed in three dimensions: anyone who stands in front of such a building must be delighted by it. (Decorative effects have had their time, just as they have had their time in the life of men). The edges of the forms are not vague or arbitrary. The design has certainly grown of itself. Nature has had no influence on the structure, which has evolved into a unity; this is clear from the drawing, as are equally the proportions and the purity of the outline.

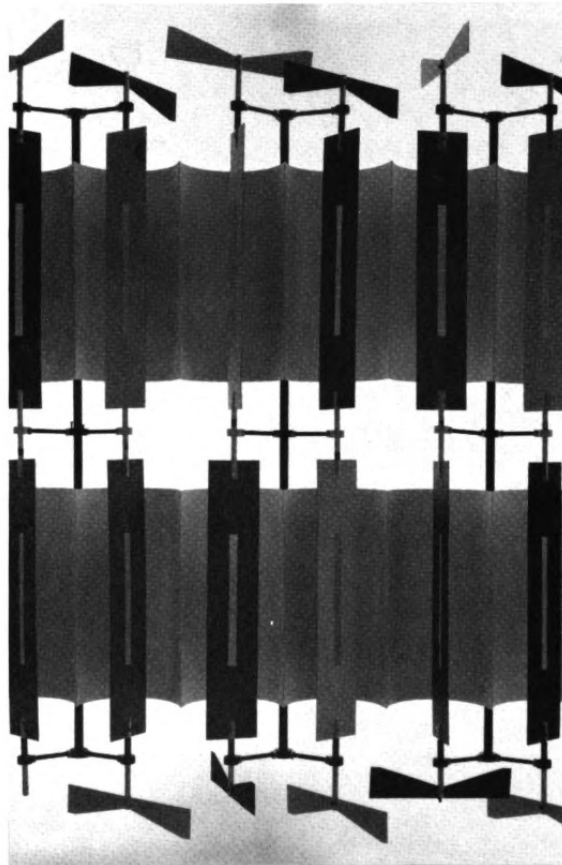
The plans illustrated above speak for themselves. They are beautifully put together, as are all the plans of this master, from whom so much can be learned.

In this way Unity Church is once more brought into the foreground; this building is the forerunner of the new plasticism in architecture.

Bernard Lassus was born on 20th November 1929 at Chamalières, Puy-de-Dôme. In 1962 he founded the Centre de Recherche d'Ambiance in Paris. His unique contribution over the past few years has been a fusion of the roles of Kinetic artist and architect. He has exhibited at several outstanding exhibitions of Kinetic Art—including that which was organised at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in the summer of 1967. But his 'Boîtes à lumière' and 'Ambiances' are devised essentially as demonstrations, 'visual games' which will enable both artist and public to become familiar with the complex interrelationships of volume, colour and light. The fruits of this research are to be found in the many architectural and decorative projects for which Lassus' services as a 'coloriste-conseil' have already been secured. Among the most interesting are his completed schemes for various buildings of the Houillères du Bassin de Lorraine (1958-63) and his mural for the Groupe Scolaire Jacques Sturm of Strasbourg (1964).

Above. Bernard Lassus: 'Brise-Lumière No. 6', 1963. The coloured blades rotate, and reflect light onto the curved surfaces behind.

Right. Bernard Lassus: interior scheme (coloured mosaic) in a passageway in the Puits Vouters No. 2, Merlebach, Houillères du Bassin de Lorraine (1962-63).



Environments and Total Landscape

by Bernard Lassus

This is an edited version of M. Lassus' resume of the statement which he made at the meeting of the International Union of Architects in Prague, in July 1967.

Translated by Stephen Bann

The disappearance of text in favour of illustrations which is taking place in magazines, the increasing number of reproductions in art books, the introduction of the cinema and photography into teaching and, in a short time, the commercial exploitation of colour television, all go to show that the importance of the image as a cultural vehicle has grown and will continue to do so.

This development involves considerable, but hardly foreseeable, modifications in our relationship to our environment. It results in a growing divergence between the visual requirements which increase from year to year and the solutions which are proposed.

This appeal to a visual awareness, which owes its growing success to the advantages of speed, draws our attention at the same time to the importance of the level on which communication is established between the sender—that is, the environment—and the receiver—or inhabitant receiving information.

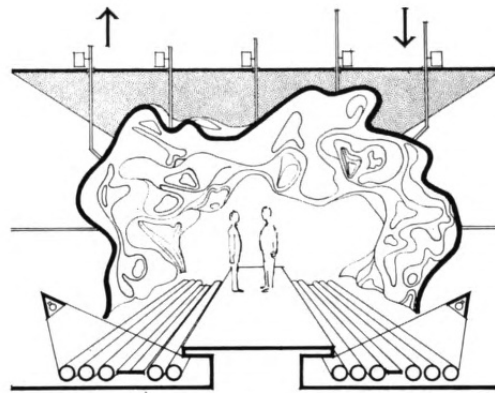
Meanwhile numerous inhabitants, whether they be owners or lodgers, take a particular care of their own accord in the external decoration of their houses. They divide up the wall surfaces by combinations of different materials, make certain objects stand out by the application of colour, create motifs which they place on their lawns, and demonstrate the care which they lavish upon their gardens by the

different types of trees and the design of their borders. This is how those whom we agree to call amateurs carry out their numerous schemes: the aspect which we should bear in mind is their desire for visual animation.

This richness and complexity is but rarely echoed in the plans, either prospective or effective, for new groups of buildings. In this respect appearances do not answer to the needs of the inhabitants, and, as a result, they are ill at ease in their environment. The individual gestures which are sometimes made as a result of this (such as modest pots of flowers) are regarded as conflicting with the architect's chosen objective.

One of the aims of my work is to clarify the possible divergences between the real or constructed form and the variety of forms which we experience. The degree of the divergences, which I discovered in the course of my first experiments, demonstrations and visual games, led me to propose, in 1961, the existence of two distinct scales of external vision, the tactile and the visual—this in spite of their inevitable interpenetrations and juxtapositions. The tactile scale is the one on which we move, the one which we must be precisely aware of in order to park our cars, gauge the position of the stairs, and open the doors of our houses. This scale is not confined to ourselves, but applies also to the active dimensions of our

Bernard Lassus: 'Ambiance 11'. A complex reflecting surface is distorted continuously by the action of rods from above: rotating cylinders of different colours, at floor level, are illuminated from the side, and mirrored in the surface above.



Bernard Lassus: 'Ambiance 11', detail (see above), realised at the Maison des Beaux-Arts, Paris in May 1966.



instruments—buses, cranes, aircraft flare-paths, arrangements for loading and unloading on quay-sides . . . Here the space may be animated but not falsified and distorted, or at least only in so far as is consistent with the everyday requirements for the appreciation of distance.

The visual zone of the pedestrian is very often neglected for economic reasons or, frequently enough, to achieve a functional bareness, as is demonstrated, for example, by the transparent surfaces and the long uniform ground-storeys of numerous groups of flats that have not been designed to be seen at this level but rather as a support for the different levels of the facades. They are, however, the dominant feature in the visual field of the pedestrian who passes alongside the buildings. The visual scale is situated in distant vision, or above the tactile scale—that is to say in a region where phenomena, though they may give us certain sensations, are not strictly visual.

In this department we have no reasons, apart from aesthetic and, in certain cases, psychological ones, for tying ourselves down with considerations of respect for the existing volumes. From far away, the generally obvious and similar facades of present buildings, both those worked out individually and those in sequences, dissolve into one another and give way to a visual mass scattered with small black dots, a huge

sponge that shapes itself into bizarre forms, the product of pure chance.

This effect can be interesting and even pleasant in a panorama; but from close up the white mass becomes a wall which encloses the entire visual field and may be felt to be overbearing and even hostile, especially if it is composed of apartments on different levels.

Nowadays, it is no longer a question of constructing an isolated dwelling or a few dozen apartments, but of carrying through the almost simultaneous realisation of hundreds and thousands of dwellings, and even of new towns.

The problems involved are of an entirely different order. Formerly the relative importance of buildings, often objects or grouped objects, could be considered in relation to vegetable life, whether in harmony with or in opposition to it. With the realisation of mass projects, the decorative scheme is destined to surround man in the greater part of his activities. The groups of dwellings, roads, trees, alterations of level, and single environment, which should become more natural to man than nature itself.

At the present moment, the appearance of buildings is most often directed towards describing the principle of construction, more or less improved for aesthetic reasons. Such a solution is of interest to the specialist, but it imposes certain constraints which hinder the use of appearances

for the realisation of coordinated visual wholes—as is necessary—on the scale of a total landscape. The use of appearances according to this principle makes possible the creation of environments adapted to public needs, by means of the manipulation of sensory effects.

Another of our aims is to try and determine the level of visual complexity necessary for the satisfaction of the public in a total landscape.

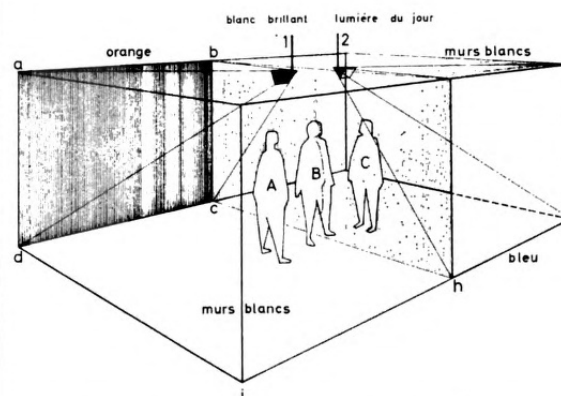
Researches touching upon successions of spaces and surfaces—all in relation to possible paths of travel—upon variations in the visual field and in the movement of the eyes, introduce another scale which we might call the successive scale.

We look forward to a public not merely of spectators but of participants. Good urbanism is engaged in passionate search for a personality which will elevate that of its inhabitants in the course of a lengthy period of common maturation. That is why at this stage we are studying evolving plastic themes, taking account as far as possible of natural and artificial light, of shade, the seasons, and the ageing of materials: these constitute frameworks which are enriched by the expression of the public life of those who, consciously or unconsciously, are able to qualify them according to the measure of their imagination and the manner of their everyday living.

Scheme realised for the Suchard Factory, Paris (1958-61) by Bernard Lassus

This short article is reprinted from a collection of texts relating to Lassus' work edited by the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in April 1966.

Translated by Stephen Bann



Bernard Lassus: diagrammatic perspective of a room forming part of a scheme for the Suchard Factory, Paris, 1958-61. ('Research into 'ambiance' through the contrast of volumes of coloured light.')

I was given the task of bringing a heterogeneous volume, with a low ceiling and a length out of proportion to its height, onto the scale of human perception. My procedure was to break up the total space into a series of smaller volumes by the use of the following principle of chromatic adaptation: if we are not normally conscious of the colour of light in a place where we have been for some time, we nonetheless become aware of the colour when two lights of differing colours are placed in the same volume. An incandescent lamp emits a light which appears yellow when it is juxtaposed with a fluorescent tube—and the latter appears to give out a blue light.

To facilitate the description of the way in which this problem was tackled, I have drawn a plan and a schematic perspective of an extremely simple volume which has been visually bisected.

In that part of the volume

which is equipped with a 'daylight' fluorescent tube, two walls and the ceiling are white and the third wall is painted blue. In the other part, which is fitted with a brilliant white fluorescent tube, two walls and the ceiling are also white, while the third is painted orange.

In this particular case, where I was concerned with a work-room, I did not point the contrast between incandescence and fluorescence of the daylight type, since the difference in colour would have been considerable; it was sufficient to contrast two fluorescent tubes with spectral curves of different profiles.

In this way, the white walls opposite the blue wall appear bluish, and the white walls opposite the orange, yellow. The female workers who move about within these volumes have the impression of passing from a volume of blue light/matter to one of yellow light/matter.

The effect is fully perceptible—and I have subjected it to tests—yet it is not detrimental to the recognition or utilisation of objects, thanks to the phenomenon known as 'constancy.'

The workers seem to be content with the finished project, which gives the volumes where these young women work a more gentle appearance through the use of light/matter/colour, and a more human scale through the division into visual sub-volumes.

First published in *nota* No. 3, 1959
Translated by Stephen Bann

Photo: Marthe Prevot



Out of the chaos of sounds and tones man has chosen a certain number and rejected the rest. He has signified his choice with the names of concord and harmony.

If we take note of the multitude of possibilities which our voices offer us, the different noises which we produce with the aid of the numerous techniques of breathing, the positioning of the tongue in the palate, the opening of the larynx and the exertion of different degrees of pressure on the vocal chords, we arrive at a new conception of what may be called the will to creative sound-form.

As a result of the Dada movement, poetry acquired an entirely new character: instead of sequences of meaningful words and pleasant vowel sounds—as had been the rule—there came about a deliberate decomposition, which took as its basis the characters of the alphabet, the ultimate visual expression of mankind's sound-form.

If the Futurists, Russolo in particular, developed the use of machines and sound-producing instruments, if Marinetti employed a number of typographical signs and characters in his poems to imitate raw sounds, and Dr Barzun, in his simultaneous poems, liberated the harmonic aftertones of words from a medieval legacy—in the same way the creators of Phonic Poetry, men like Scheerbart and Morgenstern, discovered a genuinely new system of phonetic order: yet they were

still wedded to the semblance of 'imaginary words.'

Even Hugo Ball remained strictly within the confines of a 'poetic linguistics' of invented words. As Scheerbart and Morgenstern never performed their phonic poems in public, their sounds remained in consequence at the level of the idea—which was not 'a-musical' but semantic throughout.

Clear indications of a protophonetic poetry are to be found as early as the Greeks (for instance, the famous Nightingale's Song in Aristophanes). In subsequent centuries new techniques were brought to the fore, as for example in Gongora's spurious *Jitanjatoras*.

We can instance as examples of sound-technique onomatopoeia, alliteration and tautophony. But all of these are concerned with ONE meaning, whereas it should be a matter of multiple meaning.

Already in 1917 I had made use of 'multimeaning words', brought together from various strands of meaning, which made up new 'word-complexes' or 'complementary words.' Frequently these complementary words arose from my omitting the superfluous syllables in 'natural' (common) speech. (Paul Scheerbart had a similar approach: for example, he liked to say 'Wiesatnschin' for 'Wie gesagt, entschieden'.)

In Phonic Poetry it is not ONLY a question of giving

stammered expression to an anarchic lack of restraint, but also, frequently, of word-agglomerations, which arise into our consciousness from the common fund shared by different languages. It must nonetheless be remembered that the 'sound-image' of Phonic Poetry invariably derives from the 'observed sound'.

The first unequivocally 'lettristic' poem, with no traditional poetic tendencies—emerging from the mouth, and from human speech—was devised by means of and for the sake of the enormous possibilities of unliberated sound existing in the roots of language.

This original poem, which I myself composed in 1918, read 'K p' er i ou m'—and it opened up an entirely new direction for man's expression of sound.

The original sound-poems were soon overtaken by a series of four other sound-poems in sequence. In order to give these poems a deliberate character I restricted all of them to the same number of characters, which distinguished them from the first, completely unrestricted, series.

When Schwitters later began the 'composition' of his *Ursonate*—which was based upon this series of four more or less balanced sound-poems, in particular the first one, 'fmsbw'—he introduced an antiquated principle, which was in opposition to the

true significance of lettristic poetry: he took over the form of the Sonata and composed his sound-sequences according to the principles of Classical music, thereby producing a hybrid between form and sound.

It is certain nonetheless that Schwitters, who had discovered around 1920 the sound values of the alphabet read back to front, allowed genuinely lettristic sound-values in his *Ursonate*.

But to return once more to the original conceptions—in my sound-poems of 1947 I made use of the methodical control of the larynx; these break out in remarkable ways when one 'creates the poem in the mouth' and eliminates any intention of 'composing', while maintaining a subconscious frame of mind that allows the introduction of any noise which is practicable for the human voice.

'K perioum' published in Der Dada, 1919

(April 1918)

kp' eri um lp'erioum
nm' periii pernoumum
bpretiberrerreeb ee onnooooooooooh gplanpouk
komnpout perikoul
rreeeee eee rreeeee a
oapderree mglepadonou mtnou
tnoumt

Opossum (1946)

psumo s sumpo
opsun ss
pusmo
muspo
pousupom
poupousom
sousoumompoup
pomoups
soumsoum
m m m m m

Poème-affiche
(October 1918)

f m s b w t ö z ä u
p g g i v — m ü ?

O F F E A H B D c
B D Q ! qiyee !

(1960)

a' ousponbalets ponause
b bouballa bennsé
b oupadalts coldbatse
a boléutspas pertbée
A boulaun a boulaun E
s' eterté perféte perl
t' eberbé fergate baun
g' habé et, g'han à berbat
h' laté est, h'gan a bsvé
EBSER , EBSER
ONA , QNE , ONU
s'heptem, t'lepre
t' okfan, u' phartsim
Mené, Mené, Tekel
UPHAR SIM !

ch ch ch chchtt chchtt chchtt
 chatatatta chatt a chatt tatt
 e chnatt ch ch ch batt
 batt batt batt battatat
 battchnattbattat tt chtt
 ch ch ch ch ch ch !
 bbg bbgg bggg e
 ccccc c! c! c! c!
 jjjj ji jjj!
 uuut uuutt uttutut ffr fr fr uuui i i uuuzzuuuuu
 (ggggggg) gg
 bbg bbg bbg jjj ji jj zzzuuuu oooooo O !
 uuuchtachtj hhh hzz hhzzz ggggzggg zgg z' —
 kkki i i u kkiuu kki
 hha iiii u hhu hhzz hhzzh hu hhhhhgg gg
 jjjj zzzzz zzzttttr ttr u uu hgh
 jjjuu iiiiu jjjuu hhhe ffr ffr frrr tz zz
 hhhhgg jjjjii iiii kkkk iiii hhhzzh zz h ggt frr gggttt —
 hhj kkk kh h gg ggg ggggkhg
 bg
 bbg
 bbbg gg
 bggggg —
 gghhhhgh ggh hhhhe gttgt
 ggt tt ff fffrtf fffrrf rff frff ! cht chchtt
 hhh h u uuuoio ou uuachtuachtex u
 jjju fr ffrfr fr ggzu gzgu usiebenseiben
 ggggtttt jjju uu nnnnjn
 nkkkop po öoi —
 gggz zgg gz huuuuu iop
 i ooooo i
 u uuuuuui
 ooooo i i
 uachtuachtuacht uneunachtsiebenfünf sechssieben
 uhuituhuituhuit unineeightsevenfivesixseven
 ochomilnuevecientoochentasiete
 thij kkkk klö
 uachtu jjj j zuz zzzuz uico uisi uisio
 ttttttsizsizsizsizsizsizs uuuuu uacht uiuzz zz z
 tt uiuz zz uuuhggkzi
 gkzhi gkg gr
 gr gnrr ehrr
 ch ch chtt chatt tattatt

Reprinted from the First Catalogue, 1933



This is the second section of an open-ended series on Black Mountain College (of which John Andrew Rice was a founder and first Rector). In the next two issues there will be contributions from Ted Dreier, Anni Albers, Jean Charlot, Andy Oates and Jonathan Williams. The Studies Building, built by students to the design of Lawrence A. Kocher, is to be documented in Form No. 6.

Black Mountain College was founded in order to provide a place where free use might be made of tested and proved methods of education and new methods tried out in a purely experimental spirit. There is full realisation, however, of the fact that experiment is, for the individual, also experience; hence, no experiment is being tried which is not submitted beforehand to the test of reasonable likelihood of good results. It is for this reason that the College is for the present content to place emphasis upon combining those experiments which have already shown their value in educational institutions of the western world, but which are often isolated and prevented from giving their full value because of their existence side by side with thoughtless tradition.

The College is at the same time a social unit. The members of the teaching staff, their families, and the students live in the same building, have their meals together and are in constant intimate contact with one another; as a result, the distinction is broken down between work done in the class-room and work done outside, and the relation is not so much of teacher to student as of one member of the community to another. This ease of communication restores one of the time-tested necessities of education. This does not mean that the disparity of interests between younger and older people is not recognised. On the contrary, it is understood

that the ways of the scholar are not always those of the student; but an effort is being made to make the fields of common interest as wide as possible.

Another and equally important aspect of the life of the College lies in the relations of the students to one another. One of the implications of the accepted equality of men and women is that they should be educated together; but co-education should mean something more than the unconsidered association of young men and women in college. Here they should learn to know that their relationship to each other, both while they are in college and afterwards, is to be, in the main, not one of opposites, but of those who live upon the common ground of humanity. Hence the attempt to keep the intellectual and social life of the College as much as possible on the same plane.

Of equal importance is the part played by the work that has to be done around the College. All of this, except that which requires the continuous attention of one person, is divided among volunteers from the student body and the teaching staff. For example, at meal times members of the College take turns serving the food, and when it is necessary to repair the roads or cut wood or work on the farm, volunteer crews do this under the supervision of a student. It would of course be misleading to suppose that all students are equally alert in their responses. When the

student learns to assume full responsibility, one of the principal tasks of the College is done. The emphasis is upon seeing whether the student is actually becoming responsible, not upon whether he acts as if he were responsible. Punctuality, for instance, may be evidence of complete slavery or of complete self-control.

There is no discrimination between students who pay the full fee and those who pay less, and unless the latter choose to tell it themselves, no one knows that they are beneficiaries. No student works his way through Black Mountain College. To have some students servants to the rest is disruptive of community life.

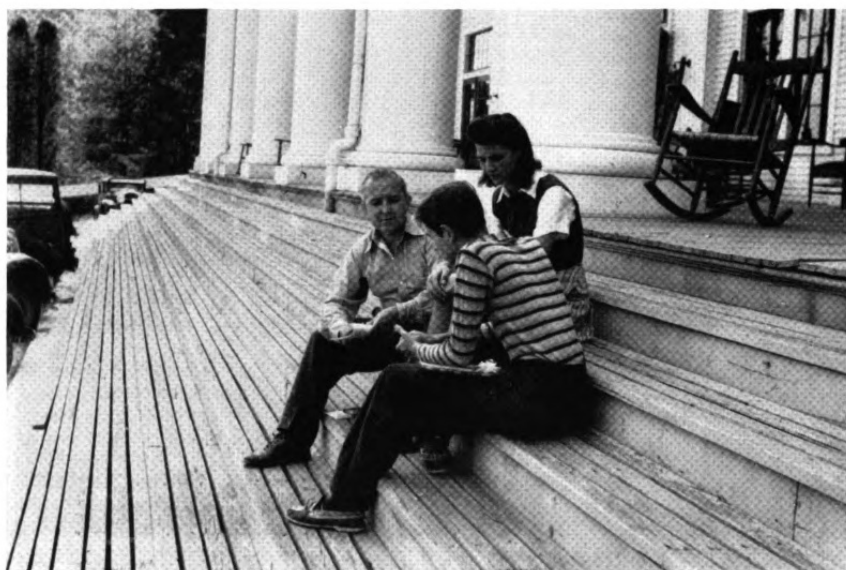
Curricular and extra-curricular activities, as the words are usually employed, imply divided responsibility; that is to say, students are responsible to teachers for their curricular activities and to themselves and each other for their extra-curricular activities. No such sharp distinction holds in Black Mountain College, where there is full recognition of the fact that self-directed work is invaluable.

As an inevitable result of this point of view, Dramatics, Music, and the Fine Arts, which often exist precariously on the fringes of the curriculum, are regarded as an integral part of the life of the College and of importance equal to that of the subjects that usually occupy the centre of the

curriculum. In fact, in the early part of the student's career, they are considered of greater importance; because, in the first place, they are, when properly employed, least subject to direction from without and yet have within them a severe discipline of their own; and also because of the conviction that, through some kind of art-experience, which is not necessarily the same as self-expression, the student can come to the realisation of order in the world; and, by being sensitised to movement, form, sound, and the other media of the arts, get a firmer control of himself and his environment than is possible through purely intellectual effort. This is a theory, but a theory which has met the test of experience. It has already been shown to the satisfaction of those who have had a share in it that the direct result of the discipline of the arts is to give tone and quality to intellectual discipline. It is expected that the way can be found to use other fields of activity, Science, for instance, as it is proposed to use the Arts. In the meanwhile, the student is encouraged on entering to alter the procedure to which he has usually become accustomed and to put the same faith in doing that he has been taught to have in absorbing. The effort is not always successful, but the fact that the whole community takes part is persuasive.

As a corollary to this belief, there are no required courses. The student is free to choose whatever courses he pleases.

John Andrew Rice with two Black Mountain students at Robert E Lee Hall, the College's first site. Photo courtesy State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.



provided only he has the prerequisite knowledge that is necessary.

This extreme freedom of choice would in many cases result in confusion if it were irresponsible, but one of its purposes is to place responsibility where it belongs; namely, on the student. However, he is not thrust into an incomprehensible world and told he must find his way by trial and error, for there are always nearby older and more experienced people ready to help. But in the end the choice is with him. In consequence, there have been set up two points in the career of the student at which he must face comprehensive tests of his failure or success in meeting responsibility. The curriculum of the College is divided into

two parts, the Junior Division and the Senior Division. Before passing from the Junior to the Senior Division the student must pass one of these tests, and before graduation, the other.

The student's stay in the Junior Division is a period of discovery, of himself and for himself, and of exploration. Here it is expected that he will come into contact with the fields of Science, Social Science, Literature, and the Arts in a way that will enable him to form an intelligent opinion about them; for one of the principal purposes of the Junior Division is to allow the student to make a wise selection of a field of knowledge in which to specialise during the latter part of his career in college.

But there is no prescription as to how he shall come to this choice. On his entrance to college, a plan of work for the first term is made out with each student individually, and thereafter each term while he is in the Junior Division. At first he may take entirely new subjects, or a combination of new subjects with some with which he is already acquainted, or he may work in the field of his immediate interest. It is expected, however, that as his interest grows and expands, he will see how it touches other subjects; so that, by the time he has completed his work in the Junior Division, he will have acquired an attitude towards Science, Social Science, Literature and the Arts that is based upon knowledge rather than ignorance.

When the student, after consultation with his teachers, decides that he is ready to enter the Senior Division, he presents to the Committee on Admissions to the Senior Division a detailed statement of what he has accomplished and what he knows, and a plan of the work he proposes to do in the Senior Division. If the Committee is satisfied with the quality of these statements, this is to say, if the statement of accomplishment and knowledge indicates that the student has adequate foundation for his proposed specialisation, and if his plan of work shows an understanding of what lies ahead, he is required to take comprehensive examinations, oral and written. These examinations, set by the Committee on Admissions to the Senior Division, are devised to test capacity as well as knowledge. The record that the student has made in college is also considered an important criterion of his fitness.

The student on entering the Senior Division, begins to work in a special field and closely related fields of knowledge. By this time it is assumed that he is sufficiently mature to assume responsibility for his work, and this is made easier by having him work under the supervision of one or more tutors. What courses he will take or whether in a given term he shall take any courses at all, is a matter to be determined on consultation with his tutor. It is not expected, however, that his special subject will

take up much more than half his time, leaving the rest for related subjects and other interests.

When the student, on consultation with his tutor, thinks that he is ready to graduate, he will submit to the faculty a statement of what he has accomplished and what he knows; if, in the opinion of the faculty, this statement is satisfactory, the candidate for graduation will be required to take comprehensive examinations, oral and written, covering the work he has done in the Senior Division. These examinations will be set by professors from other colleges and universities, and their opinion of his work will be the principal criterion of his fitness to graduate. The use of outside examiners tends to change the relationship of teacher and student, to put their work on a more agreeable footing, and increases the student's willingness to hard work.

The purpose of both these examinations, to enter the Senior Division and to graduate, is to find out whether the student knows what he professes to know, and how he can use this knowledge. This is one reason why the oral part is considered important, in that it tests the capacity to follow thought in motion. Another is that it is prepared for by intelligent conversation.

Every teacher has complete freedom in choosing methods of instruction; as a consequence, a visitor will find

classes conducted as recitations, lectures, tutorials, and seminars. One of the experiments that is being made is in the conduct of the last. At the present time there are two seminars, one in writing, and another in English literature and history, in which there are four or more instructors who attend every meeting and who represent in their training several fields of knowledge. The intention is to let the student see the way in which an idea, a movement, a period in history, an art form, appear to a group of specialists, and also to get the student away from the habit of trying to please the teacher. Most of these seminars meet in the evening from eight o'clock on, in order to have plenty of time to follow an idea. Sometimes they are in session for less than an hour, sometimes for more than three hours. Other classes meet at some time between eight-thirty and twelve-thirty in the morning or between four and six in the afternoon. This allows a period after lunch for getting out of doors, and during this time no classes are scheduled. There is no prescription as to how often in the week a class shall meet; that is left to the discretion of the teacher.

As the faculty attempts to place responsibility on the students for their conduct, so also it assumes full responsibility for the government of the college. The Board of Fellows, elected by the faculty and consisting of members of the teaching staff, is like the governing bodies of

Oxford or Cambridge colleges and those of some of the older colleges of this country in their early history. There is no legal control of the college from the outside, but in order to maintain contact with the outside world, an Advisory Council has been established on which there are representatives of the educational world and the world of affairs. The Board of Fellows works in close cooperation with the Advisory Council, keeping the Council continually informed as to what is being done in the college, and asking advice in the solution of difficult problems.

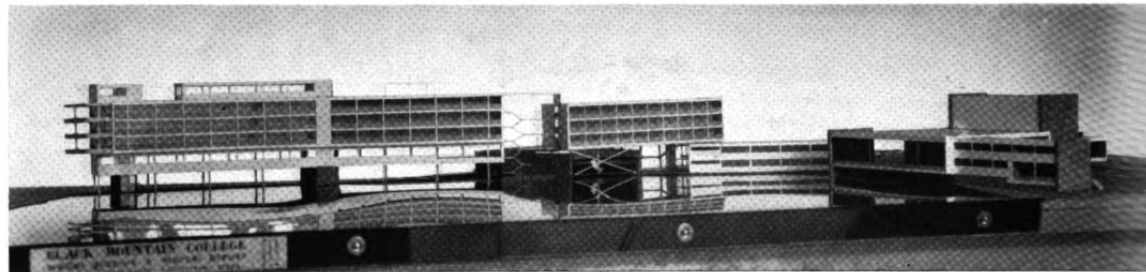
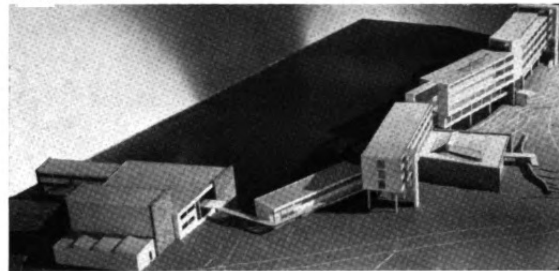
The Board of Fellows also keeps in constant communication with the student body through a committee of three students, who meet with the Board at least once a week. Most of the questions that come up are settled at these meetings, but when a matter is considered sufficiently important, there is a meeting of the whole college community. Here the question is discussed until a decision is reached. If this cannot be done in one session, the discussion continues at later meetings until the community moves as a whole. The development of the habit of self-government is at first slow; but, as principles of action are disclosed, skill and speed follow, both in the individual and in the social unit.

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The Gropius/Breuer designs for a campus for Black Mountain, published (overleaf) in detail for the first time, which were not realised for lack of funds and because of the short notice of eviction from Robert E. Lee Hall, exerted a profound influence on the communal imagination. The Studies Building, put up instead of the Gropius scheme, was built with student labour and designed by Lawrence A. Kocher (it is to be documented in Form no. 6). But the legend persists among later Black Mountaineers that this was the building designed by Gropius.

The Black Mountain scheme was, with their competition design for Wheaton College, Massachusetts (1938), among the first fruits of Gropius'

All photos Ezra Stoller



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Digitized

Note reprinted from Black Mountain College Newsletter, Vol. 1, Number 4, March 1939 —'Walter Gropius to design new College building'.

partnership with Breuer established on his arrival in America from England in 1937. In his previous, English, partnership with Maxwell Fry, Gropius had undertaken several educational commissions, only one of which was built—the Village College at Impington, Cambridgeshire (1936). A school for the tuberculous was designed for Papworth, also in Cambridgeshire, but this remained a project.

The Cambridgeshire schools and the American colleges share characteristic features. In each a wedge-shaped hall or theatre and long rectangular blocks of smaller rooms are carefully articulated: in the Black Mountain scheme the entrance lobby forms a second wedge to echo the larger auditorium. But whereas the other designs tend to a compact rectangular organisation, the Black Mountain project takes advantage of the lake-side site with a looser arrangement of linked pavilions in a gentle curve.

Dr Walter Gropius, internationally known architect, has been selected to draw the plans for the future Black Mountain College buildings to be located on the College property at Lake Eden, N C. The plans, which are to be completed by the middle of April, are an important part of the intensive efforts of the College to develop and build up the Lake Eden site. The College is planning to move to Lake Eden permanently in the autumn of 1940, since there is an increasing possibility that it will be unable to continue in its present location at Robert E. Lee Hall, Blue Ridge, later than that date.

At present the entire College is united in working on the plan for the development of Lake Eden. The main features of this plan are the construction of the building to be designed by Gropius, the immediate construction of small buildings and the adaptation of the present ones for temporary occupation, and the improvement of the land.

Specifications submitted to Dr Gropius call for a large central building to house the main activities of the College as well as to provide living quarters for the faculty and student body. The building will be designed so that it can be constructed in units, the first to consist of an assembly hall, library, and student and faculty studies. Sleeping quarters, laboratories, and other units will be added later.

Roof

- 30: roof terrace
- 31: students' rooms
- 32: games room
- 33: play deck
- 34: faculty

Floors 3, 4 & 5

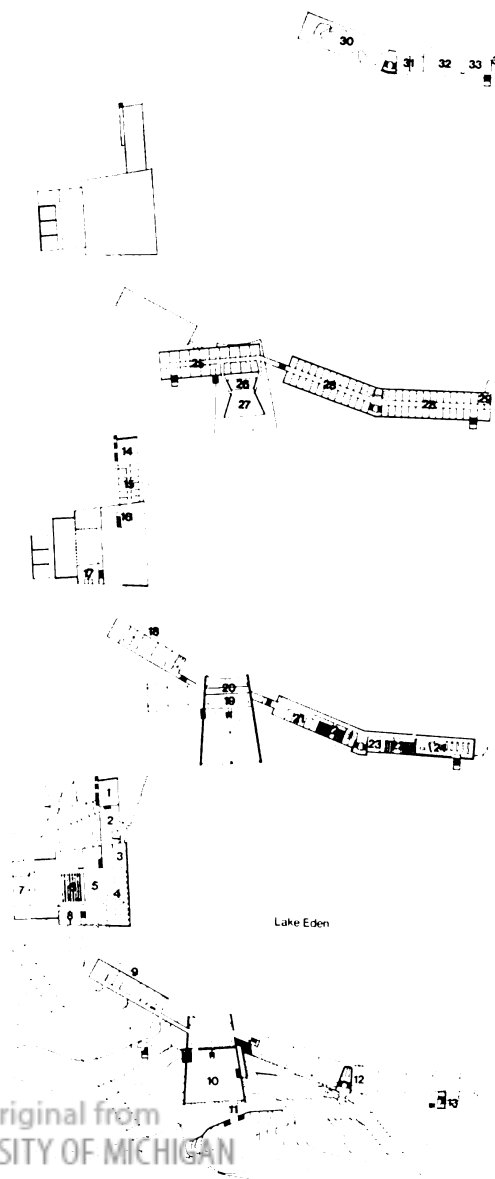
- 25: double dormitories, 18 per floor
- 26: skylight
- 27: sundeck, partitions on sides to act as windbreak
- 28: individual studies, 49 per floor used as dormitories for 2
- 29: faculty apartment; can be divided into 1 and 2 room apartment combinations

Floor 2

- 14: large music listening room
- 15: music practice rooms
- 16: music balcony
- 17: chorus dressing rooms
- 18: science teaching
- 19: mezzanine
- 20: mezzanine terrace
- 21: offices
- 22: classrooms
- 23: large studio
- 24: library, with magazine and newspaper room

Floor 1 (Ground)

- 1: band practice
- 2: kitchen
- 3: pantry (with serving counter)
- 4: dining room (250 seats)
- 5: space for additional dining or auditorium
- 6: auditorium (144 seats)
- 7: stage house, shop and storage
- 8: dressing rooms
- 9: arts teaching
- 10: main lobby (for general gathering, classes, dances)
- 11: entrance to lobby (access to garages under)
- 12: entrance to study building
- 13: special entrances to faculty apartments



Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Elizabeth Capehart, to whom I was then married, and I went to Black Mountain on the suggestion of her friend from Bennington, Mary Gregory, who was teaching woodwork at BMC. The location in North Carolina was the most compelling reason for my interest. In early summer 1944 we had just finished stretching the money of a year's Guggenheim Fellowship over two, and we urgently needed a place to live and work. In those days American colleges took a rather dim view of poets, yet for some reason I decided that I would like to teach.

As was customary for prospective faculty members, I was invited to give a lecture, as well as to be inspected by faculty and students. The lecture invitation struck me as being a rather more intelligent hiring procedure than those in force at other American academic institutions. On this first visit I found myself attracted by the faculty members I met: Josef and Anni Albers, Eric Bentley, Clark Foreman, Franciska de Graaff, Heinrich Jalowetz, Eddie Lowinsky and Erwin Straus. Two men who were later to become good friends, Fritz Hansgird and Herbert Miller, were absent. On the very first night I was aware of the tension which too soon erupted into a series of exacerbated faculty meetings and a mass resignation. Bentley, Foreman and de Graaff were serious losses to a small college which depended more than it realised on their prestige. Sometime

during the summer Bentley wrote me a very long and kind letter, advising me to resign my appointment for the next year. However, the time was late, there was scant hope of finding another appointment, so not without misgivings we arrived in September.

Black Mountain College had its first campus in a resort hotel across the valley from its final location. John Rice and other dissident members of the Rollins College faculty began there what they considered America's most progressive college. It had no grades, no faculty ranks, no trustees, no endowment. Cash was to come from tuition and unrestricted gifts, both hard to come by during a depression. England's Summerhill was to some extent the model for much of its basic philosophy. By the time I arrived, only two faculty members remained from the original Rollins group: Ted Dreier, the treasurer and Nell Rice, the librarian.

The final campus, on the shores of Lake Eden, was the property of a former summer resort, which included a scattered group of houses and a communal dining hall, which was situated on the lake. Walter Gropius, whose interest in the place came through his friendship with Albers, had utilised his classes in architecture to produce many designs which would have made it the most handsome and utilitarian campus in America had they been executed. But the financial facts of existence forced the

college to utilise the old resort buildings, with the addition of a Studies Building, a long, modern structure on the opposite end of the lake from the dining hall. It had been built mostly by student labour, and after it reached the stage of habitability, the efforts to finish it diminished considerably. As far as I know, it was never really completed.

Black Mountain educational philosophy included a work program and communal living to the extent that students and faculty *had* to eat their meals together. Both, I suspect, arose from economic necessity in the early years of the college. The compulsory dining hall for the faculty no longer had economic foundation, and looking back I suspect it to be the unacknowledged cause of many faculty problems which seemed to have their roots elsewhere. Bad food in bleak surroundings contributes little to intellectual exchanges. During wartime, at least, the work program had some justification both in terms of economics and necessity. But as an educational philosophy it must have been formulated by people who had always enjoyed a certain amount of wealth and physical comfort, and who found it a way to work off literally the feeling of guilt engendered by the fact that in a depression-ridden world they were free to live decent and human lives. Coming from the opposite end of the economic spectrum, I did not relish coal-handling as a faculty enterprise, nor understand its educational

value to students. Bleak necessity has to be accepted, but neither moral nor intellectual virtue is connected with the act.

The work program, the enforced meals, the experience of living too closely together and the academic program constituted in the minds of some the 'Black Mountain Community'. At one faculty meeting an enthusiast of this peculiar quadrivium exclaimed dogmatically—'We are not a college: we are a community!' Untactfully and profanely I pointed out that such a view was not likely to expedite getting the college accredited—an ever present source of touchiness.

The college also operated a farm which was supposed to be a source of income. The farmer who had been engaged to run it was grossly incompetent and negligent to boot. He was paid considerably more than the faculty members, so he could afford to get drunk on bootleg corn. While drunk he would plow fields at night, wasting precious gasoline in wartime, and keeping people awake. His apologists managed to keep this expensive clod around until after I left. While drunk, he tried to rape a coed, forcing his own dismissal. Shortly thereafter, the farm began to break even.

Faculty meetings, held at least twice a week, were always protracted and often contentious. The faculty had complete administrative control of the college: the two

officers, Rector (president) and Treasurer being elected from its members. The meetings were a continual string of crises and controversies. Money was the perennial, and real crisis. The college was always being threatened by financial dissolution, and Ted Dreier always managed to raise enough money, from his friends in New York or by other means, to keep it going. There were other real crises too, such as the presence of a mentally disturbed student who became, quite unrealistically, an issue rather than a person; and the arrest of the Rector for homosexuality. But most of the crises, which exhausted everyone's patience and energy, and promoted ill-will, were suspect in my mind, and it finally became obvious that they were unreal, unconscious promotions by faculty members who needed them for self-administered psychotherapy at the expense of others. These destructive meetings were part of the high price of the college's physical isolation.

The students elected their own two representatives to faculty meetings: a girl and a boy who held their offices for a year. As I remember, student representatives could vote on all issues before the faculty except those of money. When new faculty members came up for appointment, the student representatives were expected to poll the student body before voting in meeting.

If the inmates of Black Mountain agreed about

anything, it was the lousiness of the food. The diet was memorably bad, and badly cooked into the bargain. Those who survived it seemed to live on milk, which the otherwise unsuccessful farm produced in abundance. The cook and his wife were sacrosanct. They had superior housing, they were paid not merely more than Black Mountain faculty members, but more than most instructors and even assistant professors were getting in other educational institutions at the time. One of the ironies of American life was that intellectuals would put up with the isolation and other hardships of Black Mountain for the experience of teaching there, but hired help demanded—and got—hardship pay. Yet food, in the end, drove them away.

If Black Mountain seemed, short of a concentration camp, the worst possible place to live, it was certainly the best possible place to teach. The students were intellectually eager, and willing to work. There were, of course, exceptions of one sort or another, but even they were, at least, intelligent. At a time when the output of American high schools tended to be a mass of soggy, beaten-down human dough, these kids had risen. In their demands, they were twenty years ahead of their time. I learned more about teaching, in the most fundamental ways, from them than I could have learned anywhere else or by any other process. I very quickly found out when I had fouled up in class and when I had been

good. The students, free from the pressure of making grades and maintaining status (the two are not synonymous in American undergraduate life) felt free to met their instructors as human beings. The instructors were able to respond in turn because academic freedom was relatively real.

At Black Mountain a faculty member was free to teach what he wanted in the manner he felt best. Before each semester a list of proposed courses with a brief summary of contents was submitted by each member to the entire faculty. These courses were discussed in terms of the total academic need and generally approved. After that, one was guided by his sense of personal responsibility, secure in the knowledge that when a colleague audited his class the only motivations were interest and intellectual curiosity. Although examinations were not part of college policy, some of us gave them either at the request of the students or to satisfy our own curiosity about how well we were teaching.

The first semester I taught The Psychodynamics of Creativity, Modern Poetry, and Verse Writing. The Psychodynamics, which must have been rough going for undergraduates, was based on a book which Edward J. Stainbrook and I were writing. Unfortunately, we never carried the book to the point of completion. After a year of teaching it, I never got beyond scattershot efforts toward finishing it. A book which established the

theoretical basis for the existence of such phenomena as Pop, Op, and such behaviour patterns as those of the Beats, back in 1944, was somewhat ahead of its time. A full description of the course at Black Mountain, would, after all, write the book at long last. It was the best attended of my courses, and from time to time faculty members would drop in as auditors.

Some of the contents of the Psychodynamics inevitably carried over into the modern poetry course. I argued for a relativistic approach toward literature and art, one which took into account the cultural background of the artist and his 'meaning' as he projected it. I treated the culture itself in terms of the artist's reaction to, and interaction with it, rather than using it as a deterministic factor as Taine and the Marxists had done. The poets I selected were Hart Crane, whom the critics at that time steadfastly refused to comprehend; William Carlos Williams, whose greatest work, *Paterson*, had not yet appeared, but who had much to offer as a formalist, and a man alive to his environment; e e cummings, the apostle of individualism; Wallace Stevens, the aesthetic theoretician; and T S Eliot who served as counterpoint to the others. Poets who might have been included, Conrad Aiken, Pound and Auden were omitted for lack of available texts. On that score, Williams and Stevens presented enough problems.

During the early months of the second semester Maria Hansgirk, who had been teaching French, had a heart attack. Through student pressure and faculty indifference I took over the French classes, lumping them into one. Although I pointed out at faculty meetings and to the students that many of the refugee faculty members were better qualified than I, in the end the students were stuck with me. I had never been to France, and certainly some of the refugee students had better accents than mine. There were no decent textbooks available: we had to scrape by with the grammars happily provided through Maria Hansgirk's foresight, and *Paul et Virginie*, the only text of which I could find enough copies, for reading material. While the beginners were still struggling with grammar, the most advanced students had zipped through *Paul et Virginie*, giving me additional problems of finding something for them to read. The students were sympathetic to my plight. One morning I found on my desk two bottles of beer which two boys who weren't even in the class had bought in the next county (Buncombe County, where the college was located, was dry). Their round trip, all on foot, was nearly 10 miles.

Probably my least successful class was verse writing. It was effective to the extent that it brought students together for self-critical sessions (which always require considerable guidance) but looking back I think that my introduction of prosody was highly confusing,

particularly since I interjected my own theories of quantity in American speech while the students were struggling with Saintsbury.

During the year I taught, Erwin Straus, the psychiatrist and former editor of *Nervenzart* was away on extended leave of absence at Johns Hopkins medical school as a special resident to become accredited for American practice. Straus had been the first refugee faculty member at Black Mountain, arriving at a time when it was still possible to leave Germany with most of one's household goods. Asheville doctors often consulted Straus unofficially—for he was a brilliant diagnostician as well as a psychiatrist—but he collected no fees for his services, since by law he was restricted from practice. He taught philosophy and psychology, and it was partly through his tolerance that I was able to teach the Psychodynamics instead of a more conventional psychology course. While he was at Black Mountain, his presence at faculty meetings served as a balancing influence, which was sorely lacking during my year there.

Josef Albers, although he remained more or less in the background during faculty meetings, had a talent for organisation which was demonstrated in the summer Art Institute. Lyonel Feininger, Ossip Zadkine, Robert Motherwell and Mary Callery were there the summer we left. Thereafter, Feininger and I had a sporadic

correspondence which lasted until his death. Feininger's drawings of locomotives were truly magnificent, something of which few people are aware.

The enforced sociability of meals and the irritating contacts of faculty meetings had a dampening effect on social life at Black Mountain. Nell Rice, the librarian, Herbert Miller, the sociologist, Fred Schwartz, who came in the second semester to teach economics, and Hansgirk the chemist were our particular friends.

When John Rice left the college he founded, his ex-wife Nell stayed behind to be its librarian. The inadequacy of the library and the remoteness of the college from any equivalent institution with an acceptable library kept the college from being accredited. Nell, by instituting the Library of Congress catalog system, and by constant attention to the library's needs, had made it a respectable operating entity—in fact, it was the best managed part of the college. Unfortunately, she had inadequate funds to bring it up to size, although the library appropriation, in terms of total income, was far more generous than that at many larger institutions.

Herbert Miller, who was 76, had retired from Oberlin College and was teaching at Black Mountain to keep busy. During World War I he had assisted in the formation of the government of Czechoslovakia and was a cherished friend of Benes and

the Masaryks, who sent him a cablegram on his 76th birthday, astonishing the Black Mountaineers. In this country, Dr Miller had been a pioneer proponent of what is now known as civil rights. He did more than any other faculty member to improve the image of the College in the city of Asheville, where he became a member of the Lions Club. His town activities were criticised by some of the members of the faculty who seemed to desire a moral as well as a physical isolation for the institution.

Although Fred Schwartz held a Sorbonne Doctorate in Economics, he had been a textile manufacturer in Czechoslovakia before the Nazi occupation. With his wife, Dora, he fled Prague by air a day ahead of the Germans. In New York he stayed in the textile business long enough to decide that being a businessman in this country was less pleasant than it had been in Europe. For several years he was a highly successful chicken farmer in upper New York State, selling out that venture because the isolation was intolerable. He performed his academic duties at Black Mountain with great conscientiousness, although he found the place increasingly unbearable. He once described it as —'a polite concentration camp, without brutality, torturers or hangmen, and with plenty of bad food.' His wife, Dora, once volunteered as kitchen manager. After a week of superintending the production of surprisingly edible meals, she found the

task too strenuous for her health.

Fritz Hansgirk, who taught chemistry and physics, was one of the most brilliant men who ever taught at Black Mountain, but in a community where the accent was on the graphic and musical arts, his great abilities were never properly recognised. In Europe he had been an internationally famous industrial chemist, and royalties from his American patents made him quite well off even in this country. He came to California from Korea, where he had set up a chemical plant with the approval of the German government, which expected him to return via the Trans-Siberian Railway. Hansgirk's impatience with the Nazis, and Russia's declaration of war brought him to America. He was the designer and chief chemical engineer of Henry Kaiser's Permanente plant, one of America's principal sources of magnesium during World War II. Unfortunately, after a dispute with Kaiser he found himself in an American concentration camp in Arizona, from which he was released for teaching purposes, since the government had no case for detaining him. Although he had invitations from leading universities, he chose Black Mountain, sight unseen, because he liked the name (*Schwarzberg* seemed to have some magic appeal in German) so he came to teach chemistry in a college which had no laboratory facilities. These were installed largely at Hansgirk's personal expense. Because of his wife's ill

health, the Hansgirgs occupied the stone cottage, the only one of the original resort structures built as a year-round building.

During Hansgirk's years at Black Mountain, his interest in magnesium extraction continued and he began work on a process which would utilise the abundant olivine of North Carolina. Backed in part by financing from Asheville, he constructed a pilot plant in the chemistry building, but at the time I left, mechanical difficulties had consistently interfered with its operation. Some time in the following year, both laboratory and pilot plant were destroyed by fire.

Heinrich Jalowetz and Edward Lowinsky were the mainstays of the music department. Trudi Straus, Erwin's wife, taught violin, viola and cello, but she was not concerned with administration and augmentation. Jalowetz, who was the senior member, had been a famous conductor in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. He first went to Canada, where he had been conductor of the Toronto Symphony for a time, but he lost that post through age, and came to Black Mountain. Jalowetz was a disciple of Schoenberg and twelve tone music, and his European reputation enabled him to draw famous performers as teachers for the Summer Music Institute.

Lowinsky, then a young man in his thirties, had started life as a concert pianist, but when a slight bone defect made it

impossible for him to continue, became a musicologist. His musical interests covered the time span from Bach to Beethoven. Among modern composers, Arnold Schoenberg was the especial target of his wrath. 'Did you ever hear any of these twelve tone people *play* their music?' 'Does Jalowetz himself ever play it at piano recitals?'—were his constant questions. Not the least of his crosses was that he had to do the managerial work of the summer music institutes, which usually paid some tribute to Schoenberg in passing. In the end, Eddie was the first refugee musicologist to be awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, and when last heard from, he was teaching in California.

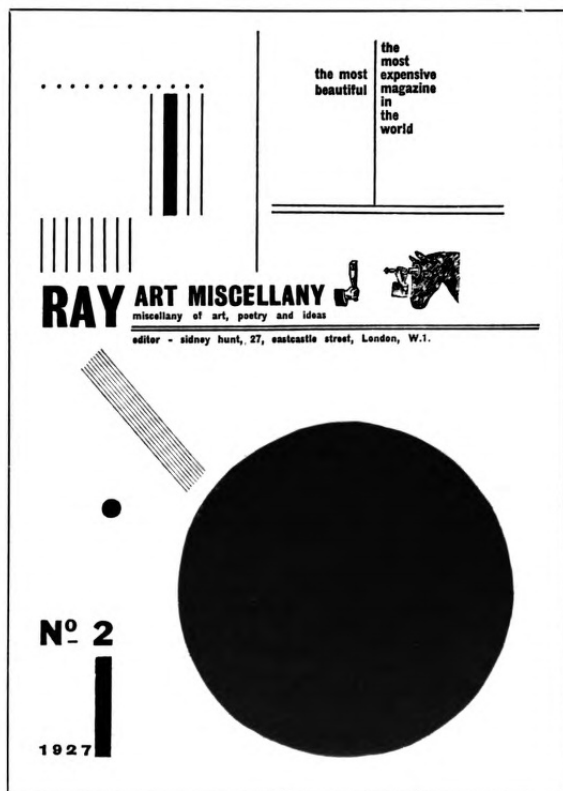
What makes a place intolerable—so much so that even though one has friends there, remaining seems impossible? Albers wanted me to stay, because he still had hopes of making the college even more influential than the Bauhaus. When he knew of my resignation, Fritz Hansgirk made a generous offer to keep me as his assistant on the magnesium research project, quite independent of the school itself. It was something I wanted very much to do—elsewhere. Miraculously, one of my students in the Psychodynamics course suggested a possible place at Marietta College, where we finally went. But the last weeks were, for both of us, weeks of almost unbearable tension. I can still remember the feeling of peace and release that

noisy, dirty New York City brought. Even riding on the subway brought a joyous sense of freedom, and with each sight I understood a thousand times over how prisoners must feel when they return to society.

I have met only one person who taught there after I left—the artist Theodoros Stamos. In a brief conversation as I was leaving and he was arriving at the Cummington School of the Arts in 1950, Stamos summed up the worst of it:—Christ, what lousy food!

No. 5: Ray— Art Miscellany

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**From 'Ray': Voorbijtrekkende Troep
(Troop Marchpast) by I K Bonset
(Theo van Doesburg)**

Ransel: knapsack

Blikken trommel: tin drum

Ran sel
Ran sel
Ran sel
Ran - sel
Ran - sel
Ran - sel
Ran - sel
Ran - sel

**BLik-ken-trommel
BLik-ken-trommel**

BLikken TRommel

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**From 'Ray': The Progress of the Modern Movement
in Holland by Theo van Doesburg**

The modern movement in Holland consists of two groups, the group known as "Wendingen" (Change) at Amsterdam, and the group called "De Stijl" (Style) with headquarters at the Hague. These two principal schools or movements are totally contrasted in their ideals and work.

Unlike the artists of "De Stijl" group, the artists of the "Wendingen" group are concerned above all with Decoration—individual caprice and bizarre and illogical constructions. Influenced by German expressionism, they have constructed a good many private houses, several buildings and street-frontages (in Amsterdam, for example). These architects are the real *experimentalists* and their "fantasy" knows no bounds. At Bergen-sur-mer they have built houses in the form of a ship, in the form of a human head, and in imitation of a tramway!

It is easily understood that this ultra-individualistic movement has not had any influence upon the evolution of architecture in the Low Country or the neighbouring countries. Some architects of this group adapt the principles of the "STIJL" group, notably Staal and particularly Dudok.

In contrast to the Wendingen group, the STIJL group works from an elementary and constructive conception, the true outcome of cubism, the only artistic movement

and architects concerned with the review "DE STIJL."

"DE STIJL" was founded in 1916 by the founder and activator of the STIJL movement—the painter and architect Theo van Doesburg; and in this publication the artists find it possible to defend their principles and their labours.

By means of the various exhibitions, conferences, manifestoes and other artistic demonstrations organised by van Doesburg, the public has gained an insight into the ideas and the works of the neo-plasticians of the STIJL school.

During the war, when Holland was almost isolated from all other countries, the artists of this school developed a truly new conception, from the point of view of plastic creative art, and thanks to the war's lengthy duration, the public, including official personages, acquired confidence in the STIJL artists, and the painters—Mondrian, van der Leek and van Doesburg began to sell their abstract paintings to private collectors and museums.

A conflict was produced among the official press. Art journals (also medical journals!) flung out insults, principally directed against the founder of the movement, but the architects of the STIJL movement began to receive orders, and the collective idea was fostered and developed, since the principal aim of the movement was to free its followers from the domination of individualism—in architecture as in all the

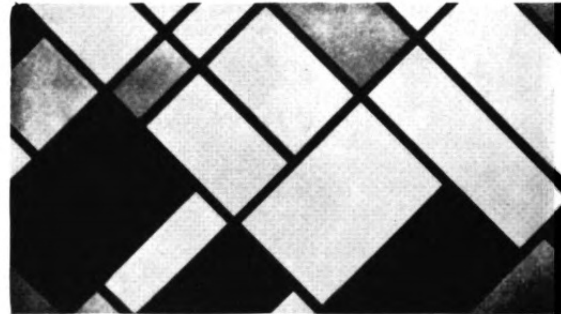
First of all the STIJL artists have purified their means of expression. They have, so to speak, "elementarised" their means and have studied what are the true elements appropriate to each branch of art. For painting they have exacted: pure colour; for sculpture: pure volume; and for architecture, materials that shall correspond to the function of the construction.

To construct with the real elements WITHOUT ANY ILLUSION, without any decoration, is one of the principal aims of the STIJL movement.

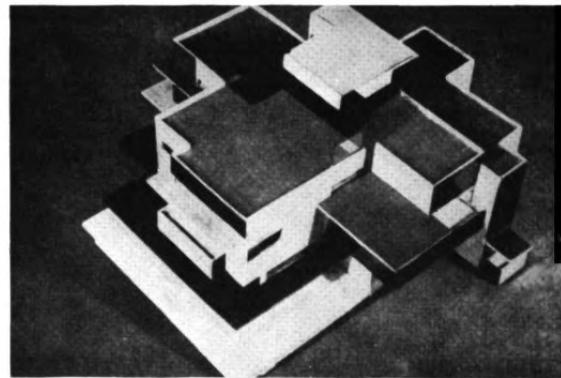
Architecture, the synthesis of all the arts, will spring from the human function, simply from life, and not as formerly from types already created by ancient people who had an entirely different manner of living, different customs and habits, and who thought in a manner totally different to our way of thought.

Artists of the STIJL movement have not only made anew the painting and architecture of their country, but they have tested their "plastic system" in all other branches of artistic activity and also in the practical field: in typography, poetry, furniture, etc.

Since 1917 they have pursued their realisations in architecture and it is very curious to note that in 1917 the two architects, Jan Wils and van Doesburg were awarded premiums for a town-planning project for the centre of the town of



*Model for a Villa, Paris, 1923.
Architects: Theo van Doesburg
and C. Van Eesteren*



comprised official engineers and architects, such as Berlage, de Bazel, Holsboer, etc. The monument for the town square, constructed by van Doesburg, became the starting-point for an architecture of a rigid, logical and anti-decorative style. This was, at the same time, the first official recognition of the movement. In the report of the contest, the Leeuwarden monument was specially mentioned as a new conception in architecture full of possibilities.

All the young architects

participated in the movement and realised the ideas of the founder and promoter Doesburg, who, together with the painter Mondrian, was the theoretician of the group.

These realisations in various towns (Woerden, The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Amsterdam, etc.), remarkable and demonstrative of the solidity of the principles of the movement, produced a great influence in neighbouring countries, such as Belgium, Germany, Czechoslovakia and France.

From 'Ray': Art and the Times by Kurt Schwitters

We have the German word "Kunst" (Art). This points to "Können" (to be able). What shall be "gekönnt" (made possible)?

The old say: Ability (Können) that is of the inner self does not exist, for the whole world—of which we are but a tiny part—stands beside us, and it is able to act more correctly than we: so much more correctly that our ability is but an imitating—an imitation of the thoroughly able Nature World. It is here, in this consideration a matter of indifference whether the imitation is conventional or personal. Imitation remains imitation. Imitation is weakness and error. Thus there came to be Imitation Landscapes and Portraiture, Programme Music and finally, also the so-called styles or schools which deluge our times. However, one must judge qualitatively; and in that respect we stand as one man against the world, which in measure of quantity surpasses the individual, but which in essence is as we are. By traffic with the world we become that which we could become; and we become as attentive inhabitants of the world more and more related to the world. Now we see the equal endeavour growing, becoming, and passing away—with us, as with our surrounding world; and this fact becomes especially clear and distinct in respect to a work of art. If you can see the essence of a work of art, then it appears to you—I refer here to works of art such as those of Bracque, Gleizes, Boccioni, van der Leek, Mondrian, Doesburg,

Malewicz, Lissitzky, Moholy, Hans Arp, Mies van der Rohe, Hilbersheimer, Domselaer, of myself, or also to the works of art of a child that are free and untrammelled by education or instruction—well, then, a work or art appears to you as a unity. The unity is limited as regards the time or period and the place, as a thing that grows out of itself, which rests within itself, and which does not differ in essence from other things or entities in Nature. The imitative picture formerly differed considerably from the surrounding world: it was essentially a pale imitation, whereas the new naturalistic work of art grows as nature itself, that is to say, it is more internally related to nature than an imitation possibly could be. I refer here to the publication NASCI which I composed with Lissitzky. There you will see clearly demonstrated the essential likeness of a drawing by Lissitzky to a crystal, of a high building by Mies van der Rohe to the austere construction of an upper thighbone; you will recognise the constructive tendency of the position of leaves to the stem: you will take the photographed surface of Mars for an abstract painting—maybe by Kandinsky, only because it is framed by a black stripe. From my "I" picture you will see that Nature or Chance often carries together things which correspond to that which we call Rhythm. The only task of the artist is to recognise and limit, to limit and recognise, for even if Lissitzky's drawing and the crystal have essentially the same construction, the first

By Kurt Schwitters (1926)
(Hannover).



is still a work of art and the second is still a crystal. To know art is an innate faculty, springing from an imperious impulse to express oneself in a creative order relative to art.

And so we come to the cause of art. It is an impulse, as the impulse to live, to eat, to love. Impulses are unshakably rooted, and certain impulses are strong in some men and feeble in others. Impulses have nothing to do with social or educational status. As far as I can judge, no natural selection—in the Darwinian sense—takes place, due to the existence of the art impulse, for the art impulse is without any importance in respect to the remaining development of life; and it may be presumed as fixed that the average frequency of the occurrence of the art impulse is equal at all times and in all civilisations. But there are never more than a few people gifted in this relation to art. These few thereby take an exceptional position and one ridicules, abuses or worships them according to the prevailing

fashion. Art nations or periods—as for example Greece, the Renaissance—do not exist. There exist simply periods of art fashion or vogue. Our period or time is just as fit and as proper for the pure activating or practice of Art as any other time or period, and it would be self-deception to presume, perhaps, that Art no longer fits into our time nor into the future. On the contrary, one need not be a prophet in order to be able to foretell a fashion in Art in the future. And in our time there is even a qualitative, highest achievement of Art, as a matter of course; for the reason that our period is free from the deadening, dulling effects upon Art that are customary in times of Art fashion. In periods of fashion in Art, many incompetents occupy themselves with Art because such occupation then brings wealth, glory and position of distinction. These are the runners-behind and imitators, who serve only to discredit Art. These self-same fashion artists will, when it is the fashion to persecute Art, cry out most against Art; for they will always go with the convenient fashion of the times and can in this manner most easily achieve something for themselves. But Art is not bound down or restricted by the professional artist, for there is no such profession in this sense. And so it may come about that Art—quite apart from the professionally working incompetent artist—exists where nobody of the community of snobs supposes it to exist, maybe in handicraft or in the play of a child. Art

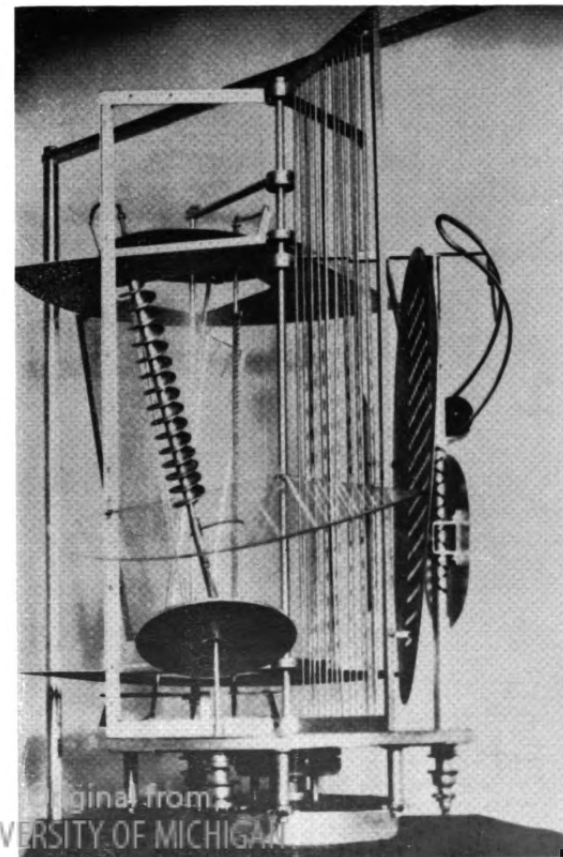
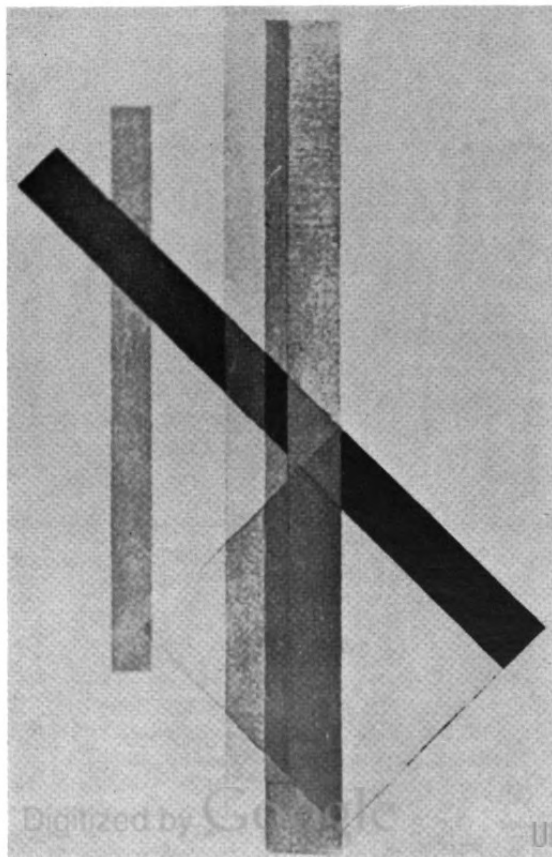
is really a peculiar flower that will not stand any manure. It is to be found wherever there is present a vigorous growing-out of a law and a correct valuation of the parts to form a whole.

In our time there is, I believe, to be stipulated an end to the past fashions in Art. There are many certain signs of this. For instance, that many professional artists leave the occupation of Art, and that he who shows the art profession in his dress, makes himself ridiculous; also that the general interest in Art has diminished considerably. Instead of such interest, the general public interest in sport and technical science has grown considerably. But all this means nothing against the necessity and life-capacity of Art; and this is the happiest state of affairs that could exist toward the healthy growth of the art-creation and against the over-growth of the weed. It is rendered difficult for the artist to find his living in the exercise of his art; but this has never been accomplished by an artist, even at times of fashion in art: for the buyer of those times with great cleverness went past or disregarded the artist and the work of art. The fact is that many artists now have other occupations; but one must not draw the conclusion that the fact of art has outlived itself; for even where the Art factor expresses itself as a formation in handicraft or in industry, it is still alive; and even much more alive than the work of the artist of fashion. So now in many cases art saves itself

by entering into handicraft, industry and the play of a child, unfettered through forming a thing with a different purpose. For here also, from the commercial standpoint, is a kind of useless form, as in the easel picture. I decline to accept, as being false, the opinion that the commercially simplest solution is also the most artistically simple, i.e. the best solution. Artistic formation is, in the final consideration, functionally purposeless. It is self-purposed. However, the crowd that admires the beautiful motor-car does not at the same time recognise that element to which it owes its beautiful shape. The crowd sees, at best, something fashionable; and it has become the fashion today to shape commercial objects artistically, in spite of the greatest technical difficulties. Yet the public did not even see the art in a Laibt.

Russian Unofficial Art by Stuart Lawrence: **Autumn Sequence**, poems by David Chaloner: **Totality through Light — The Work of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy** by Istvan Kovacs: **Black Mountain College—The Total Approach** by John Evarts, and **Black Mountain Diary** by Jean Charlot: **Great Little Magazines No. 6: De Stijl** (part 1)

László Moholy-Nagy:
'Transparency' 1922, and right
'Light Display Machine',
1922-30



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We are pleased to announce Form's new association, as from this issue, with the Department of English at Exeter University, under Professor the Reverend W. M. Merchant; and trust and anticipate that the collaboration will prove a happy one.

Despite most generous financial help from Exeter and from the Arts Council however, it has been necessary to raise the UK price of the magazine to 5/- (£1 annual subscription). We very much regret the increase, and guarantee no more rises in price beyond this.

Editors Philip Steadman
Mike Weaver
Stephen Bann

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From Howard Dearstyne:

I spent five years at the Bauhaus in Dessau and Berlin and one year at Black Mountain College. I have taught ten years at Mies van der Rohe's school of architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology. There is, of course, also, the Institute of Design, founded by László Moholy-Nagy, with which I am not unacquainted and which shares the building, Crown Hall, which houses our architecture department. We architecture people, despite the close proximity of the two schools, have little to do with the Institute, although we are on a reasonably cordial footing with the instructors of that school. The two schools, the one established by Mies and the other by Moholy, are quite distinct and the pedagogic principles of the two institutions are rather widely divergent.

But your subject is Black Mountain College and what you want to know about is how the Bauhaus, our IIT Department of Architecture and, possibly, the Institute of Design compare with it. I should say, at the outset, that I think the relationship of B M C with the Bauhaus is a rather tenuous one. The fact that Josef and Anni Albers taught at both places doesn't make B M C another Bauhaus. B M C was a liberal arts college in which the teaching of art played an important role but by no means the only one, as at the Bauhaus. One could say that the two institutions shared a similar pioneering

spirit but this doesn't make them alike. Besides the Bauhaus was various things at various times, changing its color like a chameleon, depending on who directed it —Gropius, Hannes Meyer or Mies van der Rohe.

One of the fundamental tenets of Gropius' Bauhaus teaching was the usefulness of working with one's hands, actually making things in workshops. He switched, around 1922, from handwork for handwork's sake to handwork for industry's sake (the making of models for mass production) because of pressures from without (Theo van Doesburg, that nasty fellow!) though Gropius is very reluctant to admit this. In any event, there is a connection here between the Bauhaus and B M C because the students at B M C were forced by the straightened circumstances of the school, as well as by educational principles, to work with their hands. Under supervision, of course, they built the new studies building and also, while I was there, a barn, since B M C, like many a monastery, hoped to provide its own sustenance. Both of these structures were designed and executed by my good friend, A. Lawrence Kocher who, himself, was an advocate of do-it-yourself architecture. As for Gropius, he had outlined a program of student participation in building projects but he never managed to realise this. Hannes Meyer, subsequently, carried this into execution to some extent. But, in spite of this, the Bauhaus students (myself excepted)

and the B M C people became expert craftsmen.

Black Mountain College was never primarily a school of art or architecture even though those subjects were taught there. The Bauhaus was a school of art and product design but under Gropius' direction architecture, supposedly the major objective of the combined efforts of all the artists and craftsmen, never got off the ground. Hannes Meyer, the much-maligned second director, really got the architecture department going and, of course, under Mies van der Rohe, it became the subject of primary concern. Our present departments of architecture and city and regional planning, established respectively by Mies van der Rohe and Ludwig Hilberseimer, are full-fledged schools and probably the best in the world (with the exception, of course, of your several English schools, which, I feel confident, are infinitely superior to ours!). As for the Institute of Design, which fervently wishes it could become another Bauhaus, it is still struggling to find a valid course.

In one respect, B M C and the Bauhaus were closely related and in this respect I think B M C outdid the Bauhaus. This is in the matter of sweetness and light or, conversely, internal dissension. Gropius had to struggle against the divisive doctrines of Johannes Itten but he managed to get the upper hand and threw that gentleman out. Gropius' hand-picked choice as his successor,

Hannes Meyer, was also thrown out and Mies van der Rohe, of course, was eliminated by Hitler himself. In the case of B M C — that exceptional, that ideal, that admirable institution — it didn't take a world cataclysm to put the quietus on it; all it took was bickering amongst a bunch of idiotic Rhodes scholars, so to say. The faculty and students were all to a man (woman) unbearably intelligent so that one had every reason to expect that Christian charity would prevail on the premises. Well, anyway, Christian charity or Socratic tolerance. Don't kid yourself, the more brilliant the people are, the more virulently they fight amongst each other. Why, they even ganged up on Rice, the onliest begetter, the idea man who founded the institution and, lo and behold, the people who ganged up on him were ganged up on and chucked out. So let, me ask, what happens to the idealistic students, who observe these sordid goings-on amongst their preceptors? My conclusion is that they should thumb their noses at their instructors and rebel, as, unfortunately, so many students are doing today . . .

Cordially, Howard Dearstyne

Department of Architecture,
Illinois Institute of Technology,
Chicago 60616

From Gael Turnbull:

The enclosed piece started as an effort to make some sort of collage poem, out of a little book by Lethaby, using his own phrases etc. I showed it to Ian Hamilton Finlay, as we are both interested in the possibilities to be had in cuttings and fragments, and he suggested that I send it to you, as many of the 'concerns' are those which engage your magazine.

W. R. Lethaby, from his book 'Architecture' (1905)

today, all whim and sham—
 thinking if the appearance could be reached
 the essence could be had
 *
 beauty: the complexion of health—
 not a concern for different sorts of rouge
 *
 proportion is not mathematics—
 it is fitness for a purpose
 *
 but what is a mere building?—
 there is none
 *
 to design outside need and custom—
 is to invent an alphabet no one can speak
 *
 forms, nothing
 but envelopes for the spirit
 *
 self conscious, yes—
 but we are too conscious of our self-consciousness
 *
 nothing that is only one man deep
 can last

Yours sincerely, Gael Turnbull

Bridge House, Cradley,
 near Malvern, Worcestershire

Russian Unofficial Art: 'A Fairy Tale about a Firm Road'

by Stuart Lawrence

This is the second section of a three-part essay, ' "Skidding on Frozen Lies". The Dilemma in Soviet Modern Art', devoted to the subject of painting in Russia in the context of the present East/West detente. (The other parts cover respectively Official Art, and Marc Chagall.)

'Our museums,' Ehrenburg complained in his memoirs published in 1961, 'possess superb collections of the 'left art' of the early postrevolutionary years. It is a pity that these collections are not open to the public. You cannot throw out a link from the chain. I know young Soviet artists who were 'discovering America' in 1960. They were doing (or to be more precise, trying to do) what Malevich, Tatlin, Popova and Rozanova had already done in their time.'

Ehrenburg was of course referring to what Camilla Gray so completely and definitively described as the Great Experiment of Russian art in the early 1900s and for a few years following the October Revolution in 1917. Indeed, Moscow, as the centre of Russia's exhilarating art experiences, Jean Clay notes, 'à cette époque, est à l'heure de Paris; chaque texte théorique, écrit dans la capitale française, est publié presque simultanément en russe.' Gray also stresses the influence of 'progressive ideas' from Munich and Vienna, a 'cosmopolitan basis from which an independent Russian school was to develop.'

A brief survey of the main trends in this seemingly unprecedented stream of experimentation and innovation in Russian art can hardly do justice to the diversity and complexity of the new schools. But some background is necessary if it is to be understood why certain artists today, Soviet or

émigré, are official, why others are unofficial, and why some rest on an expedient borderline.

To all appearances then in 1898 the *World of Art* magazine was the epitaph for the 'historical', social and landscape schools of Repin, Levitan, Surikov and several other artists who, today, are quite rehabilitated in Soviet art evaluation (although frequently discredited for naturalism). This publication first maintained that art is a unity, i.e. that there is a 'basic interrelationship and common source of all inspiration regardless of the medium of expression'; it urged a spiritual revival through art. Until 1904 the resultant movement, showing much Nabis and Symbolist influence, was, nevertheless, delicate, sophisticated and theatrical in approach.

The potential of the 'World of Art' movement, whose watercolours are exhibited today in Moscow and Leningrad, was soon exhausted. Its legacy was the 'Blue Rose' movement (1906-1907), the diversity of which makes classification somewhat artificial. Earlier works—until 1911—have much in common with German Expressionism (the pertinence of which I reserve for later discussion) and herald a new primitivism in Russian art. In design, Pavel Kusnetsov's canvases, *Holiday* (1906) and *Grape Harvest* (1907), have the same pantheistic and primeval quality as Emil Nolde's paintings of 1907-1912. While

1: Paul Sjeklocha, 'Modern Art and the Shackles of Dogma', Problems of Communism, Nov. 1965, p.84
 2: Jean Clay, 'Malevitch', Realités, May 1966, p.79
 3: Camilla Gray, The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863-1922, London 1962, p.61. See also Camilla Gray, 'The Russian Contribution to

Modern Painting', Burlington Magazine, May 1960, pp. 205-211
 4: Gray, *ibid.*, p.61
 5: see Bernard S. Myers, The German Expressionists: A Generation in Revolt, Praeger, New York, 1966, pp. 128-141
 6: Sjeklocha, *op. cit.*, Problems of Communism, p. 85
 7: see Gray, *op. cit.*, p.86

10: see Gray, *op. cit.*, p.216. Gray quotes from the Rayonist Manifesto: 'The ray is conventionally represented by a line of colour. The essence of painting is indicated in this—combination of colour. its saturation, the relationship of coloured masses, the intensity of surface working . . . a skimmed impression.'

the Russian's art does have the same emotional mystique and religiosity, by virtue of its more subtle colouring and humanist flavour, it is less ecstatic, spasmodic, explosive than Nolde's. Having somewhat of a lyrical stuffiness, it avoids Nolde's peasant narrowness and potential cruelty.³ The early works of Matros Saryan, who, some claim, would have given Picasso a run for his money had the revolution never occurred,⁴ anticipated the poetry, simplicity and innocence of the pre-Cubist art of August Macke.

After Matisse's historic trip to Moscow in 1911, certain 'Blue Rose' artists adopted Fauve abstract colour and more simplified and defined forms.⁵ Any symbolist sense of doom was discarded; its colour was retained. Awe of life supplanted Expressionist ecstasy. *The Playing Boys* (1912) of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, whose works are now being displayed in Moscow, is a byproduct of these crosswinds of influence. Theme and perspective are Byzantine, but by way of Matisse's *Dance* (1910-11). But Petrov-Vodkin's boys, lanky and flexed—posed, it seems, precariously at the very edge of the world—and the bits of shadow lessen the spontaneity and the space-colour harmony of the painting while, at the same time, they forfeit the more subtle tension of Matisse's masterpiece, *A Red Horse Bathing* (1912) illustrates the Fauve intensity of his colour which, unlike that of the Expressionists, Marc for instance, is purely decorative.

European influences—Impressionist, Fauve and Expressionist—so seasoned one another in Russian studios that a distinctive Russian school began to take form under the direction of the famous 'Knave of Diamonds' group. Its first members were several students, Robert Falk included, who were expelled from the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in 1910 for 'leftist tendencies'. Mashkov, Konchalovsky and the Burliuk brothers soon joined the movement. The bold and long-banned works of Falk, whom I will have cause to mention again later, are now being displayed in Soviet museums.

Ironically, the beginning of the real end of the European imagination in Russian painting came in 1909 with the publication of Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto* in the Russian press. A curious synthesis of Cubism, Futurism, folk art and the traditional *lubok* or peasant woodcut became the hallmark of the 'Donkey's Tail' group, intended in 1912 as the first conscious break away from Europe and the first artistic assertion of the 'modern Russian' spirit. Goncharova, Larionov, Tatlin and Malevich were the most influential of its members, each working in a different style. Goncharova, having abandoned the Fauve boldness of line and the peasant themes of *Haycutting and Dancing Peasants* (1910-11), was preoccupied with Futurist romanticisation of machines and the demigogery of man. In addition, with its proponent

Larionov, she experimented with Rayonism, a synthesis of Cubism, Orphism and, stylistically, of Futurism.⁶ *The Green and Yellow Forest* (1912) is representative of this uniquely Russian genre and its concern for the thickness, length and width of colour layers or light rays crossing and reflecting one another. Rayonism, a short-lived movement, was nevertheless a 'pioneer abstract school', which, writes Gray, 'rationalised the contemporary ideas in Russia, carrying to their logical conclusion Fauvism, Cubism and the indigenous Russian Decorative-Primitive movement.'⁷

While Lissitzky and Tatlin were working with 'real' materials—tin, wood, iron, glass, and with pure geometric forms in what was to become the Constructivist style, Kasimir Malevich was formulating his rival *Suprematist Manifesto*, the foundation of modern abstract art. Cézannist and Intimist in his early canvases, he soon drifted towards a Fauvist, early Picasso style with something of a mechanical rhythm, such as in *Woman with Buckets and a Child* of 1910-11. Conceived in an intense and confident blue and green and in an electric-coil orange, the painting has peasant overtones and is even iconographic. More Cubo-Futurist (than the steamroller figures of *Woman with Buckets*) was *Taking in the Harvest* of 1911, which is, in fact, analogous to the 'peinture cylindrique' of Léger and analytical cubists; there is the same closed space and pulling together of forms.

Malevich, however, never applied the sombre hues, even monochromatic tones then popular in France; again he chose a palette of rich and contrasting colours. The year 1914 saw another stylistic modification in the precocious spirit of Dadaism. An *Englishman in Moscow*, while far removed from the quasi-surrealist Dadaism of Europe, nevertheless has a conscious disorder about it. Like the postwar Dadaism of Zurich it has a shock value—the sabre, the candle, the white fish, the jagged blade, the guillotine-like formation of bayonets, the green Englishman himself—incorporated into its 'non-sense', everyday realism. Other canvases, for example the collage *Woman Beside an Advertisement Pillar*, have even less allusion to reality and are more in the vein of the synthetic cubism of Braque and Picasso, who create their own. By 1915, when Malevich issued his revolutionary *Suprematist Manifesto*, he was already interested not in objects, only in the space they did not fill, in geometric forms and the 'semaphore of colour', and finally in the inner response and cosmic identity sought in them. With Kandinsky, he had fathered abstract art. In the U S S R today this is denied. Carefully culled works of Larionov, Goncharova and Tatlin have been displayed. Malevich and Kandinsky are still taboo.

The Waterloo of the 'Great Experiment', so briefly described here, followed the communist victory by five years. During that uneasy

(Mayakovsky referred in his public explanations of contemporary painting to Rayonnism as a 'Cubist' interpretation of Impressionism.)' Gray—and the Rayonnists themselves—identified their movement with Futurism. Actually, Rayonnism is closer in theory and in subject matter to Orphism.

period the competition between the Productivism of Tatlin, who called for the abolition of art as an 'outlived aestheticism', on the one hand, and all the other schools of modern art — the Constructivism of Gabo, Pevsner and Lissitsky and the Suprematism of Malevich — on the other, did not abate. All of the artists mentioned here were 'leftist', i.e. supported the revolution and, in fact, thrived under the new regime (which even allowed them extra food rations!) Kandinsky, who was appointed professor at the University of Moscow, founded the Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1921 and became its first vice-president. Chagall was Commissar of Art in the Vitebsk province. Malevich supervised an academy in Moscow. Falk was dean of the Higher Art School and a member of the Council of Visual Arts of the People's Commissariat of Education. All were imbued with the 'classless morality' of the ideology and of official art. Malevich, for instance, explained one of his canvases, *The Violin and the Cow* (1911) in the stale communist vernacular: 'The alogical collusion of two forms, the violin and the cow, illustrates the moment of struggle between logic, the natural law, bourgeois sense and prejudice.'¹² Initially, as long as the modernists couched their formal or anti-rationalist concepts in shades of Marxist-Leninist terminology, the Bolsheviks did not interfere with their activity, but encouraged it. Even today the Soviet's grudgingly

11: Cray, *ibid.*, p.128
12: Gray, *ibid.*, p.308
14: Jack Chen, *Soviet Art and Artists, London 1944*, p. 1

acknowledge the part these artists played in overthrowing Tsarism and the indisputable predominance of their adherents in artistic circles. Futurists, Constructivists, Symbolists and Suprematists — 'who proclaimed themselves to be the only protagonists of Revolution in art . . . succeeded in installing themselves in key positions in the art world'¹³; they took over all painting studios and taught methods based on abstract studies.

But the 'revolutionary formalists' ran aground on the ideology of Lenin's *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Paralysis* in 1920 and of his more explicit art dicta in 1922. Avant-garde artists, Malevich in particular, could not swallow the notion of utilitarian art, art as a means of organising labour, or that of the artist as a technician. Nor could Malevich's group or Gabo's believe that art had a functional place or value in politics and social movements. Art was one thing, an empty stomach another. Jean Clay instances Malevich writing that 'le suprématisme est, tant dans la peinture que l'architecture, libéré de toute tendance sociale ou matérialiste, quelle qu'elle soit . . . Chaque idée sociale, aussi grande, et significative qu'elle paraisse, dérive du sentiment de la faim. Chaque oeuvre d'art, aussi petite et sans importance qu'elle soit, dérive d'un sentiment pictoral ou plastique. Il serait temps que les problèmes de l'art d'une part et ceux de l'estomac et de la raison d'autre part, soient

15: Clay, *op. cit.*, p.82
16: Alexei Gan
17: Popova, Lissitsky, Rodchenko too (Standish Lawder)
18: Chen, *op. cit.*, p.57. *My italics*
19: A. K. Lebedev, *Iskusstvo v okvakh, Moscow 1962*, pp. 58-59

bien dissociés.'¹⁵ Unable to rally to the artistically suicidal cry of the Productivists and 'anecdotic' academicians — 'Down with speculative art; art is the product of social life. Art is dead!'¹⁶—a good number of artists, Chagall, Kandinsky, Gabo, Pevsner included, emigrated. Others, Malevich for instance, voluntarily abandoned 'pure art' and turned to industrial design, renaissance portraiture and landscapes or as in the case of Martiros Saryan,¹⁷ to poster and propaganda work. From 1920 to the present day, as illustrated by the vituperative arguments of Serov, the Soviet regime eyed the modern non-Productivist movements as a wasting but dangerous disease of the decadent West. In retrospect the 'World of Art' was 'a consciously Romantic movement of aesthetes looking to the picturesque and idealised *life of the past* for their themes.'¹⁸ The 'Jack of Diamonds' ignored the robust social realities of the time. Surrealism is 'the enemy of art and exceeds its boundaries . . . cultivates madness, sickening hallucinations . . . breaks down a man with a healthy psyche . . . is the enemy of life, reason, happiness.'¹⁹ And the Rayonnists, Cubo-Futurists and Suprematists, while they did banish stale and old-fashioned art from the studio and claimed a more systematic interest in painting, were nevertheless iconoclasts, shattering not only the premises of 'traditional' Russian art, but also those of the new Socialist Realism.

20: Dmitri Sarabyanov, 'Robert Falk Exhibition', *Soviet Literature Monthly, March 1967*, p.166

Some trace of the 'Great Experiment' tradition of art did survive even the strident Stalin denunciations. Pavel Filonov continued to defy his academic mentors until his death in 1941. Displaying a marvellous diversity, his many canvases are harsh reminders of a ravaged world. Whether in a paranoiac-critical technique like Dali or a primitivist mosaic pattern, they are infested with prowling animals, cadaverous humans and cryptic visions. Filonov has never exhibited in the Soviet Union. Equally diverse but more cooperative with the communist regime is Robert Falk, whose more conservative works, *Potatoes* (1955) for instance, are widely exhibited in Moscow and Leningrad and suggest a marked Cézannist influence. Although Falk has experimented with various techniques quite independently —with cubist landscapes in the Macke fashion or awkward cubist portraits (*Negro* (1917)) after Chagall, the party retinue of artists have recently praised him, perhaps in deference to his age, for 'loyalty to himself . . . and for striving for the quaint and the unusual.'²⁰ The quasi-Surrealist Tyshler, Nathan Altman, and the noted 'Chagallian' lithographer Anatoly Kaplan have also survived the revolution and Stalinist blight in their own styles. Each is exhibited in the U S S R today.

A conservative estimate made by an important Soviet collector of modern art and reported to Paul Sjeklocha in 1965 placed the unofficial artists' community at 500 in

21: *Sjeklocha, op. cit.*,
Problems of Communism, p.83

22: D. Shmarinov, 'Palette of
the Young', *Pravda, March 1*
1967, p.3

23: Shmarinov, *ibid.*

24: see *Sjeklocha, op. cit.*,
Problems of Communism, p.88
25: Dmitri Shmarinov as quoted
in Vladimir Makarenko,
'Opinions Differ: Seven Artists'
Exhibition', *Soviet Literature*
Monthly, *Moscow, February*
1967, p.179

26: *ibid.*, p.177

Moscow, 300 in Leningrad and from 50 to 100 in Kiev, for a total of about 1,000 artists throughout the Soviet Union.²¹ In a talk on the modern Soviet intelligentsia given at Yale University in November 1966, William Luers of the State Department indicated that today the activity of this underground force is feverish, despite the difficulty of obtaining art supplies and equipment. It is also interesting that Luers, recently returned from a tour of duty in Moscow, was wary of revealing the names of certain artists.

The need for caution was not unfounded. But it would be wrong to assume that the Soviet government necessarily lowers the boom on its 'unofficial' masters. That the regime is more than just aware of their 'opposition' we have already seen. What it is doing to combat and correct it — besides the perpetual mass media campaigns — is another question. Forcible suppression, while always an alternative, is becoming a more embarrassing and less frequently used boomerang in the Kremlin's bag of tricks. Non-Socialist-Realist works are not in themselves illegal unless they are 'sexual, anti-Soviet or abstract.' As with the once notorious Article 58 of the Criminal Code of the U.S.S.R. (concerning 'anti-Soviet' propaganda and activities) the regime reserves for itself the decision of what is anti-Soviet. Significantly, few of the underground artists are at all politically minded; what the communists still reject is their lack of a socialist-humanist

conscience, of the communist spirit. Their canvases are, for the most part, void of any ideological direction and official imagery. This cannot please the conservative art officials who, curiously, do not reject communist metaphor or symbolic images. An article in *Pravda* by Russian People's Artist D. Shmarinov described the image of Lenin in *Smolny, the Headquarters of October* as not so much 'a portrait likeness but . . . a precise gesture, movement, conveying intensity of thought and inner spirit.'²² Close communist metaphor is lauded.

What the communist art rejects is, on the one hand, extra-dogma innovation and, on the other, a Russian tradition which it claims is sterile. 'What we need today,' counsels Shmarinov, 'is not abstract propositions about traditions and innovation but the ability in good time to discern and to support genuine innovation embodying our humanist ideals and lofty principles, the ability to spot unerringly the uninspired repetition of canons passed off as the following of tradition and pseudo-innovation which conceals its inner emptiness behind an outer 'avant-garde' form.'²³ The Socialist Realism doctrine, then, while overtly extolling patriotism, rejects the native Russian and other national traditions as provincial and uninspiring.

While prosecution for violation of the Socialist-Realism statute seems to be rare, the Soviet government employs two other methods in trying to

dissolve its 'degenerate' opposition. Underground artists, many of whom live and work in pre-revolution, one-room pantries (and share communal facilities), unless they have steady employment, may be snared by the anti-parasite laws and, after due warning, sent to Siberia or, in some cases, to mental institutions.²⁴ On the other hand, conservative art officials have recently launched a programme of one day show/discussions to lure the avant-garde community into the open. One academician complained of the 'legends' that arise around the non-exhibiting studio workers of the 'opposition'. 'One would like,' ogled Shmarinov, '... to see all these painters 'out in the open', strong, convinced and generous; one would like their canvases to present not merely the particularities of life, but . . . the general shape of things; . . . to give up this 'severance', this self-isolation, in short, to set themselves a higher aim, to give the spirit, without which there can be no true art.'²⁵ To date, however, only the most conservative of the 'unofficial' artists — Birgher, Nikonov, Yegorshina, Weisberg, Mordovin and Ivanov — and the most conservative canvases, meet the Academy's summons.

Any attempt to classify the art of these semi-official modernists and their more covert and avant-garde comrades into one school or another would be a frustrating exercise. The avant-garde experimentation or more accurately, consolidation

challenges that of the 'Great Experiment' years in diversity and force of numbers. It would be valid nevertheless to distinguish two areas of activity — both relative to Western modern art — in the Soviet 'unofficial' art world: the 'catching-up' and the 'almost contemporary'.

By 'catching-up' is meant the recapitulation of the evolution of Twentieth Century art — the re-emergence of Impressionist, Expressionist, Cubist, early Constructivist and Abstract, and *Skazka* (fairly tale genre) techniques submerged beneath the red sea of Socialist Realism and Productivism in 1922.

Kiril Mordovin, for instance, is dexterous at pictorial gymnastics along early French Cubist lines. Some of his landscapes, *A Backyard* being just one, are reminiscent of the pre-Cubist landscapes of Braque (*La Ciotat*, (1906/7)); others approach the spirit and style — although less disciplined — of the Horte de Ebro landscapes of Picasso. Soviet critics regard such technique as 'lacking both feeling and thought'.²⁶ Natalie Yegorshina is constant to her Fauvist technique and Matisse orientation which, the critics note, evince unusual delicacy of perception and taste in treatment of colour. The conservative side of Falk is, as already mentioned, in the Cézannist vein.

Still more discernible an element in the 'catching-up' trend is the expressionist temperament of many

underground Soviet artists. Without labouring the issue — indeed, it would be a study in itself—it might be suggested that German and Russian Expressionisms have a remarkable psychological and spiritual affinity by virtue of (or as a consequence of) the authoritarian systems which engendered them. There are significant similarities. Both Germany (1800-1900) and the U S S R (1917-1960) experienced the raw and impersonal challenges of rapid, forced industrialisation — the severing of brotherly bonds and alienation from nature. German artists who had expected a better world to come out of the debris of World War I survived the cataclysm a more disillusioned lot. Their art sought to rejuvenate the 'old world' affinity with nature and a sympathetic and humanitarian spirit; they worked to create the 'new man' in a flight, like Gauguin's, from an ultra-rational, materialistic society; they sought an 'annihilation of oppressive reality'.²⁷ Their talent transformed the shadowy legacy of authoritarianism into a highly emotive art — less concerned with form than mood, more ecstatic, powerfully primitive (even carnal) and of a more closed and homogeneous composition than the contemporary French and counterpart Russian arts.

Modern Soviet artists are also seeking a renewed brotherhood and spiritual uplifting. Disillusioned and disoriented by the Revolution, waylaid by the tempestuous industrialisation and yet hardly

deceived by the 'new Soviet Man' propaganda, they escape from the stark context of the 'two-world' system into their canvases. Russian Expressionism, in much the German fashion, is the most conservative painting technique offering such escape; it is exhibitable and acknowledged by Soviet critics for its high emotional intensity but appealing beauty. On the other hand, while Russian Expressionist works share the stylistic flavour of the German, they are inferior precisely in their emotional content and more lyrical and poetic in interpretive design. Pavel Nikunov, sometimes accused of 'infantilism' by the Academy, approaches the exotic but somewhat primitivist tones of Otto Mueller, whose journey to Central Europe after the war left him with cold impressions. The landscapes of Mikhail Ivanov simulate the whiplash strokes and infused colour of Vincent Van Gogh. It is interesting to note that Soviet critics professing that artists employ such a technique merely in search of 'breadth of expression in the reproduction of reality',²⁸ play down what emotional intensity there is in these canvases.

The differences between the Russian and German Expressionist movements are perhaps more significant and manifold than the similarities. The dissimilarities concern approach and effect which, in turn—but disproportionately— affects style. As they will also be intelligible in the more contemporary context it might be well to enumerate them

here. In general, Soviet modernists have seasoned Expressionism and the more avant-garde trends with a Russian simplicity, a naivety and folk spirit beyond mere primitivism that give the impression of stylistic immaturity — although this is not at all the case. German works drained an emotion to the lees; melancholy is always 'brooding' or 'seething' melancholy. Russian technical excess—a method is pursued to its extreme—is nevertheless buffered by a certain poetic restraint. While German art, especially that of Nolde and Barlach, was pessimistic, self-pitying and socially conscious, the Russian had abandoned its Dostoevskian heritage for a more neutral and secretive 'public' position. The Russians have suffered enough and, with a few exceptions (Filionov for one) paint around their memories and politics. German Expressionists, in the Kollwitz tradition, painted these memories — the betrayals and iniquities — in harsh, personalised and untempered tones. Rather than record scenes of brutalised humanity and moments of anguish, Soviet traditionalists, for whom restraint and obscurity are Stalin era traditions, would rather paint the fortunates who avoid them. Finally, in place of the closed and angular design of most German Expressionist canvases, Russian objective art is generally more like the early *Jugendstil* tendency, more curvilinear and ventilated. This is due, in part, to the ineradicable vestiges of Suprematism and its exploitation of space.

There is little information available in the West today concerning the second area of Soviet avant-garde art — the 'almost contemporary' and unexhibited new directions. Marshacke, Sjeklocha, Luers and a handful of others are the only persons really in the know. In his provocative article 'The New and the Old: From an Observer's Notebook', George Gibian notes that one of his most poignant experiences in the Soviet Union was a talk with a painter 'who kept asking him about 'op' and 'pop' art in the U S, what abstractionists were doing, what the newest trends were.' 'I wish,' protested the artist, 'I were living in a world where I could know immediately what someone was painting in New York. I don't want to know it three years or even a week later, I want to know it right away.'³⁰ While an avant-garde lag does exist, it has been verified that such names as Anuszhewicz, Oldenburg, Lichtenstein, Jones, Indiana and Rauschenberg are not unknown to the more precocious of Soviet artists — the already mentioned Zverev, for instance.³¹

In the more contemporary avant-garde scene the least revolutionary and most traditional artist is Evgenii Kropivnitsky, the patriarch of unofficial art. Kropivnitsky utilises less intense — more Slavic — Keane optics, conservative futurist simultaneity, more shallow De Chirico architecture and landscape, and Matisse's flat Byzantine colour and curvilinear space in most of

(to cover the whole three-part essay, including 'Official Art' and 'Marc Chagall', besides the section published here.)

his objective work.

More modern are a group of artists centred around Plavinsky who work in collage and three dimensional painting. Plastic acrylics, plaster of Paris, insects, fish skeletons, tin circles and rectangles executed in an 'anti-pasto of bright hues' are a current rage. A variation of 'pop' art — banal parts of Soviet reality (subway escalators, advertisements for state groceries, dirty table cloths but no official imagery) blushing in the drab brick-red or frowning in the inescapable brown of Soviet apartment buildings — is also popular. However Soviet 'pop' art differs conceptually from American. While the latter captures items from our everyday collage environment, the Soviets' assembles over-exposed items—things no longer a part of their reality because they are indifferent to them.³²

The current Soviet Constructivism differs from its Western counterpart (Gabo's for example) in two respects. It is less confident and sophisticated, more individualist: and it is invested with surrealist and garish overtones and nuances. Much of this type of work owes its existence to magnificent but frightening and introverting scientific nuclear developments—in stark contrast to the sombre reality of Soviet Russia from which the artist endeavours to withdraw himself. Y. Vasiliev's themes and patterns go far beyond the kinetic interests of Tatlin and other Constructivists.

It borders on the Abstract Expressionism which is still in its infancy in the Soviet Union. Filionov's mystical surrealism and mosaic patterns have already been mentioned. Other more abstract expressionists, the majority of whom do not work with oils but with crayon, Indian ink, felt pen and pencil, use a 'rubber cement pick-up' technique, a 'palette-knife' composition, and the 'target' motif to achieve a uniquely Russian abstract art.³³

This then is the contemporary Soviet art world. Although forcible suppression of the avant-garde movements is never far in the background—it is necessary to repeat—the growing numbers of modern art enthusiasts, the support of many high-ranking patrons and the tacit encouragement of regime officials whose supervision of exhibitions is becoming more 'experimental', betoken an even greater world detente. It is most likely, however, that Productivist posters and Socialist Realism will remain the official word in Soviet art for some time to come.

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my mind be taken back
 & the image of you as I
 saw you

the conifer
 plantation towards waters
 steel edged serrated shore

wind bellowed soft
 earth of pine needles
 your
 lips & the treetops
 sighing

in the green
 dew strewn
 morning
 the pale domed
 mushrooms
 supple as flesh
 retreat into
 earths custody

picked
 they are damp
 to the touch
 soft & round

driving through the night
 travel presents a true dignity

the still air
 moths
 the pale fields
 of
 corn

dawns style cranked
 slowly from behind
 trees

it is the briar
 to which my
 eyes are drawn
 for here I see
 the curled hairs
 of your sex
 & mine
 twisting spirals
 of the groin
 intermingled
 pliable and moist

the soft throb
 of everything

awake to your savagery as you rent the turfs
 structure cut the sandy earth & roll pebbles
 white as a virgins thigh over & over along
 slender wayward channels in mud-foamy waters
 storm rain gutting the impressionable ground

slithers

dreams are the sordid uniform/
 walk the empty street / feet & hands
 gloved with cold / alone is an even
 simpler emotion / thus the grey
 wind harbours outright defiance of
 commiseration / wound in & out
 around the obstacles of fact

1

fragmentations / disintegrated
 foliage curls haphazardly
 a complex progression
 & the symmetrical landscape

2

scooped winds grapple thus

 intertwining
 lifting looping
 casting down

leaves scuff the
 endless road

3

constructed in clamped earth
 the silvered stream
 landlocked / immobile

4

gritstone outcrops
 & the beaten
 ferns

hilltops reach
 into the
 raincloud

the pennines are a
 darkened battlement
 drystone fortifications

walls

 through which the
 wayward wind threads moan
 on moan

5

(forms make a noise & are silent:
some speaking, others listening

le corbusier)

baited breath
the monotone hum of
silence
stolen moment of calm
the pause/ & the listening

6

rain lash
in swift diagonals
penetrates failed walls

"all the bloody nature's gone from
these bricks" (the builder)

damp seeps

a picture obscures the
yellowing patch

7

gale force westerly
churns the trees to singing
boughs heave
from what suggestion
towards what transformation

8

will hurl
fists full
of litter &
all manner
of debris
reckless
as a
hooligan
finding &
tilting
dustbins
with
a savage
kick

9

golden morning
& the room refound
we turn from
sleep
our eyes blur
to the days
spillage

Totality through Light— The Work of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy by Istvan Kovacs

1: Sybil Moholy-Nagy, Moholy-Nagy: Experiment in Totality, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1950, pp. 11-12.

For László Moholy-Nagy art served as the vehicle for exploring the totality that is man's confrontation with the world. He sought a wide range of media and techniques to attempt to approximate the richness of human experience. Light for him was a ubiquitous protagonist in man's existence.

His own awareness of the significance of light was revealed as early as 1917 when, lying in a hospital recovering from his wartime wounds, he wrote a poem concerned with the problem of vision and light, from which the following lines are extracts: 'Learn to know the Light— design of your life.' 'Space, time, material — are they one with Light? Dependent on the Light that gives you life?' 'Light ordering Light, where are you?' 'Light, total Light, creates the total man.'

In his search for a total expression he turned to photographs and photograms which expanded his concept of the role of light. Again and again throughout his life he would turn to a new medium of expression and would find in the new medium a new approach to an old problem which he would then utilise in a previous medium. It was from an early photogram such as that of translucent and transparent objects overlapping one another (1922) that he borrowed the idea of experimentation with those objects by the mere utilisation of pigments. Thus, whereas before Moholy-Nagy had utilised a technique of

superimposition of forms similar to that of Malevich (compare Malevich's *Suprematism: yellow and black* (1916-17) with Moholy-Nagy's *Glass Architecture* (1920): in both works overlapping forms completely obliterate the sections of other forms which lie 'beneath' them), now overlapping forms lose their absolute shadings and become influenced by the intensity of colour of the objects lying 'above' or 'beneath' them, and these 'influencing' objects themselves are influenced by the colours of the objects they influence (e.g. *Transparency* (1921-22)). Thus, we are no longer aware of separate entities with distinct shadings as are found in Suprematist works; rather, objects lose their distinctive individual form and colour to fuse into a common section of combined colour — a synthesis of the original colours comprising it. The combination of different coloured objects where the interaction of the colours is allowed results in an image which can no longer present the objective truth of separate elements but emerges instead in a highly unstable, shifting optical illusion. In *Transparency* (although this work is much more complex than other paintings of the period treating transparency, and therefore should be regarded as the apex of the artist's experimentation with transparent elements) the overlapping strips move back and forth, into and out of the pictorial space implied by their crossing. We cannot simply work out the relative positions

of the strips as we would like to (and as we can in most of his other works of transparency) because the areas of crossing are coloured without a determined order: the square is transparent over the background and yet it darkens the strip it covers, for example. In this, his most important work dealing with transparency, Moholy-Nagy is revealing the supreme power of light. Merely by playing with light he has disrupted the simple spatial relationships suggested by overlapping objects. He has, in fact, proclaimed the decisive role of light in determining our spatial awareness. By thus elevating light above spatial perspective he has ridiculed the human conceit of trying to order the world around man: how can man order his universe when he cannot even discover the simple back-and-front relationship of two or three objects?

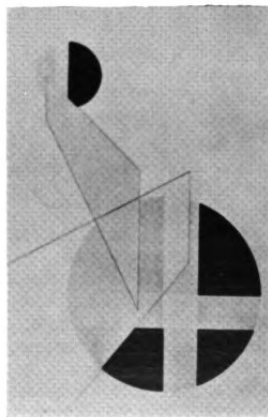
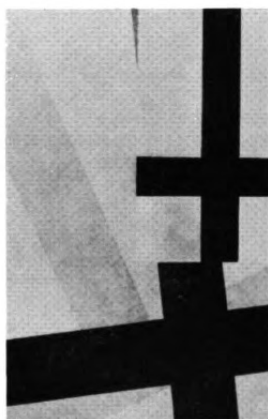
Having succeeded in destroying the illusion of fundamental spatial order, Moholy-Nagy sought to formulate his own spatial harmony. At the time he arrived at two separate solutions. Whereas in *Transparency* a confused spatial relationship was implied by the 'improper' blending of two or more superimposed colours, in *Construction A II* (1923) an objective order was established by the superimposition of three planes defined by crosses stretched out on the planes they determine. The planes lie directly on top of one another, the crosses being

overlapped are a light shade of grey since a supposedly translucent plane covers them. In *Construction A II* the problem of spatial organisation — still restricted to isolated areas of attention as with the clearly defined circle-strip islands of *Large Aluminium Picture* (1926) — are generalised to the level of planes that include the whole painting. The superimposition of planes, each distinct 'behind' another, having an inner unity but showing through the other levels, implies the levels of consciousness and subconsciousness separate in themselves and yet influencing one another. The nearly opaque translucency further implies that another plane lies 'behind' the almost imperceptible one, and an even more solid, real plane supersedes all the planes indicated—the plane of the work itself. The staccato repetition of the plane-defining inverted cross establishes an anti-Christian, mechanical order. A second, much more conventional way of creating a spatial order is demonstrated in *Construction A 2* (1926) where light planes dart from one element to another and off the canvas, always being enlarged as they move. Although it is the expanding area of the planes which implies progression from a spatial depth from inside the canvas, the translucency of the lower plane allows the viewer to observe the directionality of the upper plane, without which the depth of the picture could not be established.

László Moholy-Nagy,
'Construction A II', 1923

Right: 'Transparency', 1922

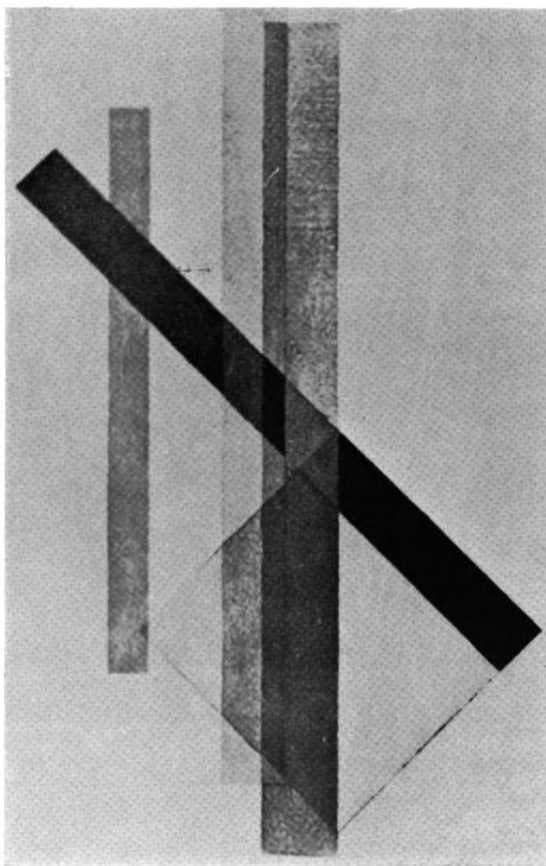
László Moholy-Nagy,
'Construction A 2', 1926



Moholy-Nagy's real contribution to light experimentation came in his utilisation of different media. He noted the relevance of pigment in these words: 'Of course the pedagogic value of manual pigment painting will not be denied. But this painting will be no more the only art of expression.' It was this pedagogic value of pigment

that he explored in his early years. In various early works he broke down different pigments into arbitrarily determined surfaces made up of lines and differently spaced dots. He then proceeded to combine these basic surface structures by superimposing one surface over another. The resulting overlap then became a testing ground for the effects

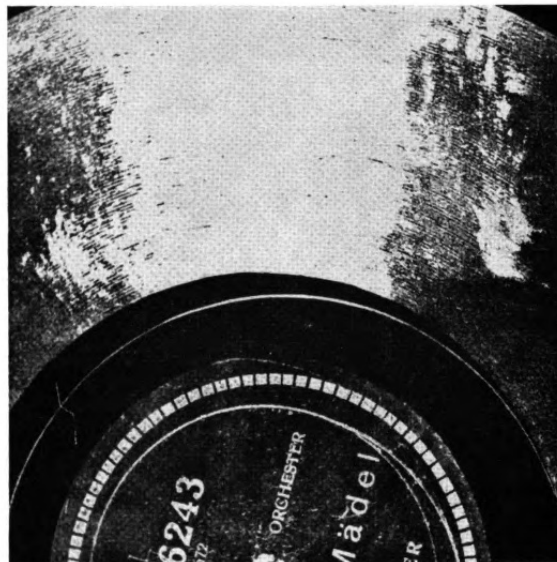
of transparency where the artist could manufacture the type of combined 'colour' (read surface) which he desired (*Composition of Diagonals with Dotted Rectangles and Squares* (1921), *Abstraction/woodcut* (1953.659 Yale Art Gallery)). It was by his willingness to experiment with the interaction of surfaces and his



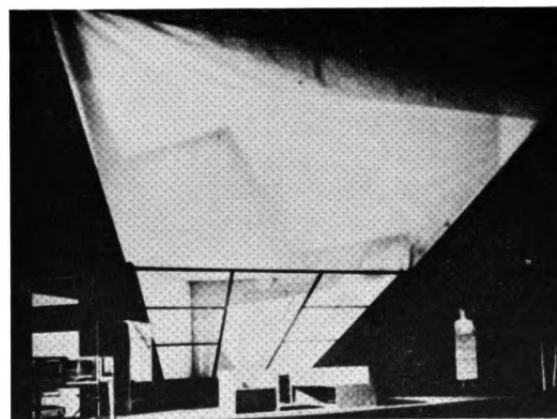
unwillingness to paint the expected outcome of interacting colours that Moholy-Nagy was able to achieve the illusionistic, subjective effect of *Transparency*.

Some of Moholy-Nagy's most interesting work with light was achieved by the utilisation of several media in one artistic creation. He was able to achieve the harmony of various interrelated media only by previously recognising that the medium of art in which he was working determined the nature of the subject of his expression, not merely served as a background for it. His totalistic view of man expressing himself in a multitude of ways had started very shortly after he began painting. As early as 1920 he saw the limitations of working on a canvas, so he cut one of his abstract works in two, turned the two halves perpendicular to each other, and pasted them together (*Still Life* (1920)). In a later work he again cut the finished collage in two and separated the two parts by a small space before pasting them on a board. (*Divided Collage* (1923)). In the former creation the artist had violated the sanctity of the unity of the sheet, while in the latter he had made the medium of his expression become as much a part of the subject of the final creation as was the subject of the original sheet. In the drawings of the early 1920s Moholy-Nagy linked the subject of his work with the medium in a more subtle way. Either connected to the central subject of the work

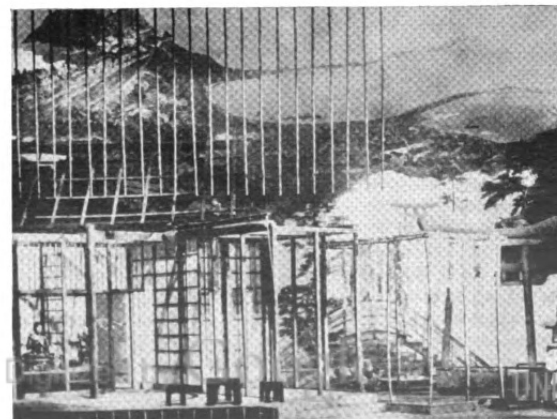
László Moholy-Nagy,
'Grammophonplatte',
photograph ca. 1925



László Moholy-Nagy, stage
setting for 'The Tales of
Hoffmann', State Opera, Berlin,
1929



László Moholy-Nagy, stage
setting for 'Madame Butterfly',
1930



(*Construction/enamel* (1922) or wholly separate from it (*Construction 'R 1'* (1923)) ran a line, or strip, completely across the sheet which was not really a part of the central composition. This line in actuality connected the subject of the work with the medium in which it was drawn by on the one hand being drawn by the artist in the same way that the central subject had to be drawn, and by being of the dimension of the sheet on which it was drawn, on the other. (In both cases mentioned the extended elements are quite unrelated in structure to the other elements in the drawing.)

To accept the medium of expression as a dynamic element in the totality that was his work was a prerequisite for Moholy-Nagy's experimentation with different materials. Although initially he worked with the accepted framed rectangular picture, he knew no limitation in his materials. Aluminium, enamel, oil and silberit were just some of his raw materials. One of Moholy-Nagy's chief interests in using such a variety of materials was to further probe the possibilities of light play. In *Oil on Galalith* (1923-26) (1941.573 Yale Art Gallery), for example, the background of galalith, upon which various strips and circles are formed with a material of rough surface, is in a sense more important than the figures constructed on it. The figures of the work have a secondary function as far as the problem of light is concerned, for it is the galalith plate which offers

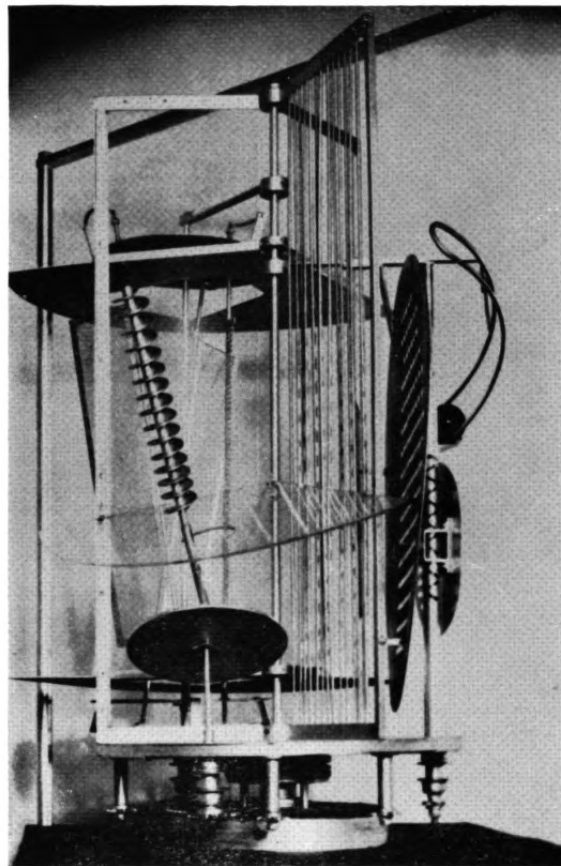
the smooth surface for the reflection of light—a reflection that changes with the changed position of the viewer. With other media he sought different treatments of light, but these he achieved mostly through a background/subject contrast as in *Oil on Galalith*.

Beginning in the 1920s, then, Moholy-Nagy began to explore the possibilities of light in an intense, scientific manner: 'We must become familiar with colorimetry, wave lengths, purity, brightness, excitation of light, and with the manifold possibilities of the artificial light sources . . . The work of the future lies with the Light engineer . . .'¹³

In his photographs and photograms Moholy-Nagy sought to exhaust the technical potential of light-sensitive paper. He sought unusual natural geometric patterns, such as a circular walk with a path as its offshoot photographed directly from above. He caught the single burst of light reflected from the rim of a wheel, and allowed that spot of light to emerge from the active background by its simple brilliance. He combined both reflected light and an unusual geometric pattern in a close-up of a segment of a record entitled *Grammophonplatte*.

To accentuate the force of pure light, he activated the contrast between the light with which he was concerned and the setting of that light. The dynamic interplay of light and shadow was transformed by the juxtaposition of the photographic negative and

László Moholy-Nagy, *Light display machine*, 1922-30



positive into a definite polar contradiction of light and dark. The dual image created by mere juxtaposition of negative and positive was as much an outcome as a cause of experimentation with the proliferation of similar forms which was particularly feasible with photographic superimposition. The themes of duplication of objects and reflection of light were further elaborated by the inclusion of a mirror in the photograph.

For a brief period during the late 1920s Moholy-Nagy was able to pursue his experimentation with light in a wholly different medium: the construction of stage sets. In his two major works the artist utilised light in exactly contrasting ways. The set from

The Tales of Hoffman (1928) shows the powerful upsurge of an ever-widening solid white screen which provides the background for the action. The wide expanse of the material is like the reflective background of the artist's early 1920s paintings — the central action being minimised by the light-reflecting backdrop. In his other set from *Madame Butterfly* (1928) his purpose was to break up light as much as possible. He erected skeleton walls to cast open shadows and cluttered the stage with so many thin pole-like elements that the dispersal resulted in a rich play between light and shadow.

But Moholy-Nagy's achievement with stage sets could not satisfy his drive to

4: László Moholy-Nagy, 'The Future of the Photographic Process', *Transition*, February 1929, p.289.

5: László Moholy-Nagy, 'Problems of the Modern Film', *New Cinema*, No. 1 (1934?), p.5.

6: László Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision*, New York, Wittenborn and Co., 1946, p.74.

treat light as a kinetic phenomenon. His photographs and photograms, too — not to mention his paintings, no matter what materials he utilised — presented static formulations of problems of light. It was by means of his *Light Display Machine* (1922-30) that the artist could adequately treat problems of luminosity. He had observed that 'all photographic processes attain their climax in the film.' Although he created a number of films, the one that is specifically concerned with the interplay of light and shadow is *Lichtspiel: schwarz, weiss und grau* (1930), which examines the intricate relationships of luminosity as produced by his light machine. Thus, although the film is an examination of a device whose function is already to examine light variations, so that a duality of treatment should occur, the effects of the light machine are wholly integrated into the film to offer a unified query into kinematic light problems. In this film Moholy-Nagy lives up to his belief in 'the principle that all artistic creation should be appropriate to the specific technical potentialities of its medium.'¹⁵ The light machine is introduced in the film by the focusing of the camera on a perforated sheet through which the rest of the apparatus can be seen, already drawing the viewer into the machine itself from which he is separated only once (through a clumsy mistake) in the film. The involvement with the apparatus through spatial manipulation and light moulding increases gradually until the cinema becomes a

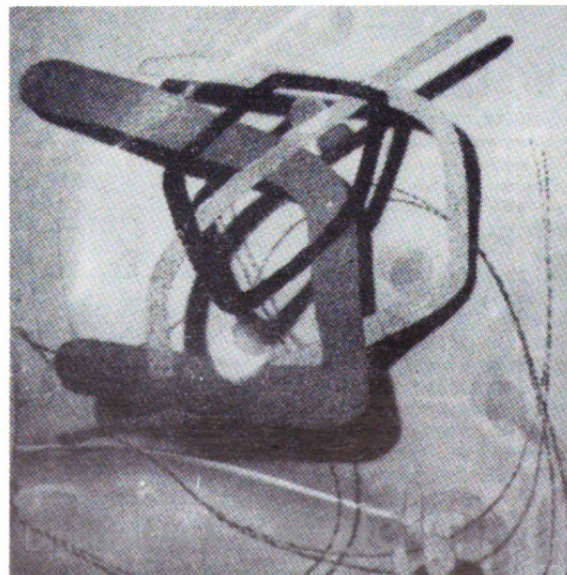
total kinetic experience. Beginning by simply viewing the machine in its manifold gyrations — but always being so close to it that a separation can never take place between viewer and object — the artist continues by substituting negative frames, juxtaposing negative and positive in the same frame, and proliferating the movement by multiple exposures. While the tempo of the film accelerates through the quantitative increase of the content of the frames, through various photographic illusions, and angle shots, Moholy-Nagy probes further the problems he had stated in his photographs. The mirror reappears now as an instrument of interpretation of the total motion. The artist is not afraid to deal with the dazzling, camera-filling light of light bulbs. In fact, he observes the gradual rotation of the machine until the camera captures the full, blinding effect of a series of lights. The artist, however, emphasises the kinetic nature of the light machine somewhat to the detriment of the light effects it creates in the film. But the most important lessons of the light apparatus itself had to do with light. Moholy-Nagy later commented that he learned from it 'the new visual effects (created by) shadows thrown on transparent and perforated screens.'¹⁶ The lessons of the light machine were not to be used until the plexiglass creations of the 1940s.

The most immediate influence of Moholy-Nagy's examination of active light was manifest in rectangular works where the

László Moholy-Nagy, 'Vision in Motion', 1940



László Moholy-Nagy, 'Hand-shaped Plexiglass', 1943

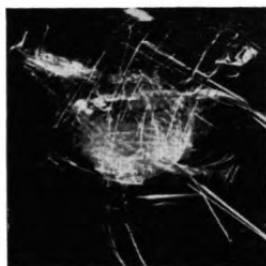


principle element, a celluloid sheet, could cast a shadow on a background. Thus in *Construction Cel 2* (1930) one or two inches behind the celluloid sheet upon which circles are placed is a back-up sheet attached to it on which the shadows appear and move according to the origin of the light. These constructions, called 'space modulators', were gradually developed in the following years. In 1936 the artist for the first time cuts a hole in the frontal transparent sheet to allow for a greater light medley both on the surface of the plastic sheet and on the backing sheet. In *Vision in Motion* (1940) he plays with the idea of the dual image seen in the space modulators. To accentuate the duality of frontal image and back shadow the artist maintains the format of the transparent plastic sheet held out from a background, but instead of placing his figure on the plastic sheet he cuts out two large holes in the plastic and fastens to the background two similar figures. The joke is that although both the format of the space modulator and the duality of the figures — one light, the other dark — remain, the duality is not caused by the play of light on the plastic. It is the kind of intellectual game which Moholy-Nagy played before with the substitution of dots and lines for different pigments in attempting to form a model colour combination. In *Hand-shaped Plexiglass* (1943) the artist reached the most complex dual surface light structure. After he has heated the sheet of plexiglass, he

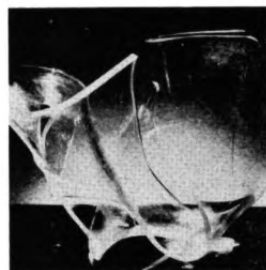
bends and twists it, causing its projected shadows to be distorted. Having found the method of shaping plexiglass Moholy-Nagy was now ready for plexiglass sculpture. It must be understood in the consideration of these dual surface space modulators that the artist's purpose was not merely to obtain a shadow of the image which he painted on the plastic. He was interested, rather, in the kinetic interplay between image and shadow in much the same way that he was interested in the juxtaposition of positive and negative photographs. In some space modulators he even went further to obtain a more dynamic interplay among various similar forms and their shadows by simply painting on several similar figures instead of one.

In *Spiral-bound Mobile Picture* (1936) the artist created a mobile opus as different from what he had done before as was his light apparatus in 1930. Two celluloid sheets with engraved lines were tied together by a spiral with a board backing it. In one sense it was merely a radical improvisation on the theme of the space modulators, for these engraved sheets could be moved as opposed to those which were permanently fastened to their boards. However, this was the first space modulator which could recreate the visual effects of shadows on transparent screens as the artist had observed his light apparatus produce them. A continuous motion of light and shadow

László Moholy-Nagy, 'Mobile Sculpture', 1943



László Moholy-Nagy, 'Double Loop', 1946



could be achieved by the movement of the celluloid sheets. With its two leaves and background the *Mobile Picture* could be made to show an intricate relationship of figures in various planes, and their shadows, by folding one sheet over the other.

The late 1930s witnessed further improvisations in the use of light as determining space. In *Warping the plane by locomotion of points* (1935) pins were stuck into cork, but it was not their physical presence which broke up the plane, since it was their shadow, when the work was lit, that indicated a difference in level between the plane and the pins. In the following year the set for the city of the future in the film *The Shape of*

7: László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*, Chicago, Institute of Design, 1947, p.236.

Things to Come revealed two spatial areas: the white flat plane and the round telescopic view with the future city breaking up the plane. In this set the artist is playing with our sense of spatial depth as he did in *Transparency*. We are not really certain if the view of the city is just a round picture held up in front of the white plane, or if it is actually a hole in the plane with props set in our field of vision. He used a similar but much more effective juxtaposition of simple geometric elements defined by light to confuse our sense of depth perception in *Space modulator with fluctuating black and white arcs* (1940). The indeterminate relative positions of the two arcs actually cause a forward-backward movement, making this work perhaps his most dynamic.

The bending of the sheet of plexiglass to make a dual surface space modulator opened the way for Moholy-Nagy to use plexiglass as the basic medium for sculpture. The *Spiral-bound Mobile Picture* influenced plexiglass sculpture in the consideration of the resulting visual effects of shadows on transparent areas. Even more important than these considerations was the artist's belief in equipoised sculpture, which could remain in equilibrium with the aid of opposing forces.⁷ It is natural, then, that the artist's works of sculpture possess an almost symmetrical harmony (*Double Loop* (1946)). Above all, plexiglass offered new possibilities of light reflection. A dramatic effect is achieved

8: 'In the Galleries: Moholy-Nagy', Arts, October 1957, p.55.

9: Sybil Moholy-Nagy, op. cit., p. 205.

by the focusing of light at the edges of the plexiglass sheet. Because it is the edge of the sheet that is illuminated, the sculpture loses its form, so that the brilliant defining edge of the material seems to be light itself, with much of the weight of the form seemingly gone. It is little wonder that plexiglass has been called by a critic 'his best material: the quintessence of form, space, light and motion.'⁸ Yet Moholy-Nagy was dissatisfied with his stabile sculptures. At a lecture he commented: 'This urge of mine to supersede pigment with light has its counterpoint in a drive to dissolve solid volume into defined space. When I think of sculpture, I cannot think of static mass. Emotionally, sculpture and movement are interdependent.'⁹

In these last years of his life he created several mobile sculptures which, in their circular orbit, satisfied at once his need to dissolve solid volume and to create a new light display (*Mobile Sculpture* (1943)).

By attempting to seek totality of expression through art, László Moholy-Nagy uncovered a new set of values for light which, besides influencing traditional means of expression, created new techniques of portraying light/shadow interplays, and legitimised photographic art.

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The Total Approach by John Evarts



This is the third part of an open-ended series on the College begun in Form 4.

Robert E Lee Hall was perched on low hillsides overlooking the town of Black Mountain, North Carolina, the Valley, which terminated on the other side by the village of Montreat, and a range of beautiful high mountains with a part-angular, part-rounded profile. The big main building with its enormous white pillars and two wings had a large lobby giving onto the broad front porch; it also had a proportionately large fireplace. On the ground floor were various administrative rooms; on the first and second floors were long corridors with many, many bedrooms. From the lobby two large glass doors on each side of the fireplace led out back to a mounting covered path that led up to the Dining Hall. Surrounding these two large buildings were numerous small white cottages. And below Lee Hall to the left as one looked towards the mountains was the gymnasium and an outdoor pool fed by a cold mountain brook. On the grounds were quantities of laurel and rhododendron bushes, flowering dogwood trees, oaks — but practically no pines or spruces.

Each summer the buildings reverted to their original purpose — a summer conference hotel — and each autumn students and faculty members converted them to the College uses. The lobby became the big hall for all uses. 'Plato I' took place over in one corner. Sometimes Mr Albers held drawing classes there. The Community Meetings, of course, were

held there. Some smaller classes were held on the porch in good weather. The Saturday night concert, which became a tradition, took place there — followed by dancing until midnight or so, with music provided on one or both of the grand pianos. Some of the smaller administrative rooms remained office rooms for the college — others became class rooms. Biology and chemistry laboratories were gradually adapted in rooms in the basement floor, and the college library too. The chairs everywhere were green-painted wicker porch chairs or brown-red wood with black leather seats.

In the first years there were so few students and so many little hotel rooms that each student had his own study and also a private bedroom. There was the girls' floor and the boys' floor for bedrooms. Some faculty members had suites in one of the two wings; others, with children, lived in the white cottages near the building. The dining hall served many purposes, too. A temporary stage was built in its larger hall — so on occasions, it was a theatre. Tables of eight were used for meals. There was a piano — and after-supper dancing for a half hour or so every other evening. A smaller 'private' dining room became the music studio — with piano, records, gramophone, chairs. One of the cottages became a 'music cottage' with pianos for practising.

How did it all start? In rebellion. First. Then in the attempt to realise a many-

sided dream—an 'ideal' college, educating the whole person, giving the arts their rightful place as formative, sensitising elements, bringing out latent but untouched talents, emphasising the individual rather than the mass.

In furthering the concept of 'total education', it was felt that every aspect of life in the community had important bearing on education: community discussion of problems, the volunteer outdoor work programmes, participation in plays, musical performances, etc. No one 'worked his way through college'. Everyone was expected to help in the smaller or larger daily tasks. Every student was on the same social basis in the college, whether he paid the full tuition or nothing at all. Only the treasurer knew precisely what anyone paid, and he never disclosed what the amount was.

Mealtimes and tea-time were important — students and faculty members, as chance would have it, would sit together at the tables for eight. Joe Schmidt from Brooklyn might go to the kitchen counter and bring in the service dishes of meat and vegetables. And later Professor Straus might go to get the coffee from the urn for everyone at the table while Mary Jones would clear the dessert.

Another pleasant tradition was after-dinner dancing in the dining hall — and here again faculty and students mingled

normally and naturally. To prevent anyone's 'getting stuck' with another, there was a device of calling out 'Change partners' — now and then. New 'traditions' were 'created' every other week, it sometimes seemed. Waltzes, a polka and a Varsoviennne became dance 'traditions'. Dress was informal —but coat and tie and normal dresses for girls was the custom for dinner. And Saturday nights — a little dressier. The aim was to keep the ratio of boys to girls always a little in favour of the boys. This was usually achieved.

Many of the ideas emanated from the principal founder of the college — the controversial figure of John Andrew Rice. A stocky, rotund figure with a rather ruddy complexion, eyes that twinkled behind thick glasses — sometimes with amusement, sometimes with malice. In the first years B M C was definitely a 'one-man college' and he was the man. He was alternately an amiable, provocative Socrates, and a diabolical rebel and critic. He was deeply kind and understanding, his vision was broad, his knowledge deep. He was a wonderful talker and story-teller. Born in the South and always an educator, he had also been a Rhodes scholar at Oxford. He would start off with a word or a concept which most people thought they understood perfectly — a word like 'sentimental' or 'democratic' or 'aristocratic' or 'love' or 'honour'. And the discussions on a single concept might continue for two weeks or more — the digressions were



Above: John Evarts

Right: John Andrew Rice. Photo courtesy State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. 'John Andrew Rice with two Black Mountain students' in Form 5 (page 20) was a regrettable case of mistaken identity. The chief subject of that picture was Robert Wunsch, the teacher of dramatics and later rector of the College, mentioned in John Evarts' article. Our apologies both to Mr Rice and to Mr Wunsch.



enormous; he would confuse the class, showing some of them all too clearly that they didn't say what they meant and didn't mean what they said. He was more than adroit in getting people to speak and in engendering scepticism and caution — he stretched people's minds and made them think. He made them doubt and question the meaning of ideas and concepts which they had blindly accepted. When a word or idea had been scrutinised, dismembered, tossed around for days, interlarded with anecdotes and reminiscences, he would, finally, pull all the loose ends together and by that time his listeners were at least a little wiser and less ready to throw words around which they only vaguely understood.

His constant companion was his pipe—which was as stocky as himself. He would often shock people by emptying the burnt tobacco inadvertently on the floor. But he loved to shock people in all ways — to provoke them to think. He would make sweeping statements — usually condemnations — to watch people blink and see how they would defend themselves or their ideas. Like some psychoanalysts he would 'break people down' — and not always build them up again. This applied to both students and faculty members. But he was always brilliant and could have the tongue of angels. He was loved, feared and sometimes hated. A real father figure.

The arrival of Josef ('Juppi') and Anni Albers was an important event for the college. He could barely speak or understand English; she was quite good at English. She was a textile designer and weaver. He was already eminent as an abstract painter and superb teacher. Each was highly individual — and each in his or her way, a rebel and pathfinder. He was 'non-verbal'. He was against 'literary' art history. He gave 'silent concerts' — showing slides of great diversity — from Greek statues and Rembrandt, to a piece of driftwood or geometric shapes. His drawing classes educated the whole person — made the sloppy ones neater, the shy ones opener, the noisy, cocksure ones humbler, if not always quieter. His courses opened people's eyes to see — to perceive more sensitively. Albers' prejudices were healthy: he was against intellectualism and bookishness — and traditional banalities about the arts.

He was also a sort of antipode to Mr Rice. He was wary of words — and he loved his own rather didactic nuggets of wisdom — compressed into often cryptic phrases, in German-fashion 'maxims'. He hated mass judgments, mass emotions — he was for the individual.

It was also around this time — in the second or third year — that Bob Wunsch joined the faculty. He too had taught for a time at Rollins and belonged to the 'Rice faction'. On resigning he took a job as

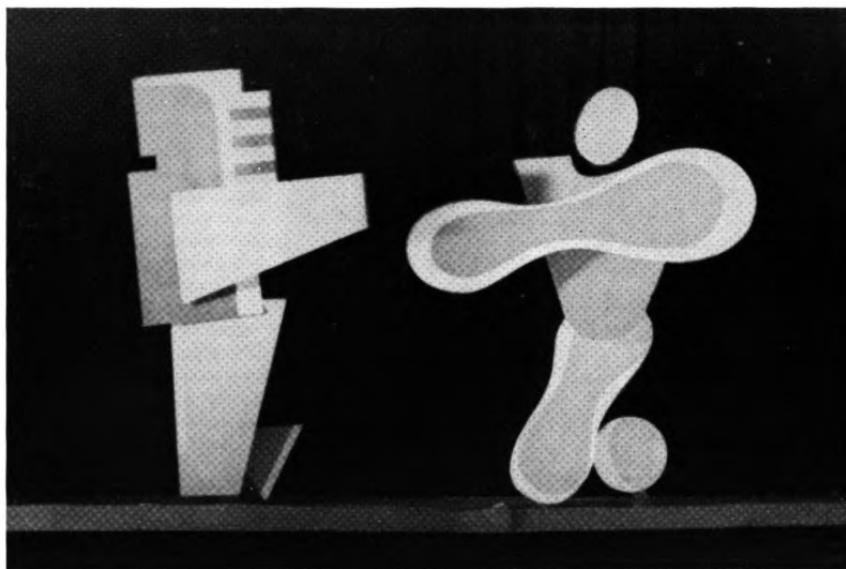
teacher of drama and writing at a Louisville high school. Then he came to B M C, bringing with him three young students who became important in the college community and in the future of the college. They were Jane Mayhall, Morton Steinau and Bela Martin.

Bob Wunsch was a native North Carolinian — and had been a room-mate at the University of North Carolina of Thomas Wolfe. They were good friends. Bob was passionately interested in theatre and writing and people. He was a great idealist and something of a sentimentalist. He was not exactly a 'sophisticated scholar' but he was an ardent, sensitive humanist. He used the theatre as Albers used his art classes to 'educate' the whole person — to bring out, develop confidence in the shy and to cut down the angles, tone down the brash or arrogant. His writing classes tried to develop observation and sensitivity as intense as Proust's — or Thomas Wolfe's.

I remember vividly Bob Wunsch's productions on the stage in the dining hall of, among several others, Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Doll's House*, *Wild Duck*, *Waiting for Lefty*, and *Bury the Dead*.

Xanti Schawinsky, artist, graphic designer, amateur 'cellist, assistant to Albers in the art work, also contributed to the theatre work. Xanti is an ebullient, enthusiastic, gifted, earthy character bursting with energy and his own ideas. One

Abstract Theatre at Black Mountain College, 1937. Xanti Schawinsky, director; John Evarts, music



The Danse Macabre, Black Mountain College, May 14th 1938. Xanti Schawinsky, director; John Evarts, music. Death: Bela Martin (Don Page, designer); Baron: Everit Herter; Abbess: Irene Schawinsky; Astronomer: Morton Steinau (George Hendrickson, designer); Cardinal: Alex Elliott (William Reed, designer)



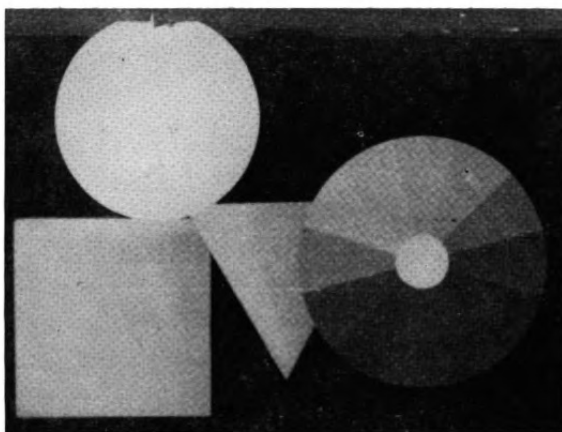
of his ideas, which he had already tried out at the Bauhaus in Germany in some form, was carried out as a sort of group effort — 'Abstract Theatre' — the play of abstract forms and sounds, with original musical accompaniment. It was all quite strange to us Americans and its values were much debated, but it was a provocative eye-opener to new and different aspects of theatre art.

The following year, Xanti organised a sort of total-theatre production of the *Danse Macabre* in a theatre-in-the-round set-up in the gymnasium. Students (Bob Sunley and Morton Steinau) translated the poems into English; art students designed and executed the costumes; I composed the music (based on *Dies Irae* — in variations) for such instruments as we had available—and the performers worked out their movements as dance-pantomime; the poems were read over loudspeakers.

I think that it was in this same year of 1938 (or in 1939) that Mr Rice left the college—after long and difficult deliberations on the part of the members of the faculty. He separated from Mrs Rice, who stayed on at the college as librarian. They were later divorced. Bob Wunsch was elected to replace him as rector of the college.

I shall not attempt here to go into the intricacies of Mr Rice's resignation. It was a painful period — it was painful to have the man whose vision and brilliance launched the college leave it in an atmosphere of

Abstract Theatre at Black Mountain College, 1937. Xanti Schawinsky, director; John Evarts, music



recrimination and bitterness. It was indeed a collective and individual upheaval — which threatened the continuance of the college. The messiah had feet of clay.

Another, external fact also threatened its continuance: the owners of Robert E Lee Hall and the property wished to use the place the year round beginning in 1940-41. Where would we go, what would we do? Was it worth going on? Community meetings were frequent. The crisis continued for long, but was finally resolved.

Across the valley was a piece of property (with a small, man-made lake) called Lake Eden. On the side of the lake was a single-roomed dining hall with a porch over the water. There were two large 'lodges' nearby and houses of various sizes distributed around the property —all for summer use only— as a sort of summer rustic inn and camp. The property was

up for sale at a relatively good price.

Appeal was made to some of our financial supporters and the Forbes family, in particular, came to our rescue and purchased the property. There were many anxious faculty and community meetings to discuss the future. It was finally worked out that in following a carefully organised volunteer work programme, with some experts to supervise and aid, we, the members of the college staff and student body could insulate and prepare the old buildings at Lake Eden and build a new building in time to meet the deadline.

It was one thing for students and faculty to take part in the volunteer afternoon work programme in repairing the road up to Robert E Lee Hall, or in haying, woodchopping, making building repairs, etc., as we did in the first years of the College, but quite another

when the College was faced with building its own central studies building. Fortunately, there were a few expert artisans both among the students and on the faculty. I was certainly not one of them. But what brainwave, what foolhardy presumptuousness gave the teachers and students of B M C the illusion (or delusion?) that they could pursue academic studies in the mornings and evenings, and in the afternoons construct a large modern building? A sort of naive faith and intense determination on the part of both groups. The College—as it had existed at Robert E Lee Hall, near Black Mountain, would have to cease—close its doors for good—or build itself a new home in the newly-acquired property, called Lake Eden, across the valley. The most meagre of funds were available. The country was only gradually coming out of the Great Depression, war was threatening the country. Students and faculty would have to make a gigantic effort to keep the place going.

The decision to do this was made, I think, at a General Meeting of the College in the early spring of 1940. By autumn, things had begun to be organised when the term began in mid-September. Mr Lawrence Kocher, a distinguished modern architect, and Mr Richard Gothe, a German refugee who had had considerable experience in running work camps in his own country, had been persuaded to join the staff. A professional builder and his assistant were employed to direct the work,

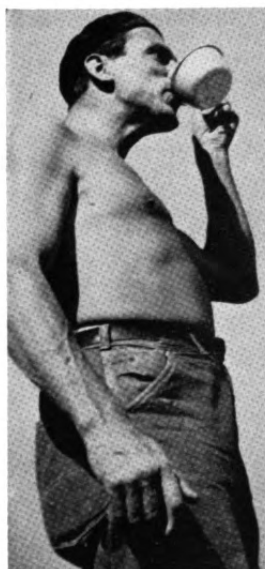
and our regular handyman-genius, 'Bas' Allen, would be sometimes available. The faculty members and students would be the 'common labourers'. Ted Dreier, the treasurer of the College, had obtained some funds to begin the construction and to adapt the existing summer cottages for year-round use. But not enough to complete the operation, and at first things went extremely slowly.

Lake Eden is a small artificial lake which might more properly be called a pond. When B M C acquired the property, there was a square building at one end of the lake, with a porch over the water. This was the dining hall, which later did yeoman service as concert hall, theatre, dance hall etc., as well. A dirt road wound along the lake and among the cottages, between splotches of pines, oaks, azalea bushes and laurel. Up on a level patch, not far from 'Mountain Stream' cottage, it was planned to build a small but beautifully modern and perfect cottage for Dr and Mrs Jalowetz (music).

The first steps in preparing for the main studies building, which was to include some sixty studies for students, living quarters for two or three faculty members, class rooms, studios for painters and art classes, were to survey and examine the land. The location chosen was at the end of the lake opposite the dining hall. It was found to be swampy in places and none too solid. Our first jobs were to clear away the bushes and trees, dig

Richard Gothe, in charge of the Work Program at B M C, 1941. Photo courtesy State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.

Right: Black Mountain students and faculty at work, 1941. Photo courtesy State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.



drainage ditches, foundation ditches etc. It was a long, muddy, discouraging, backbreaking job. But we 'common labourers' could at least wield shovels pretty well.

Dick Gothe established teams for the various volunteer workers, and schedules were published daily on the College bulletin board in Lee Hall. Ted Dreier would captain a team of rock-haulers on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons from 1.30 to 5.30. Jack French (professor of psychology) would captain a team to install insulation in the two main lodges, etc. 'Sign here!'

The team I most enjoyed working on was the cement-mixers. I think we may even



have had *rival* cement-mixing teams. With plenty of hands to help, we worked out various would-be efficient systems, taking turns at carrying the heavy wheelbarrows of finished cement to the 'masons' team', taking turns at shovelling the sand into the mixer or hauling pails of water. As soon as the ground floor began to be formed, the work became more exciting, and little by little we saw the pylons rising, on which the long, boat-like building would rest (pylons that resembled a little the Le Corbusier type). This was the work which amateurs — men and women — could easily do, and I remember the philosophy teacher and psychologist Dr Straus and the Jalowetzes — their grey hair flying in the breeze — joining my team on

some occasions (in Europe, no Dr Professor, I reflected, would be likely to even come near a cement mixer, let alone carry pails of water!)

Simultaneously with the work on the Studies Building, we were also intensely occupied with insulating all the summer buildings and cottages, installing heat, mending roofs, and with the building of the Jalowetz cottage. Most of the plans for this and their execution were carried out by Don Page, Alex Reed, Bob Bliss and Claude Stoller.

During the Christmas holidays that year money-raising teams were sent to different sections of the country because we had run out of funds. Not enough left for nails. And it was the

same story during the Easter holidays and in the summer. Nothing was *really* completed when we had to make the Big Move. Our trucks and workers made hundreds of trips over and back, transporting the library, office equipment, furniture and so on. Most of the buildings were only partially finished. Some heating had not yet been installed. The work programme continued to function full blast. More studies were gradually completed.

One of the most remarkable contributors to the actual work and to the work programme was a young New England woman—scarcely thirty—named Molly Gregory, who worked as an assistant to Mr Albers (in the art classes) and who was both artist and superb artisan. She designed furniture and she made it. The Jalowetz Cottage was habitable, the lodges (dormitories) were more or less heated, and little by little the beautiful, panelled class rooms and apartments in the Studies Building were finished. But life demanded a great deal of resourcefulness and improvising. We were all happy to complete the various operations, to live and work in the new rooms and we were extremely proud of our experts and of our own humbler parts in the operations. The cottages began to take on the personalities of their tenants: the cool whiteness of the Albers' flat in 'Roadside' (upstairs) and the Dreier's flat (downstairs), with their Steinway and numerous Albers paintings; the Mangolds'

The Studies Building, Black Mountain College



The Jalowetz House, architect A. Lawrence Kocher. Mr Kocher writes: 'It was the result of class instruction on low-cost house design. There was special emphasis on acoustical control since it was to be the Director of Music's house.'



gemü.lich, book-filled apartment in 'Mountain Stream', and so on.

The pace of life at B M C quickened immeasurably that year. The pulses and minds quickened as well. In most cases, the academic work did not suffer, and in many, it may have been livelier and more intense. The more expert

workers among the students often spent five afternoons of the week at the jobs, but usually they also fulfilled the demands of their regular studies very well. And the excitement of the operation was infectious.

The fact that the work was an actual necessity in order 'to save the college' brought meaning and urgency to the tasks. And the tasks were not fictional or merely invented to give young people practical experience. The educational experience involved in taking initiative and responsibility in the work programme was integrated in the total process. It was a case of genuinely facing reality and involved more than winning a football game.

This 'total approach' was evident earlier in the theatre work of Schawinsky and Wunsch (though with the obvious differences of the American and European viewpoint), as well as in the art and literature. The whole person was taken into account —first, as an individual, and subsequently, as a member of the community. The communal struggle for survival served to lessen the inevitable internal tensions of the college—to heal a few old wounds — and, in the words of a popular song of the time, 'to accentuate the positive'.

Note on 'The Building Project and Work Program' from Black Mountain College Bulletin 6

Designed to make the best use of novice workers and of building materials on the property, (the building) will cost less than half of what it would cost if built by a contractor. The ground floor, from the hillside to the terrace under the building, and the fire-tower, against the hillside, are of masonry in native stone. The greater part of the building is supported by concrete and steel columns in cantilever construction. The sheathing of the outer walls is of large corrugated sheets of Transite, an asbestos synthetic, the sections of which are easily screwed in place. The continuous steel-sash windows are of the projecting type and run almost the length of the two upper floors. The skeleton of the building is timber, with inner walls of plywood over an acoustical core.

This building is the largest of the group of four shown in the plan . . . and contains sixty student studies, ten faculty studies, and studies for the Art Department. The group of buildings is situated at the northwest edge of the lake, between the hillside and the water. When buildings and landscaping are completed, the two main wings of the group will roughly parallel the lakeshore, at a distance of about twenty-five yards. The three other units that the whole plan calls for — a second student studies building, a library, and a small building for offices — will be constructed as rapidly as finances and time permit.

In 1944, I was artist-in-residence at the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia. The Charlot family, at the time we left for Black Mountain College: myself, my wife Zohmah, Ann, 4 years, John, 3 years, Martin, born in Athens, 3 months old. Also our colored maid, Maud.

June 23

Leave Athens 1.30 p.m. Arrive Asheville at 8 p.m. Dinner, To B.M. At Lodge. Baby noisy. Bad night.

24 See campus. Coffee at Eddie Dreier's. Siesta. Shop in town: lamps etc. Bathe in lake.

25 Sunday. Mass 10.30. The children bathe all day long. Picnic at Study Bldg.

26 Bathe in lake with Zohmah and John. Read *Siennese Ptg.*

27 Vist to our new home. No ice box! Tea at Bobby Dreier's.

28 I am to paint the house tomorrow!

29 Paint all day long. I paint the house under the supervision of a house painter. Help comes from 4 girl students. Bathe 5 p.m.

30 a.m. I paint the kitchen floor. Our things not yet arrived from Athens. p.m. Things arrive. Unpack in new house. Bad night. Somewhat sad.

July 1

At house. Uncrate the Bendix. Carry boxes to basement.

2 Wunsch to house. We buy 10 tickets for a radio raffle.

3 Our new house is called 'The Black Dwarf'. We sleep in it.

4 Evening, general meeting. Speech Wunsch, etc.

5 Evening, informal class. We begin tomorrow. Awaiting arrival Albers. Anni lends us an Albers painting for the house: 'Visitation'. (The title of the ptg. was not the artist's

own. My wife called it so, saying she was not overjoyed to have two pregnant women depicted on our walls. For others, it was an abstraction.)

6 2 p.m. Class. Model in bathing suit. Rain.

8 To B.M. village. Need gas ration tickets to go to church. See Fr. Kerry. Evening. Concert. Great Mendelsohn. After, at the Jalowetz's.

9 Mass 10.30. Swap Fr. Kerry gas tickets for concert tickets. We receive in new house. I do hollandaise with margarine and lemon. Good. Evening: work in studio.

11 My class on theory of art. A few drawings.

12 Sort art photos for dept. Mostly rejects from Fogg. Evening: lecture by Jalowetz. Beautiful rendition of Bach/ Monteverdi.

16 Albers arrives. Happy to see him. After dinner short talk by Albers in the Round House.

17 Opening of Art Institute. Schedules arranged. The Breitenbachs here. My drawing class. Bathe.

8.15. I talk on Breughel to 10.15. Then to the Albers.

(Those evening talks were part of the Art Institute, open to all.)

19 Class p.m. painting. Zohmah prepares tea with hot spices. Evening. Lotti Leonard talks on song.

20 To Asheville in Bobbycat. Buy

groceries, other materials. Evening. Square dancing in dining hall. Nice.

(The Bobbycat was the Dreiers' station wagon.)

21 a.m. Albers class on design. Very interesting. p.m. Tea at Bobby's for Breitenbach.

22 Drawing class a.m. Albers also corrects.

Evening. Yela Pessl at harpsichord. Beautiful concert well attended. *Tombeau de Couperin*.

23 Mass 10.30. I begin drawing on the piles in view of painting a fresco.

24 My first class on composition: '2 dimensions'. Anni and Albers both attend. Task given: an analysis of Taddeo Gaddi and Giotto. Draw on piles. Also draw Yela at harpsichord.

Evening. Breitenbach lectures on photography. Party at the Albers'.

25 a.m. My drawing class. p.m. Panel on art education. Evening at Yela Pessl. Good goulash.

26 Drawing class held in the open. I put paper for cartoon on pile No. 1.

Evening. Mrs Gilmore (Elizabeth Gilmore Holt) talks on 'The third kind of madness'. Chocolate at the Albers afterwards.

27 a.m. Draw cartoon for *Inspiration*. On brown paper with chalk highlights.

Breitenbach photographs me before cartoon fresco.

p.m. To Asheville w. Wunsch. Buy Rembrandt and Vermeer.

28 a.m. Albers' class on design. Mimbres pottery. Disagreeable interruptions. I begin draw panel No. 2 *Tempest*. We lash tarpaulin over cartoon. Red snapper for dinner. Evening. Panel on the dance w. Agnes de Mille. After, square dancing. Zohmah dances.

29 a.m. Drawing class. p.m. Continue cartoon of panel No. 2, version 2, from a drawing posed for by Mary. Evening. Brahms concert. Esther Worden Day visits from Blue Ridge.

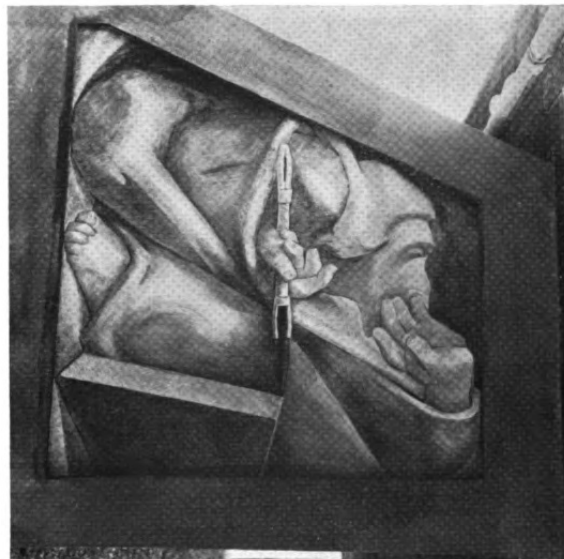
30 Mass. At breakfast Breitenbach takes photographs of the children. Tea at the Straus'. Dinner at the Dreiers', w. onion soup. Agnes de Mille, Humphrey. Baby Martin gives us a bad night.

31 a.m. Class in composition. Correct 'home work' after Giotto, Daddi. p.m. Show Agnes de Mille photos of Georgia murals, the cartoons etc ... Evening. Breitenbach lectures on photo portraits.

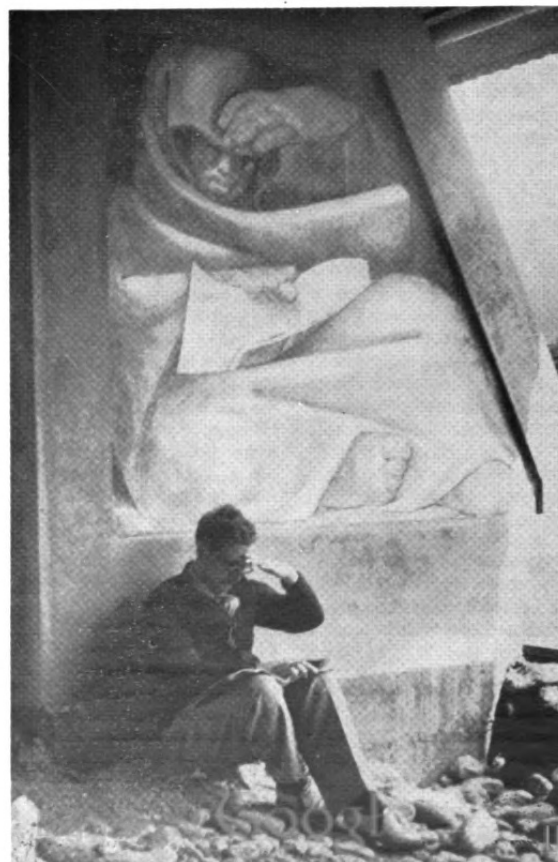
August 1 Drawing class. p.m. I write synopsis Mexican murals book for Knopf. Evening at Albers. See his paintings. New ones beautiful. We speak of an exchange. Schnapps.

(Eventually the book was published by Yale Univ. Press under the title 'Mexican Mural Renaissance, 1920-1925'.)

'Tempest', mural by Jean Charlot, B M C 1944. Photo courtesy State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.



'Study', mural by Jean Charlot, B M C 1944 with Charlot posing for his completed work. Photo: Zohmah Charlot



2

a.m. Class. p.m. I finish writing synopsis book for Knopf. Evening. I talk on El Greco. After, party at house. Martin discovers his feet.

3

Work on Mexican book w. Zohmah. Students help change paper for panel No. 2. Will begin tomorrow version 3. Bathe in lake w. Zohmah and children.

4

a.m. Design class by Albers, on textures. p.m. Finish drawing version 3, panel 2. Evening. Run extra slides El Greco in North Lodge.

7

Amédée Ozenfant arrives a.m. Student's meet new professors. 10.30. My class in composition. p.m. Children to doctor. Martin takes shot for whooping cough. Evening. Rudofsky lectures (on costume). After, party at the Albers'. Zohmah comes dressed à la Rudofsky, in a bedsheet.

8

Drawing class a.m. and p.m. general assembly, secret. Decisions taken split faculty. 18 students are out, including Mary Krieger who comes to see me. After tea, good class on sculpture by de Creeft: how to fill in the stone silhouette. After dinner see photos. Great tension felt all day apropos the decisions taken.

9

De Creeft attends my drawing class. No model available so we use a cushion instead. (The janitor, who often found a professional pretext to peek in at the life class, was disappointed that day.) Evening Ozenfant lectures. Illus:rates with beautifully

chosen pebbles and shells.

After, party at Albers'. Mary to go to Smith College.

10

Begun version 2 of panel 1. Telephone call: old putty lime is not to be found. p.m. Present at class on Plato by Dr Straus. Very interesting. After dinner, square dancing. I dance. Long conversation w. de Creeft.

11

Design class Albers. Folded paper, cut paper. p.m. Finish version 2 of panel 1. More compact. After dinner Ozenfant shows his own slides in Lodge. After, at Albers': Ozenfant, de Creeft, myself. Look at paintings. Drink. Good conversation.

12

Drawing class a.m. and p.m. begin trace panel 1. Evening concert. Zohmah has a cold. We leave early.

13

Mass 10.30. At 2 p.m. general meeting all B.M. people. Explosion! My mason arrives. We talk about the fresco job.

14

Mason here at 8.30. Begins fresco job. Frame put on panel 2 with help from Faith (a student) etc . . . Mary grinds colors, after the blends from the maquette. We shall keep samples of colors for each day in test tubes.

(In fresco painting, the colors are pre-mixed dry pigment, before they are ground in water.)

9.30. My class. Composite image of plan and elevation. p.m. I paint portrait of Yela Pessl, 8" x 10". Given to her. Evening, Rudofsky talks on

costume. After, Ozenfant and de Creeft at house. Conversation.

15

To Mass late for lack of gas. Drawing class a.m. Two models pose together. The mason finishes both frames. To Asheville w. Zohmah. Bought fresco brushes, and a haircut.

Evening. Ozenfant lectures in French to French class on the XVIIIth Century.

16

Drawing class a.m. Mason puts on second coat, 4 of cement to 1 of sand. Tomorrow, final coat. p.m. I show the cartoons to Ozenfant. His criticism: not enough space for the volumes.

Evening. Ozenfant lectures on pre-forms. After, party at the Albers', with Gropius present.

17

Fresco begun. Mason puts mortar from 7.15 a.m. to 1 p.m. Too wet. Rain p.m. I paint area 1 of panel 1 *Inspiration* to 5.30. Rather good. Mary, Faith, Joan help. Very tired. Zohmah brings dinner to house in the rain.

After, last talk by Ozenfant. Questions answered.

18

Panel 1, area 2. Mason works from 7.15 to 12.30 p.m. Mason puts area 1, panel 2. I paint to 6 p.m. J. B. Neumann arrives. Happy to see him.

19

Panel 2, area 2. I paint from 8.30 to 3 p.m. Rather good. Wunsch celebrates completion frescos with cocoa and coffee. Evening. Concert. Beethoven. Schubert.

(The two panels were painted in three days. It appears that

on the 18th, I painted both area 2, panel 1, and area 1, panel 2.)

20

Mass 10.30. Good sermon. De Amico arrives. Picnic dinner in the forest. De Creeft cooks Catalan rice and chicken. Very good. Gropius present. etc . . .

22

Albers, good drawing class a.m. and p.m. Mary leaves. We accompany her to B.M. village. Also to get gas for our own departure. Evening. J. B. Neumann displays facsimiles of fifteenth century woodcuts in dining hall. Talks about them.

23

Drawing class a.m. The board refuses us the gas needed to go to Mass. Zohmah sad, I upset.

p.m. Zohmah makes decorations with paper birds for tonight's party.

Evening. Gropius lectures on post-war housing. Birthday party for Charles. Costumes. Gropius disguised with lobster antennae.

26

a.m. Zohmah goes to get train reservations. I help hang Albers' show. Large ptgs. on pillars. Also shows stained glass and black and white. Nice effect. Johnnie goes fishing w. Archie. Evening concert Edward Steuermann.

28

a.m. Class in composition. Fourth dimension. Analyse the *Meninas* of Velasquez with the help of a three-dimensional maquette by Dick Albany. p.m. Work on my coming lecture on Albers.

Evening. Gropius lectures on city planning w. accent on the

family as unit. After, old-fashioned reception at Wunsch's.

29

a.m. I walk through the woods to prepare Albers' lecture. Meet J. B. Neumann who works on his lecture! 16 drawings for Sheed. Work on opera costumes for Cohan, Saturday.

(The drawings were for 'The Trumpet', the trade publication of the publishers, Sheed and Ward.)

After dinner, I talk in French to French class. Subject French painting in the XVIIIth Century.

30

a.m. Drawing class. Work on lecture in the woods. Evening. My talk, 'Josef Albers, his life and times'. Use original ptgs. instead of slides. After, party at Albers'.

31

I prepare to hang my show: photos of Georgia murals and the painting bought by Hansgirt. Very tired. Evening. Good lecture by J.B.: 'From Rembrandt to Klee'. After, to the Lowinskys'.

September 1

Paint portrait Maud a.m. oil 10" x 8". For the children if she must leave us. p.m. Paint portrait Bobby Dreier for her. 10" x 8". Evening. Hang in the dining hall the cartoons for the frescos made here.

2

Cut paper accessories for Jalowetz party. Telegram from Mabel (*Maud's mother*) that Maud can stay with us.

p.m. Pack. Visit the Jalowetz. Concert. all cantata XVI

Century with Lowinsky. Milhaud, Claudel with Jalowetz Beautiful.

After, comical bull fight arranged by de Creeft. John Reiss as *Presidente*. Very successful.

3

Mass 10.30. Rehearsal 2 p.m. Flute and Orpheus. 5 p.m. Compare notes on students with Albers and de Creeft.

Evening. Opera. After, with Zohmah to Leonard.

4

Last day at Black Mountain. Finish packing. The whole family dines at dining hall. Coffee at Lowinsky's. The Albers take us to the station. Train (for New York) leaves 4.30 p.m.

No. 6: 'De Stijl'

(Author Index part 1:
to Theo van Doesburg)

*Series edited by Mike Weaver,
37 West Garth Road,
Exeter, Devon, England*



Above is the logotype designed by Vilmos Huszár and used on the title page up to issue 3/12.

The second part of the Author Index, from Pétro van Doesburg, will be published in Form 7. The second series of translations of writings on architecture from 'De Stijl', promised for this issue, has been unavoidably held over.

Dates, editor:

76 separate issues in all, 75 edited by Theo van Doesburg, plus final memorial van Doesburg number. Issues, monthly in the first place, were numbered by yearly volumes, and are indexed here as 1/1 (to signify year 1, number 1), 1/2, 1/3 ... 2/1 etc.

1/1: Oct. 1917; 1/2: Dec. 1917; 1/3: Jan. 1918 (wrongly numbered 1/4); 1/4: Feb. 1918; 1/5: March 1918; 1/6: April 1918; 1/7: May 1918; 1/8: June 1918; 1/9: July 1918; 1/10: Aug. 1918; 1/11: Sept. 1918; 1/12: Oct. 1918; 2/1: Nov. 1918; 2/2: Dec. 1918; 2/3: Jan. 1919; 2/4: Feb. 1919; 2/5: March 1919; 2/6: April 1919; 2/7: May 1919; 2/8: June 1919; 2/9: July 1919; 2/10: Aug. 1919; 2/11: Sept. 1919; 2/12: Oct. 1919; 3/1: Nov. 1919; 3/2: Dec. 1919; 3/3: Jan. 1920; 3/4: Feb. 1920; 3/5: March 1920; 3/6: April 1920; 3/7: May 1920; 3/8: June 1920; 3/9: July 1920; 3/10: Aug. 1920; 3/11: Sept. 1920; 3/12: Nov. 1920; 4/1: Jan. 1921; 4/2: Feb. 1921; 4/3: March 1921; 4/4: April 1921; 4/5: June 1921; 4/6: June 1921; 4/7: July 1921; 4/8: Aug. 1921; 4/9: Sept. 1921; 4/10: Oct. 1921; 4/11: Nov. 1921 ('Anthologie-Bonset', special issue devoted to poems by I. K. Bonset); 4/12: Dec. 1921; 5/1: Jan. 1922; 5/2: Feb. 1922; 5/3: March 1922; 5/4: April 1922; 5/5: May 1922; 5/6: June 1922; 5/7: July 1922; 5/8: Aug. 1922; 5/9: Sept. 1922; 5/10 and 11 (special double number, portfolio of drawings by El Lissitzky); 5/12: Dec. 1922; 6/1: March 1923; 6/2: April 1923; 6/3-4: May/June

1923; 6/5 (no month given) 1923; (the remaining numbers in volume 6 are headed 'series XII') 6/6-7: 1924; 6/8: 1924; 6/9: 1924-1925; 6/10-11: 1924-1925; 6/12 (headed 'series XI') 1924-1925; (numbers in volumes 7 and 8 are numbered 73, 74, 75 ... etc: no volume 7 numbers 1 and 2 ('71' and '72') appear: numbers in volume 7 are headed 'series XIII') 7/3-4 ('73-74') 1926; 7/5-6 ('75-76') 1926-1927; 7/7 ('77') 1926-1927; 7/8 (numbered 8 on cover, 7 (wrongly) on title page) 1926-1927 (after this number a prospectus was published for the following 'jubilee' number, entitled '10 Jaren Stijl 1917-1927'); Jubilee number to celebrate 10 years of publication, numbered '79-84' ('series XIV'), indexed here as 8/1-4: 1927; 8/5-6 ('85-86', 'series XV') 1928; 8/7-9 ('87-88-89', special number devoted to interiors at l'Aubette, Strasbourg by Th.v.D., Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp); final memorial number 'Van Doesburg 1917-1931', indexed here as 9

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Bibliography:

Jaffé, H. L. C., *De Stijl 1917-1927*, Amsterdam 1956 (q.v. for further bibliography).

Notes on page-numbering etc.

Pages are numbered in sequence through each volume, starting again at 1 with a new volume. Pages in 3/4 are wrongly numbered 21 to 28, and are indexed here in correct sequence as 33 to 40 respectively. In volumes 1 to 3 plates (apart from a few small diagrams etc.) are given roman numerals, I to XVII in volume 1, I to XXIII in Volume 2, I to XIV in volume 3, and appear on separate pages without page numbers (they are indexed here as plate I, plate II etc.). From volume 4 plates appear in the body of the text, although a few still appear on pages without numbers also. From volume 4

a two-column layout is adopted, and *each column* is numbered (except for 4/11 where each page is numbered) in sequence by volumes: the index here is by column numbers where these apply. Separate indexes were published originally with the magazine, listing articles by authors, plates, and illustrations in the text, for volumes 1, 2 and 3 only.

All articles, items *signed* Theo van Doesburg, 'Th.v.D.' etc. are indexed here under van Doesburg: 'I. K. Bonset' and 'Aldo Camini' are indexed separately as such. All other unsigned contributions, announcements etc., and items signed 'Redactie', 'Red.', 'De Stijl' etc., are indexed under 'Editorial' (although in some cases these are listed under Theo van Doesburg in the original De Stijl indexes, or referred to as by van Doesburg in later issues). Also various De Stijl manifestos are indexed under 'Editorial' and not under all their separate signatories (who are listed with the entry).

(I=illustration)

(P=poe^try or experimen^tal prose)

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Kinetic Art in Czechoslovakia—the 'Synthesis' Group, Milan Dobes, Jan Slavik: **Cinema and Semiology: Some Points of Contact** by Peter Wollen: **New American Photography: Airfields**, poem by Simon Cutts: **Vasarely and the Triumph of Structuralism** by Abraham A. Moles: **Great Little Magazines** No. 6: **De Stijl** (author index part 2)

*Joel Meyerowitz: Untitled, 1965.
Courtesy of George Eastman
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(The Black Mountain College series will be continued in Form 8 with an article by Xanti Schawinsky)

Editors

Philip Steadman
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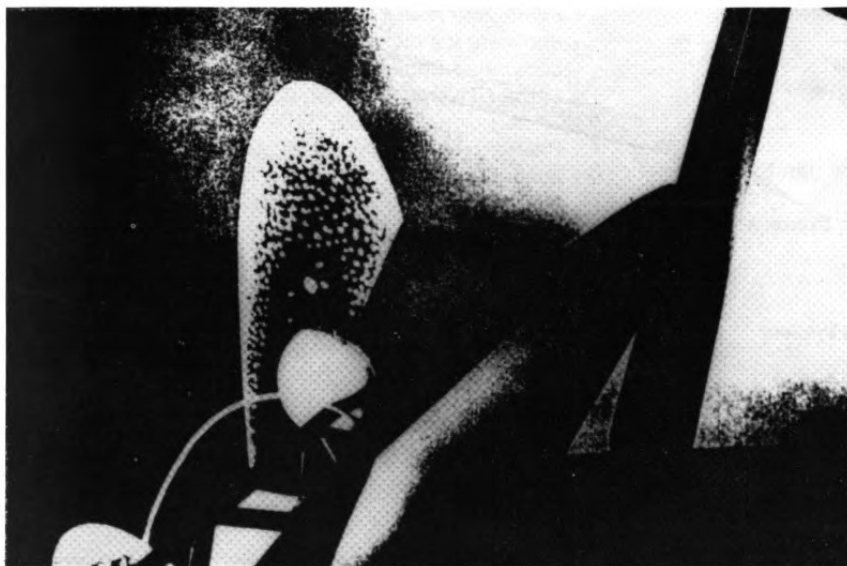
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Above. Sculpture with lights, by Zdenek Pesanek, from the 1920s.

Right. Karel Benes and Ladislav Halada: frame from kinetic film 'Homo', 1966, dedicated to the memory of Pesanek.



Kinetic art is far from being a novelty in Czechoslovakia. The Czech artist Zdenek Pesanek was working with light and movement in the 1930s, and published in 1941 a theoretical study entitled *Kinetismus*. Yet the progress of this new art form was interrupted for twenty years. It was only in the 1960s that Kinetic art reappeared in Czechoslovakia, with fruitful results that are obvious from the short survey which follows. Milan Dobes shows a close acquaintance with the styles of such Western artists as Vasarely, Schoffer and Kosice—all of Hungarian origins. Yet there is considerable individuality in his own work, which ranges from constructions involving the use of moving light to finely executed 'optical' paintings in oil and tempera. The experimental film *Volumes* (1966), by Jan Slavik and Ladislav Halada, displays an equally wide range of techniques, evoking a field of research which has recently been neglected in Western Europe. Finally, Prague has its own formally constituted group of kinetic artists, whose program is presented here by their chief spokesman, Dusan Konecny.

Kinetic art is by no means new in Czechoslovakia. The tradition was initiated by Zdenek Pesanek, who died not long ago. With the lapse of time his importance has not diminished but, on the contrary, has grown both in the national and the European context. A particular feature of his work was his creative intensity and his unifying of a vast field of

interests. There was probably no area or method explored in the development of kinetic art which Pesanek did not touch upon in a career which started in the '20s. Luminous plastics, colour-music, luminodynamic performances, kinetic fountains, kinetic film, advertising — in all these he never remained on the surface, but strove for the highest standards, leaving the signs of his talent upon every domain and every technique. From the start he attempted to generalise his practical activity in theoretical terms, and found in theory new creative implications. In the late '20s he began work on his book *Kinetismus* which was published in Prague in 1941.

The work of Zdenek Pesanek is permeated by his firm conviction that Kinetism is the art of the future. This belief was not merely a result of personal prejudice, but followed from the scientific analysis of the evolution of modern art and from the study of the basic premises of Kinetism — in science, technology, the psychology and physiology of the consumer, the sociology of avant-garde art etc. Pesanek pleaded that Kinetism should be kept free from commercial pressure and the vagaries of fashion. He demonstrated in his work that it could be successfully developed even under the modest conditions which he was forced to put up with throughout his life as a result of the lack of comprehension by experts as well as by contractors and the general public. He proved that

even under these circumstances the true quality of kinetic works need not necessarily be sacrificed.

The 'Synthesis' group accepts the heritage of Pesanek. It was formed in 1964, though some of its members had been experimenting in Kinetic art for several years previously (Vladislav Cap, Karel Benes, Jan Antonin Pacak, Jaroslav Vaculik). The constitution of the group was encouraged by the personal interest of Pesanek, and also to a great extent by the visit of Frank Malina to Prague which resulted in personal discussions with the members. Another great encouragement was the close contact with the 'Dvizdenije' group in Moscow under Lev Nusberg, which had been established as early as 1963, thanks to Helena Dubova.

The first exhibition arranged by the Synthesis group took place in 1966 as part of the 'Interscena '66' exhibition which had been arranged in the 'ULUV' hall, Prague, on the occasion of the International Symposium of Scenography. Those who took part were Vladislav Cap, Jaroslav Vaculik, Karel Benes, Lubomir Ruzicka, Stanislav Zippe, Stanislav Toman, Jan Antonin Pacak, Helena Dubova, Robert Pelouch: Milan Dobes and Karel Malich contributed as guests. Besides kinetic objects and performances this exhibition included static works and drawings.

Critics in Prague noted that two streams were combined in this exhibition — that of

Constructivism, which originated with the Soviet avant-garde, and that of Op art, which came to our country from Western Europe. This was quite natural since avant-garde art has always been an international affair which does not exclude but in fact welcomes the complicated interchange of reciprocal influences. Of course this does not mean that the Synthesis group had no individual personality and program. These were already evident in the first exhibition.

The Synthesis group took its stand upon the humanist vision of Zdenek Pesanek, and declared from the outset that it conceived kinetic art as the humanisation of modern techniques. It aims to make use of all accessible technical equipment, but not so as to put the technical element in the forefront, techniques being not the aim but the imperceptible basis of the kinetic vocabulary. The kinetic performance is seen as a kinetic poem. The group maintains exactly the same attitude to the geometrical elements of visual art. As opposed to the cool, impersonal rationalism of some Czechoslovak representatives of visual art and programmed painting, it stresses the emotive and poetic qualities of geometrical creation, the magic of the individual conception and the charm of the artist's personal touch.

These principles have endured although the passage of time has brought new tasks. Kineticism has remained the

central element of the work of the group. But the sphere of interests is growing larger. The group does not want to forego investigation into the problems of synthesis which lie beyond the borders of Kinetism. For example, it is beginning to branch out into architecture and industrial design, although in this respect it is for the moment confined to rather narrow tasks. Above all, it is concerned that the contact of kinetic creation with architecture and industrial design should lead to the construction of a specific new space for kinetic performances, the investigation of the luminous characteristics of materials and forms etc.

The Synthesis group has grown in numbers since 1964. It now has 19 members as opposed to the original 10. But for the moment there are no plans to enlarge it much further. The structure of the group has also changed. The core which consists of kinetists has been supplemented by a composer, Dr Vaclav Kucera, who is active in the sphere of electronic music, a choreographer V. Pokorny, an architect Jan Kaplicky, the industrial designers L. Kaprasova and V. Cigler, and the electronic artist L. Sikova.

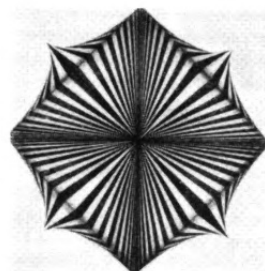
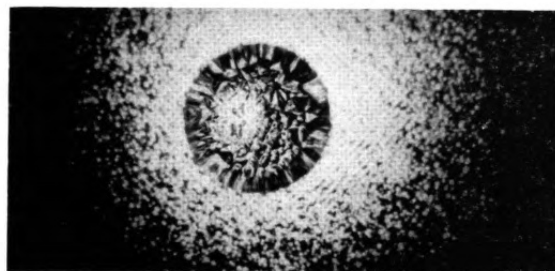
In the spring of 1968 the Synthesis group intends to present the results of its activity for the second time. The event will take place in the Prague Theatre of Music, which is known all over the world for its splendid acoustics and its modern electronic

equipment. The exhibition hall of this theatre will be deprived of the character of an art gallery. The group will try to form a special space for the perception of kinetic objects. Certainly it will abandon the principle of the 'black cave' that was used on the occasion of its first exhibition and is no longer satisfactory. It will test the results of this experiment through psychological observation of those who visit the exhibition.

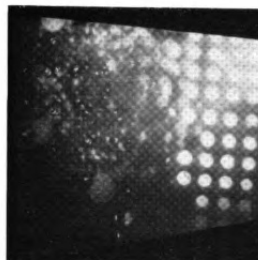
Under the direction of Vladislav Cap, Dr Kucera and V. Pokorny the group is preparing a kinetic ballet. For the first time there will be a presentation of the kinetic films of Karel Benes and Jan Slavik, which have up to now been shown only to a narrow circle of experts. Both of these artists have worked in collaboration with L. Halada. Karel Benes, who was represented in the 1966 exhibition of the group by a demonstration of the 'sound-film', has created a kinetic film 'Homo', dedicated to the memory of Zdenek Pesanek. The film uses as its central theme the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci and is based upon the rhythmical contrast between geometrical elements and free graphic structures. The second kinetic film, 'Volumes' by Jan Slavik, is based upon the principles of Op art. But the setting of these motifs into space and motion is at the same time their negation, as the quality of illusion tends to evaporate. It is necessary to remark that all the members of the Synthesis group are moving away from the production of

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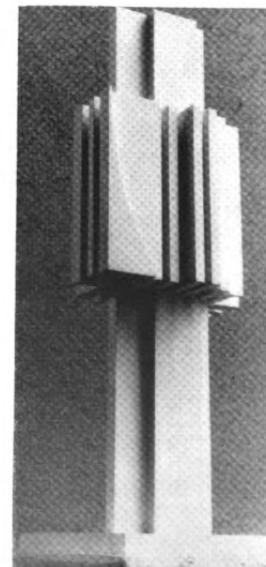
1. Vladislav Cap: 'Fleur', glass construction 1967. 2. Helena Dubova: 'Target IV', 1965. 3. Lida Kaprasova: 'Drapery of space', 1967



4. Jan Antonin Pacak: 'Luminous Targets', 1966. 5. Stanislav Toman: 'Fantastic drawing', 1966. 6. Vladislav Cap: 'Fokus II', 1966



7. Ladislav Halada: 'Luminous plays', 1967. 8. Stanislav Zippe: sculpture, 1966



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Milan Dobes

Op art, which was represented rather extensively in the 1966 exhibition, and consequently became fashionable in Czechoslovakia. Elements of Op art are now only being used at the most as components of kinetic works. Besides the films mentioned above the second exhibition will also include demonstrations of Halada's original experiments with light and movement.

Vladislav Cap and Stanislav Zipse are working on luminodynamic performances. The former was represented in the 1966 exhibition by the kinetic performance Focus II. In the same year his glass kinetic object successfully took part in the poetry evening 'The Red Strawberries', held at the poetry tavern 'Viola' in Prague with poems by Antonin Bartuska. Cap is now creating 'The Miniatures', a coloured light object in which he applies a system of lenses and screen glass. Glass design has a long tradition in Czechoslovakia, and it occupies the interest of kinetic artists Helena Dubova (luminous plastics) and Jan A. Pacak (kinetic vitreous compositions).

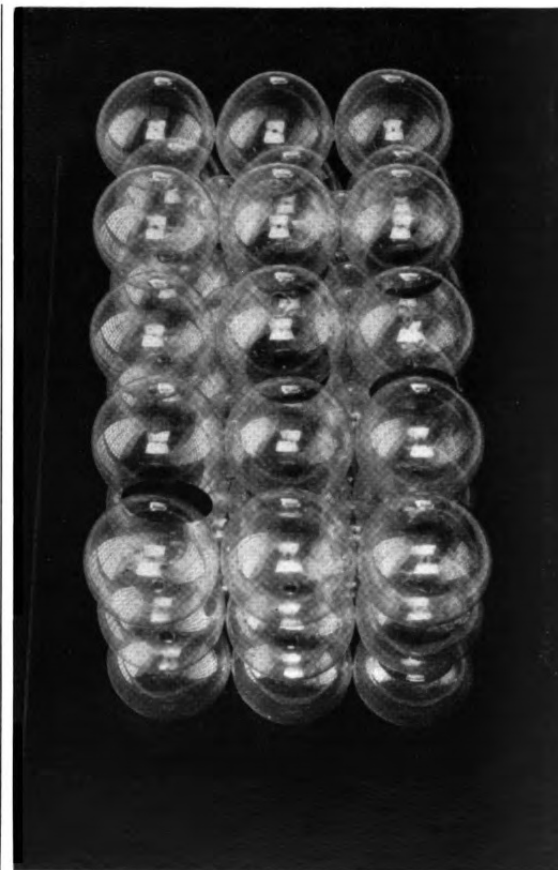
Zipse, Toman and Dubova represent the geometrical tendency within the group. Each strives according to their individual temperament for a poetic purity of content, which is at the same time divorced from cool rationalism.

Lubomir Ruzicka works with a rare sense of the specific charm of each material —

metal, glass, plastics, concrete etc. Jan A. Pacak, who is by the way a member of the Olympics — the most successful pop group in Czechoslovakia — breaks the strict geometry of the vitreous compositions by an impulsive dislocation of the forms. Sometimes he attempts to animate his kinetic creations by the incorporation of elements akin to folk art — as in the luminous targets represented in the 1966 exhibition. The magnificent geometrical textiles and jewellery by L. Kaprasova utilise the optical properties of the material.

The Synthesis group has cooperated with some kinetic artists who are working independently, such as Milan Dobes, from Bratislava, and also with members of other groups, such as Karel Malich and Radek Kratina. It disclaims even the most distant connection with the spirit of Op art, lifeless rationalism and purely formal Constructivism, which are becoming the dominant fashion in Czechoslovakia, and also with the cheap, pompous devices used in the well-known Prague theatre 'Laterna Magica', and in the so-called 'Polyecran' which figured in the Czechoslovak pavilion at Expo '67.

The members of this group, in the main very young people, share the concern of the members of the Soviet group 'Dvizdenije' with the inner authenticity and the outward accomplishment of their artistic work.



Milan Dobes was born on 29 July 1929 at Prerov in Slovakia, and entered the Bratislava Academy of Art in 1951. Through several study trips abroad he became familiar with contemporary art in Paris, New York and London. His particular concern with Kinetic art was demonstrated for the first time in an exhibition at the Currian

Majernik Gallery, Bratislava, in the autumn of 1965. He is not a member of the 'Synthesis' Group, but a member of the Union of Slovak Artists. The work illustrated here is 'Rhythm of Glass III' (photo: Roman Buncak).

The Kinetic Film 'Volumes' by Jan Slavik

Text reprinted from 'Film & Doba', Prague, No. 5, 1967;
and translated by Mary E. Humphries

Right. Two series of frames from 'Volumes', kinetic film by Jan Slavik and Ladislav Halada, 1966

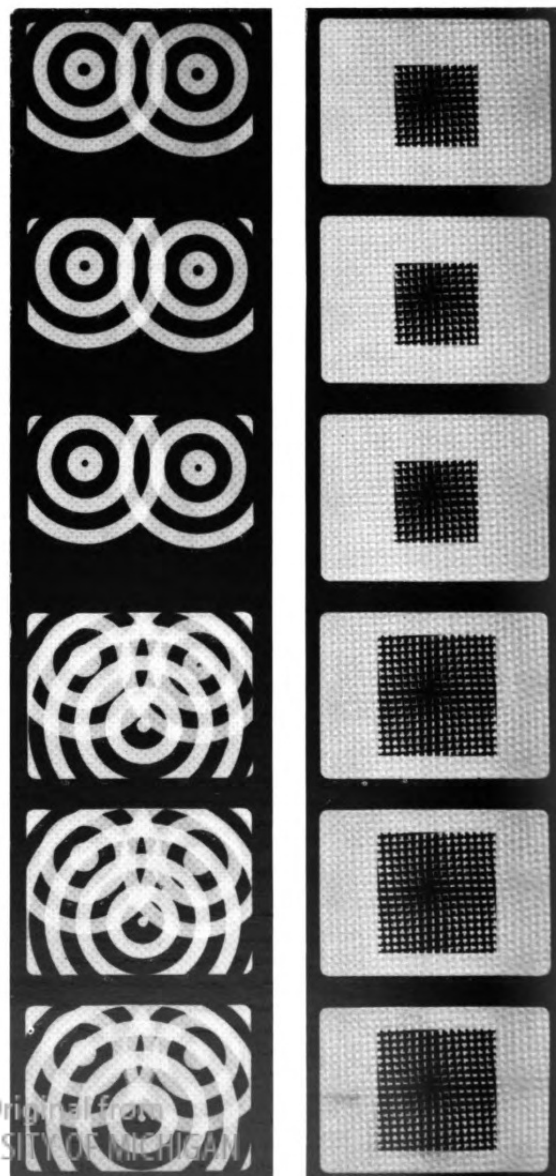
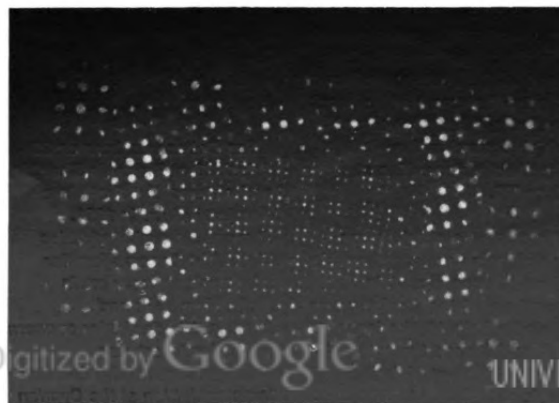
The graphic artist Jan Slavik studies at the School of Commercial Art, Prague, in the studio of Prof. Adolf Hoffmeister. The technician Ladislav Halada both devised and constructed the 'Phazograph', a complicated machine for the automatic graphic distribution of moving phases according to a pre-set program.

Slavik and Halada have formed a partnership to test the expressive possibilities of this invention. In the course of their studies at the School of Commercial Art, they produced the experimental animated film *Volumes* (1966), which made use of the graphic principles and methods of Op art, Kinetic art and geometric abstraction. Individual sequences in this film are studies of the metamorphosis of lines and shapes, the whole work being unified by electronic music (*Volumes* by Francoise-Bernard Mache). An extraordinary result of the experiment was the

achievement of a most suggestive illusion of space and the plasticity of objects, which was a result of the animation provided by the 'Phazograph'. As the 'Phazograph' is continually being improved, the full number of possibilities which it can contribute to artistic expression in animated films has yet to be discovered. These can only be revealed and realised through systematic and patient creative research.

The Research Department of the School of Commercial Art which deals with short films is now working on a more ambitious use of the 'Phazograph' in the production of animated films in which coded programs are fed into the machine on magnetic tape. Meanwhile Ladislav Halada is working on a further improvement, which involves the principle of reading phases off directly by means of a travelling photo-cell, with no need for re-drawing.

A frame from 'Volumes' (reproduced from 'Film & Doba')



Is it possible to relate the theoretical study of film and film aesthetics to the general theory of semiology, insofar as it has been elaborated? We need to ask this question because traditional aesthetics has proved incapable of coming to terms with twentieth century art. It has not entered the modern age.

1. The science of semiology was first posited by Ferdinand de Saussure in his lectures at the University of Geneva, posthumously collected and published by his devoted students. Saussure envisaged that linguistics, already a highly developed discipline, would eventually be considered a particular branch of semiology, the general science of signs. Semiology was later explored in the United States, under the name of semiotic, by Morris, who deflected it in the direction of Carnapian logic and behaviourist psychology: it is of no further interest to us in this Anglo-Saxon form.

Most attempts to develop Saussure's idea of semiology have concentrated on micro-languages, such as the highway code, ships' signalling systems, the language of fans, etc. However, these are evidently extremely limited cases and, for the most part, parasitic on verbal language itself. Barthes, as a result of his investigations into the language of fashion, reached the conclusion that it is only in very rare cases that non-verbal language can exist without auxiliary support from words. cursory examination seems to bear this out. Even such highly developed and intellectualized systems as music and painting constantly have recourse to words, particularly at a popular level: songs, cartoons, etc. Cinema, of course, is another case in point.

However, it is only recently that there has been any contact between semiology and the study of film, despite the fact

that there is a widespread idea that cinema is in some way a language, or at least has a grammar. The idea usually runs along the lines that the shot (or take, though this raises problems) is logomorphic, in some way analogous to a word, and that the linking of shots by editing is a kind of syntax. This idea seems particularly current in books on theory of film and in educational circles, perhaps because of the obvious pedagogic charm of the over-simplification to which it lends itself.

2. The principal source for this logomorphic view of cinema was Eisenstein and his theories, of course, were given additional weight by his fame as a director. However, over the years there has been a definite swing of the critical pendulum in the opposite direction. The main theoretical antagonist of Eisenstein was André Bazin, whose ideas have become well-known through the influence he exerted on the magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Broadly speaking the heroes of Bazin's view of cinema were Murnau, Renoir, Welles and Rossellini. He enthusiastically applauded their use of the long take, the travelling shot, deep focus, natural lighting and locations, etc. The burden of his argument was that the cinema should reflect the continuity and homogeneity of the real world; montage was a wilful and destructive intervention on the part of the director. Bazin's distrust of the director also led him towards a movement and genre theory of cinema, opposed to the main *Cahiers du Cinéma* line

of the auteur theory: I shall return to this point later.

In recent years there have been two outstanding recapitulations and elaborations of Bazin's ideas: Charles Barr's essay on *CinemaScope* in *Film Quarterly* (Summer 1963) and Christian Metz's article, *Le Cinéma; Langue ou langage?* in *Communications* 4, 1964. Barr's essay is innocent of any interest in linguistics or semiology, so I shall concentrate here on that of Metz, though I shall return to some of Barr's points, notably his liberal critique of Eisenstein's theory of 'participation' and his view of the relationship of appearance and essence.

Metz's article has a particular interest in that he was trained in linguistics and was presumably a pupil of Barthes. He is fully conversant with the theory and development of linguistics and semiology, but, despite this background, emerges as a champion of the Bazin pro-realism anti-logomorphism school. Indeed, in many respects, he goes further than Bazin and behind the overwhelming apparatus of linguistics he brings to bear on film can be discerned a very traditional Romantic aesthetic. This leads him, in fact, to hint at a Romantic critique of structural linguistics itself.

3. We can see quite clearly from Metz's work how the problem of the relationship of language, symbolism, iconography, etc. to the

cinema is essentially the inverse of the problem of realism. That is to say, to what extent does film communicate by reproducing an imprint, in Bazin's terms, of reality and of the natural expressivity of the world, like a Veronica or a death-mask? Or, to what extent does it mediate and deform (or transform) reality and natural expressivity by displacing it into a more or less arbitrary and non-analogous system and thence reconstituting it, not only imaginatively, but in some sense symbolically?

Metz's answer, in effect, is to suggest that cinema can heighten natural expressivity and it can (indeed, almost must) inscribe it within a fictional 'story' which, as it were, transposes natural expressivity into a different key. Metz's view can be indicated by a scheme as illustrated overleaf.

It can be seen that there are a number of interesting, and unexpected, features of Metz's approach. First, there is the stress he places on the concepts of 'connotation' and 'denotation', which originate from J. S. Mill, and have, I imagine, reached Metz via Hjelmslev and Barthes. Of course, for Mill they represent the end-product of the long development of Romantic aesthetics: we can see behind them Coleridge's distinction between 'imagination' and 'fancy', and the general outlook of 18th century German Romanticism. (And, of course, looking forward from Mill, we come to I. A. Richards and thence, interestingly enough to

	Natural	Cultural		
Cinema	Denotative images, endowed with a primary level of expressivity by nature	Connotative composition, endowing images with a secondary level of expressivity (e.g. the triangular composition of heads in <i>Que Viva Mexico</i>) which can become denotative and non-expressive (e.g. Griffith cross-cutting, originally expressive, becomes part of a conventional code)	(though he does not say if he means equal expressivity) whereas words are not, unless manipulated in a particular way. Actually, Metz admits to a difficulty in a footnote, when he cites Bally's analyses of the spontaneous expressivity of popular language, slang, etc (which are actually at the basis of Mukarovsky's theory of aesthetics) and shifts the abyss between expressivity and non-expressivity from between prose and poetry, to between code and message.	on documentary, despite his attachment to natural reality, for its banal attempt to describe the world denotatively, instead of making use of it to evoke emotion in a fictional context. Indeed, as we shall see, Metz is only willing to see germs of a film grammar in various narrative devices.
Literature		denotative words, the non-expressive "language of the tribe" which are endowed with expressivity by connotative composition	Metz goes on to argue that since cinema is, in his terms 'homogeneously connotative', that is always connotative through and through, therefore it is originally art and, if it is to be coded language at all, only later. Here, of course, we are right back to the beginnings of Romanticism in the 18th century, with Rousseau and Vico, who, in Venturi's words, assigned to art the auroral moment of knowledge. Again, this view was largely popularized by German thinkers: thus Hamann, the ideologist of Storm and Stress, held that poetry was to prose as barter to commerce. In this way, Metz, in his description of the primitive art of cinema, returns to Romantic theories of the development of language from art in primitive societies. Thus he goes on to explain how cross-cutting, which now simply denotes simultaneity of time in two different places, was originally introduced as a connotative device to generate excitement, as in the famous Griffithian last-minute rescue. It is not surprising also that he should launch a severe attack	Clearly, given the views outlined above, Metz feels antipathetic towards Eisenstein, who prided himself on being an intellectual, whose ambition was to make a film of Marx's <i>Capital</i> , and who always associated emotion with shock and practically refused to believe in pathos or ecstasy unless he actually saw people screwing up their faces in agony or jumping out of their skins: thus, in his stage productions, 'rage is expressed through a somersault, exaltation through a <i>salto-mortale</i> , lyricism on "the mast of death"' and sentiment merges with acrobatics Eisenstein, following Meyerhold, believed that ordinary reality was quite inadequate to shock and hence change spectators sunk in apathy and ideology: to fulfil its maieutic function, art must exaggerate and schematise. Here, curiously, we again encounter a completely different heritage of Romanticism in the admixture of the sublime and the grotesque. Thus Lenz, the Storm and Stress dramatist, like Eisenstein, admired the grotesque, the <i>Commedia dell'Arte</i> and caricature: of course, this grotesque strain meets with the Longinian sublime preeminently in
	Charles Barr again). It is also interesting to note how Metz attempts to synthesise the traditionally hostile expressive and mimetic theories of art by compounding the expressive compositional creativity of the director with the natural expressivity of the world. (Barr follows Mill very directly in his antagonism to the pragmatic/conative/rhetorical theory of art. Mill held that when personal expression was 'tinged also by that purpose, by that desire of making an impression upon another mind, then it ceases to be poetry and becomes eloquence'. Barr's hostility to Eisenstein as a propagandist is of the same stamp: actually Barr goes further by comparing Eisenstein's use of montage to that of advertising films and	thus directly linking a theory of language with a theory of art). Secondly, Metz denies that, in the cinema, there can be any distinction between 'poetry' and 'prose'. He goes so far as to say that 'a film of Fellini differs from a US Navy film, made to teach new recruits how to tie knots, through its talent and its aim, not because there is anything more intimate in its semiological mechanism.' This leads him into open conflict with the Italian director, Pasolini, who has recently expounded a theory of poetics of the cinema, again heavily influenced by structural linguistics. Metz's view is the inevitable result of his belief that all visual images, even of bowlines and sheepshanks, are endowed with expressivity		

Shakespeare, the Shakespeare of the Romantics, that is, of Garrick.

But it is the intellectualising, schematising side of Eisenstein for which Metz feels most distaste. He describes Eisenstein's method as being like that of Meccano or an electric train lay-out: first, reality is decomposed into isofunctional units, then these units are reconstituted into a new, devitalised totality: a product, not of *poiesis* or *pseudo-physis* but of *techné*. Metz and Barr use exactly the same image of the *ersatz* to describe this process. Thus Barr: 'Pudovkin (Barr does not make very much attempt to distinguish between Pudovkin and Eisenstein) here reminds one of the bakers who first extract the nourishing parts of the flour, process it, and then put some back as "extra goodness": the result may be eatable but it is hardly the only way to make bread, and one can criticise it for being unnecessary and 'synthetic'. Indeed one could extend the culinary analogy and say that the experience put over by the traditional aesthetic is essentially a *predigested* one. These two epithets have in ordinary usage a literal meaning and, by extension, a metaphorical one, applied pejoratively; the same correlation is valid here.' Or Metz: 'Prosthesis is to the leg as the cybernetic message is to the human phrase. And why not also mention—to introduce a lighter note and a change from Meccano—powdered milk and Nescafé? And all the various kinds of robot?'

Thus Rossellini, for both Barr and Metz, becomes a wholemeal director, while Eisenstein is likened to bleached white bread. And Metz, biting the hand that fed him, extends his condemnation of Eisenstein beyond the cinema to include the great masters of structuralism itself, especially Claude Lévi-Strauss, who are reproached, under the banner of vitalism, with preferring the intellectual model to the reality itself. Thus Barthes's 'structural man' is presented as a robot with prosthetic limbs, uttering computerised binary messages and, when he makes films, making *Strike* and *October*. Monster indeed.

Metz, more cautious than Barr, as befits one publishing in France rather than California, does not link this condemnation of Eisenstein's 'manipulative mind' directly with his political viewpoint. (Barr, who develops an ideology of free choice and judgment, leading naturally from appearance to essence, speaks of Preminger's use of CinemaScope in a way reminiscent of Bazin's equivocal comment on Wyler's use of deep focus: 'William Wyler's deep focus seeks to be liberal and democratic like the consciousness of the American spectator and the heroes of the film!') Interestingly, Barr finds support for his liberal and democratic ideology in an article by Norman Fruchter on teaching film appreciation to unsophisticated teenagers whose visual acuteness has not been stretched by

familiarity with ideas and concepts!) Metz, as far as he can—and we have seen the extent of his commitment to vitalism and Romanticism—tries to conduct his argument as though it were part of an academic discussion about the more knotty problems of semiology. He reproaches Eisenstein for being dissatisfied with the natural sense of things (which is 'continuous, global, without specific significance: like the joy which spreads across a child's face') and therefore seeking specific significances in images and hence falling into his erroneous logomorphism.

In fact, Metz is guilty of the over-simplification he attacks in others, including Eisenstein himself. He alludes in passing to the intellectual climate in which Eisenstein was formed and in which he worked, drawing attention to Eisenstein's training as an engineer and his links with Constructivism, but this is as far as he goes. In a way this is understandable: it is still very difficult to reconstruct the intellectual climate of Russia in the twenties: one would like to know much more about the work and ideas in the theatre of Meyerhold, Foregger, Tretyakov, etc. and of the writings of the Russian Formalists on cinema. These would be especially fascinating, since they would provide a link between the study of language and of cinema obviously relevant to Eisenstein. We know that Shklovsky wrote scripts and a book on literature and film

Eichenbaum edited an anthology on the poetics of the cinema, Tynyanov worked on several scripts for FEX, Brik scripted Pudovkin's *Storm Over Asia* and wrote theoretical defences of Vertov's Kino-Eye for LEF: unfortunately little of this has yet been translated from the Russian. However, a great deal more could be said about Eisenstein and his relation to his context—and the Bolshevik Revolution—than Metz attempts.

Cursorily, in defence of Eisenstein, it should be said that his view of both the world and of art was very different from that of Barr or Metz. He did not believe that the world of appearances would offer up its meaning to the ordinary spectator: it would only feed his prejudices, his ideology in the sense in which Louis Althusser writes that 'when we speak of ideology, we must realise that ideology seeps through all human activity and that it is identical with the very 'lived experience' of human existence.' He believed that the spectator had to be shocked and provoked, emotionally, into participating in a new schematisation of the world, demanded of him by his will to understand the film and thus, by a maieutic process, to reveal to himself an understanding of the world, inherent in appearances but transcending them: an esoteric meaning. This remained a schematisation, but it could be filled out by future thought and experience. In many ways, Eisenstein's approach was similar to Brecht's. And also, in that like Lévi-Strauss, he

came to his theory of the intelligible through Marx and Freud, it was indeed correct of Metz to link them together. But we must be quite clear that what is at stake is not a simple semiological error but a clash of quite different world-views. Of course, to prefer Eisenstein's is not to say that, for instance, Rossellini's films are worthless, but it is to see them in a different light: they are among the most remarkable products of their age, but they can be located stylistically and ideologically and they are not absolutely validated by any scientific laws of semiology. The same is true, *a fortiori*, of Preminger.

On the other hand, Metz is quite correct in condemning Eisenstein's logomorphism: we must develop a much more supple and flexible attitude to the question of cinematic language than that expounded in *Film Form* and *Film Sense*. However, as Metz allows, there is a great deal in those two books which will have to be integrated into any future theory. Thus, for instance, the section on *Colour and Meaning* is indispensable to anybody interested in the development of semiology. There Eisenstein concludes 'In art it is not the *absolute* relationships that are decisive but those arbitrary relationships within a system of images dictated by the particular work of art. The problem is not, nor ever will be, solved by a fixed catalogue of colour symbols, but the emotional intelligibility and function of colour will rise from the natural order of

establishing the colour imagery of the work.' This is quite in line both with Saussure's insistence on the arbitrary (non-analogous) character of the sign and with developments in modern film criticism, principally in *Movie*, stimulated by the use of colour of directors such as Sirk, Minnelli, Ray or Godard.

In the end, Metz is only able to see two possible zones of study for semiology in the cinema, insofar as semiology implies an element of abstract denotation and not mere reproduction of the natural sense of things. One is in the field of iconography, where Metz quotes Rieupeyrou's remarks on the distinction between good and bad cowboys being shown by their wearing white and black shirts respectively, and comments that this kind of iconography is very partial and provisional. Incidentally, Erwin Panofsky, the world's most outstanding scholar on this subject, concludes that such examples as he notes—the Villain's black moustache and walking stick, the poor but honest milieu signified by a checkered tablecloth, the Newlyweds' breakfast coffee — were doomed to extinction by the sound film. Although this may have been a premature threnody, since emblems of this kind seem very persistent, at least in the genres, nevertheless it is clear that iconographic programming is nowhere near so prominent as in Renaissance painting, for example.

Secondly, Metz comments on

the various kinds of conventional cutting, such as flashbacks, *champ-con:rochamp*, etc., which he claims have by now a constructional and normative value. He rightly stresses that these are not clichés but simply syntactic (or rather syntagmatic) features, in the same way that Flaubert's use of the imperfect is not a use of a cliché but of a conventional (basic and permanent, to all intents and purposes) feature of language. He also comments that such syntactic features are not strictly necessary, citing Hitchcock's *Rope* (even more apposite, I suppose, is Warhol's *Sleep*). However, there are some problems for Metz in this discovery of syntactic features, which, though he asserts that they are secondary and partial rather than primary and global, bring him at times uncomfortably close to the traditional, Eisensteinian view of film language. Thus he is forced to admit that Resnais leans in the direction of *techné* rather than *pseudo-physis* and Godard's frequent neo-Eisensteinian montage is admitted as a syntactic feature under the somewhat hermetic title of 'non-diegetic metaphor'. Thus practical changes in the character of cinema itself—and Metz admits that to dismiss Resnais, Godard, etc., is in some sense to dismiss modern cinema altogether—begins to force him out of his absolutism to posit a bipolar development. On the other hand he celebrates the fact that the Lumière tendency has completely vanished the

Méliès tendency and confined it to minor genres: even this may prove to have been too bold a claim. And, in any case, even if the Méliès tendency is now only a diffuse element scattered among Hammer films, peplums, science-fantasies, etc., one cannot entirely reject a tradition which also must surely include the Arthur Freed musical, particularly its Donen-Kelly peaks.

In fact, Metz has limited himself far too greatly by refusing to see linguistic features almost anywhere except in narrative technique. In this field, it could certainly prove more fruitful to try and develop Proppian techniques, which Metz mentions and to which I shall return, much more finely, nuancing them from gross constituent elements down into sub-elements, of phrase or sequence scale. However, before developing this line of thought, I would like to suggest three possible points of entry for semiology which Metz neglects. These are merely disparate suggestions and I do not claim, at this stage, to see any connection between them. They may seem rather eclectic, in that they are drawn from such diverse sources as Vilém Mathesius on functional sentence perspectives, Basil Bernstein on the sociology of language and Jiri Veltrusky's studies of the theatre.

4. Mathesius was a Czech linguist who, at first a student of English, concentrated on Czech after he went blind at an early age, and developed a series of comparisons between

the two languages. Among his innovations was the functional analysis of the sentence into two components: themes and rhemes. The theme corresponds roughly to that part of the sentence which conveys information already known. The rheme is the part which conveys new information. Mathesius's concern was to show the differing ways in which the syntactic structure of English and Czech sentences coincided with their theme-rheme structure. Clearly, this kind of analysis could be usefully applied to the analysis of film sequences, to investigate the problems of establishment, suspense, surprise, etc. Thus Hitchcock for instance provides an interesting paradox: on the one hand, he always insists that the setting should enter into the action, thus thematising rhemes which would otherwise be discarded without ever contributing any dynamic information at all. On the other hand, his theory of the MacGuffin centres the plot construction around a rheme which is deliberately never thematised, reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss's *mana*.

Bernstein raises a quite different kind of problem. Bernstein is an English sociologist who has concentrated on the mediation of culture through language. He has developed concepts of the 'restricted' and 'elaborated' code. When a 'restricted' code is used, there is a high level of syntactic prediction and individuality is expressed through meta-linguistic

features. An 'elaborated' code, on the other hand, has low syntactic prediction and individuality is expressed through the use of language itself. Bernstein goes on to apply these distinctions to the educational problems of working class children (operating with a restricted code) on entering school (operating with an elaborated code). However, it seems as if they could also be applied to the distinction between the *auteur* film and the genre film (whether American gangster or western, or European 'art-film' genre.)

Thirdly, there is the work of Veltrusky, another member of the Prague School, on man and object in the theatre. Veltrusky describes a dual movement of signification to action and back. Thus the human performers can be either vectors of action, or along a scale going through 'human props' like servants and on through sentries, etc., eventually become merely part of the scenery. And objects, on the other hand, can also move from being part of the set or props to intervening in the action, as for instance in Strindberg's *The Pelican* in which a storm howls through the house slamming doors and extinguishing lamps. The same kind of personification of natural objects takes place a great deal in Oriental theatre. This kind of approach is equally applicable to the cinema. And it could perhaps be supplemented by work on gesture and development of choreographic notation. And even Balaz's dream of a

lexicon of facial expressions might be made possible by the extension of Birdwhistell's work on kinesics and the recording of eye, mouth and face movements. Here we are back in the physiognomic tradition of Lavater and Lenz (again), which so fascinated Eisenstein.

5. We must now return to problems of narrative and plot analysis, of the syntagmatic structure in its gross constituent elements. This will also bring us to a confrontation of the relationship of cinema to myth and of folk to mass art. The basic groundwork for plot analysis was achieved by students of the folktale: the two crucial stages were the work of Olrik in Denmark and Propp in Russia. Propp, the most interesting for our purpose, analysed into chains of moves or functions, which, Propp claimed, represented the logical sequence of the plot construction. He reached the surprising conclusion that all the tales he studied, despite the richness of their specific variants, had in effect the same plot structure. Although this conclusion is open to question the interest of his method is beyond doubt.

As far as I know, there have been three main developments from Propp's analyses now available in English. These are Dundes's work on the Red Indian folktale, Umberto Eco's analysis of the Bond novels in *The Bond Affair* and Lévi-Strauss's studies of myth. Each of them slightly revises Propp: Dundes, following Fiksel, formulates the concept of

functions in terms of 'motifemes' and 'allomotif'; Eco sees the James Bond plots as similar to a game, in which there is a code and moves and links it to a binary series of oppositions (Bond-M, Bond-Villain, Bond-Woman, Free World-Soviet Union, Luxury-Discomfort, etc): in this way he brings Propp much closer to the main body of structural linguistics. Lévi-Strauss develops a harmonic analysis, allowing for the repetition and redundancy of units, and working from the analogies of an orchestra score and fortune-telling with playing-cards. He also introduces a diachronic and synchronic pair of dimensions.

It should be possible to present a concrete analysis along Proppian lines. For the time being, however, I would like to draw further attention to the two problems mentioned above. First, the relationship of folk to mass art. It is certainly true of mass art as well as folk art that in Jakobson's words, in his postlogue to Afanasiev: '(The tale's) entry into the folklore habit depends entirely on whether or not the community accepts it. Only a work that gains the consensus of the collective body, and of this work only that part which the collective censorship passes, becomes an actuality of folklore. A writer can create in opposition to his milieu, but in folklore such an intention is inconceivable ... The socialised sections of the mental culture, as for instance language or folktale, are subject to much stricter and

more uniform laws than fields in which individual creation prevails.' But, of course, mass art is by no means identical with folk art. We particularly need a theory of the transition between the two: thus the suggestions made by Hall and Whannel on the intermediary role of vaudeville and music-hall between folk-art and cinema could be followed up, and also the origins of cinema in peepshows, waxworks, Wild West Shows, etc. In this connection, Henry Nash Smith's work in *Virgin Land* provides a firm starting-point. Of course, the relationship with myth is more complex still: film critics and scholars are still very prone to use comparisons between the Western and Ancient Greece without much attempt at rigorous definition. Obviously, there is an affinity of mental climate, but this will not get us very far. The problem is perhaps insoluble until the nature of myth itself is clarified: here the work of Lévi-Strauss is of great interest and it is worth noticing that he himself has applauded the capacity of the cinema for conveying the myths of our own civilisation.

6. Another crucial question raised by the Propp approach is that of individual authorship: the comments I quoted from Jakobson pose the problem quite clearly. Here, of course, we are back on familiar territory with the debate over the *Cahiers du Cinéma* line and the *auteur* theory. (Although the same problem applies to Eco's analyses of the Fleming novels he does not in fact mention it). The

problem is that there is an obvious social synchronic level—the genre—and another, apparently individual and diachronic, which can yet be treated synchronically—the author. My own tentative view is that there are two levels of redundancy in operation: one that of the genre, opening on to myth: one that of the author, opening on to art. The first is a proper subject for the study of myth, for an ethnology of the modern world; the second is a proper study of aesthetics, which remains a matter of messages rather than codes (though of course no message is explicable or even intelligible without its code). Furthermore, I am inclined to think, with Shklovsky, that great works of art always transcend their genre, through frequently incorporating many elements from different, often vulgar or exotic genres. Thus we cannot understand *The Night Watch* simply within the framework of the Dutch portrait group or *Crime and Punishment* within that of the mystery story. Or, in terms of cinema, *Lola Montès* is more than a costume drama; *Vertigo* more than a suspense thriller.

One more point needs to be made on the subject of the *auteur* theory. A true structural analysis cannot rest at the observation of resemblances or repetitions (redundancies) it must also comprehend a system of differences. In the long run, the main problem for study will be the reconstruction of authors by going beyond the orthodox canon of their works to include their apparent

eccentricities. Thus, while at first, the *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* trilogy is essential to an understanding of Ford, in the future it may turn out that *Wings of Eagles* is the crucial film. Or, in the case of Hawks a system of differences can already be discerned right at the surface of comprehension, in the obvious contrast between the dramas and the comedies. Eventually, it is the explanation of this system of oppositions which will define Hawks. Renoir once remarked that a director spends his whole life making one film: this film which it is the task of the critic to construct, consists not of the typical features of its variants, which are merely its redundancies, but of the principle of variation which governs it, that is its esoteric structure, which can only manifest itself or 'seep to the surface' in Lévi-Strauss's phrase 'through the repetition process'. Thus Renoir's 'film' is in reality 'a kind of permutation group, the two variants placed at the far-ends being in a symmetrical, though inverted relationship to each other.' Of course some films will have to be discarded as being indecipherable because of 'noise' from the producer, or even the actors; other directors may have to be split into two: thus English and American Hitchcock. But our guiding methodological principle remains the same.

7. Finally, I would like to make a few remarks about the question of 'world view', to use Dilthey's term, or 'symbolic' conceptions of the world following Cassirer and

Panofsky. First of course one must reiterate that these too are accessible only through what the author betrays, not what he parades, as Panofsky stresses. But the problem of the relationship of analysis of world-views to stylistic or Proppian analysis and semiology in general is a pressing one, which we do not seem to be in sight of solving.

Almost all the interesting work in this field springs from German thought at the end of the last century: Dilthey, neo-Kantianism, Simmel, Wölfflin, Riegl, etc, but it is marred by an overwhelming current of idealism. Personally, I must admit to an inability to see my way. My own criticism, springing as it does from Lucien Goldmann's work, particularly on Malraux, and Andrew Sarris's redefinitions of the *auteur* theory, is certainly marked by an unresolved dualism. I no longer find it possible to accept Goldman views, least of all his famous 'homology of structures', which is extremely schematic and historicist, to the extent of simply ignoring anomalies. Indeed, Goldmann's attempt to save Lukacs's thought by rescuing it from social realism and re-endowing it with the *nouveau roman* has really meant nothing more than exchanging one necessity for another. Sarris's work, on the other hand, is always veering in the direction of stylistics and then back again towards 'what ultimately interests' a director thematically. Perhaps the truth is, as Renée Balibar has recently boldly announced, that

form and content are not in fact inseparable, as orthodoxy avers, but in conflict, that history exerts its influence on the work of art through style and ideology in contrary directions. (This point of view was also put forward by Shklovsky, as part of his controversy with Trotsky: the whole Formalist debate on this issue, pressed on them by the Bolshevik Revolution, is worth further study).

8. In the last resort these grand problems of aesthetics are the vital ones. Until they are solved (if they are to be solved at all) they simply create turbulence throughout every other kind of discussion. Thus, in the Eisenstein v. Metz controversy, my sympathies on the question of logomorphism lie with Metz, but my sympathies on the question of aesthetics lie with Eisenstein. Perhaps the whole problem has been wrongly posed and we should start again with Hitchcock, who is certainly not a victim of logomorphic illusions, but who is so like Eisenstein in other ways: his careful pre-planning of each film for effect, his *penchant* for emotional shocks, his system of 'participation', his assault on common-sense ideas about reality, etc. It is only by extending the argument in this kind of way, by arguing and re-arguing, that we can finally define, first our method and then our truth.

New American Photography

The Authentic Vision by Mike Weaver

'And for the season it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast. Besides, what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and men—and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. Neither could they, as it were, go up to the top of Pisgah to view from this wilderness a more goodly country to feed their hopes; *for which way soever they turned their eyes (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respect of any outward objects.*'

Almost exactly three centuries later when Louis Zukofsky announced the Objectivist programme for poetry, his first lexical definition of 'objective' was taken from optics: 'The lens brings the rays from an object to a focus.'² The process by which images are produced on specially prepared surfaces by means of an *objectif* through which light passes, provided an analogy for the new poetry. But for photography, of course, the process was in no way an approximation; it is a demonstrable fact that in addition to light rays other radiations, both representative of the subject's uniqueness and his chemical composition at the time of exposure, are trapped in the silver halide emulsion. The chemicals are, moreover, in continuous resonance with those of all

other matter.³ This accounts in the most literal way for the apparently mystical conviction of photographers that the photograph is more than an appearance of reality and contains, in fact, authentic particles of reality. In short, the photograph embodies reality and does not merely symbolise it. Edward Weston recognised this intuitively when he exhorted, 'Not fanciful interpretation—the noting of superficial phase or transitory mood: but direct presentation of THINGS in THEMSELVES.'⁴ He had spoken of the creative force released coincident with the shutter's release. He could not conceive, though he nevertheless knew, that he was speaking a literal and not symbolic truth. Neither could D. H. Lawrence when he wrote: 'Our plasmic psyche is radioactive, connecting with all things, and having first knowledge of all things.'⁵

The American Indian knew in his very bones that the essence of an individual dwells in its image. He was reluctant to be photographed because he believed he would be hurt if any harm came to his picture.⁶ He was exactly correct about his photograph, whereas Mark Rothko, speaking of releasing his paintings into a dangerous world, was only approximately right.

In 1922 Paul Strand rightly claimed that science and art were brought together by the photographer: 'He has evolved through the conscious creative control of this particular phase of the machine [the camera] a new method of perceiving the

'These American workers make us look again at ordinary things, and we find that we had overlooked something that was quite precious'— 'Mr Archibald Cochrane on Landscape Photography', Photography, January 2nd 1906.

life of objectivity and of recording it." The 'straight' photographers, Stieglitz, Strand, Sheeler, Weston, and Evans, who represent the most concerted effort in American graphic art and the finest photographic tradition in the world, insisted on the rejection of painterly techniques from the medium for one main reason: manipulation in the printing process represented human interference with the negative which is already perfectly representative of the rays lighting the subject and, we might add, the other radiations emitted by the subject. In Weston's terms, 'There is no substitute for amazement felt, significance realised, at the TIME of EXPOSURE.' The supreme intervention in nature is made then; to intervene further at a superficial level is to interfere with nature.

Since the *Mayflower*, Americans have yearned for solace and content in respect of outward objects. Acutely deprived of those objects in what Cotton Mather called the 'squallid, horrid American Desert', they became materialists. Hard and mechanical in their bodies, brittle in their minds, when the Puritans did not look upwards for biblical precedent they grubbed in the rocky soil for Indian corn and Indian implements. They were empty, finding release in a soul which was itself a 'pale negative'.¹⁰ The Puritan legacy is in the young American photographer's grain; it works to his advantage. Imagism in poetry and Straight photography are American

manifestations. But now he is also aware of his other inheritance; Hispanic, Indian, and Negro America, whose negatives are not empty and pale but full and flushed with colour. The Puritans recorded; the passionate response of a Lawrence or a Williams amplified that record.

The present generation of photographers explores the quintessence of the daguerrotype, the snapshot, the concrete image (formerly called 'abstract'), and the straight photograph. All these elements in the tradition are represented here. These photographers not only see straight but sense fully. Theirs is the authentic vision.

1: William Bradford, 'Of Plymouth Plantation' [1630], ch. IX, my italics

2: 'Poetry' XXXVIII, 5 (February 1931), p.268

3: For an application of this discovery see my father's work: H. L. Weaver, 'Locating Persons Missing at Sea Using V-Rays', 'The Coastguard' N.S.II, 1 (January 1968), pp.4-6

4: 'Experimental Cinema' I, 3 (1931), [p.14]

5: D. H. Lawrence, 'Phoenix II', London 1968, p.227

6: Frances Densmore, 'Chippewa Customs', 'Smithsonian Institution Bureau of Ethnology Bulletin' 86 (1929), p.79.

7: Nathan Lyons (ed.), 'Photographers on Photography', Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1966, p.143

8: loc. cit.

9: Quoted by W. C. Williams, 'In the American Grain', NY 1925, p.82

10: Ibid. p. 65

Alice Andrews: 'Smoky Mountain Morning, No. 1', September 1967. Courtesy of the photographer

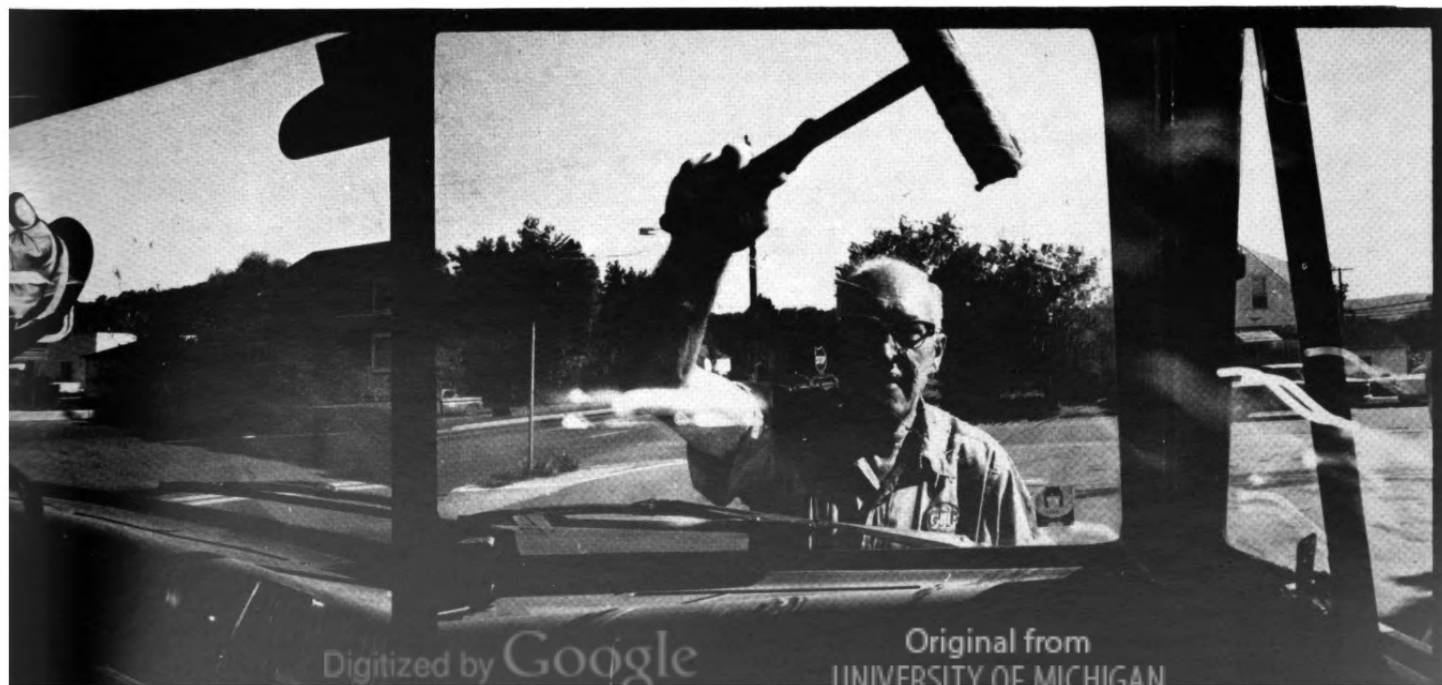
Alice Andrews: 'Remaining unperturbed, but nevertheless reached for, R. drives', September 1967. Courtesy of the photographer



Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Alice Andrews

Born Erie, Pennsylvania, 1929. Studied at Pennsylvania State University and Rochester Institute of Technology. Began photographing in 1959. Attended Ansel Adams' workshop 1961. Workshops with Nathan Lyons, 1961-62 and 1965-66. Joined staff of George Eastman House 1962.



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Robert W. Fichter

Born 1939. Received Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from University of Florida, Gainesville 1963. Member of exhibitions staff, Florida State Museum 1965. Received Master of Fine Arts degree from Indiana University 1966. Joined staff of George Eastman House, 1966, where he is currently Assistant Curator, Exhibitions.

Robert W. Fichter: 'A. reclining during performance of Diana boogie', 1967. Collection of Thomas F. Barrow



Robert W. Fichter: 'Twin thrust defeated, A. slowly recedes', 1967 (applied colour: purple and green acrylic paint). Collection of Thomas F. Barrow



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Roger Mertin

Born 1942. Received Bachelor of Arts degree from Rochester Institute of Technology, 1965. Workshop with Minor White, 1963. Workshops with Nathan Lyons, 1963-64 and 1965-66. Joined staff of George Eastman House 1966, where he is currently Head of the Reproduction Center.

Roger Mertin: Provincetown, Mass., 1967. Courtesy of the photographer



Roger Mertin: 'Rochester Memorial Day', 1967. Courtesy of the photographer



Reginald Heron

Born Marseilles, France, 1932. Received Bachelor's and Master's degrees 1963 and 1966 from Institute of Design of the Illinois Institute of Technology. Taught photography at the Institute 1963-66. Joined staff of George Eastman House, 1966.

Reginald Heron: Rochester, N.Y., 1967. Collection of Thomas F. Barrow



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Original from
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Thomas F. Barrow

Born 1938. Received Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Kansas City Art Institute, 1963; film courses with Jack Ellis, Northwestern University, 1965; Master of Science degree in Photography from Institute of Design of the Illinois Institute of Technology, 1967. Joined the Staff of George Eastman

House, 1965, where he is currently Assistant Curator, Extension Activities.

The editors are extremely grateful to Mr Barrow for collecting and selecting all the photographs reproduced here.

Thomas Barrow: Rochester, N.Y., 1967



Thomas Barrow: 'Room', Akron, Ohio, 1967



Joel Meyerowitz

*Born 1938. Received Bachelor
of Fine Arts degree from Ohio
State University, 1959.
Currently free-lance
photographer in New York
City*

*Joel Meyerowitz: Untitled, 1965.
Courtesy of George Eastman
House, Rochester, N.Y.*



*Joel Meyerowitz: Untitled 1965.
Courtesy of George Eastman
House, Rochester N.Y.*



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Original from
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1	2	3
4	5	6

a spine of trees

a distance of asbestos

Tennis courts,

a Lean-to shed
and canteen

Greenhouse-reflections

*par les industrial faubourgs
monotone et miniature*

Caravans; a golf-course

Plages

twigs are scarce
in the air

where whimbrel and godwit
inhabit the occasional
gorse of the foreshore

Translated by Stephen Bann

The artist, just as much as the engineer, is the *rightful* creator of the modern world. It remains for him to become its *effective* creator. The modern artist stands at the centre of a field of creative freedom whose extension he himself must determine. Style strikes him as a *perspective of possibles*.

The great problem nowadays is to establish an art which is no longer on the scale of the individual but on that of society as a whole. Yet art has remained up to this stage the message of one individual, the artist, to another. We need a new mode of aesthetic communication, and this is what Vasarely's work provides.

Not long ago the work of art was still the last bastion of pure form—form that could be perceived in its entirety and resisted any attempt at decomposition. And yet we have known since the discovery of coordinate geometry that any total form can be recomposed through a sequence of simpler elements. The artist, however, rarely pays attention to geometry, and no artist has made use of this item of knowledge in determining the first principles of a work of art.

Should we regard Vasarely as the painter of 'Structuralism', the doctrine which has come to seem the distinctive philosophy of the modern world? Structuralism reflects the traditional practice of cutting out signifying objects upon the backcloth of nature, and reconstructs the environment in a systematic fashion by

assembling elements according to a certain number of rules, which are known as a whole by the term *structure*. The geometrical works of Vasarely transpose onto an aesthetic plane this recomposition of total forms from a certain number of simple elements, assembled according to certain algorithms. They are, in fact, a symbolic version of the structuralist philosophy, which hinges upon the notion of a world that man constructs by an assemblage of simple elements, pieces or bricks—all of which possess a geometrical character.

In the course of a continuous development which began with a dichotomising of the world into black and white and led to his achieving a mastery of colour — first as a supplementary element in controlled variation and later as an autonomous generator of forms — Vasarely puts before us the abstract image of a world of structures in which the form is no more than the abstract integration of a great number of elements. Instead of being dominated by form, he constructs it. He shows us an *atomism of form*.

The presence of the basic Gestalt, in its own right as well as in its various possibilities of assemblage (inversion, symmetry, correspondence), stamps Vasarely's work with a 'hard causality' as opposed to the 'evanescent causality' of Nature's usual forms, which are continually impaired by chance. There is nothing

strange about this—it is just one more of the features of a world that is *constructed* rather than *submitted to*. Vasarely in his laboratory is concerned with the articulation of forms, establishing the *elements* as a first stage and then assembling them according to *algorithms* identical, in principle, to those of the programmer. The intellect plays a large part in his art, which is that of a chess player who anticipates by three or four moves the consequences of his decisions —particular lines of advance selected from a strictly limited repertoire—and takes as his golden rule the optimum degree of complexity. His programmes can be enunciated, transmitted and realised by others, but it is he who supplies them in the first instance.

Whether this is his intention or not, Vasarely's compositions allow the spectator to derive pleasure from the manifest evidence of the operations of reason—to admire the way in which the mind is prompted through the sense of vision to set strict boundaries to the form: even the interplay of free colours can be interpreted in this connection as a *warmth of the mind*. The pleasure spoken of here is of a rigorously semantic nature, very similar to the mental satisfaction which is involved in rounding off a form, resolving a problem and, by that very act, dominating for a short moment a fragment of the surrounding world, instead of feeling oneself to be dominated by it.

In response to this clear evidence of rationality, the spectator rediscovers his autonomy and his capacity for judgement. In direct opposition to the informal paintings which crystallised upon the canvas a gestural gymnastics—allowing genius and mediocrity to rub shoulders in a daunting confusion of values—the geometrical work offers the mind a point of rest, providing criteria for discrimination and judgement. The spectator thereby recovers his aptitude for disentangling values and enshrining them in clear thought. He is already conversant with the elements and forms which constitute the very environment of abstract thought—the squares, circles, ellipses and triangles that are the universals of our technological age.

Vasarely's work belongs with the category of what we may call *permutational art*. This might be defined as the sum total of the product of systematic combinations of simple elements, limited in variety and proceeding from a rule of assemblage which the artist sets himself a priori. It is one of the underlying factors in all artistic evolution, a continual current which has had its favoured periods in the past—as in the Mannerist era—and reappears in modern Op art, of which Vasarely is perhaps the most important representative.

Although it has been confined for a long time to mere stylistic exercises as a result of the mind's powerlessness before the multiplicity of its

own powers of combination, permutational art can now adopt a new mode of operation as a result of the appearance of machines that will allow the artist to realise the huge—but finite—number of combinations which are open to consideration by virtue of their inclusion within a 'field of possibles'. It is one of the most remarkable features of the combinatory algorithm that, beyond the limitations of principle which it implies in the total number of possible realisations, it necessarily causes the mind to discover the idea of infinity, guiding it towards the crossing of frontiers that lie wider and wider afield.

Although his work is purely manual and his studio shows no trace of any calculated rules of procedure, Vasarely prefigures the development of machine art. His work is already an image of this type of production, insofar as the emphasis is placed on the programme, on the strict independence of the repertoire of elements in relation to the method of assembling them, and on the distancing of the artist from the work which can always be brought to completion by an assistant. Taking these features into account and considering the profound rationality of Vasarely's procedure, we can see all the signs of a mechanisable operation. Vasarely himself is fully aware of this, and knows better than anyone that only a certain amount of technical progress is necessary for his work to be varied to an infinite degree by

machines manipulating the elements of information. Machines of this kind are already at work.

In this respect, Vasarely's work goes beyond Op art and takes its place within the current of a more profound evolution, that in which art is adapted to the latent characteristics of society. As a human being, Vasarely is preoccupied with the question of incorporating aesthetic values into a mechanical society. He knows that this type of society is essentially concerned with consumption, and that it exerts a 'cultural pressure' on art, requiring a multiplication of works from the basis of a limited source of creative originality. This is why permutational art is the essential element of a *social art*, in that it offers each individual, through the artifice of combinatory techniques, works which are quite different and yet equivalent as far as their novelty is concerned.

In his works and exhibitions, Vasarely is undertaking the gradual integration of combinatory geometric method into the most widely differing aspects of our environment. The forms which he offers for our attention pass into everyday life and revert to the original role of art. If we are farsighted enough to enrich the elements of our world with appreciable qualities from the very start, he reminds us, the construction of the environment carried out by technological civilisation will be the construction of an intrinsic beauty, and not one that is added after the event.

Art will be integrated into the city—the architect's dream. Vasarely is therefore developing our awareness of the possible. Permutational art is inscribed in filigree on the technological era.

Vasarely's most recent works represent the total integration of colour onto the rigorously conceived work: quantification of colour matches quantification of form. It is psychologically attractive to think of this integration taking place through fidelity to a particular attitude of mind, which Vasarely has readopted and given fresh value in a new dimension of the visual universe.

Great Little Magazines

No. 6: 'De Stijl'
(Author Index part 2:
Péto van Doesburg
to Karl Zàlit)

(I=illustration)
(P=poetry or
experimental prose)

Doesburg, Péto van. (*open letter to W. F. A. Röell, correspondent of 'Het Vaderland', on subject of 'De Stijl' refused representation at Exposition des Arts Decoratifs, Paris 1925*), 6/10-11:151-152
Doméla, César (Césaré). Constructie Nr. 6 (*drawing*) (I), 6/8:98; Kompositie 1925 (*painting*) (I), 7/3-4:16; (*memorial tribute to Th.v.D.*), 9:52
Dunan, Renée. La Rationalité de l'Absurde, 4/4:51-52
Dzirkal, Arnold. Die Proklamation der Gruppe von Künstler über Fragen, die der Beurteilung des Kongresses nicht unterliegen (*with I. Puni, Karl Zàlit*), 5/4:53-55
Editorial. Ter Inleiding (*introduction*), 1/1:1-2; De Omslag (*typographical note on the cover, design by Vilmos Huszár*), 1/1:11; Bij be Bijlagen (*notes on plates I and II, 'Schilderij' 1917 by B. van der Leek (q.v.) and Strandboulevard project by J. J. P. Oud (q.v.)*), 1/1:11-12; Moderne Bouwkunst bij Noodwoning in Gewapend Beton (*illustrated with drawing of country house by J. Wils (q.v.)*), 1/8:96; Open Brief aan den Architect Huib Hoste (*open letter to Huib Hoste*), 1/9:111-112; (*reply to Huib Hoste's reply in 1/11 to open letter in 1/9*), 1/1:136; Inleiding bij den Tweeden Jaargang (*introduction to second volume*), 2/1:1-2; First Manifesto of 'De Stijl', 1918 (*in Dutch, French, English and German; signed by Theo van Doesburg, painter, Rob't van't Hoff, architect, Vilmos Huszár, painter, Antony Kok, poet, Piet Mondriaan, painter, G. Vantongerloo, sculptor, Jan*

Part 1 of the 'De Stijl' index appeared, together with bibliographical details of the magazine, in Form 6 (December 1967).

Series edited by Mike Weaver, 37 West Garth Road, Exeter, Devon, England.

Wils, architect), 2/1:2-5; Aanteekeningen over Monumentale Kunst (with reference to plate I, two views of hall in holiday house at Noordwijkerhout, architect J. J. P. Oud (q.v.)), 2/1:10-12; Guillaume Apollinaire† (obituary notice), 2/2:13-14; Rondblik ('Das Kunstblatt'; Picasso) (this international survey — 'rondblik' — appears as a quasi-regular feature from 2/6: a short summary list of countries and topics covered each time is indexed here), 2/6:68-70; Boeken (book list), 2/6:70-72; Bij de Bijlage (note on plates, and in particular on plate XVI, 'Danseuse' by Tour d'Onasky (q.v.)), 2/8:96; Enkele Uitspraken over Beeldende Kunst (short quotations from George Braque, Juan Gris, A. Herbin, Fernand Léger, Henri Laurens, Jacques Lipchitz, Gino Severini), 2/9:100-101; Rondblik (Germany; Belgium, Déclaration d'Indépendance de l'Esprit; Italy; Ars Nova, Albert Gleizes; France, 'L'Effort Moderne', Vollard: 'Paul Cézanne'), 2/9:104-108; Bijlage XVII (note on plate XVII, photograph of summer house at 'Huis ter Heide' by R. van't Hoff (q.v.)), 2/9:108; Rondblik (Expressionism; Germany; Italy, F. Azari — 'aviateur-turist'; Holland), 2/12:140-144; Aanteekeningen bij de Bijlage (commentary on plate XXIII, drawing by F. Léger (q.v.)), 2/12:144; Overzichtelijke Beschouwing bij de Intrede van der Derden Jaargang (introduction to third volume), 3/1:1-4; Aanteekeningen bij Bijlage I (commentary on plate I, 'Village' by L. Survaag (a.v.)).

3/1:8-9; Rondblik (Germany; France), 3/1:11-12; Ontvangen Boeken en Tijdschriften (books and periodicals received), 3/1:12, also in 3/2:24, 3/4:40 (wrongly numbered 28), 3/5:48, 3/7:64, 3/8:72, 3/9:76, 3/10:88, 3/11:96, 4/1:15-16, 4/2:31-32, 4/3:47-48, 4/4:63-64, 4/5:79-80 (including exhibition catalogues received), 4/6:95, 4/7:112, 4/12:187-188, 5/1:12-13, 5/3:47, 5/5:80, 5/9:142-143, 6/2:32, 6/5:72, 6/8:113-117 (in tabular form), 7/5:6:47-49; Aanteekeningen bij Bijlage II (commentary on plate II, two sculptures by G. Vantongerloo (q.v.)), 3/2:23; Mededeeling (announcement about Arthur Pétronio), 3/2:24; Aanteekening bij Bijlage IV (commentary on plate IV, 'Torse', sculpture by A. Archipenko (q.v.)), 3/3:32; Rondblik (Spain; Belgium; Switzerland; Germany, Uechtgruppe, Junge Berliner Kunst, Iwan Goll), 3/4:36-40 (wrongly numbered 24-28); Aanteekeningen bij de Bijlagen VI en VII (commentary on plate VI and VII, factory design by J. J. P. Oud (q.v.)), and furniture by G. Rietveld (q.v.)), 3/5:44-46; Rondblik (Paris, 'Section d'Or', 'L'Effort Moderne'), 3/5:47-48; Second Manifesto of 'De Stijl', on Literature (in Dutch, German and French, signed by Theo van Doesburg, Piet Mondriaan, Antony Kok), 3/6:49-50; Bijlage X (commentary on plate X, 'Deux Femmes' 1919, sculpture by A. Archipenko (q.v.)), 3/8:72; Rondblik (Belgium), 3/8:72; Radio's (note on Russia, Kandinsky), 3/8:72; Rondblik (Paris, 'L'Esprit Nouveau'; Germany, de

Ondergang van het Expressionisme; Russia, M. Morosow; Italy), 3/9:79-80; Rondblik (Holland, Het zien van Schilderijen, Zwart of Blank?), 3/10:86-88; Rondblik (Italy, Dada; Russia; Germany; International), 3/11:95-96; Rondblik (Belgium; Switzerland, Internationale Tentoonstelling der Avant-garde), 3/12:102-103; Aanteekening bij de Bijlage (commentary on plate XIV, interior by Theo van Doesburg (q.v.)), 3/12:103; Rondblik (Holland, 'De Stem'; Belgium; France), 4/1:10-15; De Nieuwe Typografische Indeeeling van 'De Stijl' (announcement about new format, signed 'De Administratie'), 4/2:17-18; Rondblik (Italy, Casa d'Arte Italiana (Rome); England, Vorticism; France, 'L'Esprit Nouveau'), 4/2: ; Rondblik (Paris, Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti exhibition), 4/4:56-57; Pour Comprendre l'Incompris (Le Docteur der ...) (comment on article on 'De Stijl' in 'Feuer' by Dr F. M. Huebner), 4/4:57-63; Open Brief (open letter signed 'De Stijl'), 4/5:75-76; Rondblik (Holland, Wendingen; France, 'L'Esprit Nouveau', Picabia, 'L'Effort Moderne'; Paris-New York Dada; Belgium, Groupe, 'Omni'; Russia), 4/6:87-93; Zal Binnenkort Verscijnen (books to be published shortly), 4/6:95; Third Manifesto, Towards a New World Plasticism (Tot een Nieuwe Wereldbeelding) (in French, German and Dutch, signed 'De Stijl' 1921), 4/8:123-126; Rondblik (Die Ausmalung des Residenz-Theaters in Weimar, by Peter

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'Beitrage zum Bauen', 'Architecture Vivante', 'Aurora', 'Bauten', 'Blok', 'Bouwen', 'Bouwkundig weekblad', 'Bouwwereld', 'Bolletino bibliografico', 'Bulletin de L'Effort Moderne', 'La Cité', 'Contemporanul', 'Création') (notes on new books, current periodicals), 6/8:107-112; Rondblik (*Surrealism, Paris*), 6/9:130-132; Het Einde der Kunst, 6/9:135-136; Appel de Protestation contre le refus de la participation du groupe 'De Stijl' à l'Exposition des Arts Décoratifs (section des Pays-Bas) (*Paris, 1925*), 6/10-11:149-150; Rondblik (*Wat Wil het Zenithisme? by Branco ve Polianski*), 6/12:145-146, 151-152; 1912-1926: Der Rechte Lijn als Vernietigster der 'Artistieke Ambachten' en der Decoratieve Architectuur (with quotations from U. Boccioni, F. T. Marinetti, *Th.v.D.*), 7/5-6:55-56; note on 'Bazar', crockery designs by K. Malevich (*q.v.*), 7/5-6:58; 10 Jaren Stijl, Algemeene Inleiding (introduction to jubilee number, with photograph of bound copies, 'De Stijl'), 8/1-4:1-9; Da'a en Feiten (betreffende de invloedsontwikkeling van 'De Stijl' in 't Buitenland) die voor zich spreken (*history of ten years of 'De Stijl' movement and its influence, including portrait photograph Pétro van Doesburg, cover of 'L'Architecture Vivante'*), 8/1-4:53-58; Principieele Medewerkers aan de Stijl, 1917-1927 (table showing 'De Stijl' members and collaborators) (also table showing extent of influence of 'De Stijl' in foreign countries

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From 'SIC': 'Pablo Picasso' by
Guillaume Apollinaire

PABLO PICASSO

Voyez ce peintre il prend les choses avec leur ombre aussi et d'un coup d'œil sublimatoire
Il se déchire en accords profonds et agréables à respirer tel l'orgue que j'aime entendre
Des Arlequins jouent dans le rose et bleus d'un beau-ciel Ce souvenir revit
les rêves et les actives mains Orient plein de glaciers L'hiver est rigoureux
Lustres or toile irisée or loi des stries de feu fond en murmurant.
Bleu flamme légère argent des ondes bleues après le grand cri
Tout en restant elles touchent cette sirène violon
Faons lourdes ailes l'incandescence quelques brasses encore
Bourdonnements femmes striées éclat de plongeon-diamant
Arlequins semblables à Dieu en variété Aussi distingués qu'un lac
Fleurs brillant comme deux perles monstres qui palpitent
Lys cerclés d'or, je n'étais pas seul! fais onduler les remords
Nouveau monde très matinal montant de l'énorme mer
L'aventure de ce vieux cheval en Amérique
Au soir de la pêche merveilleuse l'œil du masque
Air de petits violons au fond des anges rangés
Dans le couchant puis au bout de l'an des dieux
Regarde la tête géante et immense la main verte
L'argent sera vite remplacé par tout notre or
Morte pendue à l'hameçon... c'est la danse bleue
L'humide voix des acrobates des maisons
Grimace parmi les assauts du vent qui s'assoupit
Où les vagues et le fracas d'une femme bleue
Enfin la grotte à l'atmosphère dorée par la vertu
Ce saphir veiné il faut rire!
Rois de phosphore sous les arbres les bottines entre des plumes bleues
La danse des dix mouches lui fait face quand il songe à toi
Le cadre bleu tandis que l'air agile s'ouvrirait aussi
Au milieu des regrets dans une vaste grotte.
Prends les araignées roses à la nage
Regrets d'invisibles pièges l'air
Paisible se souleva mais sur le clavier musiques
Guitare-tempête ô gai trémolo
O gai trémolo ô gai trémolo
Il ne rit pas l'artiste-peintre
Ton pauvre étincellement pâle
L'ombre agile d'un soir d'été qui meurt
Immense désir et l'aube émerge des eaux si lumineuses
Je vis nos yeux diamants enfermer le reflet du ciel vert et
J'entendis sa voix qui dorait les forêts tandis que vous pleuriez
L'acrobate à cheval le poète à moustaches un oiseau mort et tant d'enfants sans larmes
Choses cassées des livres déchirés des couches de poussière et des aurores déferlant!

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

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George Rickey,
Constructivism, *Studio Vista*,
London 1968

The wide field that George Rickey has covered in the name of constructivism renders his assessment of the movement more stimulating than convincing. As a pursuit of the primogeniture of Russia and de Stijl it leads us in a number of directions, but the directions are really too diverse to allow for a satisfactory stocktaking. Rickey has already been criticised severely for his treatment of the early Moscow days, and it is perhaps the failure to evaluate the original constructivism of Lissitsky and Rodchenko that has thrown his subsequent analysis off balance. Although it is possible to recognise those formal elements that qualify, for instance, Jasper Johns for inclusion, one senses that the spirit of the law has been lost, if not the letter.

With so many artists included it is a pity that such artists as Jo Baer, Robert Morris and Carl Andre have been ignored. The disparity of motivation between the so-called minimal school and constructivism is worthy of investigation, and one feels that Rickey could have concentrated more profitably on the differences between constructivism and its cousins rather than on the similarities.

Even so the book is undeniably interesting, and if it has opened the flood-gates this may encourage more accurate assessments on the

part of future critics.

Of considerable interest, too, is the weighty bibliography, prepared by Bernard Karpel, librarian at the Museum of Modern Art, N Y, which among over 800 more accurate references, credits *Form* with an article by van Doesburg on le Parc!

Guy Brett, *Kinetic Art, Studio Vista, London 1968*

Guy Brett's book is titled *Kinetic Art* and its overall presentation suggests a more balanced view of the movement than is the author's objective. Guy Brett has in fact selected a number of artists, loosely termed 'kinetic', and given each a few pages and a little commentary. The performers are predominantly of Signals stock, and it is most satisfactory to see the tradition carried on. Such artists as Medalla, Takis and Oititica are well presented; the illustrations could have come straight out of old *Signals* bulletins, and the book has a journalistic flavour that succeeds in putting over some of the gaiety of the works. It is unfortunate that the title and historical preamble encourage the reader to expect more than an excellent personal anthology.

Oliver Hawkins

Russian Exhibitions, 1904 to 1922

by John Bowl

'Artists of the world, disunite!' (The Golden Fleece, 1906, No. 3)

In May 1904 a group of young artists, for the most part graduates of the Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, organised a small exhibition of their work in Saratov. This exhibition was called 'The Scarlet Rose', a name which symbolised the youth and revolutionary spirit of its participants. There is little information on this exhibition, for press reports were superficial and no catalogue was issued, but it is known that Pavel Kusnetsov, Pyotr Utkin and Alexander Matveyev, members of the future 'Blue Rose' group, took part, and that, significantly, Mikhail Vrubel and Victor Borisov-Musatov were invited to contribute. The importance of 'The Scarlet Rose' lies in the fact that it marked the beginning of a tidal wave of art exhibitions which had no parallel in the history of Russian culture.

At the beginning of 1905 the nucleus of 'The Scarlet Rose' group together with new confreres (including M. Larionov, S. Sudeikin, M. Saryan and N. Feofilaktov) united themselves round the new magazine *Art* launched by the Moscow intellectual N. Tarovaty. At the same time many of them took part in the twelfth exhibition of the Moscow Association of Artists: among those represented were Nikolay Krymov, Kuznetsov, Vasily Milioti, Nikolay Sapunov, Sergey Sudeikin, Utkin, Martiros Saryan, Vasily Kandinsky and Nikolay Ulyanov, all of whom with the exception of Kandinsky and Ulyanov were subsequently to

take part in the 'Blue Rose' exhibition. By now a movement of artists was emerging whose principles and artistic production indicated a unity in thought and style; a random selection of titles from this 1905 exhibition immediately anticipates the mood of mysticism and symbolism which was to predominate at the 'Blue Rose' exhibition—'Beneath the Moon' (Krymov), 'The Evening of Disenchantment' (Kuznetsov), 'Nocturne' (Sapunov), 'Moonlit Eros' (Sudeikin), 'This Night I Love' (Utkin).

In the autumn of 1905 Tarovaty's magazine collapsed and its place was taken on a much grander scale by a venture of the Moscow millionaire (and artist) Ryabushinsky—*The Golden Fleece*. This new magazine (the first number appeared in January, 1906) fulfilled the need for an organisational centre for the latest trends in Russian art and played a key role in the creation of the 'Blue Rose' exhibition in the following year, mainly by providing financial backing. Outwardly, it was a concern similar to the magazine *The World of Art* (which had by then ceased publication)—it was sumptuously printed, it focused attention on both Russian and European artistic movements and it presented articles on literature and music as well as the visual arts. But *The World of Art* was born in St. Petersburg, *The Golden Fleece* in Moscow, one before the 1905 revolution, the other after, one peacefully echoed Versailles and the classicism

of St. Petersburg, the other acknowledged the violent social reaction which set in after 1905.

Society was stunned and tired of the noise of 1905 and the consumers of art, in the main an enriched merchant class, required silence. The words of the contemporary writer, Vasily Rosanov, epitomised the mood: 'I don't want truth, I want peace.' *The Golden Fleece* retreated from troubled reality and cultivated the quest for theosophical and spiritual knowledge which the Moscow intelligentsia, led by the Symbolists Andrey Byely and Vyacheslav Ivanov, was then exploring. The preface to the first number set forth its point of view: 'This is our banner: art is whole because its source of thought is whole, art is symbolic because it carries within itself a symbol—a reflection of the eternal in the transient.' To the accompaniment of table-tapping, Scriabin's synthetic music and the deathly hush of Maeterlinck, the 'Blue Rose' was born.

The 'Blue Rose' group was quite unlike its predecessor 'The World of Art'. 'The World of Art' had already retired from the cultural arena although its participants continued to exhibit at the expositions of the 'Union of Russian Artists' (1903-1923) and the resurrected but changed 'World of Art' (1911-1924). 'The World of Art' stylists, retrospectivists and graphic artists had held undisputed sway from 1899 until 1906 but their supremacy was

threatened from the beginning by the rivalry between St. Petersburg and Moscow. The actual establishment in Moscow of a separate group, virtually a competitive group, in 1901 (called 'The 36', later the 'Union of Russian Artists') made hope of unification of the two movements impossible. Indeed, the lack of organisation, of a cohesive force and the presence of so many individual, often contradictory, artistic tenets led to the break-up not only of 'The World of Art' but also of the 'Blue Rose' and of the early 'Knave of Diamonds' group. Essentially, this was a healthy sign, for it meant that innovation did not become tradition—continual disintegration meant continual renewal. This was one reason why there was such an upsurge of artistic activity between the beginning of the century and the early 1920s. In the words of Vasily Milioti, one of the participants in the 'Blue Rose' exhibition, 'The World of Art' '... had been permeated with the poison of 'salon-ness', had become devoid of the drama of spiritual experience, while the Impressionists of the 'Union' [of Russian Artists] seemed to be but imitators of the French.' In contrast to the enfeebled, decomposing 'World of Art', the 'Blue Rose' group appeared as a cohesive union, as an embodiment of Vyacheslav Ivanov's ideal of collective individualism. Their basic theoretical aim was the depiction of subjective experience but they substituted the refined technique, the variety of colours and the

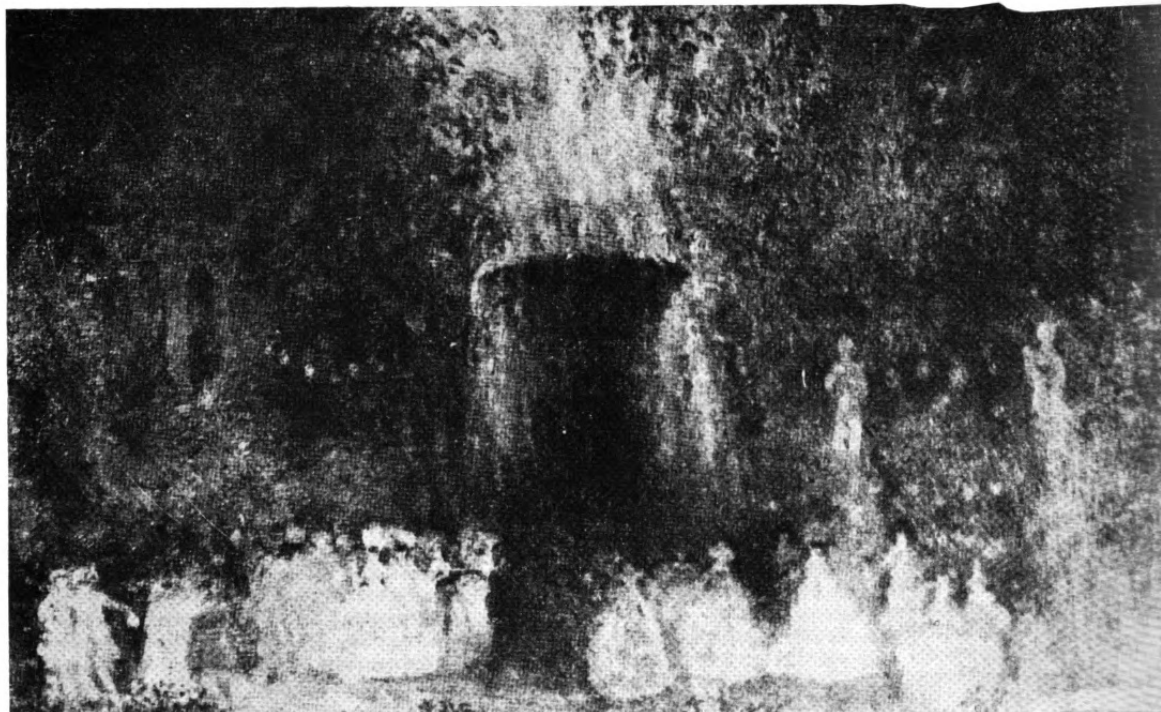
analytical observation of nature of 'The World of Art' artists by much less attention to technique, a more subdued approach to colour and a deliberate choice of subject matter for its symbolic associations.

The 'Blue Rose' group was formed at the beginning of 1907 and their first and last exhibition of that name took place in March of that year. The Blue Rosians, as they came to be called, consisted of fifteen young and for the most part little known artists: A. Arapov, P. Bromirsky (sculptor), V. Drittenpreis, N. Feofilaktov, N. Krymov, P. Zuznetsov, I. Knabeh, N. Milioti, V. Milioti, A. Matveyev (sculptor), N. Ryabushinsky, N. Sapunov, S. Sudeikin, P. Utkin and A. Von Fizen; M. Larionov and N. Goncharova, although sympathetic to the cause, did not take part in the exhibition. Many of these artists subsequently became well-known especially Krymov, Zuznetsov, the Miliotis, Sapunov, Saryan and Sudeikin, and—what is most striking—they all developed in different directions. But at that time the 'Blue Rose' was an artistic society united by principles common to all: they had nearly all studied at the Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, many under Korovin and Serov; they all recognised, and were to a great extent influenced by, Borisov-Musatov (1870-1905) and Vrubel (1856-1910) already legendary figures in Russian art; they were impressed by Denis in France, T. Heine in Germany and

Beardsley in England, and their attitude to technique was that it was one of the less important components of a picture (which sometimes led to extremely bad technique as in the works of Feofilaktov); above all, they were united in their search for a regeneration of art at its sources and like Borisov-Musatov they turned to the past—but their retrospection bore the traces of that primitivism which Larionov and later Mashkov, Kuprin and Shevchenko were to evolve into a complete movement.

The 'Blue Rose' exhibition opened in Moscow on the 28th of March 1907. Although most of its contributors had already taken part in exhibitions such as 'The World of Art', 'The New Society of Artists' and the 'Union', this was the first exhibition at which all were represented. The atmosphere, laden with the heavy scent of narcissi and the strains of a string orchestra, was one of mysticism, etheriality and subjectivism, an atmosphere which seemed strange and subdued to the average visitor who in recent years had grown accustomed to the 'colorful bouquets' of Korovin and Vinogradov. The exhibition was not enthusiastically received and the critics were not kind: I. Grabar wrote in *The Balance* (a rival magazine of *The Golden Fleece*) that he could hardly distinguish the pallid tones of the 'Blue Rose' paintings from the wallpaper, 'a material of pleasant grey hues'.² S. Makovsky was one of the few leading critics to

N. Sapunov, 'Masquerade'
(oil), 1907



P. Kusnetsov, 'Study of a
Woman', 1908

Right: P. Kusnetsov, 'Maternal
Love' (tempera), 1906



3: S. Makovsky in *The Golden Fleece*, 1907, No. 5

recognise the worth of the exhibition and he wrote in *The Golden Fleece*: 'The 'Blue Rose' is a beautiful exhibition, a chapel. For the very few. Light. Silent. And the pictures are like prayers. When you enter this small chapel you at once feel that the 'Blue Rose' is not only a hothouse flower, but also a spring flower of mystical love . . . The effect is not outward, physical, but psychological . . . (The pictures) tell no story, precision of imagery is renounced.'³

The very name of the 'Blue Rose' group symbolised its alienation from reality, for a blue rose is a completely fictitious phenomenon: the 'hothouse flower' was not destined to live long, and the dreams, pure prayers and isolation of the Blue Rosians were soon disturbed by contact with new and revolutionary trends in art. At the end of 1907 the exhibition 'The Wreath' was organised (December 1907—January 1908) again under the auspices of *The Golden Fleece*, in which took part not only the nucleus of the 'Blue Rose' group but also the new 'louder' artists Larionov, Goncharova, G. Yakulov and the Burliuks who had already 'regained consciousness' after 1905 and were searching for new forms in visual art. The mystical, lyrical pictures of Kuznetsov, Utkin and Krymov contrasted with the coarser, experimental canvases of this new movement. Just as the pictures of the 'Blue Rose' had been coldly received so were the new 'primitives' viciously

4: P. Muratov in *The Golden Fleece*, 1908, No. 1

5: I. Grabar in *The Balance*, 1908, No. 1

6: N. Ryabushinsky in *The Golden Fleece*, 1908, Nos. 7-9

attacked. P. Muratov, a leading critic, wrote: 'The Wreath' . . . loses importance because it is dirtied by the works of Lyudmilla, Vladimir and David Burliuk', while I. Grabar, unimpressed with Larionov and Goncharova, also condemned the Burliuks: 'When you enter the exhibition you gain the impression that apart from the Burliuks there is nobody else; then it turns out that there are only three of them, one paints in numbers and squares, the second in commas and the third with a swab.'⁵

Ryabushinsky, material supporter of the 'Blue Rose' and 'Wreath' exhibitions, was not as conservative as the critics. Realising that a valuable new direction had emerged in art he called for an amalgamation of rival artistic groups in an attempt to halt the disease of contemporary art—the disintegration and necrosis of artistic movements. It was with this aim in mind that he arranged in April, 1908, 'The Salon of The Golden Fleece'. *The Golden Fleece*, he wrote, 'has decided . . . by a confrontation of individual groups to establish the physiognomy and value of each one.'⁶ 'The Salon' enjoyed great success for not only were the newest developments in Russian art represented by, among others, Larionov, Goncharova, Kuznetsov, Utkin, the Miliotis, N. Ulyanov and A. Karev, but also the latest French developments as represented by Braque, Cézanne, Le Fauconnier, Matisse and

others. It became clear that the 'Blue Rose' had withered, that its subjectivism, its mysticism had been shattered by the new trends towards synthetic art, towards unexpected colour combinations and by the fresh attention to the 'how' rather than the 'what'. The death-knell was sounded in the preface to 'The Salon' catalogue signed by all the participants: 'In its searches our group has broken with the group of Symbolist aesthetes. Its basic feature is its aspiration to conquer the already stagnant formulae of aestheticism.' Ryabushinsky's 'Salon' was immediately followed by a whole series of art exhibitions organised both by individuals and by groups. He himself launched two more 'Golden Fleece' exhibitions: at the first one, in January 1909, both French and Russian modernists were again represented. At the second—December, 1909—because of Ryabushinsky's imminent bankruptcy only Russian artists were shown but these included in addition to Larionov and Goncharova, the future members of 'The Knave of Diamonds' A. Kuprin, P. Konchalovsky, I. Mashkov and R. Falk as well as the former Blue Rosians Kusnetsov, Saryan and Utkin. Sergey Makovsky the critic and art connoisseur arranged his own 'Salon' in St. Petersburg in December 1908, to which Kandinsky, David Burliuk and the Lithuanian Symbolist Churilienis, inter alia, contributed. A year later the 'Salon' of Vladimir Izdebsky was opened in Odessa.

7: L. Bakst in *Apollon*, 1909, No. 2

Izdebsky, a rich but also a cultured man (he was an artist in his own right and submitted his sculptures to several exhibitions including Makovsky's and his own), brought together almost 700 pictures representing all trends in French and Russian modern art, a venture which was inevitably criticised for its (deliberate) lack of unity and mixture of the good with the bad. At this exhibition and during its subsequent tours of Kiev, St. Petersburg and Riga, pictures of Larionov hung along side those of Bakst, Mashkov those of Denis, Ekster those of Rousseau, Lenkulov those of Bonnard, David Burliuk those of Braque. Izdebsky's 'Salon' was the most important exhibition of its kind since Diaghileff's 'Salon d'Automne' in Paris in 1906, for it indicated the direction Russian art would take—this time not towards symbolism but towards formalism.

At the beginning of 1909 Bakst wrote: 'Art of the future will crawl down into the depths of coarseness . . . art of the future will begin by hating the art of the past.'⁷ A year later the 'Union of Youth' was organised in St. Petersburg. This society, led by three young artists N. Kulbin (a doctor by profession), V. Markov and E. Spandikov, was primarily concerned with the propagation of the new and revolutionary in art: its importance lies in the exhibitions it arranged (1910, 1911, 1912) and in its series of pamphlets, one of which contained a translation and

A. V. Lentulov, 'Novdyevichy Monastery' (water-colour, pencil, bronze, silver), 1916-1917



S. Sudeikin, 'Arrogance' (illustration to poem by S. Raphaelovitch of that title), 1910 (published 1911)



annotation of the Italian Futurists' manifesto (No. 2, June 1912). Its exhibitions introduced to the public for the first time the works of O. Rozanova, V. Tatlin and P. Filonov and presented many works of Larionov, Goncharova, Ekster and K. Malevitch (already known from his contributions to the 'Moscow Association of Artists' expositions in 1907, 1908 and 1909). Many similar organisations mushroomed simultaneously such as the 'Moscow Salon' at which the spearhead of modern art was represented by Malevitch, V. Palmov, Larionov, Goncharova, Konchalovsky and Lentulov; the 'Impressionists' (later called the 'Triangle') whose Petersburg exhibitions arranged by N. Kulbin showed works by E. Guro, V. Kamensky, A. Kruchenikh, the Burliuks and Ekster; the society called 'Contemporary Painting' in Moscow to which Malevitch and Tatlin contributed; and, the most important, the 'Knave of Diamonds'.

'The Knave of Diamonds' was a group of avant-garde artists organised in Moscow by Larionov. Like the 'Blue Rose' it was at first a cohesive society united by common principles: they opposed the fragmentation of Impressionist composition, renounced psychological tendencies and the aesthetics of the individual, and aspired to recreate an objective world founded on rational, exact laws. Their aim was to deliberately simplify and coarsen form to emphasise colour and

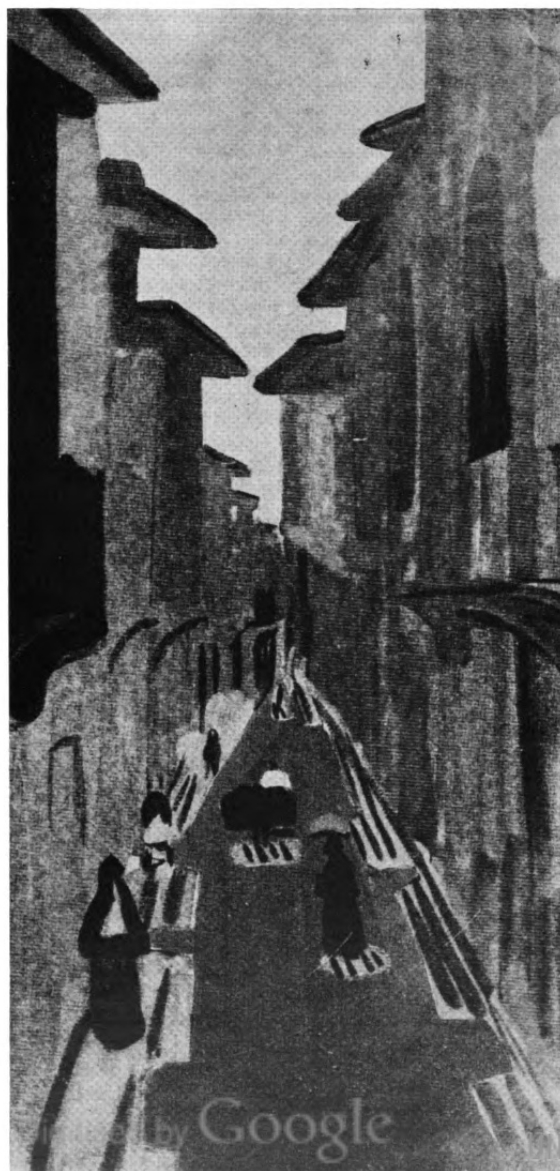
8: *Quoted by V. Labanov in Artistic groups over the last 25 years, Moscow 1919, Chapter VII*

9: *V. Parkin's article on the exhibitions of 'The Donkey's Tail' and 'The Target' in 'The Donkey's Tail' and 'The Target'. A Collection of Articles, Moscow, 1913*

accuracy of line¹⁸, and they had their own code of laws.

'The Knave of Diamonds', so named by Larionov because of '... a very interesting combination which can be formed from these two words and their letters', had its first exhibition in 1910. The main exhibitors were P. Konchalovsky, A. Lentulov, Larionov, Goncharova, A. Kuprin, I. Mashkov, V. Rozhdestvensky and R. Falk who all (with the exception of Konchalovsky and Lentulov who had studied at The Petersburg Academy of Arts) had recently been expelled from The Moscow Institute of Painting, Architecture and Sculpture for 'rebelliousness and leftism'¹⁹. This 'rebelliousness' Korovin and Serov considered to be a following of the latest French trends and, indeed, their pictures at this first exhibition showed the marked influence of Matisse and Rousseau. This influence directed attention not only to the West but also to the primitives of the East, to Russian iconography and the 'lubok', to Chinese painting and to Negro sculpture. These diverse interests could only have a pernicious effect on the fragile organisation of the 'Knave of Diamonds' and by the autumn of 1911 a division had occurred which gave birth to a separate faction called the 'Donkey's Tail'. But this by no means meant death to the remaining members of the 'Knave of Diamonds' for, with inevitable modifications, they continued to hold exhibitions until November 1917. Probably the most important were those

M. Saryan, 'Constantinople.
A Street. Mid-day'. (oil), 1910



of 1912 and 1913 at which were represented not only Russian artists such as Konchalovsky, Lentulov, Mashkov, Falk, Shevchenko, the Burliuks (1912), Kandinsky (1912) and Ekster (1912) but also French, including Braque, Léger, Derain, Picasso and Le Fauconnier. This was no coincidence: the post-1911 members of the 'Knave of Diamonds' turned their attention to the construction of objects, to the recreation of an object minus any tendentiousness or idea, to the materiality of things. Their main task became the transmission of objective reality in its three-dimensional volume. To achieve this they made exclusive use of easel painting and relied solely on colour to attain the sensation of volume while denying the creation of forms by drawn contours. The main exponents of this school of thought, Konchalovsky, Kuprin, Lentulov, Mashkov, Rozhdestvensky and Falk chose as their main genres portrait painting and still-lives. Konchalovsky's 'Self-portrait', for example, exhibited in 1912, is a large canvas (56" x 45") in thick oils which depicts the figure purely by colour texture; the dark grey suit and grey background are given perspective by the insertion in the right hand top corner of an oval picture of buildings in a landscape executed in yellow, green and blue. The overall impression is one of tremendous size and stability. The same is true of Kuprin's still-lives, one exhibited in 1913, is a huge canvas (60"

x 54"), again in thick oils, of fruit, the individual objects given volume purely by texture and weight of colour. Gradually, new elements began to emerge in the work of this movement: under the influence of the French Cubists purely decorative qualities were replaced by the monochromatic surface, and the picture was conceived as something schematic, built and architecturally balanced. Lentulov was especially affected by this conception of the picture as a constructed complex, and his famous paintings of superimposed and 'disintegrated' churches and series of 'Unnaturalistic Studies' were first shown at the 1914 exhibition of 'The Knave of Diamonds', in which Malevitch, L. Popova and N. Udaltsova also took part. He subsequently participated in the unjustly forgotten 'Exhibition of Painting' (Moscow 1915) at which N. Altman, L. Bruni, the Burliuks, Goncharova, Kandinsky, Larionov, Shagal and the nucleus of 'The Knave of Diamonds' were also represented. The changed face of 'The Knave of Diamonds' movement was evident at its last important exhibition in 1916 to which only three of the original members, Kuprin, Lentulov and Falk, contributed: the general impression indicated that the move was away from the preoccupation and experiments with volume, mass and colour of portraits and still-lives to subjectlessness and pure formalism. Malevitch submitted sixty examples of Suprematist painting, among

11: It was in fact some students from the Salon des Independants connected with the magazine Phantasie who perpetrated this.

12: V. Parkin, *op. cit.*

13: V. Parkin, *op. cit.*

other titles Popova contributed her 'Pictorial Architectonics', O. Rozanova nine 'Subjectless Compositions', N. Udaltsova three 'Pictorial Constructions' and N. Altman, D. Burliuk, I. Puni and M. Shagal were also represented. This shift of emphasis, the diverse aesthetic views and finally the explosive revolution of October 1917 led to the collapse of 'The Knave of Diamonds'. Despite a last, not very successful exhibition arranged by Malevitch in November 1917, and a retrospective exhibition in 1927, the apolitical, asocial 'Knave of Diamonds' movement ended its great role in the development of Russian painting.

The end of 'The Knave of Diamonds' was the loss of an extremely important and productive institution. The seven years of its eventful existence had stimulated the creation of a great number of small and often very gifted artistic groups. Among these was the 'Donkey's Tail', a society of Moscow artists led by Larionov and Goncharova. The name, obviously chosen to shock merchants and academicians, was derived from the story that Cezanne tied a brush to a donkey's tail, a palette to its hindquarters and a picture was produced" —an image, incidentally, which the noble Repin used in his abusive review of Izdebsky's 'Salon'. The importance of the 'Donkey's Tail' group is often exaggerated for it only had one exhibition of that name and among its ranks were few artists of outstanding talent.

Its significance lies in its aesthetic principles—its denial of tradition and academicism, its recognition of primitive and peasant art and its renouncement of the West, tenets which were more explicitly and emphatically expressed in the preface to the exhibition catalogue of 'The Target'. Larionov, organiser of 'The Donkey's Tail' exhibition in 1912 declared: 'My task is not to confirm the new art because after that it would cease to be new, but as far as possible to try to move it forward ... After organising 'The Knave of Diamonds' two years ago ... I did not realise that under that name would arise ... such a popularisation of works which have nothing in common either with new art or with old ...'¹² Unfortunately, of the nineteen artists who took part only very few put into practice their revolutionary theories and as Varsanofi Parkin, official apologist of the society observed (writing, incidentally, from a Paris address): 'If it had not been for Larionov and Goncharova, 'The Donkey's Tail' would not have existed: they are the ideological inspirers of the exhibition ... and accomplish more than anyone the tasks of the exhibition.' Indeed, over half the space at the exhibition was occupied by the pictures of Larionov (48) and Goncharova (55) which included examples of their Impressionist period (1901-1907), their Cubo-primitive period (1907-1912) and their first attempts at Rayonism (1911, 1912): for example several of Larionov's 'Soldier

series ('Relaxing Soldier', 'Dancing Soldiers', 'Morning in the Barracks'), his dynamic 'cinematographic' series ('Photographic Study from a City Street', 'Momentary Photograph'), Goncharova's 'Peacock' series ('Peacock in the Wind, Futurist style', 'Peacock in Bright Sun, Egyptian style', 'White Peacock, Cubist style', 'Spring Peacock, style of Russian embroidery') and three of her 'Immediate Perception' series ('Autumn Study', 'Street Traffic', 'Immediate Perception') were included among their many exhibits. The 'cinematographic' and 'Immediate Perception' pictures were extremely important innovations in that they indicated a complete break with the artistic principles of 'The Knave of Diamonds': mass, volume, static subject, elements often present in the 'Soldier' pictures and the 'Peasant' pictures of Goncharova (for example 'Mowing', 'Gathering Grapes', 'Peasants Gathering Apples', all shown in the exhibition) were replaced by a dynamic conception of form (inspired by the theory that any moment in visual reality is a complex of innumerable 'stills') and an apparent disintegration of subject. By the end of 1912 Larionov had applied the term 'Rayonism' to this new direction.

Other significant contributions to 'The Donkey's Tail' exhibition were those of Malevitch, Shevchenko and Tatlin—a whole wall was filled by 'the scrolls and semicircles' of Tatlin's costume designs

which made it seem as if 'Mr Tatlin had opened a small shop here'¹³. Malevitch and Shevchenko (whose works and writings have yet to be 'discovered') were still largely concerned with the re-creation of volume by colour mass and surface, which is witnessed by the 'Peasant' subjects of the former and the provincial motifs of the latter. Critics mentioned not unfavourably the works of I. F. Larionov, M. V. Le-Dantio and K. S. Zdanevitch but lack of information on these works makes a contemporary appraisal impossible.

In March 1913 the nucleus of 'The Donkey's Tail' group organised an exhibition called 'The Target' and declared ideological war on their contemporaries of 'The Union', 'The Union of Youth', 'The World of Art' (by then resuming its exhibitions) and 'The Knave of Diamonds'. The preface to their catalogue, signed by Larionov, put forward their Futurist-sounding principles, among which were:

1. A negative attitude towards eulogy of individuality.
2. The proclamation of all possible combinations and mixtures of styles.
3. The creation of our own style—Rayonism ...
4. Aspiration towards the East and concentration of attention on our national art.
5. Protest against servile submission to the West ...

To emphasise their sincere desire to find the primitive sources of art divested of the influences of traditions, movements and institutions

14: From N. Lavrsky's article
on Shevchenko's paintings in
A. Shevchenko by A.
Grishchenko and N. Lavrsky,
Moscow, 1919

they exhibited apart from their own work seventeen drawings by children, six signboards from 'The Second Artel of Signpainters', some examples of iconography and the 'lubok' and some Chinese and Persian drawings. As at 'The Donkey's Tail' exhibition much of the space was occupied by the works of Larionov (16) and Goncharova (24), this time mainly of the years 1911, 1912 and 1913, some of which were Rayonist compositions. This theory of Rayonism was expounded by Larionov in his booklet *Rayonist Painting* (published in the same year): '(Our eyes) receive the sum of rays coming from the source of light which are reflected from the object and fall into our field of vision ... But in order to receive in entirety the sum of rays from the desired object we must wilfully single out only the given object, because into our field of vision fall the reflected rays of other objects as well as those of the object itself. If we really want to depict what we see then we must also depict these reflected rays of other objects ... In other words this is the highest reality of an object—not as we know it but as we see it ...' Despite the fact that Larionov discovered Rayonism it was Goncharova at this exhibition who more than anyone put into practice this new pictorial approach: of her contributions, seven were pure experiments in Rayonist technique, for example 'Cats' (1913) (a composition of short, jagged lines and crystalline shapes in yellow, pink and black) and 'City by night' (1912) (again

a construction of crystals and crystalline rays interspersed with vestiges of 'visual reality'—a face, a house, a moon). As far as one can tell Larionov submitted only one pure Rayonist work: 'Rayonist Sausage and Mackerel' (1912). Attempts at Rayonism were also present in the works of Le-Dantio, V. V. Levkiersky, S. M. Romanovitch and Shevchenko. A conception of visual reality similar to that of Rayonism, Dynamism, based on the Futurists' requirement that 'It is necessary to transmit the dynamic sensation, that is the special rhythm of each object, its movement, or—better expressed—its inner force'—was represented by Malevitch ('The Knife Grinder', 'Dynamic Disintegration') and by Shevchenko ('Girl with a Toy'—a girl playing with a diablo whose fast moving hands and diablo are defined by a series of hands and diabolos). Also at the exhibition was a newcomer to the group, the Georgian N. Piromanashvili, whose works—completely 'representational'—were especially sympathetic to the cause with their peasant subjects and primitive, almost childish style ('Girl with a Jug', 'Deer').

In the same year Goncharova organised a personal exhibition of 761 works (1900-1913) which inevitably met with a very mixed reception from contemporary critics, from V. Songailov—'Goncharova has undoubtedly a great talent—to destroy colours and spoil canvas'—to K. Zdanevitch—'Her art is extraordinarily rich.' Larionov

had, incidentally, organised his own one-day exhibition in December 1911.

In 1914 Larionov and Goncharova organised their last exhibition before their final departure to France to work for Diaghileff. This exhibition, called simply 'No. 4', being fourth in succession since the first exhibition of 'The Knave of Diamonds', was arranged primarily to demonstrate their latest findings in Rayonism: in this respect 'The Target' had not been a great success for Rayonism had had to bear company with a pot-pourri of Impressionism, Primitivism, Futurism and Cubism. Most of Goncharova's nineteen works were Rayonist and included four of her 'electric' series, complexes of lines and colour contrasts. Of Larionov's works (sixteen in all) nearly half were Rayonist, among them two examples of a new development, Pneu-Rayonism ('Seashore and a Woman', 'Sunny Day'). Shevchenko submitted both Rayonist and Dynamist paintings, the latter including 'Woman by a Mirror' with its strange disturbance of perspective and its almost animated, Goncharovian mirror. Ekster was represented (three works) and the Futurist V. Kamensky contributed eleven pictures with such arresting titles as 'Ferro-concrete Poems', 'Newspaper 12763914 No.No.No.' and 'Wireless-telegraph'. In all twenty-two artists participated.

With the departure of Larionov and Goncharova from Moscow, Petrograd came to be a temporary centre for the

organisation of art exhibitions. In 1914 a group under the leadership of N. Altman, I. Puni and V. Tatlin had arranged an exhibition 'Tramway V' in which Malevitch, Udaltsova and Ekster also took part. This exhibition was subtitled 'The First Futurist Exhibition of Pictures', but as far as Malevitch and Udaltsova were concerned, it was mainly a retrospective showing of their work from 1911 onwards. Malevitch's contribution included five works, 'the contents of these pictures being unknown to the author', and among Udaltsova's were two 'compositions of surfaces'. Tatlin submitted seven 'pictorial reliefs' and Ekster fourteen works including two examples of 'Synthetic Depiction of a City'.

In 1915 Puni put on the exhibition '0'10' in which took part, from a total of fourteen artists, Altman, Kamensky, Malevitch, Popova, Rozanova, Tatlin and Udaltsova. In the main the works were Futurist, Suprematist, and often unnamed: of particular interest were the 'Collective Picture' by Malevitch, Boguslavskaya, Puni, Kliun and Minkov, and the 39 compositions of Malevitch prefaced by his declaration: 'In naming some of my pictures I do not want to show that one ought to look for their forms in them, but I want to point out that the real forms were considered as heaps of formless, pictorial masses, from which a pictorial entity was created having nothing in common with the subject.' And in the following

N. Kulbin, 'Portrait of Marinetti', 1914

Right: D. Burliuk, sketch, 1914-1915



O. Rozanova, 'Blue Pantaloons', 1914-1915

Right: A. B. Lentulov, sketch, 1914-1915



year Tatlin organised in Moscow 'The Shop' (or 'The Store') at which the most important names were L. Bruni, Kliun, Malevitch, Popova, Rodchenko, Tatlin, Udaltsova and Ekster.

The October Revolution of 1917 destroyed all artistic unions. But, paradoxically, those rootless artists who had organised such 'shocking', leftist, oddly-named exhibitions now found they had a place in society, at least temporarily. During the next few years they were employed in propaganda—in decorating the two capitals and the provinces, in preserving the works of art threatened by elements of the revolution and in instructing the new generation of artists. As a result of this distraction by practical work, the economic ruin of the country and the obscurity of the theoretical foundations of proletarian art, output in the experimental field was very limited: this is why contributions to exhibitions between 1918 and 1921 were mainly of 1917 or earlier. Nevertheless, the avant-garde continued to exist in spite of questions raised concerning the future of Futurism and its function in a collective society: Malevitch and Rozanova continued to work on their Suprematist paintings, Tatlin on his reliefs, Puni on his synthetic compositions of newspaper, rope and sticks, and Altman on his colour volumes and surfaces. Their further explorations into the territory of non-representational art were epitomised in the Moscow

exhibition '5 x 5=25' (September, 1921), the final fling of Russian leftist art. The participants were Stepanova (who painted under the name of Varst), Vesnin, Popova, Rodchenko and Ekster, whose aims were purely formalist and whose works were all non-representational. Of Rodchenko's five canvases one was 'Pure Red', one was 'Pure Yellow' and one was 'Pure Blue'. Popova's four contributions were all 'Experiments in Pictorial Force Constructions' while Ekster's three were 'Constructions in Plane and Colour'. The conclusion to the catalogue summed up their aspirations: 'The present works are part of a general plan of experiments in colour to resolve, in particular, the questions of the interrelation of colours, their reciprocal intensities, rhythm and the transition to colour constructions based on the laws of colour itself.'

During this post-revolutionary period many separate groups of artists attempted to organise independent exhibitions but most of them did not survive beyond the first step and never had more than one exhibition. Such groups were, apart from '5 x 5=25', the Constructivists K. Medunetsky and the Sternberg brothers, 'Yakulov and his Pupils' and Palmov's 'Fu'turism in Japan'. A little more successful was the 'Society of Young Artists' ('Obmokhu') who were all pupils at the 'First State Free Art Studios' (formerly the Stroganov Institute of Moscow): altogether they arranged four exhibitions

(1919-1922) and took part as a group in the Berlin Exhibition, 1922. But their main aim was not the creation of new modes of easel painting but the fulfilment of the demands of industry, a field which was entered by many experimentalists (Popova, Rodchenko, Altman, Malevitch). 'Obmokhu' was followed in 1922 by two organisations, the 'New Society of Painters' ('Nozh') and 'Being' both of which were fundamental to the formulation of Socialist Realism. At the first exhibition of 'Nozh' in 1922 it was obvious that a decisive step had been taken away from non-representational art: the artists, former pupils of Tatlin, Malevitch and Ekster wrote in the preface to the catalogue: 'We, previously leftists in art, were the first to sense the complete rootlessness of further analytical scholastic wanderings which are getting further and further away from life and art', a doctrine exemplified in their works of domestic and satirical content. The artists of 'Being', many of them former pupils of painters in 'The Knave of Diamonds' group, shared this sentiment and declared as their watchword 'Back to the land', a conviction expressed in their concentration on nature and landscape. In the same year after a break of five years the 47th exhibition of the 'Peredvizhniki' took place with their declaration that realistic art was unshakeable and indispensable. This acted as a direct incentive to the formation of 'The Association of Artists of Revolutionary

Russia' (AKHRR), an organisation which developed the realism of the 'Peredvizhniki' into what has come to be called Socialist Realism.

With the establishment of Socialist Realism in art, a style, a cohesive school of thought was at last found, something for which the artists of pre-revolutionary Russia had been desperately searching. Peace if not Truth was discovered.

Only a few of the total number of exhibitions between 1905 and 1922 have been analysed or even mentioned. It must not be forgotten that the exhibitions of the resurrected 'World of Art' (1911-1924) also played a most important part in the development of pre- and post-revolutionary art (among others Altman, Bruni, Larionov and Goncharova took part). The 'Union', the 'New Society of Artists', the 'Society of Contemporary Art' and the 'Society of Free Art' continued to function, in some cases, until the early 1920s with many notable contributions, and a host of ephemeral, little known exhibition groups such as the 'Independents', the 'Moscow Society of Art Lovers', the 'Group' and so on, all inspired the discovery of new theories and new forms. These exhibitions helped to conceive the renaissance of Russian art amidst the disjecta membra of an ingrown, decomposing society: if parallels can be drawn in social history then perhaps we too might hope for the imminent attainment of our artistic zenith.

Translated by John Neves

The Austrian Thomas Bernhard (b. 1931) is one of the foremost exponents of the new novel in German, and has been particularly successful in evolving new forms for the German short story (Erzählung). In 1967 he was awarded the Austrian State Prize for Literature. His books include the novels Frost (1963) and Verströrung (1967), a long short story Amras (1964), and Prosa (1967), a collection of short stories from which the following piece is taken. It is the first of his works to be translated into English.

Close of a Vacation Diary

21.9.

It was demonstrated during dinner in how short a time a cheerful atmosphere and company, which had in this case been induced by several causes, in themselves insignificant, but decisive in combination, can be turned to gloom.

We were afraid of the consequences of any and every line of thought, as though we were refusing to surrender to the terrible event we couldn't help thinking of while we were eating. Dinner had begun punctually in the greatest unease, in which conjectures and fears had given rise to a silence particularly dreadful for the wife of the missing man. My uncle had not returned from his inspection of the forest. We had searched for him, without success. (The fact that he had stayed out had such a paralysing effect for the reason that within the memory of those present he had never once returned home late from his evening inspection.)

While we were eating our dinner in silence I studied particularly the behaviour of my uncle's wife. But I am not now concerned with a description of the tension, or indeed despair, of the company at table, which, as I now know, quite naturally connected my uncle with a series of terrible accidents, and crimes, but only with what he had to report after he appeared, to the complete surprise of us all, half an hour after the meal had begun.

He whom we were no longer expecting had come in and sat down at his place as though nothing had happened, and told us how he had met a young man, as he said 'one of the most imposing young men you can think of' in the forest, in the bit of mixed wood adjacent to the spruce wood, not having noticed beforehand even the smallest detail relating to this encounter. The man had been excellently dressed. As was natural in view of the atmospheric conditions, my uncle had not been able to see his face, but could classify his voice immediately as that of someone of above-average intelligence. (In the first moment of the meeting with the stranger my uncle had already sensed it to be a stroke of fortune.)

'Curiously' said my uncle, 'I felt as if I had been waiting for years for nothing other than this encounter.'

My uncle had not for a moment considered the possibility of a crime, not for a moment had he thought of the existence of a trap.

He invited the young man, who had introduced himself and yet preserved a total anonymity, to accompany him some of the way

He had, as he told him, to examine several trunks to see whether they were ripe for felling, and he would rather have company on his round than go on alone; and he had thought to himself, the man is to be trusted, and: 'perhaps he is exactly like me, moods and movements can be a guide to the character', etc.

'This wood' my uncle had said to the young man 'is good' then another time: 'This wood is bad, and I am going to explain to you why *that* wood is good, and the other one bad. In the darkness of course you can't see why *that* one is good and this other one bad. But I will tell you the reason why *that* wood is good and the other one bad. ('People!') It may be that it doesn't interest you at all. But I have constantly to concern myself with these curiosities, country curiosities. Such thoughts as: 'Is *this* wood good? Is *this* wood bad? Why is *that* one good? Why is *that* one bad?' occupy me day and night. By day you would immediately perceive that *this* wood ('Man!') in which we are now, is bad, and you would be able to say with the same certainty of the one we are about to enter that it is good. But now you can't tell anything. The darkness makes it impossible to ascertain whether the wood ('Man!') is good, or whether the wood ('Man!') is bad. But I know that the wood in which we are now is bad, that the wood we are just about to enter is good. I am familiar with the character of all my woods . . . I see my pieces of land before me day and night . . . Continuously . . . My pieces of land are my themes . . . I can imagine that a philosopher sees before him all his philosophical ideas day and night, if he is the ideal philosopher. The art of it consists in the philosopher always *seeing into the heart* of all philosophical ideas, as mine consists in always *seeing into the heart* of all pieces of land. I must know whether and *from what cause* the tree is rotten. I must know what *is* in the tree. I must always know whatever there is to know. The world is, as you know, a world of possibilities, my pieces of land consist of possibilities, just as philosophical ideas consist of possibilities. All of us are always thinking in possibilities.'

The young stranger proved to be not merely interested where the science of forestry and plantation economics was concerned: he showed himself to be fully conversant with it. (The young man was, as became clear, an expert on the whole development of 'the science of plantation economics'.)

'I like that so much' said my uncle. 'The young man cited nature herself, and not writings about nature.'

My uncle derived increasing pleasure from the encounter. The subject of conversation of the two men, as he told us, was soon no longer confined to the science of forestry and plantation economics, at the end it was the arts that they were talking about, that astonished my uncle, for they were both of them so-called *practical men at the high point of the twentieth century*. They discussed literature, music. (As one of the few young

people with whom one can talk about everything, without fearing that one must at every moment and in the most embarrassing way make them and *therefore also oneself* sound banal, the stranger had soon won his regard by reason of his predilections, in particular those for literature and music, and his knowledge of nature.)

'The young man's German was extraordinary, and yet you could tell it was spoken by a foreigner', said my uncle. A Frenchman! he had immediately thought to himself, yes, a Frenchman! and—*what is a Frenchman doing at this time of day in my forest?* But then he had said to himself: of course it must be one of the French relatives of the Minister of Agriculture. The young man has for whatever reason, and young people have *youthful reasons*, gone for a walk before going to bed. His interest in the occurrences precisely in Upper Austria of numerous physical, chemical, and philosophical peculiarities *in the dusk* has led him to go out. To be sure, a man alone in the forest in the darkness is not only here but everywhere a suspicious sight of the most disturbing kind. But this thought had not worried my uncle. 'Trust' he said, 'Reciprocal trust'.

Not for a moment had my uncle thought of a gun.

'It was dusk, almost night' he said. 'Strange' he said, and added: 'After I had told the young man about manuring and seedling-felling, and about the different shade-bearing trees, and had told him a very interesting story about the Weymouth beetle, we fell to talking politics. Once more it became clear to me that a conversation between two intelligent men must always by its nature lead to a discussion of politics and the political, the highest and only object of thought for a fine mind. Here the high intelligence of my companion showed itself more than ever. Quite obviously, I thought to myself, that's a Frenchman talking!'

What he had to say about democracy had made a very great impression on my uncle, who is a perfect listener.

'The Frenchman knew what democracy is' said my uncle, 'he knew what the state is today, above all the younger generation and the state, the future and the state.'

'The Frenchman' said my uncle 'was characterised by precision, an elegant precision.'

The young Frenchman, as my uncle told us, showed a masterly hand in throwing light on the most obscure interrelations of events, not only in European history, but in the history of the entire human race. Without quoting a single time *from works of history*, he succeeded in a couple of sentences in describing so vividly *the standpoint in history we have reached today*, that his

description *could not help* calling forth the admiration of my uncle.

'You have gone through that school which doesn't really exist anywhere but which is nevertheless the best' my uncle had said to the young man.

The two of them had walked as far as the oaks.

'I suggested to the Frenchman that he have dinner with us' said my uncle, 'but the Frenchman declined my invitation. He requested me to lead him out of the wood, as he had lost his bearings, and I led him out' said my uncle. He added: 'The thought, that I have seen this man perhaps for the last time, is painful to me.'

As he walked back through the mixed wood the Frenchman seemed to him 'one of the most important people in his life'. ('This man is in every sense a privileged being' said my uncle, 'just as it is a privilege to meet such a man.')

23.9

Today I heard people talking about a dead man 'with his head shot through'.

25.9

'The man was an attaché at the French Embassy' said my uncle.

'Play, Life, Illusion' (1924-37)



Photo: Barbara Sutro

Xanti Schawinsky was born in Basle in 1904. He joined the Bauhaus in 1924, working under Kandinsky, Klee, Moholy-Nagy and Oskar Schlemmer. From 1924 to 1928 he was involved in theatrical experiments in dance and pantomime. As an assistant to Hirschfeld-Mack (who incidentally almost went to Black Mountain, being diverted at the last moment to Australia) he experimented with coloured light plays. At the Bauhaus in Dessau he taught stage design, as well as the course 'Man', originally given by Schlemmer.

Of his work at B M C (1936-38) he writes: 'While the work at the Bauhaus Theatre aimed at the modernisation of theatrical means and concepts, and had

a definite professional and artistic scope, at Black Mountain College an educational crack at the whole man seemed to be in order.'

Richard Kostelanetz's claim that 'history' shows the earliest multimedial performance in America to have been that mounted by Cage, Cunningham, Rauschenberg, Olson and M. C. Richards in 1952 (*The Theatre of Mixed Means, The Dial Press, New York 1968, p.29*) is plainly incorrect.

This text, copyrighted by Mr Schawinsky in 1950, is based on improvisations, experiments and designs dating from 1925-26, when certain scenes were performed at the Bauhaus Experimental Theatre in Dessau (I—5, 6; II—1, 2, 4; IV—5, 6). Between 1936 and 1938 Mr Schawinsky directed three performances based on the present script (with the exception of some scenes, and various minor changes) at Black Mountain College and the Cummington School for Music and Art. Of the four parts, we publish three here—Parts I, II and IV. Mr Schawinsky was supported by a music score by John Everts (see Form 6), and numerous performers and technicians upon whose talents and group work the success of the productions depended.

The stage setting consists of BLACK drapes and backdrop. In all action, ACTORS, DANCERS and PROPERTIES appear from behind black sliding curtains which silently glide across the stage. For projection of slides and film, transparent projection screens (scrim) of backdrop size are installed in front, center and rear, to be lowered and drawn quickly; black stage floor.

Part I

Scene 1:

A contralto VOICE sings pianissimo, then crescendo as CURTAIN rises and reveals black stage. A blue line from wing to wing slowly rises from the floor to the whole height of the stage until it disappears while the volume of the voice increases further and is joined by violin and oboe. Meanwhile, as the blue line has passed half its way, a vertical and narrow red plane enters from the left. At its appearance, the theme of the voice is taken up by a chorus of alto voices increasing in verve and changing the mood of the musical theme from 'blue' to 'red' while the red form moves to the extreme right. Before it disappears, however, a large yellow square suddenly breaks from the background and moves quickly forward to the proscenium where it stops abruptly. This movement is supported by the full orchestra ending in a fortissimo eclat.

Scene 2:

The yellow square moves to the left and disappears, uncovering in succession three white shapes: a triangle,

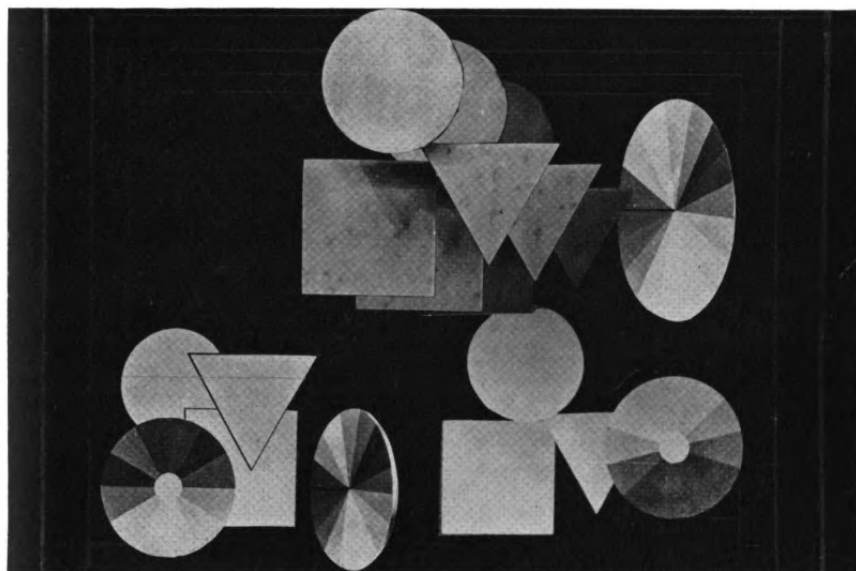
a circle and a square. These forms begin to move to various locations, forming various compositions within the whole space of the stage. To the accompaniment of a musical fugue, they multiply, and become staggered in depth and height, forming new arrangements and compositions. From behind the sliding curtains, more and more forms appear, moving to more intricate compositions which, under light projection, create an interplay of grey shadows on the black and white movement.

Scene 3:

While these forms return to their original position, a large color wheel (spectrum) spins horizontally from the wing to the center of the stage, first slowly, then faster, until the colors blend and produce the illusion of a three-dimensional color spiral. From behind sliding curtains, more color wheels appear, and colored lights begin to change the scene by their effect upon the spectrum colors, changing their values through green, blue, red, yellow. White forms move simultaneously into new positions, creating through color lighting and complementary shadows a living color architecture (climax).

Scene 4:

Sliding curtains and dimming lights change the scene to complete darkness. In a sharp cone of light a white mask appears suspended in space, reciting the BASIC SOUND SONATA (after Kurt



Above: 'Play, Life, Illusion' (1924-37), stage demonstration of form and colour (Part I, Scene 3)

Right: demonstration of two-dimensional form and colour (warm and cold colours) (Part I, Scene 7)

Schwitters), while microscopic life is projected on the front screen.

Scene 5:
A color wheel spins across the stage, eliminating the image of the mask, and uncovering a blue wall, which in turn spreads out to three walls of equal size—blue, red and yellow. The walls move—to form various ground-plan patterns: staggering, spreading, juxtaposing, lining up straight again, forming a diagonal, etc. Joined by a number of identical walls entering from all sides, they perform a *space play* of convex and concave formations, overlapping, s-curves, crossing diagonals, division etc. until they dissolve into amorphous chaos—only

to re-group to a new and final formation of alternated colors (climax).

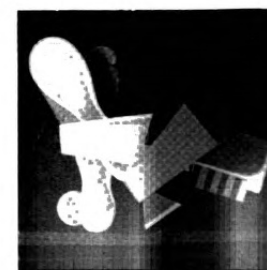
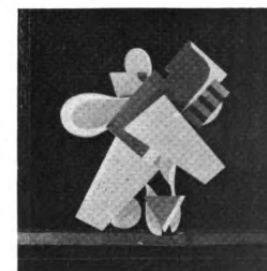
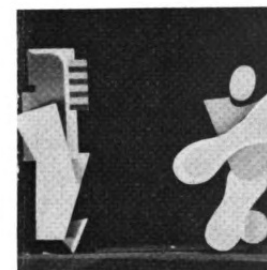
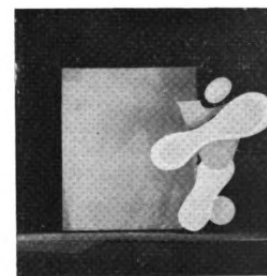
Scene 6:
ACTORS in tights of corresponding colors appear from behind the walls, each one demonstrating the character of his own color. More join them, and they form a BALLET CORPS of the three temperaments. From the orchestra, corresponding solo instruments are introduced: cello for blue, clarinet for red, trumpet for yellow. SOLO DANCERS in white join the group, and a ballet evolves, with the moving walls as an architectural setting. Climax: the dancers disappear behind the walls which glide off to both sides at the same time.

Scene 7:

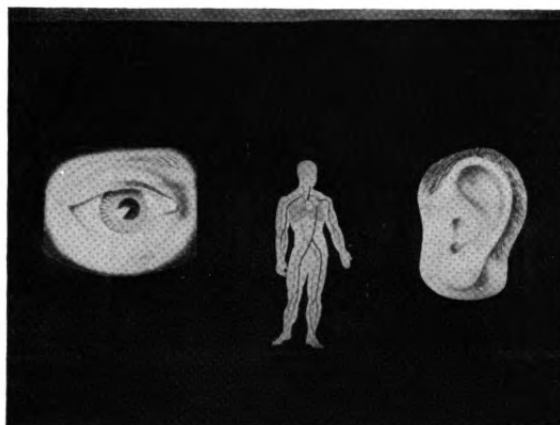
Entering from the right, a large red square moves slowly across the stage and reveals two large two-dimensional figurines, representing the cold and the warm colours (contrast). To the accompaniment of a majestic musical theme, they move their abstract forms to various positions. By means of the dimming and the interplay of lights (interaction of complementary hues etc.), their colours change their chromatic intensity. From all directions and from behind sliding curtains, more figurines enter, midgets to giant size, and appear to greet each other, harmonise and disharmonise, attract and reject, love or hate, until they finally form two groups in hostile opposition. Then, with dimming lights and projections from the rear, the scene evolves to a silhouette, making a ...

Scene 8:

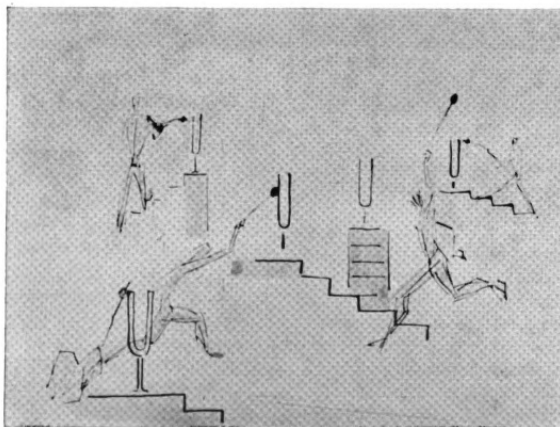
... shadow play on the lowered front screen. First white flood-lights produce grey shadows of different intensity; then a colored light organ introduces a play of complementary shadows, additive and subtractive color mixture effects and multiple projection images of various hues and saturations. Music and color compositions are coordinated symphonically. Exit of two-dimensional ballet, only one figurine remaining which disappears dimming lights, and ...



'Play, Life, Illusion' (1924-37),
symbols of optics and
acoustics (Part I, Scene 10)



'Play, Life, Illusion' (1924-37),
sketch for tuning-fork ballet
(Part II, Scene 2)



Scene 9

... entrance of a group of large shields floating in mid-height of the stage, representing the various methods of VISUAL REPRESENTATION. As they enter, a LOUD VOICE calls their names: texture, facture, structure, perspective, plasticity, realism, abstractions, symbols,

photography, typography, geometry. Superimposed, a large eye appears on a projection screen, followed by a collection of paintings, drawings, photographs — contrasting in style, purpose and intention: cave drawings and modern camouflage, EL GRECO and RUBENS, Egyptian relief and stroboscopic photograph,

african mask and portrait of movie star, GIOTTO and KANDINSKY, MICHELANGELO and GABO sculpture, etc.

Scene 10:

A LECTURER appears at the proscenium and in a LECTURE, with the aid of slide projections, explains the biological function of eye and visual sense, and shows that visual interest as well as pictorial expression correspond to a state of mind depending largely on the 'inner eye'—imagination; that, while the human grasp may shift with changing interests, different judgments are formed about a seemingly unchanging universe. He demonstrates the universe of the ancient Greeks with its even crystal spheres centered around the earth, in fulfillment of the most perfect form, the sphere, and compares it with today's views about the same universe with its suns or stars, its planetary systems, its galaxies and nebulae. Then he asks whether a star looks different to man now that he knows it is not fixed on the heavens (as was the belief of the Greeks) but is moving through space ... the lecturer exits, almost colliding with entering ...

Scene 11:

... blind man, with two black spots over his eyes, white hat and cane, and a sign 'BLIND' across his breast. Blind man: a star?—what does a star look like? they all speak of it ... it shines ... in all colors. Wonder what the colors are like. Here—(pointing into the black surroundings) I see the most beautiful colors ...

are they the colors of the stars?—but last night I saw a color in my dream which I had never seen before—wish I could show it to you; (to audience) you have never seen anything like it. Lights dim out.

Part II

Scene 1:

Backstage, a sound ladder becomes audible, demonstrating a scale of different noises: crumpling paper, scraping, knocking, breaking, tearing, chain rattling, etc. etc., as well as drumbeats, a cymbal, gongs, tuning forks, and other sound equipment. A large ear appears in the center of the front screen. Transitionally, the noises become more organised and gradually lead to a composition of percussion, from which emerges a noise symphony.

Scene 2:

The sounds of loud tuning forks remain from the noise symphony, while all other instruments die away. Large tuning forks become visible, mounted at various levels on platforms and ramps on the stage. ACROBATS strike the tuning forks with their sticks, and while leaping to the various levels of the platforms, perform a musical composition. Climax: they produce chords, and the ORCHESTRA answers the different chords. Various scales are then demonstrated: minor, major, half-tone, chromatic, five tone, quarter tone, exotic.

Scene 3:
VIRTUOSI appear on the stage to play *solo parts* on their instruments and then to play as an ensemble.
Superimposed: sound track of moving picture sequence appearing on front screen, with various orchestras playing—bagpipes, negro jazz, church choir, Bali orchestra, military band, symphony orchestra, beer hall brass band etc., and a harp ensemble. The harp tunes mingle with similar sounds behind the screen, moving pictures dim off . . . and . . .

Scene 4:
. . . the scene, in the meantime, has changed to a banquet of fantastic personages wearing masks of every size and character, assembled around a long table. They clink and toast their large glasses filled with variously colored wines, and one hears the harp-like tunes they produce. Gradually, the drinkers take great pleasure in toasting the glasses across the table and to all directions, and the banquet produces a *wine glass toccata*. They put their glasses down and applaud silently (feigning the motion of applauding). One of the characters makes a speech consisting of disconnected sounds and words; other brief speeches follow, releasing chuckles and laughter and (silent) applause.

Scene 5:
A MESSENGER in white appears and whispers a *rumour* to a participant who in turn passes on the *shocking news* (whispering campaign)

until it creates an uproar and releases an increasing 'alabas lamirusola, alabas lamirusola, rhabarbar rhabarbar, alabas'. The *ear* appears again on screen. The drinkers take off their masks and show their *true faces* (different masks) and divide into two opposed and fighting groups in staggering excitement. They disappear fighting. Lights dim down, cannon shots split the darkness. A baby cries.

Part IV

Scene 1:
Fireworks mingle with *paper rolls* which stream in high arches and large waves across rear and front of the stage. ACTORS throwing the paper rolls appear from side wings and let them fall into heaping piles out of which emerge amorphous *paper figurines*. Other paper forms and figurines appear, each of which represents a different principle of CONSTRUCTION: folded and creased, enfolding fan-like; arched and spiralled—in revolving motion; sliced—in jumping leaps; boxed; and rolling slowly. They all move in a manner corresponding to their construction, then unite to perform a PAPER BALLET. As they leave the stage, they encounter . . .

Scene 2:
. . . a group of BUILDERS carrying large sheets of thin white cardboard across the stage. The builders take up various positions, display the boards, fold and bend them, and, acrobatically using ladders to reach the heights,

build with them a *daring construction*, employing a large portion of the stage. Climax: the last board causes the collapse of the huge construction, chaos and disaster and flight of the builders. Singing of chorus 'we build' which had increased during the progress of the construction to the utmost pitch, suddenly stops. Transition:

Scene 3:
. . . architectural views are projected on the front screen alternating with rear screen—Egyptian, Greek, Roman, medieval, baroque, contemporary; superimposed Giza pyramids and Eiffel tower; gothic cathedral and pont transbordeur; Greek temple and skyscraper, etc. During projection the stage is being cleared.

Scene 4:
Two ladders remain on stage, one of them supporting a *black-board* atop. *T-squares* and drafting *triangles* are suspended in mid-air, a red *cube* stands in foreground. Blending—intimate scene between an ARCHITECT, his ASSISTANT and a LADY CLIENT who asks for the design and construction of a *chair*. In a pantomime with acrobatic arabesques, assistant is sharpening pencils when architect enters. Both climb up ladders, meet on top. sing *duet*

Scene 5:
Knocking backstage: lady client enters, sings
Lady client: I need a chair of

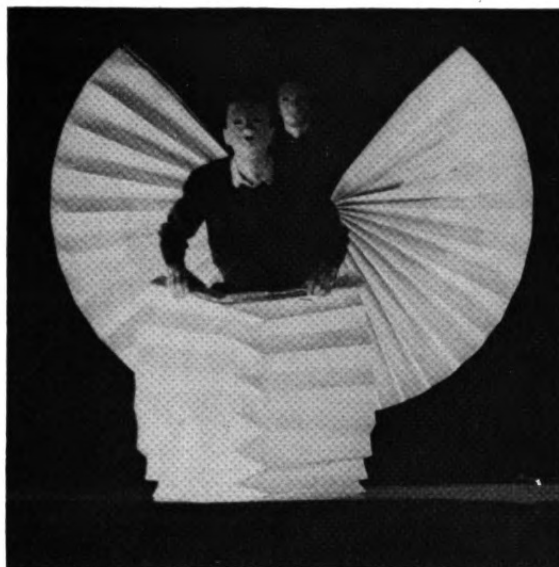
your design and up-to-date construction. The model first be only mine, then serve for mass production. *Architect* (sings): With honor and with pleasure, but first we need your measure. Man's proportions give the base to modern architecture's face.

The assistant takes the measurements of the lady all around, calls them to the architect who designs the chair on the black-board, and sings:

Architect: Done well, done well, the measure is correct. Done well, done well, proportions are perfect. The chair not only has to fit, but please the eye before you sit. Thus—while its functions find expression, *esthetics* slowly gains possession.

Then he lifts the (previously cut out) chair from the black-board, and it descends to the stage floor by means of invisible strings as the lady looks on in amazement. She is persuaded to sit in it, though it has only two legs. But by using one of her own legs as a third, she rests on it and rocks forth and back with growing ease and comfort, while the architect and his assistant dance in triumph. As the dance is in progress, a projection of measure sticks and rulers falls on the screen. These measure the various motions and activities of the human body—sitting, resting, working, playing, sleeping etc., and fade into the projection,

'Play, Life, Illusion' (1924-37),
from the paper ballet (Part IV,
Scene 1)



on front and rear screens, of yardsticks and tape measure pointing in all directions. This dissolves to . . .

Scene 6:

. . . **SPACE PLAY**—a ballet in which the dancers form several constructions by means of long wooden sticks and ribbons. They mark off the geometry of the stage demonstrating the relation of diagonals and subdivisions to **MAN** and his **ACTIVITIES**.

Scene 8:

A solid **THREE DIMENSIONAL CONSTRUCTION**, illusionistically painted on two cut-out flats, appears. The illusion of solidity and volume is intensified by the relative motion of three **ACTORS** who walk around the construction, disappear behind it and so-to-speak 'enter' into it. The reality and dimensionality of the image has by now been well established. But then the flats are turned by 90 degrees around their centre axis, and the illusion dissolves completely. Voices and laughter are heard backstage, while actors disappear, and

Scene 9:

dressed-up actors of a typical repertory theatre enter informally from everywhere; a few pieces of scenery are moved in by stage hands, and now a rehearsal for a scene of Pirandello's **TONIGHT WE IMPROVISE** takes place, in which a clashing encounter, reality and illusion create staggering confusion. A dispute arises in which the players mix up their lines with

spontaneous expression of their own. The **Director** appears on stage, textbook in hand, trying to point out to the cast what the 'real story' is. But the actors tell him to go to hell and push him off, accusing him of having changed the **AUTHOR'S** original idea. Some of the stage personnel, electricians, painters and the property man, come out from the side wings to watch the confusion and to listen to the excited dispute between the actors and the director. Members of the staff speak up, taking sides, shouting their opinions from the auditorium; some of them climb over the ramp—only to add to the disorder. Finally, the **PRODUCER** enters and tries to create order, apologising to the audience. But during this attempt, the image and voices fade out magically into complete darkness and silence.

Scene 10:

In **REVERSED ORDER**, the very first scene is repeated. The full orchestra and **CHORUS** break the silence, while the **YELLOW SQUARE** recedes from the proscenium to the rear of the stage. The **RED PLANE** moves across from right to left, while the chorus and the orchestra fade out slowly and leave the solo contralto voice singing the same introductory melody. The scene ends with the lowering **BLUE LINE** and pianissimo contralto theme.

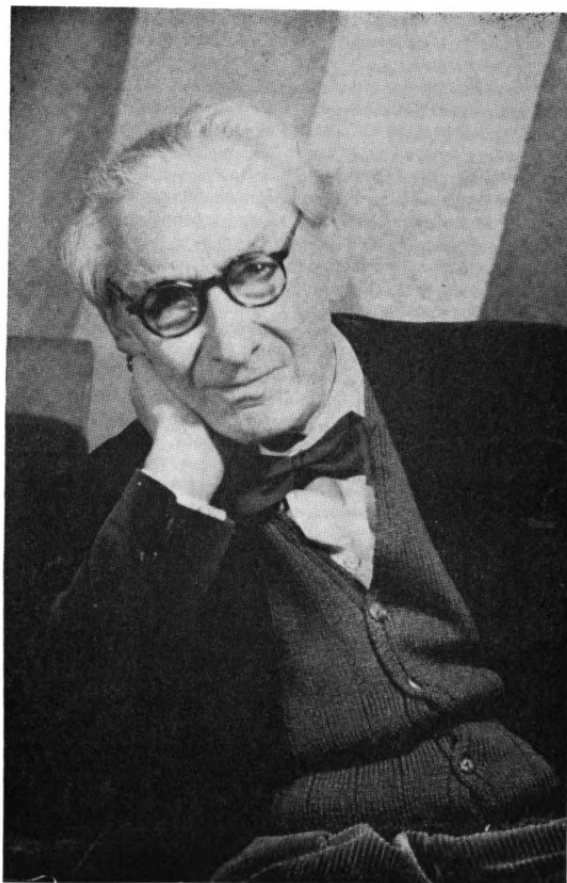


Photo: Man Ray

Pierre Albert-Birot was born in Angoulême on 22 April 1876 and died at Paris on 25 July 1967. But he preferred to date his birth from the first publication of his magazine SIC in January 1916. This formative infancy continued for three years, during which his own artistic personality gradually emerged out of a filial relationship to Apollinaire, and poets of the younger generation such as Aragon, Breton, Soupault and Radiguet were publishing some of their first work under his aegis. In June 1918 he published the first 'fragment' of Grabinoulor, a prose work which was to occupy him at intervals for the rest of his life, and which expresses to the full his capacity for 'understanding, penetrating, transforming and translating' his own experience.

The group of texts included here cannot be held to represent every aspect of his work, which included 'poèmes-affiches' and drama as well as poetry and prose. A well-chosen selection from all these fields was published last year in Segher's Poètes d'aujourd'hui series, with a preface by Jean Follain. Our aim has rather been to deplete the considerable amount of unpublished material which Albert-Birot left behind, besides providing an index to SIC and a few examples of the material which appeared in this magazine. The poem which is printed here almost certainly dates from the autumn of 1945, while the photograph by Man Ray was taken in 1967.

The two chapters from the third book of Grabinoulor may perhaps require some explanation. Albert-Birot published the first book in 1921, and a collected edition of the first and second books in 1933. In 1964 Gallimard published another edition which included a selection of chapters from the first three books—out of six. Of the two chapters which are printed here, the first has never been published and appears both in the original and in translation. The second appeared in a limited edition in 1965 and is included only in translation. Albert-Birot has written that punctuation is 'a staircase that you climb step after step: neither poetry nor thought are aware of these intermediate stages.' Yet he is willing to admit division into chapters, which signifies not a total break, but a 'pause for sleep'. At the beginning of the first chapter in the third book, the pause has been longer than a mere interval between chapters. And this explains why Grabinoulor is obliged to 'find his feet'. In the second chapter, however, he has fully materialised, and is able to resume his adventures.

Quand les messieurs-dames ont froid aux pieds ils disent—pas les pieds mais les messieurs-dames—ils disent chacun pour les siens bien entendu 'je ne sens plus mes pieds' alors que Grabinoulor au contraire et les sains hommes qui l'ont toujours sous la main droite depuis que pour eux et peut-être aussi un peu pour lui donner à lui comme à une fleur une petite éternité on l'a mis dans un livre ceux-là donc savent qu'il lui arrive le plus souvent d'être au contraire O contraire Stop! . . . tiens Monsieur Stop un nouvel ami qui s'est jeté assez impoliment sur cette première page sans doute pour s'offrir le plaisir de se sentir aux côtés de Grabinoulor et de respirer les mêmes microbes qu'à juste titre il estime probablement de premier choix toutefois cette amitié sans préavis ne laisse pas d'être assez surprenante ce Monsieur ayant coutume de réserver ses meilleurs sentiments pour les petites dames virgules et leurs petits amants rondouillards les points quelquefois même conjoints point et virgule ménage à deux ces prévenances de l'écrivain au revoir Monsieur Stop nous sommes très pressés pour l'instant mais ne manquez pas de revenir à un meilleur moment donc Grabinoulor au contraire ne sent pas ses pieds mais hélas en dépit du regret sincère qu'on peut avoir de torturer légèrement le compreneur du lecteur il faut ici faire un crochet hors le droit chemin car il ne s'agirait que ce lecteur par excès d'impatience crût et ici encore un crochet dans le crochet pour assurer au dit impatient qu'on ne demande pas qu'il croisse mais simplement qu'il croie ou plus justement qu'il ne croie pas qu'on veuille pousser son attention sur un Grabinoulor ne mettant pas ou mettant son organe olfactif ou en terme moins élégant son nez sur ses pieds quand il s'agit d'un Grabinoulor qui a ou qui n'a pas ses pieds dans sa conscience—que ne peut-on mettre dans une conscience—selon qu'ils sont froids ou chauds donc que contrairement aux messieurs-dames qui ne se connaissent des pieds que dans le bon temps où ils sont chauds Grabinoulor ne les considère comme siens qu'aux rares instants où ils sont un peu froids tandis que quand ils sont à la douce température de tous les pieds raisonnables Grabinoulor dirait volontiers qu'il n'en a pas ce qui ne l'empêche pas de se tenir debout aussi bien et mieux que s'il ne pensait qu'à eux et de marcher admirablement comme on sait or ainsi donc un jour que les pieds dont nous parlons étaient plus froids que nature Grabinoulor s'aperçut qu'il en avait et certes on n'ira pas jusqu'à dire que ce fut pour lui une révélation mais un certain courant sans doute passa du Sud au Nord c'est à dire monta des pieds à la tête ce qui tendrait à prouver à la légère que la tête est le Nord de l'homme et d'ailleurs on sait bien que d'aucuns le perdent le Nord ce qui est de cadette importance tellement il existe aujourd'hui d'autres moyens de naviguer ainsi donc précisons qu'au centième de second où il re-connaissait ses pieds il se reconnut tout entier et se frappant à grands coups de poings le sternum un peu à la façon d'un pêcheur enragé d'avoir pêché et non moins d'avoir à pêcher quoiqu'il n'eût lui Grabinoulor aucune raison pesante de faire

mea culpa c'est à coups de poings sur son torse plein qu'il se sortit énergiquement de son imagination où il était resté en puissance pendant un nombre de jours d'ans ou de siècles qui n'a pas été compté puisqu'on ne ferait rien de ce compte et juste à l'instant où il arrivait ici Monsieur Oscar Thanatou en passant vint le voir et lui dit bonjour Grabinoulor comment vous portez-vous ce matin bien c'est possible je n'y vois pas d'inconvénient mais à part ça que pensez-vous de la mort? Comment déjà Monsieur Oscar mais j'arrive juste repassez dans huit jours je vais y réfléchir

Grabinoulor finds his feet

When ladies and gentlemen have cold feet they say—not the feet but the ladies and gentlemen—they say each referring to his own of course 'I can't feel my feet any more' whereas Grabinoulor on the contrary as well as those sane people who always have him at their right hand ever since he's been put into a book for their benefit and maybe a little for his own benefit too to give himself to himself as you might give a flower a small eternity well those people then are aware that more often than not his opinions are contrary to Contrary creature Stop! . . . well here's Monsieur Stop a new friend coming barging in rather rudely on to this first page no doubt because he wants to have the pleasure of being with Grabinoulor and breathing the same germs which he probably and quite rightly considers very high-grade germs nevertheless this unexpected friendship is not altogether unsurprising considering that this gentleman usually reserves his most tender feelings for those dear little ladies called commas and their chubby little lovers called full stops who sometimes even unite in holy matrimony in which case they're called semi-colons which just goes to show how obliging writers can be good-bye Monsieur Stop we're in a great hurry just at the moment but do please come back when we have more time well then as we were saying Grabinoulor on the contrary can't feel his feet but unfortunately in spite of the sincere regret we may suffer at thus mildly torturing the reader's grey matter we nevertheless have to make a bit of a detour here away from the strait and narrow path i e to put in a parenthesis to the effect that it wouldn't do for the reader to get so impatient that he began to grow and here we even need a parenthesis within a parenthesis to assure the said impatient reader that we are not asking him to grow literally but merely to grow accustomed or more precisely not to grow accustomed to the idea that we are trying to force him to observe a Grabinoulor not putting or putting his tactile organs or in less elegant terms his fingers on his feet when what we're talking about is a Grabinoulor who is or is not conscious of his feet which etymologically of course is the same thing as having them on his conscience—and what can you not have on your conscience—according to whether they are cold or hot so that

contrary to those ladies and gentlemen who are only aware that they have feet on those happy days when they are warm Grabinoulor only considers that his feet really belong to him in the rare moments when they are slightly cold whereas when they share the gentle temperature of all reasonable feet Grabinoulor would be quite likely to say that he hasn't any not that this would prevent him from standing on them just as well as and even better than if he were thinking of them exclusively nor from walking on them as admirably as we know he does well then it so happened that one day when these feet we have been talking about were preternaturally cold Grabinoulor became aware that he had some and though we certainly won't go so far as to say that this was a revelation to him nevertheless there was no doubt that some sort of a current or draught was moving from the South to the North i e was rising from his feet to his head which if we don't think about it too closely might tend to prove that according to the compass whether metaphorical ship's or hand-bearing a man's head is in the North even though we all know that some people are only too apt to lose their bearings be they North South or any other direction yes but all this is of minor importance now that there are so many other methods of navigation well then let's be perfectly explicit and state that in the precise hundredth of a second in which his re-cognition of his feet took place he recognised the whole of himself as well and beating his sternum vigorously rather like a sinner who is furious at having sinned and no less furious at having had to sin even though he Grabinoulor had no weighty reason to indulge in any mea culpa it was by means of torso-beating that he energetically extricated himself from his imagination where he had been under restraint for a number of days years or centuries which has not been counted since no one would have any use for such a calculation and just at the very moment he arrived here Monsieur Oscar Thanatou who happened to be passing came up to him and said hallo Grabinoulor how are you this morning quite well yes why not I have nothing against it but apart from that what do you think of death? What already Monsieur Oscar but I've only just arrived come back in a week I'll think about it

Grabinoulor looked round about him for several calendar months still without counting them of course so as not to lumber himself with their total and you mustn't be surprised at his staying for such a long time in the middle of what was surrounding him because in the first place he likes the centre and then with Grabinoulor you must expect everything to be unexpected and never suddenly open your eyes wide well then one day which was ostensibly no different from any other day but which to tell you the honest truth was a great day—because there are some truths that are more honest than others just as there are some days that are greater than others—he hailed his maleness with a very decorative string of oaths and other sonorous but so-called evil-sounding words which was a Grabinouloresque way of sounding his conscience Good God Good God Good God thus proving to himself that it really was a question of Grabinoulor not only in name but in person and in just as real a person as anyone can seem to be with all a person's proportions and riches both tripal and cerebral but also with the intention of informing the said person and positively assuring him that he had come back with the definite intention of daily and nightly making use of all his human weight on the mineral Earth where he had so often known the midnight sun and all those other sorts of lovely earthinesses that you can only find and know and do there just precisely there but in spite of these declarations however conclusive they may have seemed he began to hesitate again either for a few seconds which is what people usually do or rather what people usually write or for a few hours unfortunately this time the seconds and the hours are being counted according to the clock and it's quite obvious that we can't bow to this oh so conventional timing when we're thinking in terms of Grabinoulorian time it's a duration and that's all there is to it and it was absolutely useless to say any more about it but are there any things that are useful be that as it may there was a duration between the moment during which boxing himself he emerged from his imagination and the what you might call very elastic rubber moment during which even though he didn't show himself his passport he assured himself that he really was himself yet it's true and it has to be said even though we must be prepared for those nervous people fidgetting over there to complain that Grabinoulor's story is never-ending but how could he possibly end it right away when he's come back from such a distance it wouldn't be a good ending so please try and be patient you nervous people to be never-ending is a far far better thing than your nerves think well then there was a duration between the moment when he boxed himself out of his imagination and the sliding moment when even though he didn't show himself his passport he assured himself that he really was himself and that the terrace of the cafe where he was drinking a greenish absinthe with sugar and saying very positively this is good was really on the old Earth of yore and a terrace on the Earth what a viewpoint as the guide would say but is it enough just to say of yore more like of double or triple

yore yes at least triple because the absinthe he was drinking seemed to him to have an ancient or perhaps a very modern taste and the café tables and its chairs seemed to express something new and different and yet they were still tables and chairs and quite clearly intended for the use of the general public while as for the drinkers sitting round or on them it was only outwardly that they resembled the volatilised men he still remembered because all the said drinkers he saw here were not only gross but also ponderous both in appearance and substance for they were anxiously weighing down their seats which were themselves sometimes groaning not without making the ground bear the consequences which poor sod it couldn't but well finally he Grabinoulor felt less imponderable both when he was sitting down and when he was walking but this semblance of weight didn't appear to him to be due to any change in the humour of old man gravity who gets older like everyone else but doesn't change all of which tended to convince him that he was not after all on the wrong planet nevertheless the waiters visibly took a very poor view of their customers even after and perhaps even particularly after they had been offered a good tip gratuity 'trinkgeld' or 'pourboire' and who knows whether they don't consider it rather uncalled-for that they should be invited to 'trinken' or 'boire' when they spend their whole lives in these places where people drink so much but what can anyone do about this state of affairs nothing and murmuring under his breath a 'still' that in just five letters was fraught with vast conclusions—though maybe it's only in France that 5 is a mystical number—he stood up straight as a die and supple as a reed just as he had always done in the days before the 'after' we have just been talking about when he used to withdraw from these seats his own seat which he had temporarily entrusted to them then he left and travelled through all this that and the other with the intention of seeing recognising getting his bearings and accumulating validations invalidations formations deformations and confirmations and without wearing too pronounced a grabinoulorian look which could have made him a bit too conspicuous he started looking for the people who had appeared in his first two books and he did this because he wanted to re-immersé himself as refined people might say in their atmosphere and as luck would have it or perhaps that amiable individual we always go looking for when we can't think of any other solution isn't really luck at all well at all events as something would have it—if something or anything is better than luck—as something would have it he first of all thought with rosy satisfaction of his two very dear friends the voluminous newspaper-woman and Madame Duran the authoress of the new 'Liaisons Dangereuses' with her 'mais z'oui monsieur' well then so he thought what a thinker no actually to some extent he *fought* his way down the crowded avenue which he thought of as a friendly old tart with dishevelled hair and trod underfoot that very square of pavement where only a short time before but very weary of life the rag-merchant's hut had been and in the

posh road he walked up and down and up and down past the little shop which is green today but which used naturally enough to be blood-red and which these days is only a sleepy paper-shop whereas it used to be a teeming tripery only it was teeming don't let's misunderstand one another not with different sorts of tripes and hearts and kidneys and maggots but with cordon bleu cooks in search of brains or sweetbreads oh naturally Grabinoulor did remember that those two masterpieces of Mother Nature were already dead if a masterpiece can die that is when he decided to retire into the inequation of x unknowns that is his imagination but in those days people hardly ever died except in words whereas nowadays Grabinoulor knew that people could die more or less for good and all or at least for life though with a few exceptions here and there of course because he never likes to leave out the exception that verjuice that turns the sauce sour and this was quite sufficient reason for him to wonder once again but without pressing the point and no doubt for the last time whether in the act of finding his feet he hadn't come to the wrong World and all the more so as he also called on several people and found they weren't at home because they were buried and their home sweet home was now someone else's so he said to himself because he always has something to say to himself he has a perfect right to he said to himself that it could be that he wasn't in one piece any more and that he might have a few holes here and there even though his mirror who was his friend yes but severe assured him sincerely that he still had a solid body a well-covered body as marble-coaxsters are wont to say Stop . . . ah yes Monsieur Stop damn . . . here's someone who used not to be there but in any case at this rather cool reception he had already begun to beat a retreat goody-bye Monsieur Stop and some people have gone but other people are arriving and since I'm all for innovation thank you hip hip hurrah on with the show and then who should pass in front of him and brush against him maybe even on purpose but that pretty and pleasantly mammiferous lady Madame Evergreen and from that green and rounded moment on Grabinoulor came back into the zone of life incontinent with the marvellous 'ah!' of a man who has been miles and miles among the soft shadows of the undergrowth and who finally comes out on to a road radiant with sunny whiteness and the very moment he got there a celestial pleasure illuminated the whole of his grabinoulorian person which probably reminded him of that quasi-mystical day when he wandered into the corridors of a monastery as silent as the Heavens and found himself motionless in Fra Angelico's cell where the Brother was busy painting angels from nature and he was so very busy that he didn't notice the Angel Grabinoulor behind him and Grabinoulor was so enheavened that he can't even say whether the angelic brother was using brushes and paint and enveloped in this memory and in the transparency of the Flower City he Grabinoulor that is felt deliciously angelised sorry it can't be helped since it's true it has to be put in his book even though

some bigotics may well get all grimaceish when they see us daring to put this of earth earthy human being in the same bag as those pure inhabitants of the blue that is of course if it is both permissible and possible to put them in a bag at all and he asked himself and even though we did say that he hardly ever asked himself anything in actual fact there's always something he's asking himself at every moment of his life only we don't talk about it well then he asked himself or as you might say he wondered which direction he was going to fly in because the earth seemed to him to be just as flyable-in-or-over a space as the Heavens be that as it may we are still at liberty to point out that it's probably splitting hairs and wasting several seconds this business of wondering which direction one is going to fly in when one is ready to take wing and in any case wasn't he already in full flight so why bother our heads with such a question yes quite so it's almost absurd but Grabinoulor has nothing against the absurd because it too belongs to space and naturally in spite of everything some exterior objects do exist which give themselves airs about the fact that they are separate from him because they are at a distance as if that had anything to do with it as for instance that tangible individual dressed as a contemporary man who was gesticulating very dynamically with his arms and head and accompanying said gestures with round or square or pointed oaths Stop well hallo Monsieur Stop but at the same time good-bye I'm in a hurry as for you ladies and gentlemen no no don't try and find out just exactly where Grabinoulor is whether he's in the air or on the ground whether he's out of doors or indoors just be content that is if you absolutely insist on knowing something to hear that he's now making the acquaintance of that terrible fellow Furibar well then it was striking five or seventeen if you go by the railway timetable and as Furibar had slept throughout the three princely hours of the day the afternoon that is there was presumably nothing of the faun about him not even when he was dreaming because he isn't the sort of person who would have the sort of sylvan midsummer day's dream that makes people dance on their points even when they can't dance but even so he called the 'Golden Sheaf' clock-carillon a pig that's unless it was the hour it was striking but in any case it's an expression that fits neither the one nor the other which may perhaps go to show that Furibar doesn't really think before he speaks and the reason for this misplaced 'pig' was because the sleeper or rather the waker was furious that it was already five o'clock already yes naturally that's what he would think and then because his authoritarian clock was proclaiming to the whole neighbourhood that it was five o'clock when in all loyalty it ought to have been saying seventeen so you see it was lying and yet at the same time enveloping the bad and inaccurate news in a rather pretty song oh yes a conventional sort of lie agreed but one which revealed in the clock's or in the clockmaker's movements either downright laziness or chronic avarice or a pronounced inclination not to keep up with the times which is more than

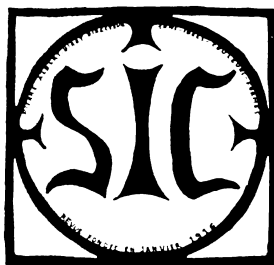
reprehensible and even more than culpable on the part of any self-respecting clockmaker self-respecting meaning non-self-respecting of course at the very least just flat indifference—well obviously indifference can't be embossed—to these new-fangled ideas all of these reactions being equally odious which made of this clockmaker—always supposing that it wasn't a clockmakeress everything is possible—a person who a priori was not very attractive and who was certainly a bad clockmaker even though he did generously and gratuitously tell Furibar the more or less right time ninety-six times in between noon and noon that's counting the halves and quarters and why shouldn't we count them ah bravo Grabinoulor ejaculated practically making the welkin ring thereby holding out his hand to Furibar I am as you see superlatively delighted to make your acquaintance a man like you is just what was wanted in my album let's be friends without further ado and let's call each other 'tu' now it must certainly be admitted that we don't really know why Grabinoulor was so hail-fellow-well-met though he probably did know himself but then again he may well not have known because the fact that you don't necessarily trail whys and wherefores after you all the time doesn't make you any less of a man but if anyone really insists on knowing more than Grabinoulor himself knew it could for instance be supposed that he had said to himself in a hazy sort of way and under his breath that with a friend like that so dissatisfied with the sun and with the time and with the clock and with the clockmaker then he Grabinoulor that is would many a time and oft have an opportunity of looking at the reverse side of people and things which might perhaps cure him of the good or bad habit of believing that the grocer gives him five hundred grammes to the pound and that his watch tells him the Observatory time and also of always being in the air juggling with trivialities and that in this way he would finally be admitted into the oh so majestic category of serious-minded people who were naturally not put on the Earth to act foolishly nor to watch other people doing so nor to send up a de profundis clamavi ad te every time they do so themselves . . . Jacqueline! Jacqueline! a man's voice was desperately calling the man was both running and distracted and the Jacquelines—Jacquelines disappeared into the distance Jacqueline's lover had gone let's hope she hears him let's hope he finds her but in the meantime and at this very moment there is a quarter of a jocondesque smile on Grabinoulor's face because he is watching something he finds so amusing and that is a woman who is posting a letter with a quasi-sacral gesture and following the fall of the envelope in the enormous gullet of the letter-box with such prolonged attention that she seems to be expecting to see right down at the bottom there the postman delivering it to her correspondent

*The second in a series,
'Aux Trente Deux Vents'*

Tu leur diras qu'un grand oiseau blanc tout pointu d'ailes et de bec	Tell them that a great white bird, pointy wings, pointy beak,
Me parle japonais	Talks Japanese to me
Par un doux trois heures d'Aout tandis que peuples au	One sweet August three o'clock while people in the Luxembourg
Luxembourg	Argue about peace
Entre eux disputent paix	Tell them I can hear the History being written which they will
Te leur diras que j'entends s'écrire l'Histoire qu'ils apprendront	learn by heart
par coeur	In an illustrated book
Dans un livre illustré	Tell them my name and the name of the ministers and of the
Tu leur diras mon nom et celui des ministres et celui du coiffeur	barber
Qui ce matin me coiffa	Who did my hair this morning
Tu leur diras que j'ai à mes côtés des animaux en bronze qui	Tell them that I have around me bronze animals which haven't
n'ont pas bougé	moved
Depuis deux trois mille ans	For the last three thousand years
Qu'ils les regardent bien je serai dans ce bronze ou du moins	If they look hard enough I shall be in that bronze or at least
Je n'en serai pas loin	I shan't be far off
Tu leur diras que mon ciel a des nuages comme il en est au leur	Tell them my sky has clouds just like theirs
Et mes arbres des feuilles	And my trees have leaves
Tu leur diras que j'ai deux pieds bien allants deux mains	Tell them I have two feet in good walking order two feeling hard-
toucheuses et oeuvrières	working hands
Et l'estomac trop grand	And too big a stomach
Tu leur diras que mon petit doigt côté coeur porte opal montée	Tell them the little finger on the side of my heart carries an opal
sur sentiment	set in sentiment
Tout en bel or massif	All in lovely solid gold
Tu leur diras que j'ai deux yeux à rosace atlantique duement	Tell them I have two eyes rose-windows on the ocean properly
enlunettés	bespectacled
Sans doute pour mieux voir	To see better no doubt
Tu leur diras que j'ai du cheveu à volonté et du sourcil en coup	Tell them I have hair which won't lie down and eyebrows like
d'fusain	charcoal smudges
Comme en largeur d'un doigt	As wide as your finger
Le nez mal cloisonné mais quand même bon nez bien honnête et	My nose badly veined but it's a good honest nose for all that and
du tout aquilin	not a bit aquiline
Avec six poils dedans	With six hairs in it
Et bouche un peu serrée assez mal fai'e au rire mais à parole	The mouth a bit tight not well-shaped when it laughs but a good
nette	way with words
Et de tigresses dents	And the teeth of a tiger
Et leur diras aussi	And tell them too
Que j'ai	I have
Une aile aux pieds	Wings on my feet
Une aile aux bras	Wings on my arms
Une aile au dos	Wings on my back
Ils ne le croiront pas	They won't believe it
Tant pis tant pis do mi sol do	Too bad too bad do mi sol do
Ma peau sera bien immortelle	My skin will be quite immortal
Tant que j'aurai six ailes	As long as I have my six wings

No. 7 'SIC'

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Editor:

Pierre Albert-Birot

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Covers:

A woodcut incorporating the letters SIC occurs on every front cover. The first twelve covers carry the prototype design. For the next twelve (13-24) this is slightly modified. From 25 to 36, the design becomes black on white rather than white on black and the following words are incorporated: 'Pierre

Albert-Birot Directeur, Sons—Idées—Couleurs—Formes, Revue fondée en Janvier 1916'. From 37-54, the design is modified once again and reverts to white on black, while the previous pattern reappears on the back covers of all but 42-43.

Apart from this, a number of the covers incorporate special designs:

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Orloff, Chana. Gravure sur bois, 31

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From 'SIC': **Pablo Picasso** by Guillaume Apollinaire

PABLO PICASSO

Voyez ce peintre il prend les choses	avec leur ombre aussi et d'un coup d'œil sublimatoire
Il se déchire en accords profonds	et agréables à respirer tel l'orgue que j'aime entendre
Des Arlequins jouent dans le	rose et bleus d'un beau-ciel Ce souvenir revit
les rêves et les actives mains	Orient plein de glaciers L'hiver est rigoureux
Lustres or toile irisée or	loi des stries de feu fond en murmurant.
Bleu flamme légère	argent des ondes bleues après le grand cri
Tout en restant	elles touchent cette sirène violon
Faons lourdes ailes	l'incandescence quelques brasses encore
Bourdons femmes striées	éclat de plonge-on-diamant
Arlequins semblables à Dieu	en variété Aussi distingués qu'un lac
Fleurs brillant comme deux perles	monstres qui palpitent
Lys cerclés d'or, je n'étais pas seul!	fais onduler les romords

Nouveau monde très matinal
L'aventure de ce vieux cheval
Au soir de la pêche merveilleuse
Air de petits violons au fond des
Dans le couchant puis au bout de
Regarde la tête géante et immense
L'argent sera vite remplacé par
Morte pendue à l'hameçon... c'est
L'humide voix des acrobates
Grimaco parmi les assauts du vent
Ouis les vagues et le fracas d'une
Enfin la grotte à l'atmosphère dorée
Ce saphir veiné
Rois de phosphore
La danse des
Le cadre bleu

sous les arbres les bottines entre des plumes bleues
dix mouches lui fait face quand il songe à toi
tandis que l'air agile s'ouvrait aussi
Au milieu des regrets dans une vaste grotte.

Prends les araignées roses
Regrets d'invisibles pièges

Paisible se souleva mais sur le clavier

Guitare-tempête

O gai trémolo

Il ne rit pas

Ton pauvre

L'ombre agile

Immense désir

Je vis nos yeux

J'entendis sa voix

L'acrobate à cheval le poète à moustaches un oiseau mort et tant d'enfants sans larmes
Choses cassées des livres déchirés des couches de poussière et des aurores défilant!

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

à la nage
l'air
musiques
ô gai trémolo
ô gai trémolo
l'artiste-peintre
étincellement pâle
d'un soir d'été qui meurt

et l'aube émerge des eaux si lumineuses
diamants enfermer le reflet du ciel vert et
qui dorait les forêts tandis que vous pleuriez

From 'SIC': **Café**
by Phillipe Soupault

I

Moi je ne crois pas
Ils sont d'ailleurs de bons amis

Now that money is passing between us for that which has no equivalent in coin, I will give you a shilling for your peculiar smile and six pence for the silken sweep of your dress, and for your presence, that strange thing that I can neither grasp nor elude, I will give you another shilling.

Pierre Reverdy,
'Quai aux Fleurs'

Petite poitrine
O
Nuages

Dans l'étang où elle se noya
L'hiver ne passe plus

Et

Loin de son bord

Il passe, ayant remis son pardessus

*

Dans la vitrine tout le monde la regarde
Elle est morte et sourit à ces gens qui ne savent
que douter
sa petite poitrine a l'air de remuer

*

Avec vos lèvres vous soufflez dessus
Et ses yeux se ferment ou vous regardent

*

Ces messieurs habillés de noir
Ont les yeux brillants de malice

Une petite femme que j'ai beaucoup
connue.

La misère passe avec le vent
et balaie le boulevard.

*Elle avait de bien jolies jambes.
Elle dansait, elle riait.*

Et maintenant, que va-t-elle devenir?

TOURNANT LA TÊTE ELLE DEMANDAIT
QU'ON LA LAISSÂT DORMIR.

PIERRE REVERDY

Pierre Albert-Birot,
'Les Eclats'

Right: Pierre Albert-Birot,
'Pas de Corset!'

Je veux les seins d'une nourrice
Je veux le cœur d'une vierge
Pourquoi n'irais-je pas jusqu'à Dieu
Je préfère un saint du paradis et des âmes en prière
J'aurai un bras
Moi je tuerai les pierres
J'aurai une tête

LES ÉCLATS
POÈME IDÉOGRAMMATIQUE
PIERRE ALBERT-BIROT

PAS DE CORSET!



« Allons donc Messieurs
les nunistes vous nous con-
duisez à l'anarchie avec tous
vos renversements des lois
existantes, vous oubliez qu'il
faut un corset pour contenir
les affaissements et les débordements! »

« Voyons, Monsieur, vous
savez bien que ce qui a le
plus de valeur en ce monde
est justement ce qui se tient
tout seul. »

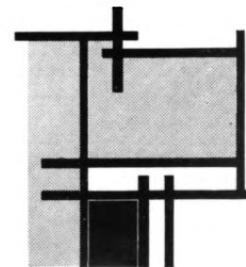
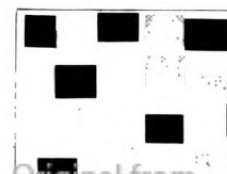
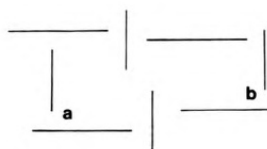
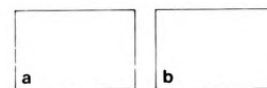
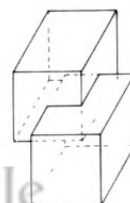
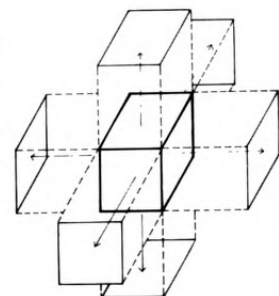
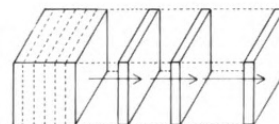
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Theo van Doesburg and 'the fourth dimension in Neoplasticism'



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I see Marcel Duchamp—wherever he might be now—playing chess, playing the game with the intense passion of a lover, the way he played it when I first met him nearly fifty years ago—playing it with the delight for its beauty, with the desire to kill his opponent—to win, with the superiority of a master, with the enigmatic personality of a magician.

Nothing can describe him as clearly, as definitely as the infinite moves of the holy game. Wherever chess is played Marcel lives.

Marcel Duchamp invented Dada in the U S A in 1915, before it had been 'discovered'. His contribution to the philosophy of Dada is elementary, practical, and so obvious that it is regarded and accepted in the United States as the Only-True-Dadaistic-Doctrine. He invented what he found 'ready-made': bicycle wheels, bottle racks, pissoirs—the ready-made as the latest cry of Art. These objects proclaimed a new reality. With brutal Cartesian logic, these ready-mades were set up against the Laocoon and the Venus de Milo as a purgative for thoroughly hypocritical times and a society which had led to them.

Marcel Duchamp did not hail 'Anti-Art' like the Berlin Dadaists, but rather 'Non-Art'. And he has lived his creed with a consistency that has made him a mythological figure even during his lifetime. Through him Dada became an intellectual extension of nihilism, an idea of

nothingness which could by no stretch of the imagination be brought to suggest meaning.

'Death? There is no such thing as death. When we no longer have consciousness then the world simply stops.' Such an acknowledgement of *cogito ergo sum* shattered me. But rendered with the earnestness of Marcel Duchamp, it seemed to solve all the problems of this world. In a mirror which thus no longer reflected anything, only existentialism found, once again, the vague outlines of a human silhouette . . . while Marcel played chess . . .

Since 1921 no-one has been able to bring him to produce any so-called 'art work', or to submit to the 'shabby processes' that underlie the art business in order to dispose of them. Walter Arensberg his collector and Dada friend tried it earnestly during the 2nd World War, when Marcel was seriously in need of means of existence, but he failed, as did his friend Roché and all of us who loved Marcel as an artist.

He has remained faithful to his Dada protest, and instead of making art he has decisively submerged himself in the ephemeral, unnegotiable but spiritually as well as aesthetically satisfying world of chess. More than his work, his life sets up an amazing paradigm of morality. The quality of his paintings would be meaningful even without the scandal that *Nu Descendant l'Escalier* called forth in New

York in 1912. Here is a man who has allowed his thinking to become such contempt for the so-called material and worldly advantages that both, perforce, have fallen into his lap.

Over his long lifetime, this muscular independence from a world of compromises in the midst of a conformist civilisation has exerted an enormous influence. Those who lack the strength to draw their own conclusions and act upon them have found a special attraction in identifying themselves with the ideas of Marcel Duchamp, who has all the strength they miss.

The temper of the present gives courage to these 'Nothing-People'. 'Nothingness', alas, becomes the insignia of a new snobbism. Is the Romanticism of 'Nothingness', which is so welcomed by a disappointed new generation, in danger of turning into a comfortable ideology?

I find the secret of Duchamp's magical force of attraction in the vacuum he created to replace 'rejected' moral and artistic attitudes. The reason for its attractiveness lies less in the artistic or in the shock value of the ready-made. It is rather that 'Nothingness' provides a home and an affirmation for the suicidal instincts of a generation which has been weakened by our cultural chaos. There are of course others for whom the 'belief in Nothing' becomes fashionable self-deception. They find a sly security in their

self-created spiritual superiority, without which their self-confidence would collapse.

Duchamp's detachment, the first step of his wisdom, permeates his personality and works like a vacuum on fate, pulling things and people toward it. They approach him open-minded and open-hearted, offer him tributes and sacrifices, and he responds with equal generosity. He who seems to want nothing can freely offer advice to others and find fitting words for the petty inevitabilities of everyday life. They are words, though born out of indifference, which express sympathy and oblige gratitude in return.

His studio is a workroom where chess tables are watched over by automatic chess clocks. Every day they fulfill their duties for two hours. Duchamp has added to the already colossal fund of chess literature with his treatise on certain problems of the end game. As vice-president of the Marshall Chess Club—a leading chess club of New York—he won its championship.

I myself was finally sucked into his chess kingdom despite my less than amateur status. For four years I worked on the filming of a chess fantasy 8 x 8, and on a story about the history of chess, *Chesscetera*. I had landed in his vacuum and was able to observe his passion without sharing it. His thoughts, his charm, his words in his impeccable French—were preserved in my film *Dadascope*.

New books: **De Stijl** reprint

'De Stijl', complete facsimile edition including covers, supplements and advertising pages, Athenaeum, Amsterdam. Bert Bakker, The Hague and Polak and Van Gennep, Amsterdam. Two vols., Part I (1917-1920) and Part II (1921-1928, plus '10 years Stijl', Aubette and Van Doesburg memorial special numbers). Dfl.350,-. Part III of the edition, to appear in 1969, will contain translations of all Dutch texts into English, an introduction to, comments on, and a complete index for Parts I and II.

Reviewed by Nicholas Bullock

The Dutch philosopher Huizinga traces the development of *homo sapiens* not à la Darwin to 'necessity' (in the struggle for survival), but rather to his instinct for play, unpurposeful and not directed toward any kind of practical use. Thus play becomes the most serious of activities, and Duchamp took Dada as a form of play. He takes chess quite as seriously as Dada. *Homo sapiens* never acquired wisdom; why not give *homo ludens* a chance?

Watching, a few days after his death, a film on T V, made several years ago by French T V, a film in which we, his friends, all paid tribute to this rare man, I was stunned and deeply moved by a sentence with which Marcel Duchamp ends the film. It still moves me ... a kind of 'last word', a kind of enigmatic 'solution' of the enigma of his life and personality. Smiling like the Mona Lisa which he once had decorated with a moustache, he seemed to summon up his philosophy and life endeavour: 'We are always alone: everybody by himself, like in a shipwreck'.

He prevails upon us to insist, 'like in a shipwreck', upon our own uniqueness, upon the originality of man as an individual, at every moment, all the time. That's the way the game should be played. And as we feel, more every day, that the ship is wrecked, Marcel has become the mythological figure of a prophet, whose word counts more than a thousand (painted) images.

From the first De Stijl was never a strongly unified movement. Not only did the interests of its members cover a wide range of activities — painting, architecture, sculpture, poetry, film — but the membership of the group changed continually. By 1923 many of the original members drifted away from the group and their places were taken by people who Van Doesburg had met on his travels in Europe—van Eesteren, Richter, Kiesler, Graeff. By 1925 even Mondrian had formally dissociated himself from the group. This instability has made appreciation of the movement difficult. There has been a tendency to concentrate on the work of a particular section of the group, especially the painters, and this has led to a rather one-sided view of De Stijl. In particular it has led to a failure to appreciate the achievements of Van Doesburg. In so many accounts of the movement his contribution is overshadowed by that of Mondrian.

The reason is clear: Mondrian, by contrast with Van Doesburg, provides excellent material for the art historian. His development, from his early Cubist paintings in Paris onwards, is clear and easily traced. At the same time his paintings are complemented by a philosophical position vis-à-vis the rôle of art in society which, though sometimes difficult, is well-defined. His interests in the work of Schoenmaakers and the beliefs of the Theosophists, or the parallels with Hegel's aesthetic theories can be traced in the most

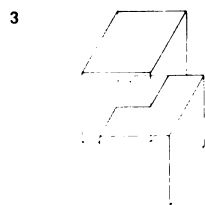
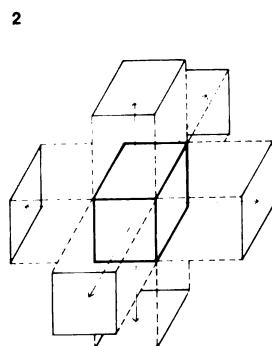
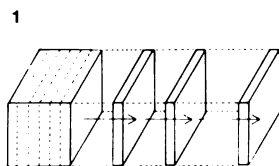
scholarly way.

In sharp contrast to the single-minded development of Mondrian, Van Doesburg's interests are very catholic. He is at once painter, architect, impresario and critic. He must even appear a little absurd: he contributes to his own magazine under different names, he dashes around Europe advertising De Stijl, he assaults the Bauhaus, he is one of the leading lights of the Dusseldorf conference of 1922, he gives Dada soirées with his wife and Schwitters, and he is always frenetically engaged in doing several things at once. It is Van Doesburg however who is the driving force behind De Stijl. It is he who in 1917 brings together the architect Oud and the painter Huszar and with them founds De Stijl.

Mondrian agrees to contribute to the magazine but remains only tentatively associated with the group. Mondrian leaves the group in 1925, yet it is not until 1931 on Van Doesburg's death that the movement ends. Nevertheless Mondrian's importance in the early years is indisputable. He contributed frequently to the magazine and provided to a great extent the philosophical underpinning of the group. The idea of art as a means of realising the ultimate harmonious reality, the need to purify the work of art of any subjective overtones, the search for the most generalised, the purest form of expression, these are largely Mondrian's thinking. During the early period Van Doesburg adopts a similar position but without the spiritual, almost mystical quality of Mondrian's writings.

After the war Van Doesburg was able to travel abroad and with this came both a widening of the horizons of the group and a change in its membership. This turning away from the austere position of De Stijl in the early years in Holland is due entirely to the activities of Van Doesburg. Contributions to the magazine came increasingly from people he had met since 1920. It became 'Elementarist' in direction. Many of the original attitudes remained — the necessity for an impersonal quality in the work of art, the search for a common style — but the mystical character of Mondrian's philosophy has gone and is replaced by the creation of an art to reflect the spirit of the age and the machine aesthetic. In the context of the fragmented nature of De Stijl in its later years, with Van Doesburg providing the only contact between different members, the magazine is of cardinal importance. It provides in effect the only complete record of the activities of the group, it is the focus of the movement. Without the magazine it is too easy to forget the kaleidoscopic range of interests of De Stijl. To concentrate on any particular aspect of the group's activities is to overlook its incredible vitality in so many fields. The republication of the magazine in its original format is to be most warmly welcomed, as it makes it possible to realize the strength and variety of the achievements of De Stijl and of van Doesburg in particular.

The drawings 1 to 9 which illustrate this paper are the work of Truus Wilmkink.



The vision of four-dimensionality which is one of the major innovations in modern plastic art up to the present day has remained a chapter almost untouched by both artists and art historians. Various new developments in the arts have provoked strong reactions, but about the most revolutionary of them all, that is the vision of reality as four- or multidimensional, a complete reticence has been preserved. At best there was offered the weak argument that the fourth dimension was nonvisual, which was to explain why this phenomenon was irrelevant to the plastic arts. When one has read the discourse in which the great French mathematician Poincaré tries to prove that empty environmental space possesses three dimensions, which cannot really be perceived, it is not difficult to imagine an even greater problem when one is confronted with a concept of reality which posits all entities in existence to consist not of three but four or even more dimensions.

What makes the fourth dimension so difficult to grasp is that one cannot take it into one's hands. For every body we can ascertain a height, width and depth. The eye can follow these measurements and the hands can feel them. The three dimensions of every object are present in a very concrete way. The fourth dimension, the dimension of change or the measurement of an object in change, however, is intangible. Yet the vision of four-dimensionality is less

complicated than is generally assumed, as a few simple examples may prove. A thermometer possesses a certain quantity of mercury in a small tube. Before measuring the temperature, the volume of mercury in the tube possesses a length of two centimetres. When the temperature has been measured and the thermometer indicates thirty-seven degrees, for instance, the same volume of mercury has acquired a length of six centimetres. No-one has added any mercury to the thermometer which might explain the increased length of the original volume. What in fact was added was warmth, under the influence of which the volume of mercury began to expand. There came to be more space between the molecules of mercury, and consequently a lesser coherence of these molecules. The mercury found the extra space it needed in accordance with this process in the empty part of the tube, into which it penetrated. Through warmth a volume which at first possessed a length of two centimetres changed into one which was six centimetres long. Thus one can say that the volume which is six centimetres long represents the four-dimensional appearance of the original volume of mercury which had a length of two centimetres only. During the period of time in which warmth, a universal force, was being added, this volume obtained a mobility which ultimately led to a change of form. The vision of four- or multidimensionality is none other than the one which holds

that all things are continually in movement. Reality is not static but a dynamic process in space and time.

Another simple example. In a particular space a kettle filled with water is boiling. Once the water has completely boiled away, the space is filled with steam. The molecules of water and those of air in that space have combined together, creating a humid volume many times larger than the original quantity of water in the kettle. Here is a four-dimensional process that anyone can perceive. Heating and cooling are just some examples of universal forces through which the shape of an object or entity may change. They always involve the penetration of one entity into another or into the space where the process takes place. In the examples given, there is the penetration of the volume of mercury into the empty volume of the tube in the thermometer. With the kettle, a small quantity of water pervades the air of the space in which the water was boiling.

From this point of view it will be clear that there is nothing which is confined by the three-dimensional limits it appears to have at a given moment. In time and under the influence of universal forces it can obtain another shape or form apparition. Through expansion, contraction or otherwise, changes occur which, when measured, can produce fourth, fifth, sixth or more dimensions, dependent upon the number of space directions in which these changes occur or the number of universal forces

which exert their influences.

Each volume or object takes up a certain space. When during a certain period of time a change occurs in that space, such a volume possesses a space-time relationship. When the term spatio-temporal is used this is to indicate that the shape of an object or entity can change spatially during a certain period of time consequent upon the influence of any one universal force.

Once we have agreed that an object does not in fact end with a definite form apparition at a particular instant but is subject to change, we can visualise this with a simple volume such as the cube (fig. 1). The cube consists, as it were, of a number of thin slices, the last of which appears as its finite plane. Since we know that an object may expand, it is possible that this finite plane will appear a little further away in space. When this process is taking place at all sides of the cube, we obtain fig. 2. This drawing is also used in science as a simple demonstration of a four- or multidimensional process. When the process occurs between two volumes, this produces fig. 3. With the help of this latter drawing, science can demonstrate for example the process of fusion of atoms within a molecule. It is this vision of the four- or multidimensionality of all things in existence which at the beginning of the twentieth century fundamentally altered scientific thought. Scientists such as Gauss, Lobachevsky

1: *The temporary split between Mondrian and Van Doesburg takes place in 1927. From 1929 on both artists revisit one another.*

2: *The exhibition Modern Art in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, which carried works by Mondrian, Gestel, Sluimers, Schelfhout and Le Fauconnier.*

3: *'Kunstcritiek' ('Art criticism') in De Eenheid, 6th Nov., 1915, No. 283*

4: *For the first time in the lecture 'The aesthetic principle of modern art', the second of Three lectures on the new plastic art, Amsterdam, Maatschappij voor Goede en Goedkope Lectuur, 1919. This lecture was held in Haarlem in*

1916 and contains the four-dimensional statement that future architecture must possess points which are 'coordinated with those of universal space' (p.46). The second statement dates from 1917 and can be found in the series of articles 'Great masters of plastic art', fragment II, in De Eenheid,

8th Dec., 1917, No. 392. It says 'This motostereometric shape represents the visualisation of a 4-n dimensional world in a world of three dimensions'. Both statements are based on Van Doesburg's knowledge, among other things, of the Futurist manifestoes of Boccioni and Marinetti, as well as of scientific literature.

Einstein and others changed Newton's static picture of the world into an experience of reality as a dynamic space-time process.

New views of science did not escape the artists of the twentieth century any more than they did those of the Renaissance. Although with Braque the principle of the interpenetration of shapes came to exist more or less intuitively as a result of Cezanne's principle that objects which were to be expressed simultaneously must be looked at from various points of view, in the case of Albert Gleizes, the theoretician of Cubism, there is no doubt of his awareness of the new developments in science. Again the Cubo-futurist Severini at an early date, in 1916, published articles on the fourth dimension. The *Realist Manifesto* of 1920 by the Constructivists Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner, as well as various articles by El Lissitzky, such as *Proun* of 1922 or *Space* of 1923, equally posit a four-dimensional approach for the plastic arts. In Holland the fourth dimension represents the point at issue between two of the main artists of De Stijl: Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg. Indirectly, one might say, it became the cause of a split between both artists after 1924 when Van Doesburg rejected Neoplasticism and substituted for it his Elementarism.¹

Before the end of the year 1915 Van Doesburg saw Mondrian's Neoplastic work for the first time at an exhibition² and at

the beginning of 1916 he made his first personal contact with him. Despite his immediate enthusiasm for Mondrian's painting³, and his plans to found a magazine, which date back as far as 1915, Van Doesburg continued his Cubist method of painting, only changing to Neoplasticism in 1917. By that time he had already made various statements which prove that he was aware of the problem of four-dimensionality.⁴ It is interesting to ascertain this order of events because it is all too easily said that Van Doesburg was more of a theoretician than anything else. The above makes it clear that in practice he went on to develop his Cubism before he joined Neoplasticism. His Neoplasticist painting continues for one year before the problem of four-dimensionality becomes fully visible there in 1918. There exists a painting from 1917 entitled *Abstract Interior* which represents not so much a four-dimensional Neoplastic work as a Cubist study, such as Van Doesburg had been accustomed to make before he gave this type of work its definitive Neoplasticist appearance. There also exists, again from 1917, the big canvas in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, entitled *Composition IX*, which is an advanced version of an earlier painting called *The Cardplayers*. Though this work embodies a Neoplasticist approach, the interpenetration of various shapes with others takes place only incidentally and has little impact. Mondrian had done the same thing before

to a much greater extent in his works dating from 1913 and 1914.

How can one visualise the element of four-dimensionality on a flat canvas plane in a painting? We shall try to illustrate this with the help of a few simple schematic drawings. *Figure 4* shows two rectangular spaces, *a* and *b*, which exist in and by themselves and, since they do not interpenetrate one another, therefore do not possess any four-dimensional relationship. In *figure 5*, however, both rectangular spaces possess an interrelationship. Space *a* interpenetrates space *b* and vice versa. The lines which circumscribe the rectangular spaces *a* and *b* do not touch at the angles in order to sustain the continuity of space. Consequently space *a* not only expands into space *b* but like the latter is related to its environmental space at the same time. *Figure 5* reveals how one new flexible, four-dimensional space caught between lines has come to exist from two separate static spaces.

In 1913, 1914 and 1915 one can find several works by Mondrian which reveal this principle stemming from Cubism: among them the series *Pier and Ocean* represents perhaps the most advanced example of a four-dimensional approach. With the exception of a single painting, Mondrian did not make any Neoplasticist works during the years 1915 and 1916. Within this period of time he was writing his theory of Neoplasticism. In 1917 he

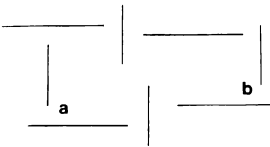
again produced a number of works, but then the element of interpenetration, the four-dimensional, had disappeared. There are just a number of independent colour planes, some of which are proportionally different and placed toward the edge of the canvas (*fig. 7*). The continuity of rectangular spaces which interpenetrate (see *fig. 5*) has now been replaced with the illusion that the space of the canvas plane itself is continuous. The planes bisected, as it were, at the borders of the canvas possess no other meaning than to suggest a possible continuation beyond the canvas plane (see the dotted lines added in *fig. 7*). However, the principle of four-dimensionality has vanished. The canvas plane is a space entity by itself and so are the colour planes, i.e. there is no relationship of interpenetration between them.

There remained one further way of expressing the principle of interpenetration by means of rectangular spaces on the canvas plane. One could do so by placing the coloured planes partly on top of one another, through overlapping (see *fig. 6*). This second possibility is used by Mondrian in 1917 for two paintings: *Composition with coloured planes on a white background A* and *Composition in Blue B*. These two paintings are likely to have come into existence under the influence of Van Doesburg who must have been stupefied to see Mondrian drop the most essential principle of Neoplasticism, the expression of mobility through four-

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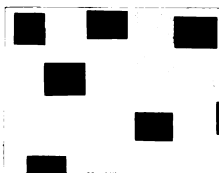
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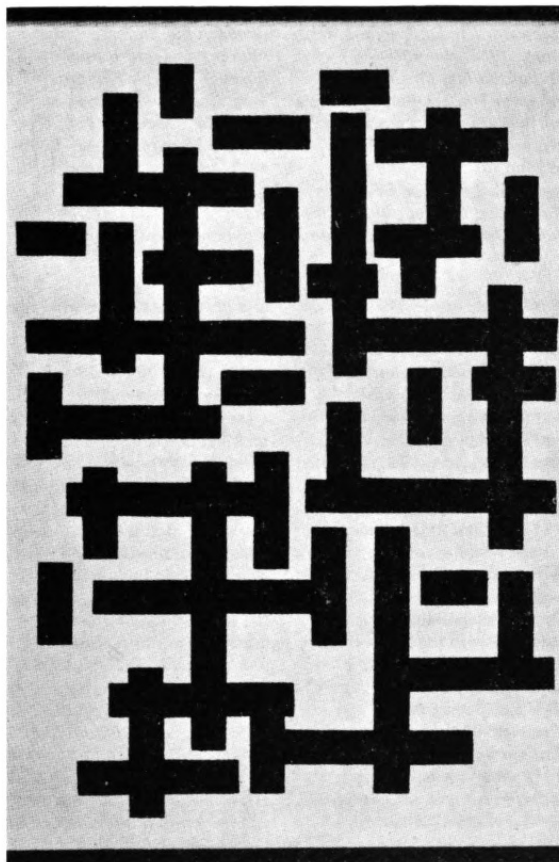
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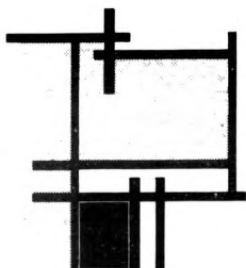
Theo van Doesburg,
Compositie XII, 1918



8



9



dimensionality. There is little doubt that in this case Van Doesburg's theoretical insight was diametrically opposed to the influence of the mathematician Schoenmaekers who, like Mondrian, was living in Laren. Mondrian's theory of Neoplasticism which he wrote during the years 1915 and 1916, just before he dropped the four-dimensional principle, was largely a transaction with Schoenmaekers' ideas⁸, and the latter rejected theories such as Einstein's. In the following two years, 1918 and 1919, however, Mondrian again dissociates himself from the principle of movement through four-dimensionality. The explanation for this step, in all probability, is to be found in the circumstance that shapes interpenetrating one another through overlapping give the impression that the space of the canvas plane possesses depth, a third dimension. The one plane lies on top of the other (fig. 6)⁹. Mondrian, before anything else, wanted to be a painter working two-dimensionally. In line with this decision he exchanged a new plastic aim, the principle of four-dimensionality, for an old plastic means i.e. painting two-dimensionally on a two-dimensional plane, the canvas.

At the end of the year 1917, the following paragraph can be found in a letter from Mondrian to Van Doesburg. 'Maybe later you could write on the four-dimensional matter better than I do. I have much sympathy for your idea that 'the negative' represents the fourth

5: Dr M H J Schoenmaekers, *Beginnelsen der Beeldende Wiskunde* (Principles of Plastic Mathematics), Bussum, C A J van Dishoeck, 1916.
6: In those paintings where Mondrian sometimes does not allow the lines to continue to the very edge of the canvas, one can indeed observe some narrow opening from one

rectangular space area to the one bordering it, but no real interpenetration. However, from this approach it becomes evident that the expression of four-dimensionality, though no longer achieved, continues to preoccupy his mind. See Mondrian's work in the years 1919 to 1921.

7: Piet Mondrian, letter to Theo

dimension, but I am unable to write about it. I do, however, have this approach in my work. I am achieving more unity in my things as well as the equilibrium I want.¹⁰ Shortly afterwards, in 1918, when he had dissociated himself from the principle of four-dimensionality, he arrived at the following statement: 'I had put down too little on these dimensions. As it is now, it looks much better to me. About the other dimensions I would rather not say anything. That matter will never make any essential difference.'¹¹ This is followed by a remark made in a letter of June 1918. 'I am very much interested in your effort for a four-dimensional view, but it is my opinion that we cannot visualise much of four-dimensionality, since one needs another (new) sense for it, as I think I know from occultism. Nevertheless a clear understanding may stimulate our consciousness of it and later on I should appreciate having your thoughts about it.'¹² Mondrian, who had intuitively expressed four-dimensionality in his Neoplastic paintings of the early years, alienates himself from this essential principle with this development. To him the fourth dimension has become an incomprehensible secret, occult even, which from then on is apparently reserved to Van Doesburg ('your effort for a four-dimensional view').¹³

The problem of expressing the fourth dimension on a flat canvas plane becomes manifest at the moment when open spaces circumscribed by lines are substituted for closed

planes of colour. It is precisely at this point that Van Doesburg who as a painter was just as sensitive to the argument that modern plastic art on a two-dimensional plane had to present itself two-dimensionally, takes the matter up to pursue it in the course of a number of paintings. In 1918 one canvas after another is completed in which planes and lines are continually played off against each other. At one stage a colour space continues within an open linear circumscription (fig. 8); at another lines defining certain spaces suddenly penetrate into other spaces (fig. 9). Towards the end of the year the problem is resolved in favour of the lines. In some cases these lines possess sufficient width to suggest planes, as a result of which the plane element reestablishes itself, more or less; but the spaces in between continue to penetrate one another, so that a series of very rhythmical paintings comes into existence. When by the end of 1918 Van Doesburg joins Mondrian by also using the plane as a closed entity in itself and painting it next to other planes with or without a straight line as a separation between them, the painterly research comes to an end for the time being. Its result is that the expression of four-dimensionality on a flat canvas plane can be achieved with lines rather than planes.

In the meantime Mondrian had been trying to restore the loss of dynamic rhythm by hanging his canvas like a lozenge. The diagonal represents an approved and in fact a classic

van Doesburg dated 12th Dec., 1917

8: Piet Mondrian, letter to Theo van Doesburg, undated, probably March or April 1918

9: Piet Mondrian, letter to Theo van Doesburg dated June 13th 1918. The letters by Mondrian to Van Doesburg are kept in the De Stijl archives in Meudon. The answers by Van

Doesburg were destroyed by Mondrian.

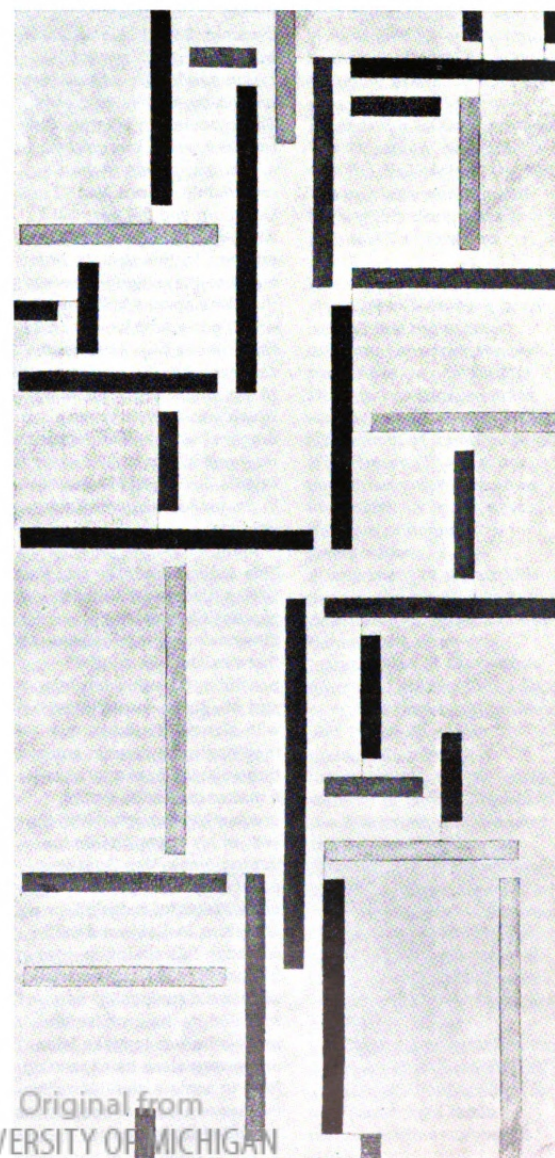
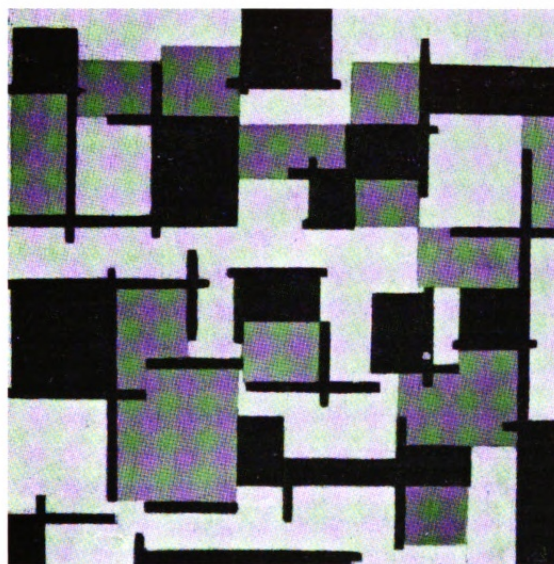
10: To the very end the fourth dimension is destined to preoccupy Mondrian. In almost his last work, Victory Boogie Woogie (1943-44), the lines are composed of small planes, whereas colour planes are placed beside as well as on top of one another. In short,

the entire problematics of 1917-1918 on the expression of four-dimensionality, i.e. the choice between lines and planes, between juxtaposing and overlapping the planes, is combined in one painting. Again to the very end a painterly means prevails. The overlapping of the planes is done in such a way as to have

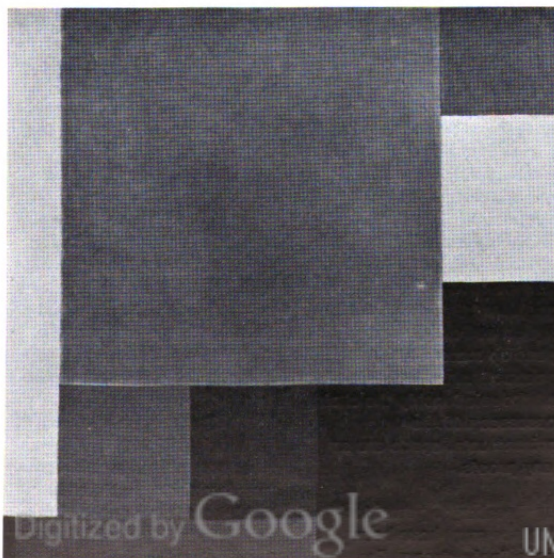
the one rest in the other, which is why technically speaking the two-dimensionality is preserved while the expression of four-dimensionality remains absent.

Theo van Doesburg,
Compositie XIII, 1918

Right: Theo van Doesburg,
Russische dans, 1918



Theo van Doesburg,
Compositie XXII, 1920



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11: *The model of this sculpture was lost. There exists only a photograph. Leeuwarden is the capital city of the Northern province of Friesland.*

12: Architectural Record, May 1914.

13: Piet Mondrian, 'Natuurlijke en abstracte realiteit', 1919-1920. In Michel Seuphor, Piet Mondrian, Life and Work, Amsterdam, Contact, p.322.
14: Theo van Doesburg, 'De invloed van de Stijlbeweging in Duitsland' ('The influence of the De Stijl movement in Germany') in Bouwkundig Weekblad, Vol. 44, No. 7, Feb.

1923, p.84. Illustrations of the ground plan and two facades.
15: *ibid.*, two illustrations of the facades on p.83
16: In De Stijl Vol. 5, Nos. 2 and 3, Feb. and March 1922, pp. 23-32 and pp. 33-41.
17: In De Stijl Vol. 5, No. 3, March 1922, pp. 41-47 and No. 5, May 1922, pp. 65-70.

means of expressing the dynamic. To this Mondrian adds a modular system by taking a rectangle of a certain proportion as a starting point. This module can enlarge itself two, four, six or more times within the system. It is remarkable to see Van Doesburg end the year 1919 with two paintings which, in addition to the straight line, also use the oblique, whereas the plane spaces in between are filled in with colour in a rather loose way. These two canvases are the predecessors of his Elementarist painting which was to employ the diagonal at forty-five degrees. However at this moment he rejects the use of the diagonal in painting in his published writings.

This springs from the fact that, during his research into the expression of four-dimensionality, he realised that there existed yet another possibility of achieving this sort of spatial constellation with planes, albeit that this then had to be done in actual three-dimensional space. Is it a matter of chance that precisely in the year 1918, the year of his research into the canvas plane, Van Doesburg participates in a prize competition for a design for a sculpture in Leeuwarden?¹¹ Although this sculpture does not possess the characteristics of four-dimensionality as revealed by the architectural models he was to make later on, nevertheless its expanding form to some extent illustrates the process of changeability as indicated by figure 2.

In 1918, precisely, the debate on architecture is in full swing. In 1917 Van Doesburg had made the acquaintance of the architect R. van't Hoff who had returned from America with much material on Frank Lloyd Wright. It had been this American architect who, in an article, set himself against an architecture consisting of 'boxes'.¹² In order to change this, he suggested that the massive forms of the 'closed' boxes were to be opened up and the rectangular volumes to be circumscribed with planes in an 'open' relationship. When we look once more at figure 3, we realise that if one volume is to penetrate the other, they will indeed have to be opened up. Thus Wright's idea of a more open architecture of spaces defined by planes came very close to Van Doesburg's view of a four-dimensional spatial expression by means of interpenetration. Now that painting had revealed that the realisation of four-dimensionality with planes led to an unpainterly solution, Van Doesburg more than ever focussed his attention on architecture. Following upon his discussion with the architects, the red-blue Rietveld chair of 1918 can be considered the first spatial product of De Stijl which opens up mass. Its airy construction, the use of planes and the relationship the chair possesses with its environmental space are as many proofs.

Van Doesburg's power to convince must have been exceedingly strong. For, in

spite of the fact that both he and Mondrian had arrived at the conclusion that four-dimensionality could not be fully achieved in painting, and Mondrian, in his work and letters, had dissociated himself from this principle, he returned to this issue in his essay *Natural and Abstract Reality* written in 1919-1920. Discussing 'the new spirit of the times' he says 'The new tendencies have been ascribed to greater consciousness of the fourth dimension; and in fact, the idea of the fourth dimension manifests itself in the new art, through the total or partial destruction of the three-dimensional or natural order, and through the construction of a new plasticism with a less limited view.'¹³ It reveals that he had followed closely the discussion on the development of the principle of four-dimensionality in architecture between Van Doesburg and the De Stijl architects; just as it is evident that the mention of 'destruction' implies that the massive closed volume is to be replaced by an open area constructed with planes.

Before Van Doesburg finished with painting in 1920, he completed a number of works which consist exclusively of planes placed in such a way as to make the impression of a strongly architectural build-up on a flat plane inescapable.

In the German period which followed (1921-1923), Van Doesburg's first architectural forms came into existence. In 1922 there is his design for a drainage building with terraces for a swimming pool which at

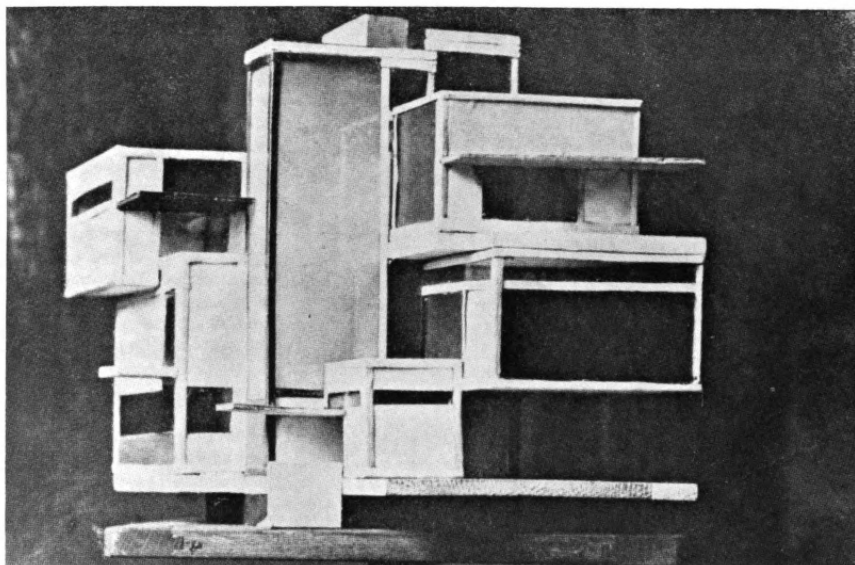
one corner, reveals a little of the element of four-dimensional interpenetration. It is also typical that the principle used in the case of the sculpture for Leeuwarden of 1918 recurs here as a way of marking the four corners of the pool itself.

The first four-dimensional ground plan occurs also in 1922, in a design for a house made by one of Van Doesburg's De Stijl course students, Hans Vogel.¹⁴ Three square faces interpenetrate one another, but the facades, in spite of their plasticity, are still conventional in the sense of representing a load-bearing architecture. The same applies to a design of the same date by another student of Van Doesburg, Bern. Sturzkopf.¹⁵

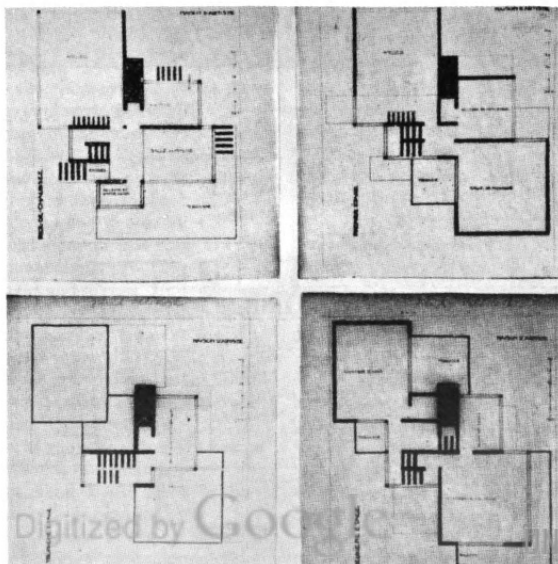
At the beginning of 1922, Van Doesburg published one of his most important writings, *The Will to Style*¹⁶, which contains his entire artistic creed. In his views he is supported by Mondrian who at the same time wrote *The realisation of Neoplasticism in the far future and in contemporary architecture*¹⁷ where he, from solidarity, again adopts Van Doesburg's four-dimensional approach. This becomes clear from Mondrian's rejection of massive form and his plea, also taken from Van Doesburg, for an architecture consisting of planes in accordance with the theory of relativity. This joint attack on the prevalent ideas in architecture owes its origin not only to the big struggle which at this time Van Doesburg, together with El Lissitzky, was pursuing against a rapidly

18: Theo van Doesburg, 'Van de esthetiek naar het materiaal' in *Bouwkundig Weekblad*, Vol. 43, No. 38, pp. 372-375.

19: J P Mieras, 'Prijskamp in de schoone bouwkunst in 1921' ('Prize competition in aesthetic architecture in 1921') in *Bouwkundig Weekblad*, Vol. 43, No. 1, Jan. 1922.



Theo van Doesburg and C. van Eesteren, studio house 1923, model and plans. Ground floor, first floor (above right), second floor (below right), third floor (below left)



rising functionalism in Germany, but also to the circumstance that around 1920 the De Stijl architects such as J. J. P. Oud, J. Wils and R. van't Hoff, for various reasons, had turned their backs upon architecture as propagated by Van Doesburg.

The Weimar models by Van Doesburg's students must have been made before September 1922. In the same month Van Doesburg published the article *From aesthetics towards material*¹⁸, the contents of which reveal that his ideas in the realm of architecture must have come to exist in a more concrete form. A year later it was to be reprinted in German in *De Stijl*. In a preliminary way it already contains the entire architectural program which in 1924 he was to publish point by point after his collaboration with the architect C. van Eesteren.

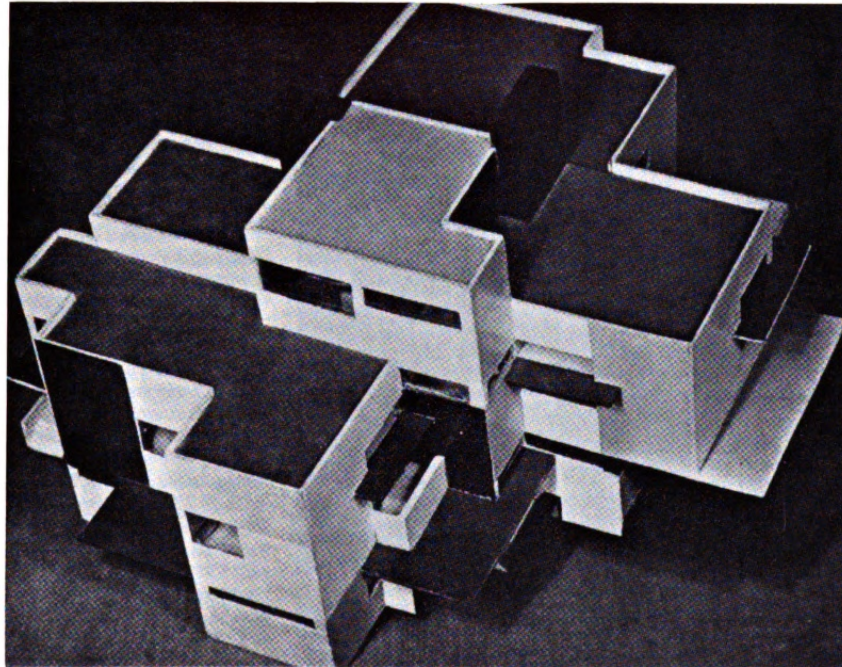
Van Eesteren met Van Doesburg in the spring of 1922. He had just won the Prix de Rome for a design for a Royal Institute of Science, Literature and the Arts¹⁹, which represented a strongly symmetrical building in the very best academic tradition. It was the German critic of architecture Adolf Behne who advised him to visit Van Doesburg in Weimar.

The first collaboration between Van Eesteren and Van Doesburg dates from 1923, a year later, when the latter had settled in Paris. Its origin is the Rosenberg house. The French art dealer Rosenberg, interested in the ideas of De

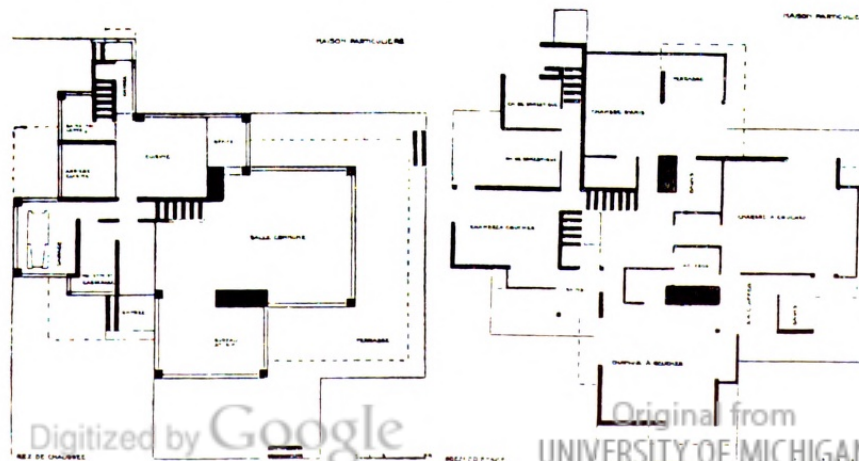
Stijl, had approached Mondrian in Paris with the request that he make a design for a house including exhibition space for an art gallery. Mondrian passed this request on, and Van Doesburg discussed it with the architects of De Stijl. The only one who came to Paris with a design was the architect Van Eesteren.

When we look at the ground plan of the Rosenberg house, we find that the various functional spaces have been placed beside one another. They do not interpenetrate, which is why it has not become a specimen of four-dimensional architecture. The facades, though very dynamic, owe their plasticity to the typical Baroque principle of juxtaposition, i.e. the arrangement of the various parts of the whole facade in a protruding or receding way consequent upon the juxtaposition of the various functional entities in the floor plan. Van Doesburg, however, was in search not of juxtaposition but of interpenetration. This latter element is clearly present with the first house, the so-called private house, which Van Eesteren and Van Doesburg started to design together in 1923. Here again, as with the design made in Weimar, the use of the four-dimensional principle is restricted mainly to the ground plan. There are only a few, slightly cantilevering parts which Van Eesteren, from his practical attitude and in opposition to Van Doesburg's ideas, supports with a number of columns.

Theo van Doesburg and C. van Eesteren, model of private house, 1923



Theo van Doesburg and C. van Eesteren, private house 1923: ground floor plan and first floor plan (right)



20: *Theo van Doesburg, 'De nieuwe architectuur' in Bouwkundig Weekblad, Vol. 45, No. 20, May 17th 1924, pp. 200-204. 'Tot een beeldende architectuur' ('Toward a plastic architecture') in De Stijl, series XII, No. 6/7, 1924, pp. 78-82.*

Shortly afterward in that same year the second house, the so-called studio house, is designed; here the four-dimensional approach is applied consistently in the facades as well. Interpenetration takes place not only horizontally but also in a vertical way. The design demanded a constructional method which at that time was not available. However with the progress technology has made up to the present day both models could be realised.

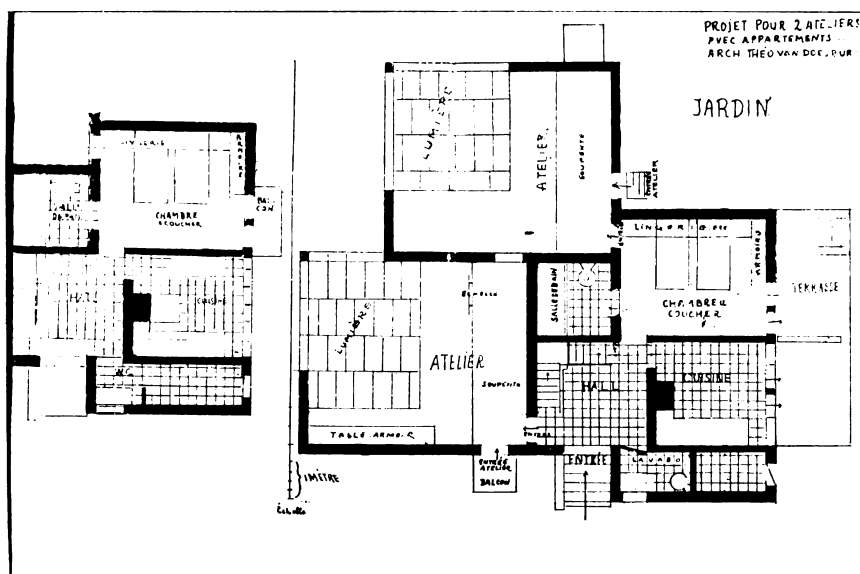
Naturally the models created a scandal at the exhibitions for which they had been made, just as the architectural programme *The new architecture*²¹ which Van Doesburg published to accompany them in 1924 was attacked from all sides. Beside the opening up of massive form, the open and formless (in the sense of being against any application of aprioristic form-patterns such as a ground plan constituting one rectangle to encompass all functions) this programme leaves no doubt as to the expression of four-dimensionality. Point 10 reads 'Space and time. The new architecture reckons not only with space but also with time to accentuate architecture. The unity of space and time provides the architectural outlook with a new and fully plastic aspect (a four-dimensional, spatio-temporal plastic aspect).'

In spite of the protests against and the technical constructional problems of this

21: In my study for the monograph 'Theo van Doesburg and De Stijl' I found it impossible to accept that the Meudon house, which is not based on the principle of four-dimensionality, had not been preceded by any design in which Van Doesburg tried to realise this idea. Acting on this supposition, Nelly van

Doesburg and I one day turned the house upside down. Besides other unknown things I found two small drawings. These two designs, the one for both the Arp and the Van Doesburg families, the other solely for the Van Doesburg family, must be dated around 1925 when the Van Doesburg family inherited a small amount

and began to think of building a house of its own.
22: In the De Stijl archives at Meudon.



Theo van Doesburg, project for a double studio house, ca. 1925

new architecture, the models did not as yet satisfy Van Doesburg. They were accompanied by a series of axonometric drawings, projections made at an angle of forty-five degrees, which were to serve no other purpose than to open up mass still further and to present a visualisation of a four-dimensional architecture of coloured planes circumscribing spaces which interpenetrate one another. He calls these drawings of 1924 'constructions in colour with the fourth dimension of space-time' or 'space-time constructions'. These drawings, made in the technique of gouache, stress primarily the weightlessness and the suspension of his architecture which is in opposition to the

law of gravity. With these axonometrics or 'counter-constructions', as he also named them, Van Doesburg reaches the culminating point in his idea of four-dimensionality as it is to be expressed in a three-dimensional space.

After the exhibition of the models, the publications for and against, and the departure of Van Eesteren, there is a lull in Van Doesburg's architectural activities, during which he sees himself more or less obliged to return to the palette and the static calm of the white canvas. Now that he had revised many values, and since he was under the spell of the dynamics inherent in his axonometric spatial designs, he changed Neoplasticism into

Elementarism. The Neoplasticist expression of the horizontal and the vertical (without the use of four-dimensionality) is too static and must be replaced by the use of the oblique line or plane which as with the axonometrics, is to be applied at an angle of forty-five degrees. The word 'counter-composition', which he uses with it, once more indicates that he requires a suspended composition in opposition to the law of gravity. The diagonal however, as Van Doesburg had clearly stated as early as 1918, represented a Baroque mode of expression rather than the visualisation of a world of four or more dimensions.

Though, in addition to Elementarist painting, the principle of four-dimensionality is maintained in theory to the very end, it recurs in his work only once with two preliminary designs for a house of his own which later on he was to build in Meudon.²¹ Both designs, the one for one family, the other for two families, are studio houses, the ground plans of which consist of a number of square spaces interpenetrating one another. The drawings have been made rather hastily on a small piece of paper. Shortly afterwards Van Doesburg began to work, together with Hans Arp, on the project for the interiors of the restaurant L'Aubette in Strassbourg, which was to take up several years. When later, in 1929-1930, the final plan for his Meudon house was produced, it is only the deeply cantilevered studio area, supported however by three

slender columns, which recalls the element of suspension inherent in his four-dimensional architecture. Yet it is precisely through this characteristic that it differs essentially from the Citrohan type of housing by Le Corbusier with which the Meudon house is often compared.

In 1930 also, an altered version of his architectural programme of 1924 was to appear, *The fundamental spirit of contemporary architecture*. This comes from a text he used for a lecture in Barcelona. In this new programme Van Doesburg introduces the constructional method of columns without making it clear how to combine this linear element with an architecture of planes. The expression of four-dimensionality is maintained unabated. Thus in falling in with a building method prevalent in his time, Van Doesburg gives proof that ultimately he wanted to establish himself also as an architect. Van Doesburg wanted to be an architect in order to arrive at the realisation of the four-dimensional vision, the visualisation of which he knew to be possible to the full only when it appeared in a world of three dimensions. He desired this because he was convinced of the coming of a newly shaped world in the future.

Note: 'the fourth dimension' in art and science

This paper touches gently on the fourth dimension as it

Theo van Doesburg is of today by Maurice Agis and Peter Jones

The authors, recipients of the Sikkens Prize in 1967, last year presented to Nellie van Doesburg the 1968 Prize awarded posthumously to her husband. Their own work in space and colour construction has led to the recent establishment of their 'Space Structure Workshop' in Weston Street, London.

occurs respectively in the worlds of physics, mathematics and the plastic arts. Its simple aim is to demonstrate that all three realms today possess a similar approach toward reality, not that any of these realms can be exchanged for another. Therefore there exists no such thing as a mathematically logical four- or multidimensional work of art, just as there is no artistic multidimensional mathematics. The reader who wants to know the visual difference between all three realms is invited to compare the following examples. For physics: put your empty square cake tin on the floor and plant one of your heels on it. Lift the wreckage from the floor and observe an example of a four- to *n*-dimensional result in the reality of physics. Compare this result with the drawings 1 to 3 of this paper and you will find that these cubes, also representing four- to *n*-dimensional processes, carry the idealising and beautifying characteristics of the world of mathematics. Again compare these three drawings with Neoplasticist four-dimensional painting or the De Stijl architectural models and you will discover that, in its turn, the reality of art has a rational and sense of beauty of its own.

Finally, when it is realised that with Neoplasticism the use of the straight line and the rectangle is the outcome of a long process of translating naturalistic shapes towards their structural relationships rather than taking some geometrical means as its basis, any confusion is excluded.



Friday 13th December 1968 — Theo van Doesburg awarded the 1968 Sikkens Prize — posthumously. This international prize, instituted by the Dutch Sikkens Company ten years ago, is given yearly to an artist or architect for work on colour and space. As his widow remarked ironically 'It is only forty years too late.' The prizegiving coincided with the opening of an exhibition of Van Doesburg's work at the Municipal Museum, Eindhoven, Holland. This comprehensive exhibition will be going to a few European cities. The man responsible for getting it together (J. Leering, Director of the Eindhoven Museum) is amazed that his offer of the exhibition was not taken up by any major London gallery. The exhibition should be seen all over the world and in every city of Europe. It has more to do with the future than with the past.

Work shown in the exhibition dates from 1913 to 1931. It is from 1917, at the age of 34, that Van Doesburg really begins to develop. Followed by

thirteen years of intensive work. He dies exhausted, aged 48.

Van Doesburg: 'Let us create a new life-force which is adequate to the functioning of modern life.' Van Doesburg was the driving force of the De Stijl movement. He was editor of *De Stijl* magazine as well as its chief contributor. De Stijl was opposed to the notion of artwork as object. Van Doesburg was continually stimulating the other artists of the movement: without him they would not have continued to contribute. He was painter, sculptor, architect, poet, pamphleteer, teacher, art critic, architectural correspondent, agitator and chief propagandist for De Stijl. He had the energy needed — he wanted to see results — to build. De Stijl was interrupted by the death of van Doesburg. Much of its promise was not fulfilled, and De Stijl's intentions are still a stimulus for today.

Van Doesburg (from *The End of Art*, 1924): 'For the sake of progress we must destroy art. Because the function of modern life is stronger than art, every attempt to renew art (Futurism, Cubism, Expressionism) has failed.' From 1917 he worked on some projects with architectural aspects: floor designs, stained glass windows, house interiors. By 1923 painting alone was not sufficient to contain the development of his ideas about space. This year saw the breakthrough.

The real work, the physical making, came first — the ideas

or concept followed. The best that happened was the working collaboration of myself and Doesburg.' (Van Eesteren, 1968). In van Doesburg's work with van Eesteren (models for the Rosenberg House 1922-3, 'Private House' 1923, 'House for an Artist', 1923) there was an attempt at collaboration between artist and architect. Like most other attempts since, there was an enormous gap in basic aims.

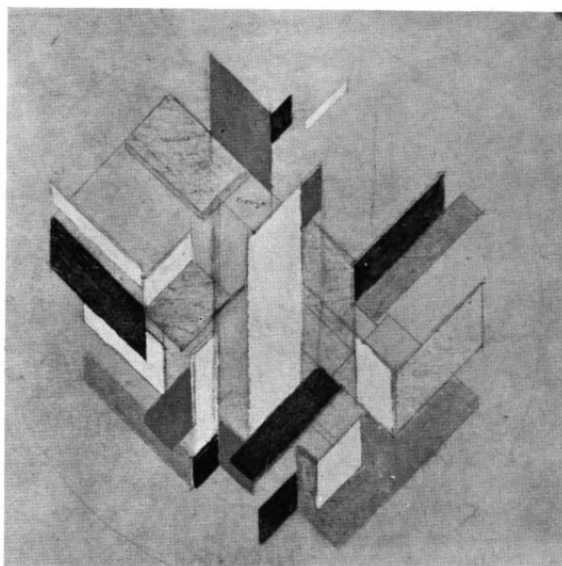
Van Doesburg did not reformulate the architect's position, task or function. He only made use of the architect for his traditional skills. It is surprising that Van Doesburg did not consider working with others who would contribute the discipline he lacked. He had no experience of the structural problems in building. Perhaps a more fruitful collaboration could have taken place with an engineer? What was proved was that collaboration between artist and traditional architect cannot work for today. It had been possible in the past, when the artist's role was to embellish a building already fully worked out in form.

Van Doesburg: 'The aims of art — to place man amid plastic art, thereby letting him take part in it.' To work with and in space there must be a language. Theo van Doesburg's most significant contribution is to have made people aware of space and to have given us the beginnings of a space/time language. It is virtually impossible to grasp the reality of space/time through written and mathematical language

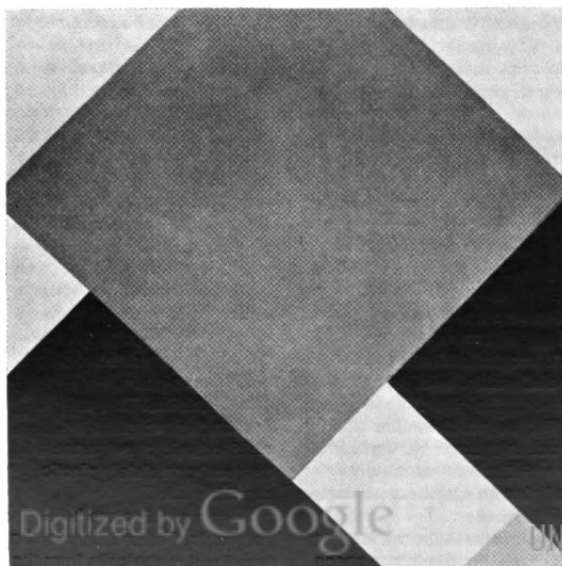
only, but Theo van Doesburg's work makes us aware that there can be a constructed reality, which can offer directly an experience in space/time. Since the ideas expressed in the diagrams for space/time constructions were not realised in any concrete form, it is they that constitute the demonstrations of his concept. They suggest the handling of plane and colour in space, to define space. Because Van Doesburg never carried this out in practice, he had to rely on the two-dimensional diagrams to convey the ideas. This makes his intuitive awareness of spatial relationships even more remarkable. Van Doesburg's ideal was that the reality of space/time should become the reality of 'new architecture' — a formless architecture within a working language, disciplined yet free. This was the challenge.

He continued to develop in parallel both painting and architectural projects, and ideas were often transferred between the two fields of activity. If he had been able to make constructions from the space/time diagrams, he would definitely have given up painting. But because these diagrams remained only as ideas, he continued to paint through the need for physical expression. If Van Doesburg is to be considered for his paintings alone, he is a major artist. But he was never concerned exclusively with the 'fine' art of painting. Always his work has implications outside the object in itself. He never set out to make a painting as an entity in its own right.

Theo van Doesburg, *Contra-constructie, House for an Artist*, 1923



Theo van Doesburg, *Contra composite V*, 1924. Use of the diagonal to dynamise the flat plane of the canvas.



Painting was a means of exploring an idea. Each painting is his understanding taken as far as possible within the terms of painting. Each painting is a complete step — sometimes a leap. This was a totally different approach from that of Mondrian, who was concerned with the idea of painting, by developing a theme in two dimensions.

The space/time constructions do not suggest domestic houses, but in an attempt to realise these ideas in a physical form Van Doesburg worked on house projects. His idea of using asymmetrically placed vertical and horizontal colour planes, balanced freely in space, was compromised in this architectural work, though the models still contain some of the original spatial ideas. As houses they were never built. The first realisation of Van Doesburg's space/time concepts came a year after the house projects, in 1924, in another's work — the Schröder House, Utrecht, Holland, designed and built by G. Rietveld. It is remarkable that Rietveld managed to demonstrate Van Doesburg's spatial concept within the limits of traditional building materials, more clearly than Van Doesburg and Van Eesteren had achieved in the comparative freedom of model making. Rietveld was essentially a maker. Inspired by the work of Van Doesburg and Van Eesteren but unfortunately lacking Van Doesburg's vision, he made no follow-up to this momentous start — his first architectural statement, the Schröder

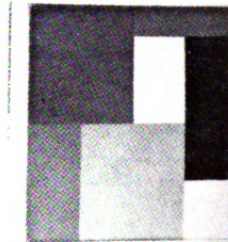
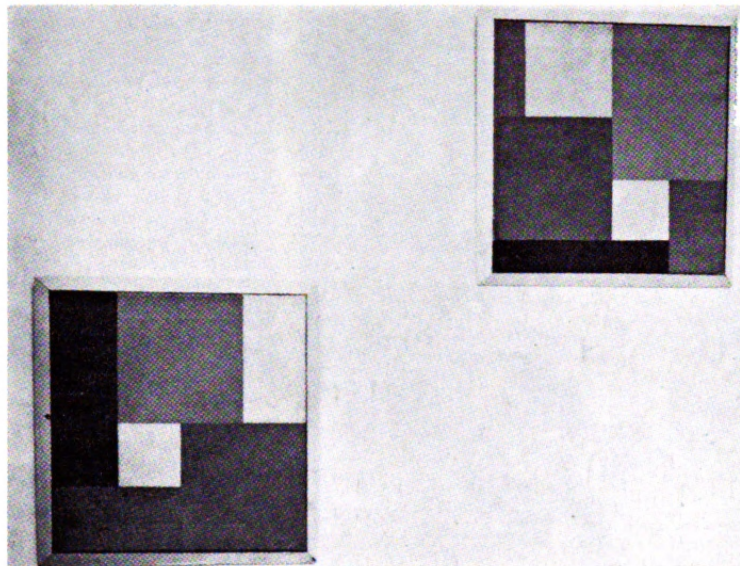
House. In spite of being a house, it is the most successful construction embodying the space/time concept.

After their period of collaboration, Van Doesburg and Van Eesteren published the following statement (*Collective Construction*, 1923, Paris):

- '1. Working collectively we have examined architecture as a unity created by all the arts, industry and technology.
2. We have examined the laws of space and their infinite variations.
3. We have considered the laws of colour in space and continuity.
4. We have examined the relationships of Space and Time, and find that the manifestation of these two elements through colour gives a new dimension.
5. We have examined the reciprocal relationships of measure, proportion, space and time.
6. We have (by the destruction of enclosure) removed the duality of interior/exterior.
7. We declare that painting without construction (i.e. easel painting) has no further reason for existence.
8. The period of destruction is totally finished. A new period begins; one of construction.'

What was the collaborative work with the architect Van Eesteren about? It was about architecture. They collaborated on house projects. What if the two men had worked together on a construction at the human scale — a space/time construction diagram made real? How much would the

Theo van Doesburg, *Composition with Three Pictures*, 1920. This work suggests an infinite number of possibilities within a set of given colour-form units; and has implications for a basic flexible architectural language.



architect have been able to contribute? As it was, Van Doesburg pushed the architecture of Van Eesteren to the limits at which his ideas were contained within architectural terms. What he did not do was to develop the space/time concept in its own right. Van Doesburg: 'The word 'art' no longer means anything — instead thereof we demand the construction of our surroundings according to creative laws. It is impossible to regard these laws as imaginary. They exist. One can only define an experience by collective work.'

Whilst Rietveld was building the Schröder House, Van Doesburg was writing about his own architectural ideas in *Towards a Plastic (Beeldende) Architecture* (1924):

'The new architecture is formless yet definite, it ignores a preconceived aesthetic formula, a mould (in the sense known by pastry cooks) in which it casts the functional spaces which have resulted from practical living requirements.'

'The new architecture has removed the notion of monumental from dependence upon largeness and smallness (the word monumental is obsolete and must be replaced by *beeldende*). It has demonstrated that everything is relationship, relationship of the one to the other.'

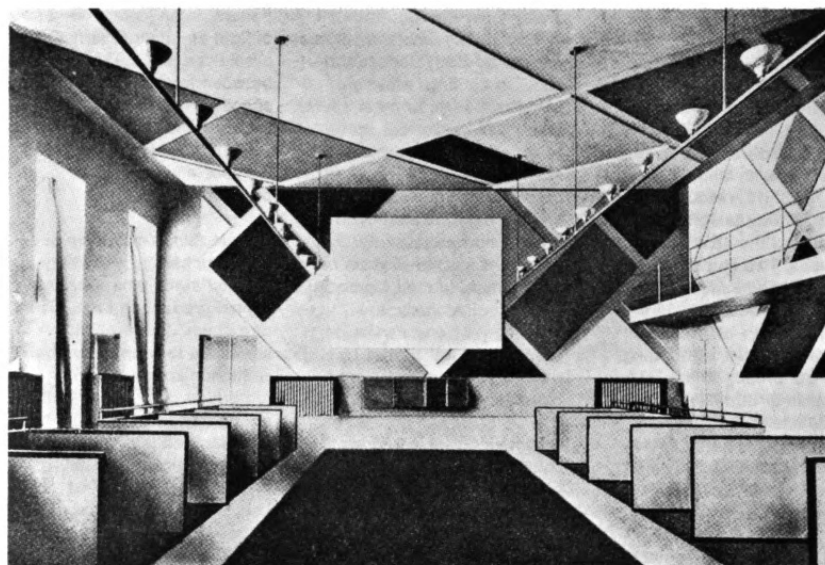
'The new architecture has broken through the wall and in so doing has completely eliminated the divorce of inside and outside.'

'The new architecture is open: the whole exists in one space

which is divided according to functional requirements. The separating planes (the earlier inside walls) can be replaced by movable planes. In the next stage of its development the ground plan must completely disappear. The two-dimensionally projected spatial composition, fixed in a ground plan, shall be replaced by an exact calculation of the construction. For this purpose our Euclidean mathematics will no longer be able to serve.' 'The new architecture reckons not only with space but also with time as one of its characteristics. The unity of time and space gives the architectonic appearance a new and completely plastic aspect.'

'The new architecture is anti-cubic. Rather it throws the functional space cells from the

core of the cube. And through this means of height, width and depth plus time approaches a totally new plastic expression in open spaces. In this way architecture gets (insofar as is possible from a constructional point of view — the task of the engineers) a more or less floating aspect that, so to speak, works against the gravitational forces of nature. 'The new architecture absorbs colour organically into itself as an immediate expressive element of its relationship in time and space. Without colour these relationships are not a living reality.' 'In a further stage of development these colours will be replaced by synthetic material having its own colour. This can be accomplished only when practical demands require the material.' 'The new architecture is



Cinema room, Cafe
Aubette, Strasbourg, 1928

anti-decorative. Colour has become not a decorative or ornamental factor in architecture but rather an organic, expressive architectural element.' 'In the 'new architecture' building is understood as a part, the summation of all the arts in their most elementary manifestation. It presents the possibility of thinking in four dimensions; the plastic architect, as which I count the painter, must construct in the new sphere of space-time.' 'As the new architecture permits no separate painting or sculpture, its intention is to employ all the essential means to create an harmonic whole ...'

'New architecture' must not be confused with what is currently understood by 'architecture'. Van Doesburg invents a new

word — *Beeldende* — of which there is no exact translation. The word suggests an end to the individual art object, ie the single building, painting or sculpture, and implies the construction of relationships to/of/in space and time for a living purpose.

Two years' work on reconstructing two rooms in the Cafe Aubette, Strasbourg, from 1926 to 1928, formed Van Doesburg's first practical work at the environmental scale. He had treated the canvas as the equivalent of a spatial void when painting such works as *Russische dans*, where vertical and horizontal colour elements are related so as to dynamise the space between. He subsequently made use of the diagonal in order to oppose the static nature of the flat

rectangular plane of the canvas. For the same reasons he needed the diagonal to counteract the static box form of the existing architecture of the Cafe Aubette, and to create a dynamic visual entity. If he had worked directly in the void of space, in three dimensions, he would have used the vertical-horizontal means of the space/time construction diagrams to render the space *itself* dynamic by implying organic movements in space and time. Unfortunately the Cafe Aubette was not reconstructed in terms of his space/time concept. Instead Van Doesburg extended painting into architecture by working in the Renaissance sense to embellish a building. He realised his personal needs of working as a public artist.

The Cafe Aubette is an outstanding achievement, bold and original. It was worked out as a complete whole, an 'environmental' conception. Van Doesburg worked as a painter, not as a space constructor. In the Cinema room the dynamic use of colour and drawing on the fixed surfaces of walls and ceilings anticipates modern synthetic coloured materials. In the Dance room light is used as a positive visual element, given equal consideration with the coloured panels as an integral part of the design. The way light is used suggests light-emitting surfaces — yet to be invented.

In the Cafe Aubette Van Doesburg reinforced the original De Stijl idea — by making the general public

aware of what the artist is capable of doing. He created a place for people. It functioned as cafe, cinema, dance area, meeting place — a multi-purpose space. Most important it brought about a new relationship of art to society. Theo van Doesburg was groping towards a new realisation of plastic values in space and time. An artist of vision, he cut right through the middle of the entrenched camps, emerging clearly by stating the role of the artist to be as a contributor to society's needs. Capitalism had found it convenient to invest in private art, Communism in propaganda through art. Van Doesburg showed the way to an art form that by its very nature could live outside these kinds of context.

Most architects fail to understand the fundamental implications of Van Doesburg's space/time concept — yet the intentions are vital for today. We, the generation of today, do not want the houses that architects design for us. We want each to fulfil his needs as an individual, not as a mass produced idea of a human being. We want buildings which are flexible enough to be changed according to our needs and moods. We want a set of building parts, technologically up-to-date, designed to be assembled in many different ways; so that we can shape our own environment and avoid the predetermined package that architects are imposing on us.

As I remember it, much of what was good theater at BMC was unstructured, unstaged, going on regardless of audience or plot, walking out, as did Mary Fitton, fresh from 'corn country' as she described herself, walking out to the exact center of a circular grass plot behind the kitchen and sitting down to sun herself, not as if she owned it but rather as though she meant to find the center of things and be part of it, unobtrusively. The talk at table, the pick-up softball games on Sunday, the parties, dances in the cavernous dining hall in successive environments evoked by string structures, cubicles with toilet paper walls, lights, balloons, whatever, this made up the action. The more formal attempts at theater often failed to achieve the kind of interaction that went on continuously on casual levels.

There were several productions of 'literary' drama at BMC during the period I was there, including Cocteau's *Marriage on the Eiffel Tower*, Yeats' *Death of Cuchulain*, Brecht, and the more conventional repertoire of Coward and Shaw, but, after Olson's presentation of myth in the summer of 1949 (for instance, *Wagadu* after Frobenius), the ground for this kind of presentation was undercut. Something different was in order, something closer to ritual, something which broke out of the usual confines of 'family' drama.

Individual dancers seemed to come close. Kathy Litz held to her weights, feminine,

balanced, her ideas as extensions of herself, not props. Vashi, a Hindu, gave us in classes and performances, the ragas, the intricate drum patterns, the classical poses resurrected from statues and carvings, with his heel, as the heel of Shiva, resounding on the high wooden platform as he mimed the destruction of demons. Two students, Vera Williams and June Rice, danced an obscene, earthy interpretation of traditional nursery rhymes, alternating, one performing to the other's raucous or bird-like recital. I recall Merce Cunningham walking in his green pastel tennis shoes with the same intensity and alertness of his dance.

We groped towards a new concept of theater but did not realize it successfully while I was there. In the fall of 1950, discussions between Warren 'Pete' Jennerjahn, then teaching art, his wife Betty, who led classes in dance, and myself, as an interested student, led to the setting up of an experimental course which we termed the Light-Sound-Movement Workshop. We had no very clear objectives beyond a general intention to 'play around' with the second-hand lighting equipment, the dining hall and other environmental areas, what talent in music and dance was available, and ideas such as creating scenes for dance action by projecting patterns of cut gelatins made up of slides on dancers and backdrops.

The Workshop developed several productions, including

a play 'after the Noh tradition' by Nick Cernovitch and various dances by Betty Jennerjahn and Tim LaFarge with light patterns, poems or other sound accompaniments, but the freshness of the technical means used was not matched by corresponding innovations in the idea of theater. Lyric drama, more or less after the pattern of Martha Graham or José Limon, formed the basic structure. Inevitably, the 'message' of any particular production was blurred by rhetoric, by unnecessary or redundant sounds, movement or words. We still thought in essentially classical terms. The solution offered by John Cage, of independent events operating simultaneously, with the elements of each event partly determined by chance operations, were not tried as a basis for theatrical events at BMC until the summer of 1952 (when, unfortunately, I was absent).

We were aware of the weakness of our approach. I can recall a session of the Light-Sound-Movement Workshop in which Betty was running through a dance that involved a series of spots on the floor, each lit by a spotlight of different color with each signifying a different 'mood'. The changes in 'mood', of course, were indicated by actions of the dancer who made a considerable point of getting in and out of the colored areas marked by the spots. At the end of the demonstration, Nick, with a nicely exaggerated, slightly original dance, parodied the

pattern. In an instant, the pools of light on the floor turned into precipices, the darkened areas between into miles of terrifying space as the lanky figure teetered and staggered on the verge of total collapse. It was a moment of inspired provocation.

Certain things may have been more successful than they seemed at the time. After a dismal production I had given of a poem/dance which amounted to a kind of verbal seduction scene at a footbridge over a deep gully on the campus. I was told by Lou Harrison that the place began to take on, for him, mythological extensions. He could not, after that, cross the bridge without thinking of the (imaginary) event I had depicted.

In any event, the experiments at BMC in 1950-51 did not establish precedents for what came about later in the 'Happenings'. Whatever connections may exist came about through John Cage's classes at the New School and his own theater 'events' in the late 1950's.

A friend who writes plays has been put off by the increasing use of undressed actors in non-verbal situations. This can only lead to a fuck, he said. But then, after a momentary pause, but then we may be able to get back to plays with words again.

His remarks brought to mind a problem I had while at BMC which, while personal, may, insofar as it reflects a common

experience, have some bearing on the directions and concerns of theater and dance today.

I had come to BMC from a suburban environment with parents who were somewhat further out than most. Several early years at a school run on progressive principles (more or less) were followed by six years at indifferent public schools and an uninspired boys' preparatory school. At 16, I felt myself to be communist. During the next two years I read into Freud — a writer who had been the subject of many oblique references among my parents' contemporaries. I became convinced that what was wrong with the world derived from a combination of social injustice and the corrupting effect of inhibitions based on Puritan mores. I resolved to be as uninhibited as I could be in all my personal relations, to speak my mind, act out my lusts, etc.

The intention led to an extreme self-consciousness which produced the opposite effect. Instead of becoming more open, that self-consciousness made me on any level of expressing my private mind more inhibited than ever. What burst out, on occasion, destroyed relationships I wanted to keep. A girl who had known me during that period said later that there was so much anger in my eyes. What came out was not the intensity of my desire but my own fury at being unable to say what I wanted to say—like a man with a stutter.

At BMC, the emphasis was on techniques, ideas. The basic misapprehension under which I labored — that 'creative expression' is somehow tied to being uninhibited, a kind of progressive school litany—was not seriously challenged or even, due to my own inarticulateness, explicitly realised as a problem.

In any event, the pattern of my original contributions to theater while at BMC displays a retrograde movement towards total verbal breakdown rather than one towards greater ease and articulateness. My efforts began with a very bad (unproduced) play about communism and ended with a chaotic Lincoln's Birthday event consisting mainly of shouting clichés and firecrackers which succeeded in alienating all those I respected most. The main, if not always explicit, concern of a series of short productions between was the effect of inhibitions, mainly sexual, which I believed at the time made it more or less impossible to proceed.

From this point of view, the increasing use of non-verbal elements and undressed actors might be seen as a series of successive escalations intended to free the psyche, efforts which may be, in effect, becoming less and less articulate. Articulation, however, does not necessarily depend on verbal fluency. On other levels what has happened in theater may be considered, rather, as an increase in expressive range at least partly fostered by the impact of

Cage's ideas since 1960. In this sense, I wonder to what extent Cage's methods may have served as bypasses to those threatened by verbal breakdowns or cul-de-sacs of the sort I have described?

Somewhere Cage has traced the beginning of his experimentation with chance operations to a moment when he discovered that the emotions which he sought to express in his compositions were just not being 'heard'. Since then, Cage has considered 'emotion' a disposable quality. Along similar lines, Merce Cunningham has dispensed with 'story line', 'mood', or other 'messages' in his dance, concentrating on elements of movement which are distinctive for their own sake as Cage has sought ways to 'release' new sounds.

In devising means of disengaging the processes of composition from the sequential organisation of space/time, Cage has also, in effect, defused the emotional charges that might normally be associated with specific objects—as, for instance, in a theater event at the Circle in the Square where the American flag appeared to no very clear though certainly not disrespectful purpose. Emotion is not specifically excluded. In the 'Happenings' of the early sixties which directly or indirectly were stimulated by Cage's classes at The New School, various objects with strong emotional connotations are used. I recall, in particular, the works of Jim Dine (*Car*

Crash) and Robert Whitman (*New American Moon*), both of which show a major concern with what might be termed 'the problem of the articulation of the unconscious', with the 'unconscious' suggested by arbitrary and/or threatening actions or disasters (a man on a swing gliding to within inches of the heads of the audience; environment of bandages, Red Cross insignia; sounds of screeching cars) but with no actual disaster represented. The real 'action' centers on unsuccessful efforts (blobs of paint slapped on in a frenzy; scribbles chalked on a blackboard with such force that the chalk breaks) to say 'something'. In one of Whitman's later happenings, 'living' elements appear which surround and act coterminously with ordinary life (picnickers in a wood eating—oblivious to strange outside organic shapes which watch them silently) but are not recognised by the participants on any ordinary level of consciousness. Aside from Dine and Whitman, many of the events by others had a slapdash effect of unfocused violence flashed at an audience standing in as paying victims. Others, such as those of Allan Kaprow, had an intellectual or literary quality of elements drawn from ritual with action formalised (processions) around primordial events or places (funeral suggested by half-seen body; furnace room) or as 'games' thought up as parodies of Pentagon fantasies. The range of ideas, situations, objects brought into play is tremendous and I can't pretend to have seen or even heard

about more than a small fraction.

In effect, Cage seems to have provided a relativistic means of exploring any element of consciousness by defusing the emotional charge on any subject formerly considered anathema or relegated to the levels of the unconscious—and by this opened a veritable Pandora's Box. This does not mean that theater would not now have been preoccupied with much the same material in one way or another. The expansion of consciousness initiated by the apostles of scientific 'objectivity' in the 19th Century, of whom Freud is one, had its theatrical counterparts in the work of the Dadaists, Artaud's Theater of the Absurd and the Theater of Cruelty. But Cage's methods, irrespective of the ties to Oriental philosophies, are particularly attractive to those who have been brought up in the more or less amoral climate of American technology with its somewhat naive presumptions that everything will come out OK in the end.

The basic unit of operation has changed in theater as much as it has in music, art, literature and dance during the past fifty years. The old proscenium stage with the superior man (of noble blood) at the center and nature 'out there'—viewed by commoners at a safe distance with only the upper class given the right to take seats on stage and hence take part in the action—has given way. As has color in painting, space in sculpture,

rhythm in dance, the syllable in writing and sound in all its analysable qualities in music (timbre/frequency/source), an audience of one has become the primary unit in theater, subject to action on any and all sensory preceptions of sight, sound, taste, smell and touch. There is no longer distance between the audience and the action. The audience is, potentially, as full a participant as any initiate in a tribal ritual.

This may have some undesirable effects. On the physical level, certain risks are unavoidable. The artist of ceremony must take care of his audience the way a choreographer does with his dancers. But this may extend further. While there is a general analogy with tribal ritual, a distinction must be made in purpose. Tribal rituals are intended to achieve personality transformations. Physical mutilation symbolises the commitment of the individual to the group. The accompanying myths and rites serve to reinforce this commitment with a corresponding worldview. While the artist may operate with the conviction of a tribal elder, his purposes, his authority is not, should not be the same.

At present, dangers of this sort appear remote, at least on the American scene. A distrust of larger constructs is present on all sides. Rhythms sought on the personal level form the new constants. As Cage points out, there is no 'silence' that can be experienced. In a

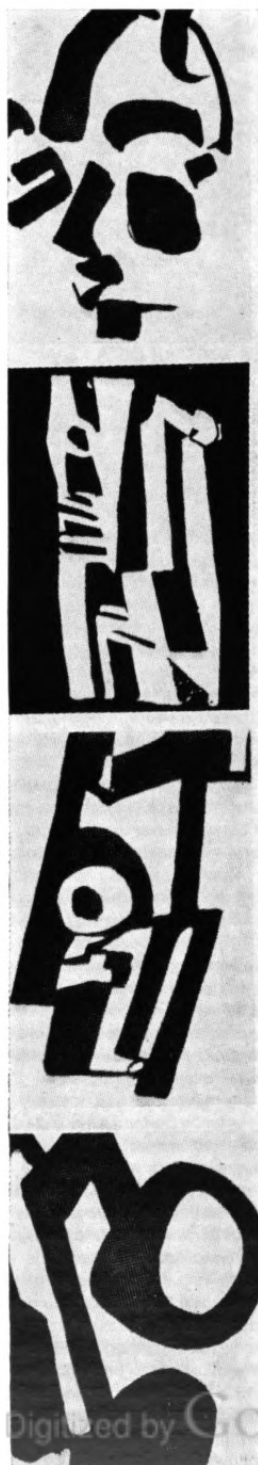
soundproofed room a man hears the sound of his own blood. Cunningham keys his dance to kinetic rhythms which are most natural to the movement to be executed, though these may vary for each individual dancer according to body structure. New groups led by younger dancers such as Yvonne Rainer scale down the artifice of a Cunningham, seeking inspiration from ordinary work/play activities. Destruction art, functionless machines, deliberately provocative or disgusting acts such as busting violins, butchering animals or making use of faeces and hair make somewhat grim fun of the business but these may be necessary steps in the process of disengaging old sets of neural motor drives in that most distinctive feature of man as animal—his brain.

It is something of a paradox that without the censoring apparatus of his brain, so liable to go haywire under conditions of stress, man would not experience the sublimities of excitations based on postponed or anticipated actions which are termed 'emotions'. A function of theater in Aristotelian terms was to provide a release or catharsis for the emotions. The disengagement which seems to be a quality of some of the theatrical experiments described will leave and does leave an unprepared audience dissatisfied. In a sense, these ventures presuppose that a dissociation has already taken place in the minds of the observers before the action begins. What may follow can

be taken as a simple or complex exploration of various dimensions of the body, mind and environment on a level of serene contemplation or, at least, sardonic detachment.

Given that release, this may lead to perceptions of new dimensions. Ted Enslin has pointed out to me that the basic rhythms of the body, the breath and pulse beats, are controlled at two separate points—by the sympathetic nerves of the spinal column and by a part of the medulla area of the brain called the vagus. Normally, while the brain is functional, the breath and pulse beats are discontinuous. At certain moments, however, the vagus may be cut off and the sympathetic nerves take over, setting up a unison of three pulse beats to one breath. This triple beat, known as the 'natural' rhythm, is the basis of the organum, that Medieval ecstasy of music which sustained the flight of the soul towards God. However, for some of us who are still earthbound and gregarious, the monotony in that may be too much.

Hans Richter, 'from Dada heads to abstraction', 1918.
Reproduced in Dada Anthology
No. 4, 1919



Step by step by Hans Richter

*An account of the transition from painting
to the first abstract film 1919 - 1921*

I came to film through painting. As a painter I have been conditioned to the value of plastic expression, its problems and its tradition. As an artist I have also been concerned with the aesthetics of art in general, the theories applied to the older arts. And most of all I have been concerned with the responsibility of the artist toward his individual inspiration and his artistic integrity. Prejudiced by and preoccupied with this inheritance, I found it rather difficult to apply the same standards to film, but I have tried for nearly fifty years, in my work, as a teacher and theoretically, to show that, though a new form of expression, film still belongs within the realm in which I grew up: the arts.

Influenced originally by Cubism and a search for structure, but not satisfied with what it offered, I found myself therefore between 1913 and 1918 increasingly faced with this conflict of spontaneous expression, to which I tend by nature, and objective understanding of some fundamental principles with which I could control the heaps of fragments which we inherited from the Cubists. More and more I lost interest in the subject, in any subject, and focused upon the interplay of positive-negative, in form and color, to build up my canvases.

One day in 1917 sitting with Arp in front of the Hotel Elite in Zürich, we observed how the trees in the Bahnhofstrasse had been cut back. 'You see,

I said to Arp, continuing a discussion on art, 'that is what I try to find, the real structure of things, the essential, the skeleton.' 'And I love the skin', he answered, caressing the air with both hands as if it were a woman's body. The more freedom I allowed myself, the more I allowed the unconscious to be governed by chance as in my Dada days, the more my reaction against it grew. What I tried to find was not chaos but its opposite, an order in which the human mind had its place but one in which it could flow *freely*. I had for some time run madly away from an 'order', a discipline; now I was just as passionately attracted to it.

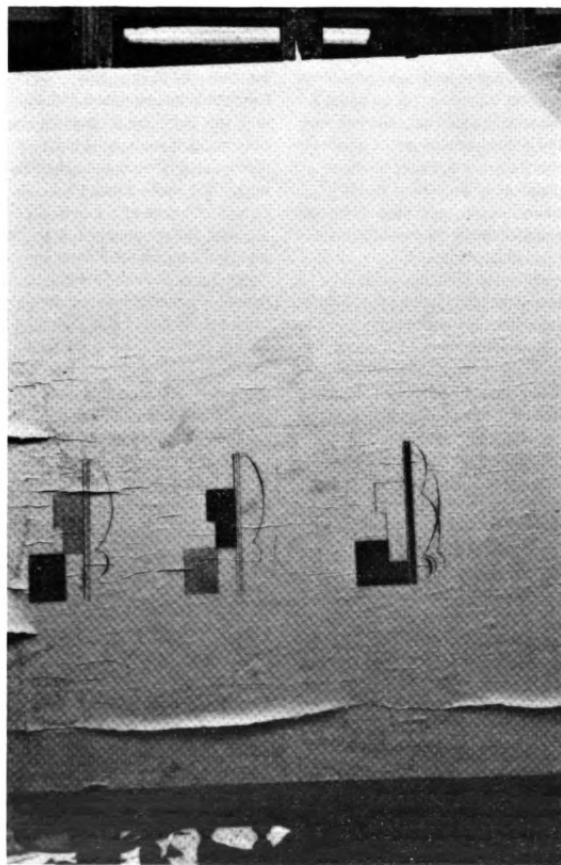
I experimented with a simple positive-negative relationship (*Dada*, 1918) of ink blots in the form of heads. These blots were articulated against the white ground of the paper so that, though black and white, they appeared as equal values. I was in a quandary and got my first advice and help from the Italian composer Ferruccio Busoni who lived in Zürich during the First World War. He was intrigued by my 'black and white obsession' as he called it, and suggested I study the implication of musical counterpoint as a technique and a philosophy, as demonstrated in the small preludes and fugues which Bach wrote for his wife Anna Magdalena. I did so, and that gave me indeed a better understanding of the interplay of forms and motifs. It allowed me also to discard objects (heads) altogether and to

articulate free abstract parts on a given plane, against and with each other. It became a kind of musical as well as a visual articulation.

In this situation and at this moment Tzara introduced me to the Swedish painter Viking Eggeling. Eggeling had succeeded in articulating a complete syntax of form relationships on the basis of the line, which he called *Generalbass der Malerei*. I was passionately impressed. We immediately became close friends, went to live on the estate of my parents and worked there for approximately the next three years. There, in 1919-1920, Eggeling finished his most important work: two sets of long scrolls, drawings on long strips of paper. On the basis of polar relationships, in the interplay of contrasts and analogies, his unlimited vocabulary developed: a vertical line was accentuated by a horizontal, a strong line contrasted with a weak one, a single line gained importance from many lines, and so on. I followed Eggeling's conclusions, though the line by itself meant no more to me than a border or division of planes. But this difference of viewpoint did not affect our creed that a precise polar interrelationship of contrasting elements remained the key for a new synthesis.

It was unavoidable that sooner or later these basic elements and relationships should form a kind of chain and so develop a continuity, not only as a relationship in space and on the surface, but also in time.

Hans Richter, part of the
'destroyed' scroll, Preludium,
1919. Courtesy of Yale
University Art Gallery



By studying this continuity Eggeling thought he had found the key to a 'universal language'.

When and how was the idea of using film as an extension of painting actually born? As an 'eye within', and involved as I was day by day in this process, I wish to contribute to the understanding of how it

occurred.

The drawing which Eggeling showed me at our first meeting became the 'theme' of his first scroll—*Horizontal-Vertical Mass*. Whether he already had in mind a 'continuity' when he showed me this drawing in 1918 and whether other drawings of that kind existed then which could make a

'continuity' I did and do not know. But when he accompanied me in April 1919 to my parents' farm (where he stayed with us, with his wife, until January 1922 when our property was sold), he continued day by day until the end of 1919 to make sketches and drawings on this same first theme. Some of these sketches were saved and are now at the Yale Art Gallery where I deposited all that I had kept, bought and collected of his work. Others are at the Basle Kunstmuseum. Most of his works were lost when the Nazis cleaned out my apartment during the week of the *Reichstagbrand* (1933) together with many notebooks and scrolls of Eggeling's and most of my own paintings, writings and books.

I do not believe that he thought of continuity before the end of 1919, not to speak of film. He continued experimenting on small special paper (that he always had with him in great quantities) for this *Horizontal-Vertical* theme. We discussed every evening the pros and cons of this or that formal relationship of what he called his 'instruments'. These every day exercises were, as I remember, the real key that opened the way to a 'continuity', to build from several drawings sequences that led us to try using long strips of paper at the end of 1919. Only then the idea of using film slowly occurred. Eggeling's first scroll was *Horizontal-Vertical Mass* (1919), followed immediately by *Diagonal Symphony* (1920) —mine *Preludium* (1919) followed by *Fugue* (1920).

It is without question that Eggeling was the leading spirit in all these undertakings and it was his suggestions that led the way, but there is no doubt that Eggeling, even at the beginning of 1919, did not know either consciously or subconsciously that he would want to make films from his drawings. There is one factor especially which sustains this assumption of mine and should prove that this whole development went step by step, and not as a sudden decision. Eggeling had one important theme or 'instrument' in his horizontal-vertical series of drawings which he called *Dehnung* (expansion, stretching). It consisted of several layers of wave-like forms. He suggested testing this instrument by painting it on a thin rubber sheet so that by stretching it might expand and contract. *Dehnung* thus became the first 'instrument' to test motion. We tried movement also then with other themes of his and mine, and had them pulled up and down and diagonally, as a kind of visual orchestra.

I do not remember whether that was before or after we had made our first scrolls, but it was just one of those steps by which the idea of the realisation of motion took first form.

As we were both influenced one way or another by music, musical terms and musical associations (compare Gauguin's 'orchestration') the idea of a visual orchestra did not necessarily arise out of that of continuity, more rather in relation to visual music. But

it became obvious that the scrolls *implied* movement and that movement meant ultimately film.

As to film, neither Eggeling nor I knew the first thing about it, and I am pretty sure that Eggeling never thought about film before he finished his first scroll. And as we did not know anything about film we had fantastic ideas about what a realisation on film would cost. Eggeling insisted that we collect *Gutachten*, that is papers by experts or better by famous people, because no film business man would help us otherwise. So we started to contact 'important people' like Albert Einstein, Professor Wätzold, Redslob—together about a dozen—but these people wanted to study these rather strange works before committing themselves. We had to leave the scrolls with them. As it would have taken months to collect committed letters from a dozen people we decided to produce copies of each of our scrolls, to show several at the same time.

In view of this ultimate film goal we called the scrolls then 'partiturs', 'scores', like music written for an orchestra. These 'partiturs' had for us at this moment more technical than art value per se. They were notes for a final realisation on film.

Later, after we had succeeded with our 'famous people collection', and got help from the biggest film company, from the animation department of UFA, we used the same scrolls for publicity purposes

and sent them to friends, critics, magazines and art organisations in France, Switzerland, Austria, Czechoslovakia etc. When Eggeling died in 1925 neither he nor I knew exactly any more where all these scrolls were.

It was by sheer luck that, after the invasion of the Nazis into my studio in 1933, some parts of his main work, the scrolls, were saved . . . and only because Eggeling as well as myself was forced by the above mentioned circumstances to make several copies.

I learned in 1929 or 1930 of a set of scrolls at the Austrian Werkbund, in the possession of one of its members, when I gave some lectures for the Werkbund in Vienna. These scrolls were saved from the Nazis at the last moment in 1938, and smuggled out of the country. There were also two fragments in the Gabrielson Collection in Göteborg, which I bought in 1963 through the Gallery Beyerle, Basle. Scrolls were also found in Prague, which I bought in 1935. Drawings were in different private collections. With the exception of the two scrolls in Basle and the sketches for *Diagonal Symphony*, everything is now deposited at the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, together with an extensive Eggeling archive of relevant letters, documents etc.

All the scrolls were on paper and very badly preserved. (They were little understood

and had no commercial value at the time.) When therefore the director of the Basle Museum, Dr George Schmidt, a former pupil of Eggeling at the Lyceum in Zuoz, wanted to hold an exhibition of all available Eggeling material in his museum in 1940, I had to have the scrolls repaired because they were in a state of deterioration which would have made them unfit for a museum showing (as are my own now at the Yale University Art Gallery, despite the fact that they have been protected there since 1949.)

With the help of Dr Schmidt I found a commercial artist who proved to be the right man. He repaired what he could and replaced the irreparable parts with new ones that he made (since paper can not be repaired like frescos or oil paintings, because the ground itself is destroyed). The restoration of the scrolls was well received and approved by Dr Schmidt, and one set of them was exhibited, together with many drawings, in 1940-41 at the Basle Museum. The Museum bought all the exhibits through the art patron Mrs Sacher. The second set of scrolls was taken by myself, with the help of Dr Schmidt, in the difficult year of 1940, through France, Spain and Portugal to the United States.

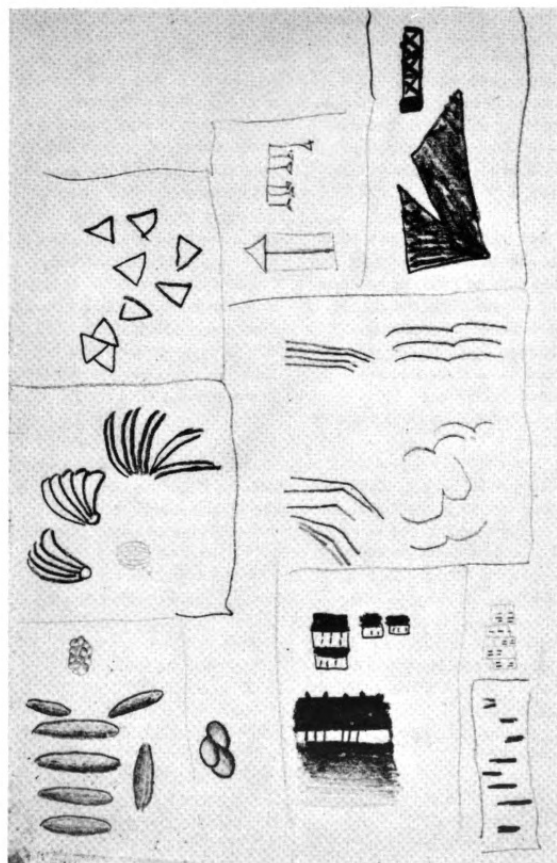
The first article published about the scrolls was conceived as a reaction to our pamphlet *Universelle Sprache* of 1920. This article was written by Adolphe Behne in that same year, and outlined the cooperative enterprise of

our work, and its implications. We had sent samples from our edition (of one hundred copies) of this pamphlet to critics, friends and magazines. It was printed in Forst i/L, but no copy is extant—though Tzara had one when I met him in 1952. There are parts of the text of this pamphlet however published in *MA* 1921, No. 9, in an article by Eggeling accompanied by his and my scrolls. His text (with the exception of the first and last paragraphs, and the title), corresponds, so far as I can remember, with the text of the above mentioned pamphlet. The first and last paragraphs seem to have been added for this special *MA* occasion.

Behne's article was obviously read by Theo van Doesburg who came the same year in December 1920 to visit us for three weeks in Klein Koelzig, where Eggeling and I lived and worked. Doesburg reported on his visit in the May 1921 (no. 5) issue of his magazine *De Stijl* (published in Holland). In the same year another article appeared in a Berlin magazine *Wjtsch* (Object); and there were probably others. In most of these articles Eggeling's and my scroll drawings were reproduced together.

From these publications it is obvious that Eggeling considered (as I did) that his scrolls were up to that time his most important work, because he chose only photos of the scrolls for publication, and nothing of his 'Elementary Tablets' which contained his philosophy in essence. It was

Viking Eggeling, material for
'orchestration of the line' —
partly abstraction from nature



these tablets, and the nature studies from which the tablets were derived, that I saw first after our meeting in Zürich in 1918. The tablets are the very nuclei of his life work, the 'orchestration of the line'. They were formed with that stunning lucidity and penetrating sharpness which his steel blue eyes promised. In those dynamic interrelationships of

'contrasts', straight against round, horizontal against vertical, organic against inorganic . . . and their connecting 'analogies', a new system of observation and thought was clearly defined. It was a new approach to art which I tried to define, in my magazine G in 1925, when I wrote: 'He was a new type of artist. He looked less for

1: Eggeling had a Giorgione-school painting which he had given as surety for a 10,000 Mark loan from a neighbour of ours, the director of the Bank in Forst i/L. After our estate was sold, just when inflation had set in in earnest, in 1922, the man wanted his money back. So my father sold the

painting for the stated amount; but Eggeling, without money like myself (and like my parents also, finally, because of the inflation) demanded one half of the sum to be paid back to him, arguing that I had spent half of the money. When my father objected, with the plea that Eggeling and his

individual expression than for the elements of expression. He believed deeply in a new and universal mission for art and had the courage to dedicate his life to it.' In more than thirty articles over the last forty years I have given testimony to my admiration for these achievements and for Eggeling as a person.

The original basis of our spontaneous friendship was the fact that I was practically the only person who acknowledged passionately and immediately the fundamental importance of his achievements. There is a reason for that, as I have already said. I had tried before I met Eggeling to find a way to a syntax with which to administer the overwhelming richness and freedom of the abstract form cosmos. Our identity of purpose, our search for a more than personal or decorative use of this new heritage, the abstract form, made us friends and held us together. This bond broke during the inflation in Germany for exterior and rather material reasons, for a short time, about a year.¹ But during this year the great differences in our personalities came to the fore and took form in our relationship as in our work. We remained friends but did not work together any more: because Eggeling was scientific and methodical, and I was spontaneous and impetuous. Though we both followed the same path the results of our labours proved to be totally different, as can be seen by comparing Eggeling's and my first films: Ivor Montagu

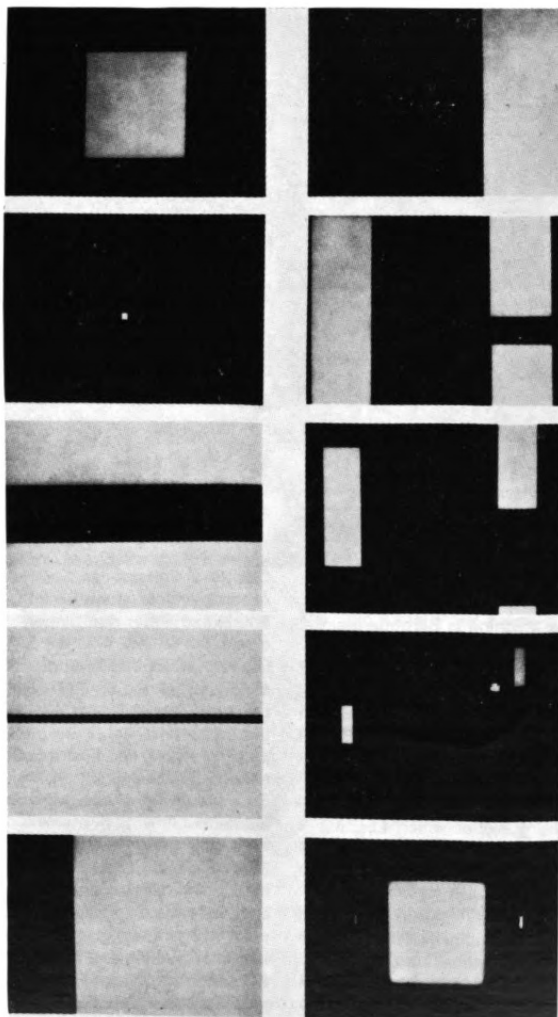
wrote at that time in *Close Up*: 'Eggeling used the canvas as a blackboard, Richter opened a window into space'.

The fact that Eggeling's work consists almost exclusively of drawings is a result of his life and experience. He became an art teacher at the Lyceum in Zuoz, in Switzerland. I suppose his being a teacher had a great formative influence. He had to get things absolutely clear in his mind in order to make them clear to students: and since they had to learn to draw he concentrated on the line as the true 'element' of articulation. For him a point was always the beginning of a line. He studied the line. The composition of lines remained fundamental, the basis of his general theory, of his 'orchestration of the line'. I was less exclusively concerned with the line. I was more a painter, dealing with surfaces and planes, as the Cubists did: and my first film, *Rhythmus 21*, of 1921, shows this. Much as I was influenced by Eggeling over the following years (as I had been before by the Cubists), a point for me was always the beginning of a plane.

Eggeling's *Diagonal Symphony*, made after his second set of scrolls in 1920, was shown in Berlin for the first time in November 1923. Since he knew nothing about film, *Diagonal Symphony* was produced with the technical help of the film director Winfried Basse and Eggeling's girlfriend of the time Erna Niemeyer. They separated shortly after the film was finished in 1924 before

wife had lived for nearly three years with us at his expense, I could not take Eggeling's side, and we split. But a year later when we met accidentally in the street, we embraced each other and remained friends till his death.

Hans Richter, from film
Rhythmus 21, 1921



Eggeling could start a new film or improve on his first. It was on the advice and with the help of Walther Ruttmann that together they reedited a short version of *Diagonal Symphony*

'for distribution in theatres'. This version was taken by Frederick Kiesler to the United States, where he showed it at the theatre exhibition put on by *The Little Review* in 1926.

At about the same time that we started on our film venture Walther Ruttmann, an abstract painter from Munich, made several abstract films. They were the first abstract films to be shown in Berlin, in 1921, at the Marmorpalast on Ku'damm. The films of the three of us were of very different character. Ruttmann used mostly three-dimensional plasticine forms put on a small rack. By turning this rack and filming it turning he achieved a kind of free movement in space. Whereas Eggeling and I used film in the first place to give our paintings and drawings motion, a problem that could not be solved on canvas, Ruttmann from the very start embraced film for its own sake. While Eggeling and I remained painters, and I am still a painter today, Ruttmann put all his eggs in the film basket and became from the very moment of his first film a 'film professional'—he remained so until his death in 1945.

Eggeling died at the Steglitz hospital in Berlin on May 19th 1925. Fritz Schupp, his nephew, his last girlfriend the dancer Inge and I were at his death bed. At his funeral were present twenty to thirty artists who had known and respected Eggeling during his lifetime, and three of his girlfriends. I spoke at his grave, and after me, Raoul Hausmann. His memory is still alive today among us.

I had recognised the scroll, as Eggeling had, to be an original art form: as a means of arresting (stopping) time but

also (and equally) of experiencing continuity, that is the flow of time. That is where the difference from film lies: in film, time is experienced exclusively as 'continuity equals flow of time'.

I continued to develop the scroll for the next forty years, that is until today, as an 'orchestration of time' (and space): parallel to, but distinct from film, in which I was interested mainly as an extension and intensification of visual problems. (That might be one reason why professional film critics show only a limited understanding of my work as a film maker.)

On the other hand the picture-scroll is essentially different from the big frescos or outsized paintings which are made nowadays. Those do not take account of the time element but are more or less enlargements of the easel painting (which you might see as *one* visual experience, from further away). I have tried, even in my smaller scrolls (15 to 20 inches) to articulate the time element as well as the instantaneous view; it is the meaning of all my scrolls (of which I have made more than fifty) to do just that. This purpose—of giving the visual arts a further dimension—explains also my preoccupation with film.

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Even Wagner with his *Gesamtkunstwerk* did not claim to have achieved totality of the theatre. His work was based on ideological premises which excluded certain means of effect and gave supremacy to others. Ballet, virtuoso singing and spoken dialogue were taboo in Wagner's Music-Drama; it was hardly permissible to speak of them, let alone accept them as artistic means of equal status. Nonetheless there existed in Wagner's vision a totalitarian undercurrent which was well understood by fascist ideologists and finally—this time with the full approval of communist ideologists of the Stalin school—transferred to the technique of state control.

In the domain of aesthetics the concept of totality overlaps with the postulate of perfection. Complete mastery of a subject, of a technique, or of a complex of means of producing an effect presupposes the inclusion of all elements. In this sense Stanislavsky's dream of the totally trained stage artist who is actor, singer, pantomimist and dancer in one person anticipated within its naturalist limitations the modern Total Theatre quite as much as Tairoff's 'expressive comedianship' or Meyerhold's 'Biomechanics'. Their dramaturgic ideas grew up on the same Russian soil as Kandinsky's stage experiments. Although as a young man Kandinsky was influenced by Wagner he worked along far more radical lines than the anti-Wagnerians Stanislavsky, Tairoff and Meyerhold.

But the step to the modern Total Theatre could not be taken because two significant innovations were still lacking, namely the replacement of the picture-frame stage by the arena-theatre or 'Raumbühne' (so termed by Frederick Kiesler in Vienna in 1924), and the participation of the audience. Both these factors had always been known in the circus. Some of the most exciting effects are produced when an acrobat or athlete is interrupted during his act by a spectator who says that he is prepared to do everything much better, enters the arena and proves himself the real and superior performer. The simple trick that fascinated us as children is the same bridging of two otherwise separated worlds as the entry of actors from the auditorium in Asian theatre or the Deus ex Machina in Baroque theatre. In opera the orchestra can also be included in the magic circle of effects. This need not take the form of the Wagnerian emphasis on the psychological implications of the leitmotiv but can be achieved by much simpler means, for instance the gun-shot which Lortzing uses in the Overture to *Wildschütz* to interrelate music and action.

When Kandinsky wrote his stage composition *Der gelbe Klang* in Murnau in 1909 he envisaged a kind of modern art-form independent of Wagnerian influence. The experiment was published in the *Blauer Reiter* together with an essay in the form of a commentary entitled *On Stage Composition*. Kandinsky

thought that sound colour and words were different as artistic means but that the final aim of the human soul would dissolve the external differences and expose the inner identity. Alexander Scriabin is mentioned as an example of an artist who replaces the means of one art with the identical means of another. Kandinsky spoke of three elements employed: the musical tone and its movement; the somatic-psychic sound and its movement through persons and objects; the colour-tone and its movement as a special possibility for the stage.

The use of the film in musico-dramatic actions is an achievement of the twenties. In 1927/28 Darius Milhaud composed music to Paul Claudel's *Christopher Colomb*. At the première at the Berlin Staatsoper Unter den Linden on the 5th of May 1930 the scene in which the flight of a dove is projected on a screen created a sensation. At about the same time Alban Berg incorporated a film scene into his libretto *Lulu* as a dramatically integrated element.

Since the early fifties the new media of musique concrète and electronic music have been used in operatic forms. In 1953 in Donaueschingen Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry produced their *Orphée 53* which is syncretistically conceived and thus anticipates Total Theatre. In the meantime, on the theatre stage the 'Absurd Theatre' of Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco had taken up Dadaist

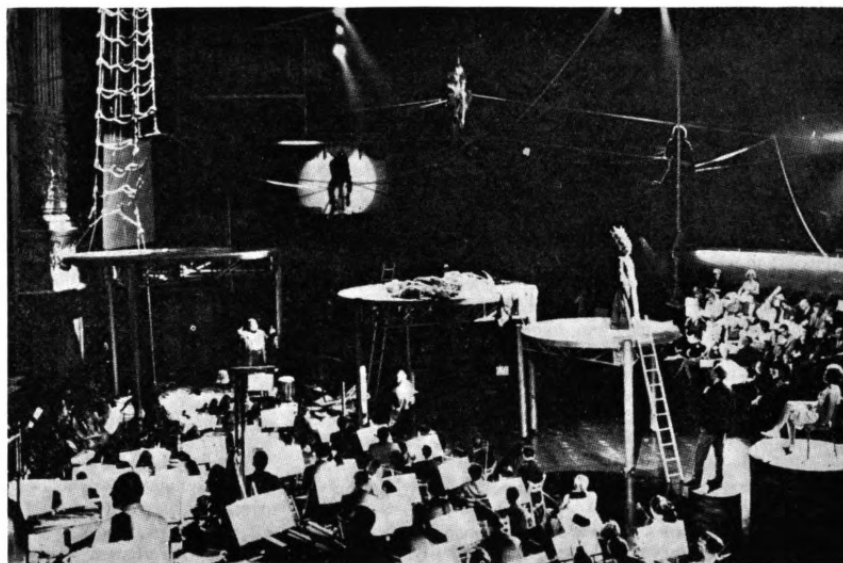
suggestions which had already in 1937 yielded results in the field of stage and musical production in *Four Saints in Three Acts* of Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson.

In his *Theater Piece 1960* John Cage, in a purely experimental manner, took all these previous attempts as his point of departure. This work was first performed in New York's 'Circle on the Square' with the dancers Merce Cunningham and Carolyn Brown, the pianist David Tudor and the contralto Arline Carmen. The futuristic aesthetics of simultaneity (i.e. of the accidental coincidence of actions taking place on several levels) is here combined with an organised clownery in the style of the Zürich 'Cabaret Voltaire' of 1916. A year later Karlheinz Stockhausen constructed his *Originale* on the same principles.

The earliest attempt at an artistically moulded realisation of Total Theatre was presented during the 1963 Venice Biennale at the Teatro Fenice. This was a performance of Luciano Berio's *Esposizione* in the dramatic interpretation of the 'Dancer's Workshop of San Francisco' under the artistic direction of Ann Halprin. Since 1951 this American troupe has developed new possibilities of stage technique. Its members are 'total' actors in Stanislavsky's sense of the word: dancers, acrobats, actors and singers. The performance was the expression of an aesthetic sur-

Scene from the Amsterdam production of Peter Schat's *Labyrinth*

M. Austria



naturalism. All visible, audible and movable elements of the theatre are here mobilised; the auditorium is part of the scene of action. Mysterious and disquieting proceedings are enacted on the stage, lights flash in the auditorium, peals of laughter are heard and boxes are lit up with beams of light. The prompt-box and the orchestra pit are also brought into the action. Through the voice of Cathy Berberian, speaking, singing, whistling, laughing and hissing become new and virtuoso artistic techniques such as may have been in Schönberg's mind when he composed *Pierrot Lunaire* in 1912.

Cage's aesthetic approach and post-Dadaist simultaneous montage are also evident in

Mauricio Kagel's *Sur scène*, a 'chamber-music theatre piece' of 1960. In this work the digressions of a professor of music are combined with vocal and instrumental interjections, pantomime scenes and 'Happenings' in which mime is included among the tricks of pop-art. This is a cabaret of gags with a basically conventional staging which in its best moments reaches the level of the absurd films of the Marx Brothers.

A radically opposed aesthetic concept is embodied in Luigi Nono's *Intolleranza*, composed in the same year 1960. Nono's political ideas about social reform project the gestures of rebellion into a dramatic presentation of unchained violence. The artistic aim is

Utopia, but unlike the Soviet theatre of social realism the aggregate of new artistic means is here employed which utilises and combines bourgeois theatre as an end in itself. Nono dedicated *Intolleranza*, a loosely dramatised protest against the police state and inhumanity, to Arnold Schönberg, a man who gave priority to cognizance over opinion. This is intended to show that the purpose of the work is fulfilled on the higher plane of sound and the sung word. The music is scored for a complicated apparatus of performing groups and written in a highly complex tonal language. The forces employed consist of an orchestra of eighty players, a large mixed chorus, five solo singers and several speakers.

Choral singing pre-recorded on tape is also transmitted into the auditorium on several channels. An impression is thus created of different sonorous masses heard in alternation such as Schönberg conjured up in 1917 in *Jakobsleiter* and later Edgar Varèse in *Deserts*. In respect of his political engagement Giacomo Manzoni, in his anti-fascist opera *Atomtod*, comes near to Nono's work. Manzoni's opera begins when the lights in the auditorium are still on, when the spectators are still looking for their seats. While the lights are dimming film strips are projected onto four squares on the curtain and electronic sounds are emitted from loudspeakers. All musical and dramatic media are combined and integrated into the action.

In 1965, the year in which *Atomtod* had its première, Bernd Aloys Zimmerman's *Soldaten*, which also aspires towards Total Theatre, was produced in Cologne. Henri Pousseur and Michel Butor had written an opera *Votre Faust* based on the 'Raumbühne' conception and on improvisation. In the Stockholm 'arena theatre' in 1964 a performance took place of a spatially conceived theatre piece, *The Dream of Therese* by Lars J. Werle, in which the audience and orchestral players were placed around a central podium. The *Aventures* of György Ligeti is also based on experimental combinations which encroach upon the tradition of the picture-frame theatre. Boris Blacher's

Zwischentäler bei einer No:landung and Roman Haubenstock-Ramati's *Amerika* resemble these experiments from the point of view of their aesthetics and techniques, without however reaching the goal of totality.

In 1963 the Dutch composer Peter Schat (born 1935), in collaboration with the librettist Lodewijk de Boer and several other young artists, completed his *Labyrinth*, an important contribution to Total Theatre. He struggled for two years to have this work performed at the Holland Festival; the première finally took place in June 1966. The critic Reinbert de Leeuw wrote about the aesthetic basis of *Labyrinth* in the periodical *Delta* (summer issue 1966): 'In *Labyrinth* the multiplicity of dimensions of Total Theatre is achieved in that the various components are handled as independent entities. Each 'level' of the work—music, acting, film, dance and staging—develops in its own way . . . unlike Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk, for example, and other traditional forms of opera in which the 'levels' serve to illustrate or symbolise the content or action, the component elements of *Labyrinth* at the most give the impression of being mutual commentaries. They are intended to disperse, not to relate. Normal connected actions, 'logical' procedures, 'meaningful' ballet, 'decorative' settings, programme music or illustrative music therefore have no place here.'

The performance provided

some practical demonstration of such a theory. The Théâtre Carré, the Amsterdam 'Circus of the Belle Epoque', was filled with a very mixed public; already when the spectators entered the auditorium the murmur of their voices mingled with sounds of whispering from loudspeakers.

In the auditorium, ropes, ladders and flexible steel poles were hung over the arena. A large orchestra was placed on the left, a small chorus on the right, and between these stood three enormous tables with metal legs, the largest as high as a house. By the wall stood two motionless ballerinas in a caryatid-like posture wearing grey tights. They then began to crawl like large caterpillars along the narrow balustrade of the dress circle.

In the arena there was a commotion; musicians took up their instruments. Then appeared the corpulent figure of the conductor Bruno Maderna who, beating time, signalling entries and sometimes playing a small drum, was altogether the life and soul of the farcical proceedings.

The action, which lasts for more than three hours, takes place on several levels. The principal action is modelled on the life of Marilyn Monroe. The main character is Beauty Kitt who has left the ex-boxer and drunkard Vulcan Fiber to find the greatest role of her life with the intellectual Ramadhu. Next to her, the embodiment of the banal-beautiful sex-woman,

stand her 'Image' Noéma and her naked body which is shown on a film simultaneously projected on two screens.

The quarrels between Beauty and Vulcan are enacted in Strindbergian scenes while the actors perform breath-taking climbing antics up and down the tables and from one table to another. There is a continuous commotion in the arena. The ballerinas ride on the shoulders of their partners and suddenly put on metal cylinder-shaped costumes resembling robots of a mechanised age. An old man wanders about aimlessly looking for something. A restless photographer places himself between Beauty and her men. An old woman appears intermittently, wearing a different costume each time; at the end she wears the tiara of a pope. In the background stands a man-size mask of a bird of paradise which in a separate and independent scene is sometimes identified with Noéma.

In addition to realistic there are also absurd scenes. All the main characters suddenly fall to the ground as if they were dead, or the trio of solo singers wanders back and forth between the podium and the back of the stage. After the interval, acrobats and dancers climb up and down the ropes.

The film element comes into its own during the spoken monologues of Ramadhu. The camera shows naked skin and curves that can with difficulty be recognised as arms, legs or

knee-joints. But the nudity, even when the camera wanders from the breast and navel to the privy parts, remains anonymous, cold, without eros. Amusement and disgust are produced by showing an insect crawling over the body.

The music is the most convincing element in the work. Schat retains traces of serial technique, leaves no room to chance, allows the solo instruments their due, and provides the singers with a variety of soloistic and concerted possibilities that ranges from normal singing to organised speaking. The orchestra dispenses with violins but contains a large array of bass-pitched instruments and percussion; the soloists also improvise. In addition to the live score there is an electronic one produced by the manipulation of a contralto voice.

According to the composer's intention, *Labyrinth* is an instrument to disquiet the listener and spectator. Works of art of this nature depend for their effect on the excitation caused by the unexpected. Although explained in detail in the programme, the action remains intentionally obscure. What the authors have here achieved is to gather together for the first time the various elements of Total Theatre and to make out of them a stage representation filling a whole evening. *Labyrinth* is therefore an important landmark in the most recent developments of modern theatre.

Great Little Magazines

No. 8: 'Kulchur'

*Index compiled by Beverly Cromwell
Series edited by Mike Weaver,
37 West Garth Road,
Exeter, Devon, England*

Cover of Kulchur No. 17, Die by Robert Indiana (half of diptych Eat-Die), black on white, 5½" x 8½". By courtesy of the Stable Gallery, N.Y.



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'Kulchur': a note by Lita Hornick

Kulchur was founded by Marc Schleifer in 1960, who published and edited the first two issues. Mr Schleifer also edited Kulchur 3 under the ownership of Lita Hornick, who became the publisher beginning with that issue.

Number 4 was edited by Gilbert Sorrentino, number 5 by Joel Oppenheimer and number 6 by Lita Hornick. Beginning with issue number 7, an editorial board was formed consisting of LeRoi Jones, Frank O'Hara, Gilbert Sorrentino, Joe LeSueur, Bill Berkson and Lita Hornick. The editorial policy was to foster a magazine of prose comment in the fields of contemporary literature, art, jazz, film, theatre and pop culture in a manner quite different from that of academic criticism. Controversy was encouraged. Poetry and fiction were admitted only occasionally, though Kulchur 9 was a special issue devoted to plays.

The editorial board formed with issue number 7 remained active through issue number 12, and then began to dissolve as other activities made increasing demands on the poets' time. Lita Hornick became sole editor beginning with number 14, with others serving as contributing editors. The editorial policy remained the same as formerly, though in the last issues of the magazine more poetry and fiction were admitted.

Kulchur continued to be published through twenty issues, always endeavouring to cover the contemporary scene in as lively and unbiased a way possible. In December of 1965 the magazine was terminated, and the editor/publisher turned her resources to the publication of Kulchur Press books, now going into the sixth number of the series.

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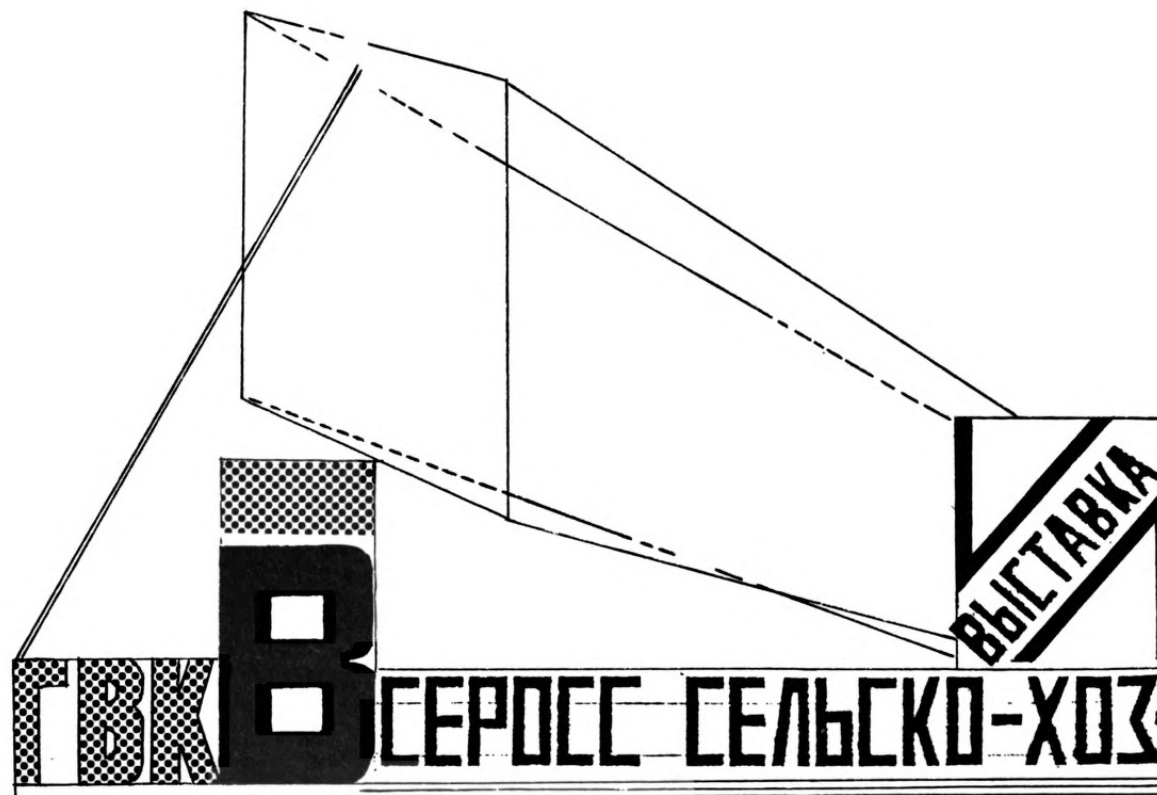
Kulchur, as the spelling of its name implies, was not a magazine of conventional bounds. Its contributors approach their world, largely that of New York in the 1960s, with a crude and spontaneous energy which defies the American reader on the most intimate of ground — that of 'his own backyard'. The concern is with intellectual honesty and free expression. Joseph LeSueur writes of American drama in number 9: '... as long as an 'opening-up' exists, a climate which either occasions or permits new forms, the non-commercial theatre is still very much alive.' *Kulchur* provided an outlet for this 'opening-up' of creative consciousness in many fields. It also provided an opportunity for the cross-flow of ideas: such situations as an exchange between Robert Creeley and Jerome Rothenberg, Edward Dorn writing on Charles Olson, Louis Zukofsky on Ezra Pound, and letters from William Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg. The concept of *Kulchur* is both enthusiastic and refreshing, even though at times almost too self-conscious and naive. Joel Oppenheimer, the Guest Editor of number 5, sums up a lot of the magazine's ethos: 'it's a loaded issue, of course, why else go at it?' This notion that action is only valuable when concerned with the controversial and the provocative seems to have been the motivation behind the selective principle of its editors. The range of subject matter is one of the most important characteristics of *Kulchur*. An American Dictionary defines 'culture' in

sociological terms as 'the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings'. Not only does one find literary concerns such as the *Tribute to Louis Zukofsky* (number 14) and the special play issue (number 9), but also a civil rights forum (number 12), and issues dedicated to Franz Kline (number 7) and the N.Y.C. Ballet Company (number 10). The best possible means of demonstrating this *Weliansicht* is to quote from the enthusiastic editorial of number 1: 'Also contemplated—analysis of: The Three Stooges, Grants (of Times Square), the etymology of hipster language, the lure of Rikers, Wayne Shorter, the Marx Brothers, 'The Shadow', phonetization, Ray Charles, Wilhelm Reich/ the sexual revolution and Orgone research, experimental film, after Birdland, the new poetry, Marijuana and dictatorship, the little magazines, puberty rites, and (this is from Olson) "'reviews of the intellectual odor of our time"'.' These things were not all accomplished, of course, but the desire to encompass, without artificiality or repression, all the 'ways of living' which they express points to the essence of *Kulchur* and its value as a touchstone of American sensibility.

Beverly Cromwell

Structuralism & Literary Criticism by Gerard Genette: **The Aesthetic of Ian Hamilton Finlay** by Simon Cutts:
Poems by Jiri Valoch & R. C. Kenedy: **Art in Crisis** by Charles Biederman: **Skullshapes** by Charles Tomlinson:
Introduction to Mayakovsky's '**LEF**' by Richard Sherwood & articles from '**LEF**' by Brik, Arvatov, Mayakovsky

From 'LEF': project for 'ciné-car' by Alexandr Rodchenko



The annual rate for a subscription to *Form* is £1, or \$5.00 in the U.S.A. This covers four issues, post free. Please send orders to Mike Weaver at Queen's Building, University of Exeter, Exeter, England EX4 4QH, stating with which number issue you wish the subscription to start. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to 'Form magazine'.

Copies of *Form* 4 and 5 (3/6, USA \$1) and *Form* 6, 7, 8 and 9 (5/6, USA \$1) are still available post free from Queen's Building, University of Exeter, England EX4 4QH. Nos. 2 to 8 are also obtainable in the USA from Wittenborn and Co., 1018 Madison Avenue, New York, again at \$1 per copy. The contents of back numbers are, briefly, as follows. No. 4: Eugen Gomringer on concrete poetry, the first in a Black Mountain College series including Albers' account of his courses at Ulm and a critique of Albers' 'Graphic Tectonics'. Lev Nusberg on Russian 'Kinetism', two essays by Charles Biederman. No. 5: Hans Jaffé on 'De Stijl and Architecture', features on Bernard Lassus and Raoul Hausmann, in the BMC series John A. Rice, George Zabriskie and designs for buildings by Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer. No. 6: Russian unofficial art, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, in the BMC series John Evarts and Jean Charlot. No. 7: Kinetic art in Czechoslovakia. 'Cinema and Semiology' by Peter Wollen, new American photography, Abraham Moles on Vasarely. No. 8: 'Russian Exhibitions, 1904 to 1922', in the BMC series Xanti Schawinsky's 'Spectodrama', and a feature on Pierre Albert-Birot with Barbara Wright's translations from 'Grabinoulor'. No. 9: Hans Richter, writing on his own films, and on Marcel Duchamp, Joost Baljeu and Maurice Agis and Peter Jones on Theo van Doesburg and Neoplasticism, and H. H. Stuckenschmidt on 'Total Theatre'.

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Editorial

Change of address

From this issue subscriptions and postal sales are to be handled by Mike Weaver at Queen's Building, University of Exeter, Exeter, England EX4 4QH. The *Form* editorial address remains 85 Norwich Street, Cambridge, England.

LEF

We are pleased to be able to publish in this issue Richard Sherwood's translations from issue No. 1 of Mayakovsky's important and influential Futurist/Constructivist/Productivist journal 'LEF', with an introduction to the magazine, its contributors and history. In *Form* 11 we shall publish an author index to 'LEF', with bibliographical details, and a further series of translations from later issues, including 'Declaration of the Constructivists', accounts of Constructivist work by Zelinsky, Brik and Stepanova, and typography, textile design and clothing design by Rodchenko, Stepanova and Popova.

Charles Biederman

Our publication of Charles Biederman's essay 'Art in Crisis' coincides with his current exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, the most extensive presentation of his work anywhere in the world so far, and including many Constructivist works never previously exhibited. The exhibition, which comprises paintings, drawings and collages as well as the reliefs, is open until October 23rd.

Ian Hamilton Finlay

In ordinary circumstances we would be delighted to announce the re-edition of Ian Hamilton Finlay's *The Dancers Inherit the Party* (see Simon Cutts' article on p.12) by Fulcrum Press. However the way in which this re-edition has been managed, entirely at variance with the wishes of the author, can only cause concern. Apart from making errors in the layout and spacing of the poems, which the author was given no opportunity of remedying, the publisher has seen fit to announce the work as a 'First edition 1969'. This piece of information, which is at the very least disingenuous, can hardly be atoned for by the fact that the dust jacket of the hardback edition refers to a 'mimeographed pamphlet' which originally contained 'some' of the poems: the uninformed reader surely has a right to know that 'some' means 41 out of 49. It may be added that the dust jacket comprises, besides this inadequate information and a tendentious comment on the author, an illustrated front cover of sculpture by Giacometti. Anyone who is acquainted with Ian Hamilton Finlay's work and views should be able to judge that such a conjunction is as inappropriate as it is contrary to the author's wishes.

Translated from *Figures*, Editions du Seuil (collection *Tel Quel*), Paris 1966, by David MacDuff

1

In a nowadays classical chapter of *The Savage Mind*, Claude Lévi-Strauss characterises mythic thought as 'a sort of intellectual 'bricolage' '. The characteristic of 'bricolage' is to pursue its activity with sets of tools which, unlike those of the engineer, for example, have not been fashioned with that activity in mind. The law of 'bricolage' is 'always to make do with the means at hand', and to clothe in a new structure the disaffected residues of old structures, sparing an expressly designed construction at the price of a double operation involving analysis (the extraction of diverse elements from ready-made ensembles) and synthesis (the organisation of these heterogeneous elements in a new ensemble where, in the most extreme cases, none of the re-employed elements will perform its original function). It must be remembered that this typically 'structuralist' operation, which compensates for a certain productive deficiency by an extreme ingenuity as regards the distribution of the remains, is discovered by the ethnologist studying 'primitive' civilisations, at the level of mythological invention. But there is another intellectual activity, peculiar to the most 'highly-evolved' cultures, to which this analysis might be applied almost word for word: I mean criticism, and more particularly literary criticism, which is formally distinct from other kinds of criticism in that it makes use of the same

material (writing) as the works it deals with: art and music criticism are obviously not expressed in sound and colour, but literary criticism speaks the language of its object; it is a meta-language, a 'discourse about a discourse': it may then be meta-literary, i.e. 'a literature of which literature itself is the prescribed object'.

Indeed, if we single out the two most visible functions of critical activity, namely the 'critical' function, in the original sense of the term, which consists in the assessment and appreciation of recent works with a view to explaining the choice of the reading public (a function related to the institution of journalism), and the 'scientific' function (essentially related to the institution of the university), consisting in a positive study, the only aim of which is knowledge, of the conditions in which literary works exist (the materiality of the text, sources, psychological and historical genesis, etc.)—there obviously remains a third type, one which is truly literary. Books of criticism like *Port Royal* or *L'Espace littéraire* are, among other things, books, and their authors are, in their own way, and at least to a certain degree, what Roland Barthes calls *authors* (*écrivains*), as opposed to mere writers (*écrivains*), that is to say, the authors of a message which has a partial tendency to resolve itself into a spectacle. This 'deception' of meaning which fixes itself and constitutes an object of aesthetic consumption, is without question the movement

(or rather the 'halt') which constitutes all literature. The literary object exists only through this movement; on the other hand, it is entirely dependent on it, and a text may or may not be literary, according to whether it is seen (more) as a spectacle or (more) as a message: literary history is made up of these comings and goings and fluctuations. This is to say that, properly speaking, there is no such thing as a literary object, but only a *literary function* which may invest or leave any object of writing. The partial, unstable, ambiguous literariness of criticism is not then peculiar to it alone: what distinguishes it from other literary 'genres' is its *secondary* character, and it is here that Lévi-Strauss's remarks about 'bricolage' find a possibly unforeseen application.

The instrumental universe of the 'bricoleur', says Lévi-Strauss, is a closed one. The repertoire of the 'bricoleur', however extensive, 'remains limited'. This limitation distinguishes the 'bricoleur' from the engineer, who can, in principle at least, obtain at any given moment the instrument specially suited to a technical requirement. The engineer 'interrogates the universe, while the 'bricoleur' has recourse to a collection of remnants of human fabrications, i.e. to a sub-ensemble of the culture'. It is enough to replace in this last phrase the words 'engineer' and 'bricoleur' by *novelist* (for example) and *critic* respectively, in order to define

the literary status of criticism. The materials of the critical task are in fact these 'remnants of human fabrications' which are works reduced to themes, motifs, obsessive metaphors, quotations, and card-references. The initial work is a structure, like the primary structures which the 'bricoleur' dismantles in order to extract from them the elements which are useful for all purposes; the critic, too, dismantles a structure into elements: one element to each card, and the motto of the 'bricoleur'—'that may always come in handy'—is the very postulate which inspires the critic in the manufacture of his card-index material or ideal. A new structure is then elaborated by 'fitting together these remains'. 'Critical thought', we may say, paraphrasing Lévi-Strauss, 'erects structured ensembles by means of a structured ensemble which is the *work*; but it is not at the level of the structure that it takes possession of the work; it builds its ideological palaces from the rubble of a former *literary* discourse.'

The distinction between the critic and the author may be seen not only in the secondary and limited character of critical material (literature) as opposed to the limitless and primary character (the universe) of poetic or prose-narrative material: this somewhat quantitative inferiority, which is related to the fact that the critic always comes after the author, and has at his disposal only those materials which have been

1. Roland Barthes, *Essais Critiques*, p.255
 2. Valéry, 'Albert Thibaudet', NRF, July 1936, p.6

3. B. Tomashevsky, 'La nouvelle école d'histoire littéraire en Russie', *Revue des Etudes slaves*, 1928, p.231

4. 'The object of literary studies is not literature as a whole, but the literariness ('literatnost') of literature, i.e. that which makes a work a literary work.' This sentence, written by Jakobson in 1921, was one of the watchwords of Russian formalism.

5. 'In mythology as in linguistics formal analysis immediately raises the question of meaning.' Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale*, p.266
 6. cf. Victor Erlich, Russian Formalism, Mouton, The Hague, 1955, pp.188-189
 7. Troubetskoy, *Principes de Phonologie*, Payot 1949, pp.5-6

imposed by the previous choice of the author, is perhaps aggravated, perhaps compensated for, by another difference: 'The author operates by means of concepts, the critic by means of signs. On the axis of the opposition between nature and culture, the ensembles they use are imperceptibly put out of alignment with one another. In fact, one of the ways in which the sign is opposed to the concept is related to the fact that the concept is integrally transparent to reality, whereas the sign accepts and even demands that a certain opaqueness of humanity should be incorporated into reality.' If the author interrogates the universe, the critic interrogates literature, i.e. a universe of signs. But that which is a sign for the author (his work) becomes meaning for the critic (since it is the object of a critical discourse) and, on the other hand, that which is meaning for the author (his vision of the world) becomes a sign for the critic as a certain kind of literary theme and symbol. It is again what Lévi-Strauss says about mythic thought, a thought which, as Boas remarks, constantly creates new universes, but by inverting ends and means: 'the signifieds become signifiers, and vice versa'. This incessant mixing, this perpetual inversion of sign and meaning clearly indicates the dual function of the critical task, which is to draw meaning from the work of others, but also to make a work from this meaning. If there exists a 'critical poetry', it is surely in the sense in which Lévi-Strauss

talks of a 'poetry of bricolage': just as the 'bricoleur' 'speaks by means of things', the critic speaks—or, more precisely, speaks himself—by means of books. We may paraphrase Lévi-Strauss for the last time when we say that 'without ever completing his project, he always puts into that project something of himself'.

It is in this sense, then, that we may consider literary criticism as a 'structuralist' activity: but it is only an implicit, unpremeditated structuralism. The question posed by the present orientation of human sciences like linguistics and anthropology concerns the possibility of whether criticism may not be required explicitly to organise its structuralist vocation into a structural method. Here we need only assess precisely the meaning and significance of this question, by indicating the various channels through which structuralism accedes to the object of criticism, and may propose itself to it as a fruitful procedure.

2

Since literature is first and foremost a work of language, and since structuralism is a linguistic method par excellence, the most likely meeting-place for them ought to be on the terrain of linguistic material: sounds, forms, words and phrases are objects common to the linguist and the philosopher, so much so that, during the first ardours of the Russian formalist movement, certain writers went so far as to

define literature as an annexe of general dialectology.³ And it is precisely Russian formalism, rightly considered to be one of the matrices of structural linguistics, which was originally nothing more than a meeting of critics and linguists on the common ground of *poetic language*. This assimilation of literature to a dialect raises objections too obvious for it to be taken literally. If there were such a dialect, it would be translanguistic, producing in all languages a certain number of transformations, procedurally different but analogous in their functions, much in the same way as the various slangs are the parasites of the various languages but resemble one another in their parasitic function; nothing like this can be observed in the case of dialects. And, above all, the line which divides 'literary language' from everyday language lies less in means than in ends: with the exception of a few inflexions, the writer uses the same language as other users, but he does not use it in the same way or with the same intention. Identical material, variable function: this rule is exactly the inverse of the rule of dialect. But, like other formalist 'utterances', this one had a cathartic function: the temporary neglect of content, the provisional reduction of the 'literary being' of literature' to its linguistic being permitted the revision of some well-worn ideas concerning the 'truth' of literary discourse, and the closer study of the literary system of conventions.

Literature had been regarded as a message without a code long enough for it to become necessary to regard it for a moment as a code without a message.

The structuralist method constitutes itself as such at the very moment when the message is rediscovered in the code, perceived through an analysis of immanent structures, and no longer imposed from outside by ideological prejudice. The moment at which this point is reached cannot be delayed for long, as the existence of the sign rests at all levels on the liaison between form and meaning. Thus Roman Jakobson, in his study of Czech poetry (1923), discovers a relation between the prosodic value of a phonetic feature and its signifying value, each language tending to give the greatest prosodic importance to the system of oppositions which is most pertinent on the semantic plane: difference of intensity in Russian, difference of duration in Greek, difference of pitch in Serbo-Croat.⁶ This transition from phonetics to phonematics, i.e. from the pure phonetic substance, dear to the earliest formalist inspirations, to the organisation of this substance in a signifying system (or a system at least adapted to signification) involves more than the study of metrics, since we have seen there an anticipation of the phonological method.⁷ It shows well enough what the bearing of structuralism may be on the ensemble of studies relating to literary morphology: poetics.

8. cf. in particular the critique by Eikenbaum, Jakobson and Tynyanov of Sievers' methods of acoustical metrics. Sievers imposed upon himself the task of studying the sonorities of a poem as if it were written in a totally unknown language. Erlich, op. cit., p.187
 9. A synthesis of these critiques may be found in Paul

Delbouille, *Poésie et Sonorités, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1961*
 10. Le Mythe de Rimbaud, II, pp.81-104
 11. 'All the colours have been attributed at least once to each of the vowels.' Delbouille, op.cit., p.248

12. Roman Jakobson, *Essais de Linguistique générale, Paris 1963, p.233*
 13. Erlich, op.cit., p.149
 14. *Essais de Linguistique générale, p.244*

15. *ibid.*, p.238

stylistics, composition. Between pure formalism, which reduced literary 'forms' to a phonic material that is ultimately formless because it is non-signifying, and classical realism, which accords to each form an 'expressive value', autonomous and substantial, structural analysis must make it possible to discern the liaison which exists between a system of forms and a system of meanings, substituting the quest for global homologies for term by term analogies.

A simple example will perhaps serve to clarify these ideas: one of the traditional bugbears of the theory of expressivity is the question of vowel 'colours', brought into the limelight by Rimbaud's sonnet. Partisans of phonic expressivity like Jespersen and Grammont strive to attribute to each phoneme its own expressive value, one of which in all languages will prescribe the composition of certain words. Others have illustrated the fragility of such hypotheses, and as far as vowel colour in particular is concerned, the comparative tables prepared by Etienne¹⁵ show in no uncertain manner that the partisans of coloured hearing do not agree on a single attribution.¹⁶ Their opponents naturally conclude that coloured hearing is nothing but a myth, and that, considered as a *natural* fact, it is unquestionably nothing more than a myth. But the disagreement of the individual tables does not invalidate any one of them taken separately, and structuralism can advance here a commentary which takes into consideration both

the arbitrariness of each vowel-colour association and the very widespread sense of a vocalic chromatism: it is true that no vowel automatically evokes a colour in isolation; but it is equally true that the redistribution of colours in the spectrum (which is, as Gelb and Goldstein have shown, a linguistic, as well as a visual fact) can find a correspondence in the redistribution of the vowels of a given language—whence the idea of agreement, variable in its details but constant in its function. There is a spectrum of vowels just as there is a spectrum of colours; the two systems evoke one another and are attracted by one another, and the global homology creates the illusion of a term by term analogy, which everyone realises in his own way through an act of symbolic motivation comparable to the one described by Lévi-Strauss in connection with totemism. Every individual motivation, objectively arbitrary, but founded in the subjective, can then be considered as the index of a certain psychic configuration. The structural hypothesis, in this case, gives back to the stylistics of the subject that which it removes from the stylistics of the object.

Nothing, then, compels structuralism to confine itself to 'surface' analogies. On the contrary, here as elsewhere, the horizon of its advance is a semantic one. 'Verse is always without doubt primarily a recurrent phonic structure; but it is never only that ... Valéry's formula *The poem, prolonged*

hesitation between sound and meaning is much more realistic and scientific than all the forms of phonetic isolationism.'¹² The importance attached by Jakobson, since his article on Pasternak (1935), to the concepts of metaphor and metonymy, borrowed from the rhetoric of tropes, is characteristic of this point of view, especially if one remembers that one of the warhorses of early formalism was a scorn for images and the devaluation of tropes as characteristic marks of poetic language. Jakobson himself still insisted in 1936, a propos of a poem by Pushkin, on the existence of a poetry without images.¹³ In 1958 he took up this question again with a very appreciable shift of emphasis: 'The textbooks believe in the existence of poems without imagery, but in fact poverty in lexical tropes is counter-balanced by sumptuous grammatical tropes and figures.'¹⁴ Tropes, as we know, are figures of signification, and in adopting metaphor and metonymy as the poles of his typology of language and literature, Jakobson is not only paying tribute to traditional rhetoric: he is placing the categories of meaning at the heart of the structural method.

The structural study of 'poetic language' and the general forms of literary expression cannot indeed dispense with the analysis of the relations between code and message. Jakobson's statement *Linguistics and Poetics* which is addressed equally to the technicians of communication and to poets like Valéry and

Hopkins, or critics like Empson and Ransom, shows this quite plainly: 'Ambiguity is an intrinsic, inalienable property of every message that is centred on itself, it is a necessary corollary of poetry. We repeat, with Empson, that *the machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry*.'¹⁵ Structuralism does not restrict its ambitions to counting feet or calling attention to repeated phonemes: it must also come to terms with phenomena which, as we know since Mallarmé, constitute the essence of poetic language, and more generally with the problems of literary semiology. In this respect one of the newest and most fertile paths opening onto literary studies today ought to be the structural study of the 'great unities' of discourse, beyond the narrow limits—impassable for linguistics proper—of the sentence. The formalist Propp was without question the first to treat (in connection with Russian folk tales) texts of a fair length, composed of a large number of sentences, as statements amenable in their turn, just as much as the classical unities of linguistics, to an analysis capable of distinguishing in them, through an interplay of superimpositions and commutations, variable elements and constant functions, and of finding in them the biaxial system, familiar to Saussurian linguistics, of syntagmatic connections (real sequences of functions in the continuity of a text) and paradigmatic connections (virtual relations

16. Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folk-tale*, Indiana University, 1958 (first edition, in Russian, 1928)
 17. Claude Brémont, 'Le Message narratif', *Communications* 4, 1964

18. We find however a type of structuralism that is in some way purely methodological in the work of writers who do not adhere to this 'philosophy'. This is the case with Dumézil, who employs, in a typically historical study, the analysis of functions which unite the elements of Indo-European mythology, and which he

judges more significant than the elements themselves. It is again the case with Maury, whose psycho-criticism interprets not isolated themes, but networks, the terms of which may vary without their structure being modified. The study of systems does not necessarily exclude the study of geneses and filiations: the

minimum programme of structuralism is that it precedes and commands it.
 19. 'Les études de style et les différents pays', *Langue et Littérature*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1961

between analogous or opposed functions, from one text to another, in the ensemble of the corpus under consideration). Thus one would study, on a much higher level of generality, systems, such as the short story, the description, and the other major forms of literary expression. We should then have a linguistics of discourse, which would be a *translinguistics*, since it would consider the facts of language in the large, and often at a second remove, i.e. in short, we would have a rhetoric: perhaps that 'new rhetoric' which Francis Ponge called for, and which we still lack.

3

The structural character of language at all levels is sufficiently widely admitted today for the structuralist 'approach' to literary expression to assert itself of its own accord. As soon as we leave the plane of linguistics (or of that 'bridge thrust between linguistics and literary history', which, according to Spitzer, constitutes the studies of form and style) and approach the domain traditionally reserved to criticism—that of 'content'—the legitimacy of the structuralist point of view raises objections of principle which are fairly serious. Certainly, as a method structuralism is committed to studying structures everywhere it meets them; but in the first place structures are not by any account objects which one meets, they are systems of latent relations, conceived rather than perceived, which

analysis constructs in so far as it picks them out, and which it sometimes risks inventing in the belief that it is discovering them; and secondly, structuralism is not only a method, it is also what Cassirer calls a 'general tendency of thought', which others might more brutally describe as an ideology, whose function is precisely to assess structures at the expense of substances, and which may therefore overestimate the explicative value of the former. Indeed, it is not so much a question of finding out whether or not there is a system of relations in any object of study, since there exists, quite clearly, a system of relations in everything, as one of the relative importance of this system in relation to the other elements of comprehension: this importance measures the degree to which the structural method is valid; but how can we measure this importance, in its turn, without referring to that method? This is the vicious circle with which we are faced.

At first sight it seems that structuralism ought to be on its home ground as often as criticism abandons the study of the conditions of existence or the outside determinations—psychological, social, or otherwise—of the literary work, in order to concentrate its attention on the work itself, considered not as an effect but as an absolute entity. In this sense, structuralism is linked to the general disaffection from positivism, from the historicising of history and

from the 'biographical illusion', a disaffection illustrated variously by the critical work of such writers as Proust, Eliot and Valéry, by Russian formalism, French 'thematic' criticism, or the anglo-saxon 'new criticism'.¹⁶ In a way the notion of structural analysis can be considered as a simple equivalent of what the Americans call *close reading* and which has been called in Europe, following the example of Spitzer, the 'immanent' study of works. It is in precisely this sense that Spitzer qualified the new structuralist attitude when in 1960 he retraced the process of evolution that led him from the psychologism of his earliest stylistic studies to a criticism detached from all reference to the *Erlebnis*, 'subordinating stylistic analysis to the explication of particular works as poetic organisms in themselves, without reference to the psychology of the author.'¹⁷ Every analysis which encloses itself in a work without considering the sources or the motives of that work would then be explicitly structuralist, and the structuralist method would intervene in order to give to this immanent study a kind of rationality of comprehension which would replace the study of causes. A determinism, in certain aspects spatial, of structure would thus take the place of the temporal determinism of origin in a thoroughly modern way, each unity being defined in terms of relations, and no longer in terms of filiation.¹⁸ 'Thematic' analysis would then tend to take place spontaneously, and to test itself in a structural

synthesis where the different themes would group themselves in *networks*, so that the sense of their place and function in the system of the work would be fully delineated: this is the design clearly formulated by Jean-Pierre Richard in his *Univers Imaginaire de Mallarmé*, or by Jean Rousset when he writes that 'there is no distinguishable form except where we can perceive an agreement or connection, a line of strength, an obsessive figure, a web of presences or echoes, a network of convergences: I would call *structures* those formal constants, those liaisons which betray a mental universe and which every artist reinvents according to his needs.'¹⁹

Structuralism would then be, for all immanent criticism, a safeguard against the disintegration which threatens thematic criticism: the means by which the unity of a work may be preserved, its principle of coherence, what Spitzer calls its spiritual *etymon*. In fact, the problem is unquestionably more complex than this, for in treating a work immanent criticism can adopt two very different, even antithetical attitudes, according to whether it considers the work as an object or as a subject. The opposition between these two attitudes has been pinpointed with great clarity by Georges Poulet in a text where he designates himself as a partisan of the second: 'Like everyone else, I believe that the aim of criticism is to arrive at an intimate knowledge of the criticised

20. 'Like quantum mechanics, structural linguistics gains in morphic determinism what it loses in temporal determinism.' Jakobson, op.cit., p.74
 21. Jean Rousset, *Forme et Signification*, p.XII

22. Les Lettres Nouvelles, 24th June 1959
 23. 'Structure et herménautique', Esprit, Nov.1963

24. cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *ibid.* p.632

reality. Now it seems to me that such an intimacy is only possible to the extent that critical thought *becomes* the criticised thought, to the extent that it succeeds in re-feeling, in re-imagining the thought from the inside. There is nothing less objective than such a movement of the mind. Contrary to what one might imagine, criticism must restrain itself from envisaging any kind of *object* (whether it is the person of the author considered as another, or his work considered as a thing): for what must be attained is a subject, i.e. a spiritual activity that can only be understood if we put ourselves in its place and make it fulfil its role of subject anew within us.²⁰

This intersubjective criticism, illustrated admirably by the work of Georges Poulet himself, is related to the kind of thought which Paul Ricoeur following Dilthey and some others (among them Spitzer) name *hermeneutic*.²¹ The meaning of a work is not conceived through a series of intellectual operations—it is relived, 'taken up again' like a message at once old, yet constantly renewed. Inversely, it is clear that structuralist criticism falls under the heading of the very objectivism condemned by Poulet, for structures are *lived* neither by the creative consciousness, nor by the critical consciousness. They are at the heart of the work, without doubt, but as its latent armature, as a principle of objective intelligibility, only accessible through analysis and commutations, to a kind of

geometrical sense which is not consciousness. Structural criticism is free from all the transcendental reductions of psychoanalysis and Marxist explication, for example, but it exercises in its own way a kind of internal reduction, traversing the substance of the work in order to reach its skeleton: certainly not a surface glance, but rather a gaze of almost radioscopic penetration, all the more exterior the more penetrating it is.

We can perceive here a boundary comparable to the one attached by Ricoeur to structural mythology: wherever the hermeneutic reprise of meaning is possible and desirable, in the intuitive agreement of two consciousnesses, the structural analysis would be (at least partially) illegitimate and irrelevant. One might then imagine a kind of division of the literary field into two domains: that of 'living' literature, i.e. literature which can be lived by the critical consciousness, a domain which would have to be reserved for hermeneutic criticism, as Ricoeur reserves the domain of the Judaic and Hellenic traditions, which are provided with a *surplus of meaning*, inexhaustible and always indefinably present; and that of literature which is not 'dead', but which is in some way distant and difficult to penetrate, whose lost meaning would only be perceptible through the operations of the structural intelligence, like that of the 'totemic' cultures, the exclusive domain of

ethnologists. Such a division of labour has nothing absurd about it in principle, and we must note that it corresponds to the discretionary prudence imposed by structuralism on itself of its own accord, which by preference tackles those domains that lend themselves best to it, with a minimum of 'residues'.²² It must also be recognised that such a division would leave an immense, almost virgin field open to structural research. In fact, the expanse of literature 'with a lost meaning' is much vaster than the other, and not always of lesser interest. There exists an entire field which is to a certain degree ethnographic in literature, the exploration of which would be exciting for structuralism: literatures distant in time and space, children's and popular literature, including recent forms such as the melodrama or the serialised novel, which criticism has always neglected not only through academic prejudice, but also because no intersubjective participation could animate or guide it in its research, and which a structuralist criticism could treat like anthropological material, studying them en masse and investigating their recurrent functions, following the path laid down by folklorists like Propp and Skafitmov.²³ This work, like the work of Lévi-Strauss on primitive mythologies, has already shown the fruitfulness of the structural method applied to texts of this type, and all that it might disclose about the ignored substrata of canonic literature. *Fantomas* and *Bluebeard* are not nearly

as close to us as Swann and Hamlet: perhaps they have as much to teach us. And certain works which have been given official blessing, but which in fact have to a great extent become estranged from us, like the work of Corneille, might perhaps speak better in this language of distance and strangeness than in the language of false proximity which people insist on ascribing to them, often to their detriment.

It is here perhaps that structuralism might begin to regain a part of the territory conceded to hermeneutics: for the true split between these two 'methods' involves not the object, but the critical position. To Paul Ricoeur, who proposed the division mentioned above, alleging that 'one part of civilisation, namely that from which our culture does not derive, lends itself better than others to the application of the structural method', Lévi-Strauss replied by asking: 'Is it a question of an internal difference between two kinds of thought and civilisation, or simply one of the relative position of the observer, who cannot adopt the same perspective in the face of his own civilisation as he can vis-a-vis another civilisation?'²⁴ The irrelevance that Ricoeur would find in an application of structuralism to the Judaeo-Christian mythologies would also be found by a Melanese philosopher in the structural analysis of his own mythical traditions, traditions which he 'interiorises' just as a Christian interiorises the Biblical

25. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *ibid.* p.633

26. Signes, p.151

27. Lévi-Strauss indicates a similar relation between history and ethnology: 'Structures appear only through outside observation. Inversely, such observation can never perceive processes, which are not objects of analysis, but rather

the particular way in which a temporality is lived by a subject . . . A historian may sometimes work as an ethnologist, and an ethnologist as a historian, but their methods are complementary, in the sense given by physicists to this term; i.e. one cannot at once define with any precision a stage A and a stage B

(which is only possible from the outside and in structural terms), and relieve empirically the passage of the one to the other (which would be the only intelligible way of understanding that passage). Even the human sciences have their relations of uncertainty.' 'Les limites de la notion de structure en ethnologie', *Sens*

et Usage du mot Structure, Mouton, The Hague, 1962, pp.44-45.

message. Conversely, however, the same Melanesian might find relevance in a structural analysis of the Bible. What Merleau-Ponty says of ethnology as a discipline may be applied to structuralism as a method: 'It is not a special discipline defined by a particular object, namely primitive societies, it is a way of thought which imposes itself when the object is 'other' and which demands that we transform ourselves. Thus we become the ethnologists of our own society if we distance ourselves from it.'²¹

Thus, the relationship that unites structuralism and hermeneutics might be one not of mechanical separation and exclusion but of complementariness: in relation to the same work, hermeneutic criticism would speak of recovery of meaning and internal recreation, and structural criticism of the distanced world and intelligible reconstruction. In this way they would find complementary significations, and so their dialogue could only be the more fertile, with the reservation that one would never be able to speak these two languages at once.²²

However that may be, literary criticism has no reason to deny its audience the new significations²³ that structuralism may obtain from works which apparently are the nearest and most familiar, by distancing the worlds they represent. For one of the most profound lessons of modern anthropology is that the distant is also near us, by the very

fact of its distance. Moreover, the effort at psychological comprehension inaugurated by the criticism of the 19th century, and pursued in our own time by the diverse varieties of thematic criticism, has perhaps laid too exclusive an emphasis on the psychology of authors and given insufficient weight to that of the public, or the reader. We know, for example, that one of the stumbling-blocks of thematic analysis lies in the difficulty which it frequently encounters in distinguishing the part of a work which stems from the irreducible singularity of an individual creator, from the part which belongs more generally to taste, to sensibility, to the ideology of an epoch, or more broadly still, to the conventions and permanent traditions of a genre or literary form. The crux of this difficulty lies to a certain extent in the encounter between the original and profound thematic material of the creative individual and what ancient rhetoric called *topics*, i.e. the store of subjects and forms which make up the common wealth of tradition and culture. The personal thematic material represents only a choice affected between the possibilities offered by the collective topics. It is easily seen — to speak in a very schematic fashion — that the role played by *topos* is much greater in the so-called 'inferior' genres, which should rather be called 'fundamental', like the folk tale or the adventure novel, and the role of the creative personality is sufficiently weak in them for

the critical enquiry to turn spontaneously, in respect to these genres, to the tastes, exigencies and needs which make up what is currently called the *expectation* of the public. But it would also be necessary to discern all that 'great works'—even the most original ones—owe to these common dispositions. How can we appreciate, for example, the peculiar quality of the Stendhalian novel without considering in all its historic and trans-historical generality the common thematic material of the romantic imagination? Spitzer relates that his belated discovery—none the less ingenious—of the importance of the traditional *topos* in classical literature was one of the events that contributed towards 'discouraging' him from psychoanalytical stylistics. But the author's transition from what we may call psychologism to an absolute antipsychologism is not perhaps as inevitable as it seems, for, however conventional it may be, the *topos* is no more arbitrary psychologically than the personal theme: it simply depends on another psychology, a collective one this time, for which contemporary anthropology has to some degree prepared us, and whose literary implications deserve to be systematically explored. The defect of modern criticism is perhaps less its psychologism than its over-individualistic conception of psychology.

Classical criticism, from Aristotle to La Harpe—was in

one sense more attentive to these anthropological facts of literature; it knew how to measure so narrowly, but so exactly the exigencies of what is called *verisimilitude*, i.e. the idea which the public creates for itself of the real or the possible. The distinctions between genres, the notions of the epic, the tragic, the heroic, the comic, the romanesque corresponded to certain great categories of mental attitudes which in this way or that organise the imagination of the reader and make him desire and attain predetermined types of situations, actions, psychological, aesthetic and moral values. It cannot be said that the study of these great diatheses which divide and inform the literary sensibility of humanity (and which Gilbert Durand has accurately named *the anthropological structures of the imaginary*) has been sufficiently undertaken by criticism and the theory of literature. Bachelard has given us a typology of the 'material' imagination: there can be no doubt that there also exists, for example, an imagination of behaviour, of situations, human relationships, a *dramatic* imagination, in the broad sense of the term, which powerfully animates the production and consumption of theatrical and romanesque works. The topics of this imagination and the structural laws of its functioning have, judging by all the evidence, the highest importance for literary criticism: they will constitute without doubt one of the tasks of that vast axiomatic of literature, the urgent necessity of which has been revealed to

us by Valéry. The greatest efficacy of literature rests on a subtle interplay between the expectation of a surprise 'against which all the expectations in the world cannot prevail', between the 'verisimilitude' predicted and desired by the public, and the unpredictability of creation. But does not unpredictability, the infinite shock of the great works, itself resound with all its might in the secret depths of verisimilitude? 'The great poet', says Borges, 'is not the one who invents, but the one who discovers.'¹²

4

Valéry dreamed of a history of literature understood 'less as a history of authors and the accidents of their careers or of their works, as a History of the mind in so far as it produces or consumes 'literature', and this history might even be written without the name of an author ever being mentioned in it.' We know what echoes this idea has found in authors like Borges and Blanchot, and, before them, Thibaudet took pleasure in instituting, through incessant comparisons and transfusions, a Republic of Letters in which the distinctions between personalities tended to become blurred. This unified vision of the literary field is a very profound utopia, and it is one which attracts with reason, for literature is not only a collection of autonomous works, 'influencing one another' in a series of fortuitous and isolated encounters; it is a coherent ensemble: a homogeneous

space within which works touch and penetrate one another; it is also, in its turn, a piece connected to other pieces in the vast expanse of 'culture', where its value is a function of the ensemble. On both these grounds it depends on a study of structure, both internal and external.

We know that the acquisition of language takes place in the child not by a simple extension of vocabulary, but by a series of internal divisions, without any modification of the total undertaking: at each stage the few words which the child has at his disposal are the whole of language, and they serve him in order to designate all things, with increasing precision, but without hiatus. In the same way, for a man who has read only one book, that book represents the whole of 'literature', in the primary meaning of the word; when he has read two, those two books will share the whole of his literary field, without any gap between them, and so on. It is precisely because it has no gaps to overcome that a culture can *enrich itself*: it deepens and diversifies itself because it does not have to expand.

In a way we may consider the 'literature' of all mankind (i.e. the manner in which written works are organised in the minds of men) as being constituted by an analogous process—with every reservation made for the gross over-simplification imposed upon it here. Literary 'production' is a word, in the Saussurian sense, a series of

individual acts which are partially autonomous and unpredictable; but the 'consumption' of literature by society is a *language*, i.e. an ensemble, the elements of which, whatever their number and nature, tend to be ordered in a coherent system. Raymond Queneau has said in jest that every literary work is either an *Iliad* or an *Odyssey*. This dichotomy has not always been a metaphor, and we still find in Plato the echo of a 'literature' which virtually consisted of these two poems alone, and which was not judged to be so incomplete. Ion knew and wanted to know no other author besides Homer: 'It seems to me', he said, 'that that is enough', for Homer speaks adequately of all things, and the competence of the rhapsodist would be encyclopaedic, if poetry really proceeded from a Knowledge (it is this last point that Plato contests, and not the universality of the work). Since then, literature has been divided rather than extended, and over the centuries men have continued to see in the work of Homer the embryo and source of all literature. This myth is not without truth, and the incendiary of Alexandria was not entirely wrong when he weighed the Koran against a whole library of books: whether it contains one book, two books, or several thousands of books, the library of a civilisation is always complete, because in the minds of men it always constitutes a corpus and a system.

Classical rhetoric had an acute

consciousness of this system, which it formalised in the theory of genres. There were the epos, the tragedy, the comedy etc.—and these genres made up the whole of the literary field. What was lacking in this theory was the temporal dimension, the idea that a system can evolve. Boileau saw the epos die before his eyes, and witnessed the birth of the novel without being able to integrate these modifications into his *Art poétique*. The nineteenth century discovered history, but it forgot the cohesion of the ensemble: the individual history of works and their authors effaces the tableau of genres. Brunetière alone attempted the synthesis, but we know that this marriage of Boileau and Darwin was not a very happy one: in the writings of Brunetière the evolution of genres depends on pure organicism: each genre is born, develops and dies like a solitary species, without caring about its neighbour.

The structuralist idea here is to follow literature in its global evolution, making synchronic cross-sections at different eras, and comparing the resulting tableaux with one another. Literary evolution then appears in all its abundance, as the system subsists by modifying itself incessantly. Here again, the Russian formalists showed the way by paying a great deal of attention to the phenomena of structural dynamics, and by discerning the notion of *functional change*. To note the presence or absence, in isolation, of a form or a literary

33. Tomashevsky, op.cit., pp.238-239

theme at some stage of diachronic evolution is meaningless as long as the synchronic study has not shown the function of this element in the system. An element may maintain itself by changing its function, or alternatively may disappear, leaving its function to another element. 'The mechanism of literary evolution', says B. Tomashevsky, retracing the course of formalist research on this point, 'thus became gradually clearer: it appeared not as a series of forms replacing one another, but as a continual variation of the aesthetic function of literary procedures. Each work is orientated in relation to the literary milieu, and each element in relation to the entire work. An element which has its value determined during one epoch will completely alter its function during another. The forms of the grotesque, considered during the epoch of classicism as the resources of the comic, became, during the epoch of romanticism, one of the sources of the tragic. It is in the continual change of function that the true life of the elements of the literary work manifests itself.'³¹ Shklovsky and Tynyanov, in particular, have studied in Russian literature those functional variations which permit an unimportant form to become a 'canonic' one, and which maintain a constant transfusion between popular and official literature, between academicism and the 'avant-garde', between poetry and prose, etc. The inheritance, as Shklovsky liked to say, usually

34. *On the formalist conceptions of literary history*, cf. Eichenbaum, 'La théorie de la méthode formelle' and Tynyanov, 'De l'évolution littéraire', in *Théorie de la Littérature*, Seuil, 1966. See also Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, pp.227-228, and Nina Gourfinkel, 'Les nouvelles méthodes d'histoire littéraire

passes from the uncle to the nephew, and evolution canonises the younger branch. Thus, Pushkin brings into great poetry the effects of the album verse of the 17th century, Nekrassov borrows from journalism and vaudeville, Blok from the gipsy song, Dostoievsky from the detective novel.³⁴

Literary history understood in this way becomes the history of a system: it is the evolution of functions that is significant, not the evolution of elements, and a knowledge of synchronic relations must necessarily precede a knowledge of processes. But on the other hand, as Jakobson remarks, the literary tableau of an era describes not only a present of creation, but also a present of culture, and hence a certain aspect of the past, 'not only the literary production of a given epoch, but also that part of literary tradition which has remained alive or which has been resuscitated during the epoch in question . . . The choice which a new movement makes among the classics, the reinterpretation it gives of them—these are the essential problems of synchronic literary studies'³⁵, and consequently of the structural history of literature, which is only the diachronic perspective of these successive synchronic tableaux: in the tableau of French classicism, Homer and Virgil have their place, while Dante and Shakespeare do not. In our present literary landscape the discovery (or invention) of Baroque has more importance than the romantic heritage, and our

en Russie', *Le Monde slave*, February 1929

35. *Essais de linguistique générale*, p.212

36. *Borges, Enquêtes*, p.224

Shakespeare is not the Shakespeare of Voltaire or Hugo: he is the contemporary of Brecht and Claudel, just as our Cervantes is a contemporary of Kafka. An epoch expresses itself just as much by what it reads as by what it writes, and these two aspects of its 'literature' determine one another reciprocally: 'If it were given to me to read any page of today—this one, for example—as it will be read in the year 2000, I would know the literature of the year 2000.'³⁶

To this history of *internal divisions* within the literary field, the programme of which is already very rich (we need only think of what a universal history of the opposition between poetry and prose would look like: a fundamental, elementary, constant opposition, unchanging in its function, ceaselessly renewed in its means), there should be added the history of the much vaster division between literature and all that is not literature; in this instance we should no longer be dealing with literary history, but with the history of the relations between literature and the aggregate of social life: the history of the *literary function*. The Russian formalists insisted on the *differential* character of the literary fact. Literature is also the function of non-literariness, and no stable definition of it can be given: only the consciousness of a limit remains. Everyone knows that the birth of the cinema modified the status of literature by robbing it of certain of its functions, but

37. *Confessions, Book VI*. Quoted by Borges, *Enquêtes*, p.165

also by lending it certain of its own means. And this transformation is evidently only a beginning. How will literature survive the development of other means of communication? We no longer believe, as men have believed from Aristotle to La Harpe, that art is an imitation of nature, and where the classics sought above all a good resemblance, we seek a radical originality and an absolute creation. On the day when the Book ceases to be the principal vehicle of knowledge, will not literature have changed its meaning once more? Perhaps we are simply living the last days of the Book. This modern adventure ought to make us more attentive to past episodes: we cannot go on indefinitely talking about literature as if its existence went without saying, as if its relation to the world and men had never varied. We lack, for example, a history of reading, a history that would be intellectual, social, even physical: if we are to believe Saint Augustine,³⁷ his master Ambrose was the first man of the ancient world who read with his eyes, without articulating the text aloud. True History is made of these great silent moments. And the value of a method lies perhaps in its aptitude for finding, beneath every silence, a question.

The reductive nature of Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Dancers Inherit the Party*, (1960), presupposes the move on the part of a writer to find a scheme of working more universal than the writer considers to be his function. That he seems to write poetry about certain simplified subjects is a concession to the usual idea of poetry, but in *The Dancers Inherit the Party* the real subject is the idea that poetry can be written about these subjects in all their simplicity with the rigidity and tautness of great verse. There is something ironic in his inversion of language for poetic ends, the incorporation into the verse scheme of the occasional colloquialism, in fact the seeming ease and casualness in making this handful of near-perfect poetry, which by its underlying redundancy, questions the future of poetry with the syntax of speech, the old lyric notion of song. This irony is enforced by the suggestion of a folk-element as an axis of the book's arrangement, Orkney Island folk songs. But in this work crucial to poetry this century, it is not only one writer's discovery that narrative sequential verse will not support this degree of scrutiny and integrity, it is also that writer's search for a mode of working outside the particularisation of poetry, a generalising aesthetic asserting itself.

In his letters following *The Dancers Inherit the Party*, in the formative period of a new poetry, with a visual as opposed to a narrative syntax,

Finlay often repeated his concern for order as the central axis of art. In quoting Malevich in one letter . . . 'by means of perfected objects, man seeks to recover the divine, non-thinking state' . . . he repeats the recurrent search for an aesthetic for art, not merely for poetry. Poetry has often failed to see itself objectively enough to make this connection. It has been easy for poets to escape the implications of art by concerning themselves only with the most immediate meaning, as opposed to formal, possibilities of language.

The fallacy of the Institute of Contemporary Art's exhibition *Between Poetry and Painting*, held in the most formative year for Concrete Poetry in this country, has never been corrected, and so it is possible for people to look at Finlay's work and believe that it lies somewhere between poetry and painting. Then they would be unable to place certain items of his later work without calling him a sculptor.

That impetuous exhibition allowed people to look at an early example of 'mixed media' activity, so called, and in this writer's opinion has severely damaged an accurate concept of concrete poetry. The truth is of course that the only real mixture of the media occurs in the work of a particular artist working from a centralised aesthetic about art, not painting or sculpture or poetry alone. In his later work it has become obvious with Finlay that the procedure is from such a position, which to some

extent then makes redundant the categories of art previously mentioned.

It is in this respect that Finlay can be compared to one other Scottish artist with whom there is a more than superficial similarity, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Both were and are working in times and in styles that have become by and large excessive to the point of saturation, the one Art Nouveau and its immediate surround, the other Concrete Poetry. It is when both are examined beneath the superficialities that it is discovered that both owe less to the 'style' in which they work than at first appears. (This is not to imply that the empirical basis for Concrete Poetry is in any way deteriorated, only its practice.) Both were concerned with the type of aesthetic much spoken about here, a means of consistency beneath the appearance of the style. Both were concerned with some kind of perfection. It is in this sense that Magritte is equally distinguished from the Surrealists.

Under these circumstances, the logical move was from the printed or typographic object to a constructed solid subject, in which the texts from a continuation of typographic interest figure as the motif to be harmonised with the materials of construction. Since 1966 Finlay has been concerned with the production of works in glass, stone and wood, and during this period it has obviously been less a

question of what a poem should be made about, as what it should be made of in terms of the relationship of material to motif, which is more a question of sculptural harmony than the usual concern of the Concrete poet. But whilst each item can be apprehended and understood on its own terms, its own unique system of nuance of material for idea, and the corresponding coordination of divergent elements into a single unifying form, the work has wider metaphorical implications. As with the width of his aesthetic, so the metaphoric system he has built deals almost entirely with an elemental structural view of the world, an order. Often this takes the form of an opposition of the basic landscape components, for instance, sea and land, sea and sky.

The NETS weathercock of 1968, now seen in a renewed version in the exhibition at Dunfermline Park in April 1969 consists of a flat table with solid letters for points of the compass lying flat (1). True to the form of a weathercock, the arrow swings in circular motion over the points of the compass, bearing upright along its back the letters NETS. Thus we have the juxtaposition NESW/NETS. First of all we see the most simple metaphorical implication of fishing boats and their nets all over the globe. The same simplicity of metaphor is present in the *Water Weathercock* of 1968, in which no part-literary metaphor is necessary, but only the presence of circular points of

1. Ian Hamilton Finlay, NETS
Weathercock, wood, 1968



J. W. Lucas

2. Ian Hamilton Finlay, Water
Weathercock, painted wood, 1968

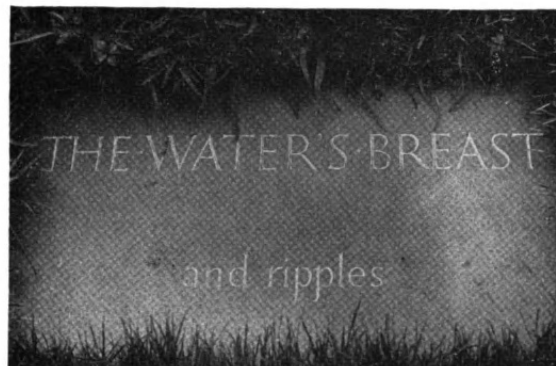


Ronald Gunn

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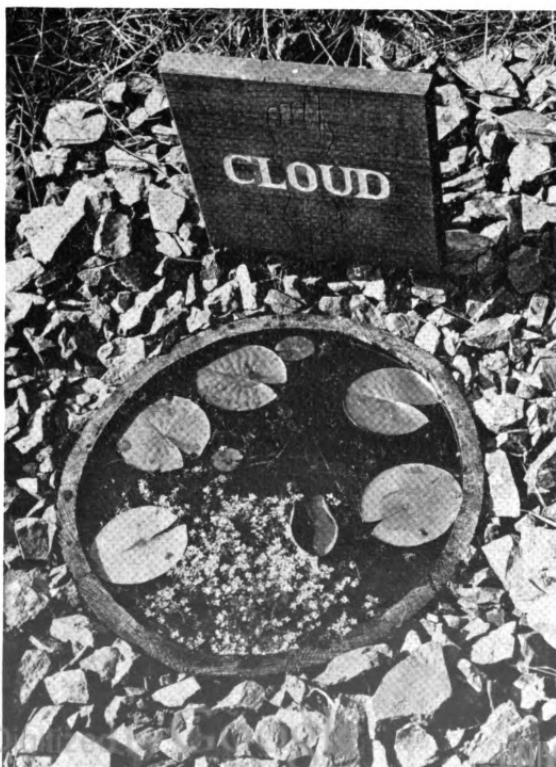
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

3. Ian Hamilton Finlay in association with Maxwell Allan, *The Water's Breast*, green slate



Ronald Gunn

4. Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Cloud Board*, wood, 1968



Oscar Marzaroli

2: Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Stonechats*, Wild Hawthorn Press, Stonypath, Dunsyre, Lanarkshire, Scotland, 1968
See also Stephen Bann, 'The Structure of a Poetic Universe', Studio International February 1969 (photographs of constructed works)

the compass anchored but floating on the surface of the water, and a central arrow or pointer likewise anchored but floating, revolving with the currents caused by the wind (2).

So far Finlay has not received his rightful recognition in the area that works like the above mentioned could be used, namely in architectural and landscape planning situations. This is perhaps not easily corrected under the present circumstances, where anything like a corresponding classicism to his work is now on the descendance.

For Finlay's work this concern with materials in what previously could only be seen in a painterly or sculptural sense, is the logical plastic extension of the typographic or visually syntactical poem, and as it becomes somewhat arbitrary to define whether or not Finlay is basically poet or other kind of artist at this level of working, so he begins to fulfil in England an equivalent position to that previously occupied by artists losing faith in the plastic object and becoming involved in the less finite environment. Finlay's work still fulfils the classical premise of the finished plastic object. As stone carving for sculptors becomes unavailable in our Colleges of Art, it becomes possible for Finlay to consider making his delicate one-word poems into solid stone tablets. In fact most of the one-word poems from *Stonechats* a small book of his published by his own Wild Hawthorn Press in 1968 have

now been transferred into stone tablets, some of which have been inset in his own sunken garden at his house in Dunsyre, Lanarkshire (3).

The carved *Cloud* board in wood (4) (1968) again emphasises the metaphoric system most particularly, and the final shift of metaphor that takes place when the lily is open in the small pond in summer, is more the concern of poetry than anything else.

Finlay has also partially pioneered the use of sandblasted glass, and the choice of this material has an obvious relationship to his concern for the pure, perfected object. The *Wave/rock* here illustrated in cast concrete (5) from Dunfermline Park was the first poem to be made in sandblasted glass in 1966. This cast concrete version becomes so harmonious with its surroundings that it is remarkable to think it as produced by a claimed member of the avant-garde. The true arbitrariness of classification for his work becomes altogether apparent in the scale of the recent April exhibition at Dunfermline Park. The fishing boat letters KY (6) are transformed into a completely abstract work in cast concrete. This seems to be one of the perfections of Ian Hamilton Finlay's work to date, exemplifying more than anything else Concrete Art in the sense of Max Bill's term.

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'I am completely of the opinion of those who say: liberty! But for me I believe it will come to us from a study of nature alone.' *Paul Cezanne*

'The artist wanders from his true way, the concrete study of nature, in order to lose himself in intangible speculations.' *Paul Cezanne*

Finding that Paris no longer remained a viable centre, that it was unable to meet the entirely new needs of art, I left in 1937. While living in Paris I realised that in America, the midwest in particular, conditions were precisely those which future art required. At the same time I abandoned the ancient tools and mediums of both painting and sculpture as now obsolete, to adopt the tools and mediums of the machine as a necessity for realising a new art. European Surrealism, due largely to one artist, was then reaching popularity and would soon after arrive at its final stage. In this country 'American Scene' painting continued to dominate. Leaving behind the past forms of art, as well as the ancient mediums with which they were formed, I was able to observe their continuing state of crisis from the outside. These references to personal experiences are apropos of the central point I intend to consider.

Once the old mimetic image of art came to its final greatness in the works of Gustave Corbet, art fell into a state of crisis which has not yet ceased. It is this problem in particular as it relates to the first entrance of American art into the world picture that will be my principal concern here. The first stage of the crisis was experienced by European artists in the loss of the ancient familiar art. Just before and during the first world war, the second stage of the crisis erupted, again experienced by European artists. The frustrations due to the loss of

the old were replaced by those due to the utter confusion of all efforts to establish a new art. Not until the second world war did Americans belatedly begin to face up to the first stage of the crisis, which Europeans had already done in the previous century. Only afterwards were they to begin to reach for the needed new form of art. This, too, the second stage of the crisis stemming from the frustrations in seeking the new, was to be a repetition of the Europeans' experience early in this century.

Why was it necessary—or was it necessary—for Americans to relive the European experiences? Had the European confrontation of the confusion surrounding efforts to establish the new failed? If so, would not that leave the Americans faced with a crisis now considerably intensified because its confusion had run on unhampered? Did they succeed where the Europeans had failed? These are some of the questions whose answers might allow one to understand the severity of the American painter's experience, as, following the European example, he sought to move even more quickly from an art of mimesis to one of direct creation. If in what follows I refer to the various forms which were popularly adopted by American artists, and not to any of the individuals who adopted them, it is only to concentrate on what is of most interest, the mass movements of American art struggling to reach expression.

Only in recent years, more than two decades after American painters had become aware of the deep, frustrating difficulties of painting, did they publicly express something of their earlier dilemma in more candid terms. The artists themselves tell us that in the forties they 'woke up' to find they were 'without hope', feeling a sense of 'absolute desperation'. So severe was this awakening that they felt it did not matter what they painted, however 'absurd' it might be. 'What', they asked, 'was to be lost?' Artists and critics alike saw art poised on the 'brink of an abyss'.

I can understand the ordeal of these painters before what appeared to them as an 'abyss', but from the position of one who had not personally experienced their despair before what comprised my own decision. That is, that both sculpture and painting were not only in trouble, but that both had become obsolete forms of art. In any case, we have here two contrary confrontations of the crisis of art. One was formed by Americans in a culturally isolated city of America, joined by European artists and writers forced into exile. My view was formed after leaving this country and experiencing isolation in the European environment, an experience essential to the view that resulted. Each position deeply contradicts the other, for which reason both are worth serious consideration. Their contrasts can throw a special light upon the nature of the crisis, of particular significance

to the artists whose life has been formed in the American environment.

It was soon after the last hope of painting, European Surrealism, had been deserted by its most popular representative, that most American artists began to be pushed before the crisis which had been rapidly intensifying since the opening of the century. Loath to question the validity of painting itself, the American artist concluded that the difficulties lay in the art he made with it. The solution to their dilemma was provided by the exiled Europeans, particularly by the Surrealists who promised 'total freedom'. As a result of these influences, subsequent American painting was hailed as having liberated art from its dilemma. Yet events have more sharply emphasised that earlier 'desperation' which left the American painter feeling that painting 'did not exist' any more, that the situation was now even more acute. Indeed, in the last few years painting has ceased to 'exist' for many American artists, who have found other means with which to free themselves from the never-ending, multiplying crises of painting.

It appeared that American artists leaped and looked afterwards. Was it not evident after Claude Monet completed realisation of his Impressionism, and more sharply after the death of Paul Cezanne in 1906, that our century was on the brink, not of any 'abyss' of despair, but of realising an entirely new

kind of art? After Cezanne's fundamental insights was it not soon evident that an entirely new vehicle for art was necessary, one as uniquely appropriate for realising the new as the past one had been uniquely appropriate for realising mimetic art? Could this call for a sense of 'desperation', of 'hopelessness', fear of an 'abyss', if painting ceased to 'really exist'? Had not the hesitations and confusions been swept aside, opening the eyes of artists to nothing less than a whole new world of art? Surely, an innovator would find such a prospect irresistibly welcome.

Yet, like the Europeans before them, Americans feared the loss of that ancient art of painting, which fear consequently determined the whole basis of their decision for dealing with the crisis in which they found themselves. Wishing the fault to lie in what was painted, not in painting, they avoided any deep enquiry into the nature of their problem—painting itself. That is, to comprehend the Europeans' experience: first, the crisis as it began with the loss of the ancient art image; then, the search for the new, itself become the crisis. Failing to understand the European past, Americans were doomed to 'repeat' it, with the proviso that each time around things did not remain the same as in the past, but became worse. In turn, this led to the delusion that something 'new' had taken place.

In the great art of Gustave

Corbet painting had reached the useful limits of the purposes for which it was originally created by the cave artists who discovered it—to realise the reality illusion of mimetic images. When this termination began to be acted upon by those Europeans who understood it, they also mistakenly assumed that their simple rejection left them completely free from the past for the pursuit of the new. Such expectations could not materialise. Simply to deny the past brought only the reverse of the result intended. In pushing it aside, the artists were not aware that they had thus given the greatest intensity to the subtle forces of the past to continue unabated, unseen, deflecting these artists, however gifted, from their purpose of realising the new.

This deflecting force was the residue of some thirty thousand years of visual conditioning to an art of painting, during the last five centuries of which painting was supreme in the field of art. It was this visual conditioning to the past which painters did not know they did not want to controvert.

Failure to recognise this conditioning process, failure to comprehend it deeply within the experience of visual awareness itself, leaves the artist captive to the past. This process of conditioning is so subtle that it only sinks further below the artist's consciousness the more he rejects or ignores the past, however much his art appears to have left the past behind. There exists a conflict between

nostalgia for the old and desire for the new. The repeated circumventions only drive the reality of the crisis even deeper from the reach of consciousness, assuring that its confusion will again surge to the surface of art, to return in a still more violent form than before. Ironically then, visual conditioning has permitted the past silently to impose its determinations upon the forms and structures of nearly all art that claims to be both new and free from the past.

Given this ceaseless state of conflict between the old and the new, is it to be wondered at that so many Europeans and later on Americans who were determined to break with the past, felt so violently towards it? The whole past was cast off as mere 'realism', a term that had become a derogatory appellation. One can then understand why the Cubists blundered so badly in their comprehension of what was taking place as to brand Claude Monet a mere 'snapshot' realist, when this artist had done nothing less than to liberate art from indecision before the new. Indeed, the bitterness and violence expressed against the past by those who claimed total freedom from it, only emphasised how deeply the exact reverse was the truth, that they were wholly encased in a violent struggle with the past itself. Did not the Cubists inadvertently admit as much?

Clearly, it is not possible automatically to shake off the past, and then proceed to capture the new out of the

blue. Does this mean that we cannot free ourselves from the past? Yes and no. The past is not the mere boggy that some would wish it to be, for it has all the diversity and nuances that characterise our own present. That is to say, the past carries within it not only that which enslaves us to its destructive influence, but also that which frees us from it with its creative action. There is only the choice of how we are related to it. On that 'how' hinges the success or failure to realise the new in art.

Soon after European painters discovered that Courbet had brought mimetic art to its last act of creative vigour, there appeared two of the most remarkable painters in the whole history of art. Only by a sustained act of projection into their times can we fully appreciate what these men accomplished in a brief period of some twenty-five years. Not only did they clearly define the termination of mimetic art, but by putting into motion the means for realising the new they unknowingly prepared for the creative termination of painting itself.

Thus Claude Monet put a definitive end to mimetic art the moment he opened up a perception of nature as a new structural vision for the creation of art. Going beyond past visual experiences, which were limited to what nature had already structurally created, Monet began revision of the perception of structure of abstraction itself by extending vision to a deeper awareness of nature's creative

structure. Nature was now perceived not merely as its already structured objects, but, to put it in terms of Cezanne's consciousness, as a creative process. Monet understood he could create with colour as nature does without imitating what nature does. In this way he took the first step towards an art whose creations would be unique to man, as nature's creations were unique to it. Most important, he avoided the error of those of his contemporaries who thought to correct his Impressionism by appealing to the then currently new scientific understanding of colour as light. He liberated the new art, not with science, but in the only way possible, with that perception of nature unique to the artist. Thus he achieved the creative potentialities of light for the colours of the painter's pigments. Monet was to go no further. Yet he left behind uniquely beautiful works created out of the very dawn of a new vision of nature and art. This extraordinary Frenchman had done nothing less than to achieve the definitive initiation of the first truly fundamental change in the long history of man's art.

Of the artists who joined Monet in his Impressionism, all were to leave him and his art but Paul Cezanne. Alone this man continued and extended the new truth of nature perception which, to use Cezanne's expression, Monet's 'prodigious eye' had opened to art. If Cezanne understood that the painter only made coloured spots, each placed next to the other on a single plane, that a

painting was without form or space, he also understood that colour 'represented' the structural totality of form-space-light as a single creative unity. Thus, he not only extended the 'new vision' into the totality of structural creation, but in doing so released the inherent creative ability of the artist into an awareness of the full spectrum of structure as a creative process, in both nature and himself. It was of that intention he spoke when he remarked that objects were but a 'pretext' towards his goal of understanding nature as 'creation', as 'process'.

To realise his goal Cezanne introduced an entirely new use of geometric forms, later to be defined by planes. With these he realised an orderly, progressive comprehension of nature as a creative structural process, 'translating' this structural experience into the particular creative needs of his art. As his works came to a close in the great landscapes of Mt. Ste. Victoire, forms as planes began to give way to planes as their own forms. Through his study of nature a gradual transformation had taken place from his original three-dimensional geometry bound in planes towards a final simplification, where planes themselves formed the pivotal agents for structuring the creation of art.

It is these planes that later served a Dutch artist [Piet Mondrian] as the departure for the direct creation of man's art. His vision of Cezanne's planes, however, came to him filtered

through the eyes of the Cubists, whose misunderstanding and misuse of Cezanne's achievements brought about a false structural interpretation of the plane's functional significance. This confusion was then compounded when the Dutchman plunged the art of the plane into the morass of mysticism and idealism, obscuring from the view of others the plane's origination in Cezanne's structural perception of nature. The Dutchman was later to speak condescendingly of the Frenchman.

These all too brief accounts of the accomplishments of Claude Monet and Paul Cezanne sharply indicate the impossibility of automatically denying the old to plunge into the new. There is no alternative but gradually to cease the old, as one gradually reaches for the new, through the perception of nature as a creative structural process. Failing to do the latter, the artist does not, cannot acquire the 'new vision' needed for a new art. Without the actuality of experiencing the new vision, all theory and knowledge, however deftly the logic is assembled, avail the artist nothing. The new slips away, enmeshed in verbalisms and immersed in confusing experiences forced upon the artist by a sense of 'desperation'. Then it is that the artist's consciousness searches for the new, while his subconsciousness yearns for the old, thwarting his purpose. This constant state of tension

between the old and new explains the mounting confusions that have assailed every effort of 'modernism'. Consider the initial, euphoric enthusiasm with which the Cubists consigned the mimetic vision (and Monet) to oblivion. Yet when even their half-truth grasp of Cezanne led them to the final and 'grand decision', to leave the mimetic vision of nature and art without equivocation, they would not, but retreated instead to the familiar world of objects. In effect, they then set out to defeat mimesis by returning to mimesis, wishing to form an art paradoxically containing both the 'destruction' of the past and the realisation of the new. In this struggle the victor would remain as before, the visual conditioning of the past. That which would destroy the past was itself destroyed by the past.

Cubism has had many consequences, one of which became evident in American painting of the fifties. For this art was based on the rejection of Cubism, which rejection involved both historical and structural problems. History was seen as a mere record of what others had done before, having nothing to do with art decisions made in the present. This amounts to a denial of history or a license to remake it to one's own desires. History thus becomes subject to the discretion of artists and critics to be made into whatever one wants or does not want. History is regarded as an inert mass which one can activate as and how one wishes, if one does not indifferently leave it inert.

Before any of us are aware of it our lives have been deeply mingled with the whole past of man. To propose, then, under whatever label or rationalisation, a 'discontinuity' theory of history is to propose further confusing the facts. For the theory only assures us that we will remain oblivious of the contradictory forces that have played and continue to play upon us, the outcome of which determines whether we will be free through the past or enslaved to its potential destructiveness. To subject the past to our arbitrary discretion, the only real intention of discontinuity proposals, is to render the past further confused. *To attempt to be wholly free of the past is to become wholly its slave.*

The evidence is apparent when one enquires into the American artist's rejection of Cubism structurally. Cubism represents to them structural restrictions beyond which they wish to go. In this the painters were deeply confused. Becoming fearful before the threatened loss of the object, did not Cubists turn their backs to the future and face the past, thus to destroy objects by structural obscurities? Had not the Americans simply taken this structural obscurity to its final stage when they applied 'destruction' to structure itself? Unable to see beneath the surface, obscuring structure itself, Americans thought to go beyond the object destructions of Cubists, unaware that they were only continuing by extending the Cubists' attitude of structural destruction. Thus, far from rejecting the Cubists,

rejecting them for what they did not represent, Americans perpetuated and extended the Cubist failure. It was then we heard American claims for the impossible, a 'non-structural' art.

For structured beings in a structured world to deny structure to anything, even a blank canvas, could only be prompted by 'desperation'. Early in the century Dada had deliberately struggled to destroy structure, leaving art in a shambles not unlike the present. To 'destroy' structure is to confuse it. The artist is unaware of the structural reality of even his own art. He cannot know that once he has crossed over to where he thinks to go beyond the structural reach of nature, he only secures structural conflict. It is impossible for any painter to do anything upon the surface of a canvas that is not inescapably related to the *totality of structure*, both within and without himself. It is only that this relationship can assume one of two contradictory structural forms. Either the artist strives for harmony between the structure of himself and that of nature's reality, or else structural confusion results between the two. What an artist does to the structure of nature, he does to the structure of himself and his art.

Consider then some of the structural claims of American artists: some have eliminated form; some have eliminated space; some structure itself; still others have preserved only the presence of something

called colour. All of these are false structural claims because they are structural impossibilities. Do what the painter will, simply give the canvas a coat of paint, or mark it in any way with one or many brush strokes, he continually produces visual statements derived from some kind of relations to the perceivable structural totality of nature. For the latter is all he can ever know or structure with. Every mark is related to the structural totality of reality. Inattentive to the order of the abstractions he makes from structural nature, the artist must confuse them. Then structural confusion replaces the needed structural extension of perceiving nature. It is this confusion which has led every 'great leap forward' of American painting into a structural and historical quagmire.

Sensing the frustrating failures of Europeans to resolve the conflict between the old and the new, Americans thought to overcome this by rejecting Cubism. But they rejected it for what it was not, thus falling into the error which Cubism was. Going beyond Cubist 'destruction' of the object to destruction of structure itself, was only to destroy the very basis upon which it might have been possible to realise a new form of art.

In any case, the specific intention of the Americans was hardly original. Much earlier a Dutchman, also caught in the mesh of the Cubists' confusion, had introduced this attitude into European art. He sought

structural 'destruction' with the ancient classical mentality, as distinct from the Americans' nineteenth century romantic approach, a romanticism induced by the Surrealist offer of expedient freedom. The works of the Americans thus became a conglomeration of the Dutchman's classical revival and Surrealism's romantic revival. The Dutchman himself had done much to confuse the two. The American canvas then appeared streaked with violent marks, where visual structure was confused to the point of utter chaos. It was as though an even earlier Dutchman [Vincent van Gogh] had returned to haunt art once more. Cubism, which had once seemed like the explosion of objects, now appeared serene compared to American painting. For structural violence is limited when confined to objects, and soon becomes exhausted. Thus when Americans extended the limits of structural destruction to structure per se, it became even more quickly exhausted. For destruction must at last consume itself once it consumes what it feeds on. To continue, one must search for some other source of creation to destroy.

In each American painting there was the persistent mingling of destructive memories of mimetic vision with the desperate struggle of the artist to create his own art. Painting became an 'arena' in which a conflict took place between two incompatible forms of art and vision, the new and old struggling for an

impossible structural unity. The conflict was implicit with every brush stroke of the painter, as he endeavoured to slash the painting into a viable unity, as if he knew that life no longer existed for painting. In this disguised replay of what Europeans had already experienced and done, Americans had buried the conditioning role of the past as deeply as possible from attention.

Each painting seemed like a blown-up fragment of some small area in most any mimetic painting of the past, revealing how little was left to painting. By quantitative excess the painter would give significance to the minute. Indeed, the old easel could no longer hold the huge canvas, which thus fell of its own weight to the floor, where the next attempt to revive painting would take place.

When the canvas was prostrate on the floor, paint was thrown, leaked across it. Certainly, it was a 'new' kind of painting, but at the cost of limiting painting even further than the ancient brush technique had. Indeed, it was the final limit, the one remaining exploitation of the old painting technique. The only step left for the past form of painting was the step to its demise. Having rejected the view that painting had reached the end of its usefulness, American painters have pushed useless painting to its end.

The next 'great leap forward' of American painting consisted of a deliberate return to the

past, this time directly repeating the Cubist retreat, to exploit the mimetic objects of urbanism instead of the studio, by repeating the old Dada elaborations of Cubism. Here art was replaced by 'show business', its stage the museum.

Almost at once American painting made still another 'leap', this one abandoning the now exhausted exploitation of the old painting technique as well as the retreat to the mimetic past. Painters now looked to a solution outside art itself, to the optical experiments of science, and exploited these. They also looked outside of painting itself for their technique, the technique characteristic of the machine. Painting became mechanised. Variations of mechanical parallel lines now appeared on the canvas. This was a regression to the lowest order of structure possible, the structure of drawing as contrasted to that of painting. And where painting had formerly been an image of structural illusion, it was now an image of structural delusion, one of visual confusion and violence. Indeed, these painters wished to 'dematerialise' the picture plane. Where preceding painters had destroyed the structure placed on the picture plane, now painters would complete that destruction by destroying the picture plane itself. The exchange between the art and the viewer, enabling one to reach even deeper into the experience of a work of art, no longer existed. There remained only one direction

the viewer as mere target whose visual experience was 'dematerialised' into aberrations.

Again one finds obscure aspirations coupled with structural ignorance. These painters wished to avoid all clues which might arouse object associations in their work. Hence, they avoid all 'horizontal shapes and lines', since, it is said, these would remind the viewer of landscape. Why not then avoid vertical lines, which might remind us of human figures? It is implicitly assumed that nature is composed of structurally opposed traits. That is, certain of its aspects will forever remain the domain of mimesis, while others will most readily respond to anyone's non-mimetic aspirations.

But it is the totality relations of any structure which determine its mimetic or non-mimetic result. If this were not so, no structure whatsoever could possibly escape mimesis, since nature has obviously used all possible aspects of structure in an unbelievable variety of creations. Here again it is evident that the artist who confuses nature's structure, confuses his art structure and remains ignorant of both mimetic and non-mimetic structure. The moment any artist structures anything, he has entered the structural totality of nature, which he then realises or destroys in his art.

This painting which abandons painting without ceasing to paint, like its predecessors is

seen in its final form from its very beginning, with all the 'newness' and 'surprise' it will ever realise. These quickly disappear in the monotony of its repetition. It is but another technical effort to revive 'painting which has reached the awaiting 'abyss'. Like all attempts to exploit science as a substitute for art, the result is useless both as art and science. Again art is replaced by 'show business'.

American painters striking out for 'total freedom' have been unaware that freedom too has its demands, that they have allotted themselves far more freedom than they were prepared to cope with. Thinking simple rejection of the past not only disposed of the old mimesis but automatically opened wide the doors to an unrestricted freedom of direct structural creation, were beliefs not to be confirmed by reality. Indeed their 'freedom' became narrowly restricted while they believed the very opposite was the fact. On the one side, this freedom became hemmed in by their innocence of what was required to free themselves from a past now ended. The very past of which they would be free, while ceasing to be the visible partner in the formation of their art, now became the silent partner in the determination of their work. On the other side, their 'freedom' was hemmed in by their being equally oblivious of what was required of them if they were directly to engage creative structure. Wishing freedom from the frustrations of mimetic structuring, they

found the 'freedom' of direct creation also fraught with frustration. The old standards of evaluating art having disappeared with the demise of the old art, the demands and difficulties of the new were, to say the least, easily under-evaluated. Hence the myth perpetuated by 'modern' art, that the artist had suddenly become free of any demands. Instead of securing freedom, artists were caught in a void between the past and the present.

As European artists had experienced much earlier, there now remained two courses open to the Americans, if they were to persist in painting. Thus, sooner or later there were those who retreated to mimetic structuring, while others thought the demon that plagued them lay in structure itself. The latter, by presuming to eliminate one or more aspects of structure, thereby thought to free painting from the structural frustrations of direct creation. What American painters had wanted to be free for, they now wanted to be free of. If earlier European artists failed to achieve a new art merely by manipulating the old art they denied, now American painters failed by denying that very structural freedom they had first demanded the freedom to manipulate.

The attempt to revive painting by resorting to the example of non-painting mediums had its counterpart in the various efforts of that other ancient art—sculpture. Sculptors saw in the efforts of the brush and

drip painters the means to release their art from what earlier observers had described as its 'state of illness'. If painters could exploit techniques of painting, why could not the same be done by sculptors? It was thus that Rodin became expediently re-glorified, as some painters had done by falsifying Monet. As the 'surprise' of brush and drip painting began to dissolve in its own monotony, it was thought that sculpture could continue what painting could not. But sculpture's techniques, like those of painting, could only be exploited so far before the exhaustion of monotony was all that remained. Hence this sculptural revival became obsolete soon after the demise of the painting which had instigated it.

American sculptors then seized on a new solution, again taking their cue from painting. As painters had mechanised their art, so sculptors would do for the structure of their own medium. With huge boxes and various bulky, angular, geometric shapes, each work appearing like an overly enlarged fragment broken from some whole, sculptors now made another attempt to revive their art. But as with the mechanisers of painting, so with the mechanisers of sculpture: there was a clear structural regression. That is, a return to that limited structural awareness characteristic of all past sculpture since its inception in the caves of France—structural perception limited to form simply displacing space. If these sculptors seemed to claim

other structural attributes for their work, such as 'exploding' or 'compressing' space, this only served to emphasise the fact of structural retreat. Unstable, fragmentary structure inevitably accompanies any regression to earlier, more limited forms of structural perception. To return to past form is not to recover it, but to confuse and then destroy it. Structural retreat means structural conflict plainly reflected in the 'tensions', if not the violence that constitute the fragmentary expression of such art. It follows that these sculptors themselves are concerned to arouse 'primitive' experiences within the structure of their work. The latter, they tell us, reminds them of 'Stonehenge', of 'totem', of 'menhir', and dim light allows them to experience the 'archaic' or 'prehistoric' in their works. When the return to primitive sources began in Cezanne's time, he warned that this 'barbarism' was the most detestable of 'decadences', far worse than the 'schools', because we could no longer pretend to be 'genuinely ignorant'. *It is evident that regression to any past form of structuring leads to the regression of even that structuring to which one regresses.*

The next effort to gain popularity for the revival of sculpture released the technique of mechanisation from clumsy structural versions of ancient sculpture. These technologists, as they will be called, seem at last to go forward without carrying the familiar past with them. Do

they not dispense with the ancient content and the ancient mediums of art? Do they not adopt the new medium for the sake of those structures unique to that medium? In short, do they not unequivocally enter the truly new?

To answer these questions requires a return to 1907. Cezanne had died only the year before, and the cataclysm of Cubism, with its numerous confusing repercussions, had not yet appeared. In that year the American architect Wright exhorted American artists to abandon the old mediums for the new one of the machine. With the latter, Wright insisted, the artists could 'create and reap anew'. He appears to have been the first to perceive this fact. A few years later, not American, but Russian artists recognised the need for the machine as the new medium of art. They called themselves Constructivists. While acknowledging that sculpture had been in deep decline for many centuries, they nevertheless insisted on reviving that art with the machine. Indeed, they insisted on being called sculptors, and as such are more properly neo-sculptors. Their intention, however, was to free this ancient medium from its ancient structural limitations.

This was done in a curious way. The structure of form was regarded as if one could replace the 'volume of mass' with some presumed volume of space supposedly contained in form. For we are told that the 'mass exists' in the space

'made visible'. It is not the perceived space which exists everywhere amidst whatever the forms anywhere which is of interest, but only an alleged space which mass supposedly occupies, 'made visible' by the neo-sculptor. It is as if the solidity volumes of all past sculpture had been concealing space, which could now be made to yield visibility. As if form alone were visible and space invisible until the alchemy of the Constructivist granted it visibility. While 'mass' somehow exchanges its visibility for the invisibility of space, the latter thus 'made visible', the consequence is that the ancient form perception of sculpture retains its structural limitations upon the work. If before, form had been the visible boundary of alleged invisible space, now form became the invisible boundary of visible space. The neo-sculptor has, in effect, implicitly stated that the space which concerns him is that bounded by the form of 'mass'. This structural confusion was the direct consequence of intending to extend structurally the antiquated hand-art of sculpture with the machine. From the first works of its leading exponent [Gabo], who to this day continues also to use both the antiquated mediums of the past, the limiting structural role of ancient sculpture has exerted its determinations upon all subsequent Constructivism.

It is instructive to contrast the neo-sculptural solution for structure with that made much earlier by both Monet and Cezanne. Monet was the first of

the new artists to clearly reject the old structural 'solidity', as he termed it, as central to the visual perception of either nature or art. Yet in their first manifesto, as late as 1920, Constructivists refer to Impressionism, implying Monet above all, as a 'purely optical reflex', therefore a 'bankruptcy'. In this they but reflected the belief of the Cubists. This view of Monet becomes all the more false in view of the fact that he anticipated the Constructivists by decades in going beyond the notion of mass or solidity. The same manifesto does not find Cezanne worth mentioning. Yet he was to go much further than Monet in anticipating the neo-sculptors' understanding of space.

Long before Constructivism Cezanne initiated the concern with going beyond a mere perception of form to a structural awareness of space. Like Monet he began by rejecting the limitations of solidity, emphasising that painting 'was not sculpture'. Not that his purpose was to reject form but to extend structurally his perception of it as revealed through his study of nature. With his unique use of geometry, his structural perception of nature developed until he discovered that the planes bounding his geometric forms need not be limited to the definition of mass simply displacing space. He discovered that form was a structural variable in nature, that planes as their own forms possessed the highly interesting structure of directly amalgamating with, not merely

displacing, the structure of space. Cezanne structurally extensionalised the 'new vision' first opened by Monet. And it was through nature that Cezanne discovered the new structural roles of both form and space.

He would have regarded the neo-sculptors' solution as false, implying an erroneous perception. Referring to the failure of his contemporaries to recognise the role of the spatial plane, Cezanne's remarks become pointed criticisms of Constructivist space theory. 'They paint', he said, 'in caves where there are no planes.' Thus Cezanne even anticipated the false notion of neo-sculptors, of convexity-mass allegedly containing invisible space in its concavity, spacing as they did 'in caves where there are no planes.' Wishing to liberate space from the convexity of form, they imprisoned space with the invisible concavity of form.

The critical difference between Monet-Cezanne and neo-sculptors is evident. The painters came to their understanding of structural extension through the direct experience of perceived nature; the neo-sculptors did not. The latter's structural theorising originated in the contrivances of thought alone. Thus Constructivists distinguish between nature's 'external world' to which, they said, the artist need not look for the means of his art, and 'mental images' with which the artist determines reality. They were not aware of the necessity of the structural extension of

nature perception. Their interest lay with an alleged space—alleged because in visual perception space is not where form is—to be then 'made visible'. Form and space are unique, not interchangeable.

It is in respect to the problem of nature that 'modern' artists fail. While such artists correctly agreed that mimetic vision had ended, they incorrectly assumed that this entailed the end of nature as a visual reality pivot for art. After the end of the object, it was reasoned, what could remain in nature to be seen? This forced the only alternative, to replace nature perception as the pivot with the artist himself, who would now appeal to his own thought as an independent reality source for art determinations. In practice this led to two serious fallacies: one in which the artist was the final arbiter of the shape which the structure of nature creations will take in art; the other in which the artist was the final arbiter of just what constituted the reality of structure, as such—if he did not eliminate it altogether. The artist and his art were in either case in the untenable position of being in conflict with the over-riding reality which nature remained.

Nature as well as history can release the artist's freedom of creation or confuse him in a destructive course. Nature could give 'liberty', as Cezanne well knew from experience, or become the source of 'destruction'. Thus it was that Cubists sought the 'destruction' of the 'solidity' of

objects, as Constructivists destroyed solidity for an alleged space. Like so many, the neo-sculptors were influenced, far more than they knew, by the false example of Cubism. Both remained subject to a past from which they thought to be free. The Cubists remained captive to visual mimesis; Constructivists were captive to structural mimesis. There were those who gained 'liberty' through nature; those who did not and became lost in 'intangible speculations', as Cezanne understood long ago. It is this confusion over nature which accounts for the rise of technologists in recent art.

Evidently neo-sculptors, Constructivists, introduced the role of technology in art; they are the precursors of current technologists. The latter do not seem to be concerned with the limited structural views of their predecessors. In fact, they seem to have little or nothing to say on the subject of structure, being primarily occupied with 'scientific' expressionism for art. Like neo-sculptors, who first expressed admiration for the engineer and scientist, the American technologists are determined to be abreast of science rather than art. They wish to be part of the scientific fraternity. They would go 'hand in hand' with the engineer and scientist.

In what way is this achieved? Does not the fundamental significance of science lie in its creative theoretical achievements respecting the physical structure of nature's unseen reality aspects? Aside from vague allusions to this

aspect of science, one is hard put to find any significant relation between fundamental science and technologists. Is not their primary interest in the by-products of engineering and science, in their remarkable instruments and materials? It is these that the technologist arbitrarily exploits into a quantitative inundation of one or all of the viewer's senses. Their goal would seem to be the *Brave New World* of which Aldous Huxley warned more than thirty years ago.

There are many reasons, good and bad, why science has been captivated by the mechanical attitude towards nature, and the scientist has become a sort of glorified engineer who thinks he is learning to 'control' nature. However, there are not any good reasons why art must join science in this disastrous delusion. Indeed, art alone can be free to create in a human sense with the machine medium, in understanding both nature and art creation; to humanise, not dehumanise. Unlike science, art can be free of the great difficulties which arise when perception must be realised through the interjection of some mechanical instrument between man and his experience of nature. No instrument whatever stands between the artist and his perception of nature. The artist remains free to engage the creative experience of man with nature, directly with his natural senses. He can make accessible ever deepening experiences of reality through that sense which ranges beyond all others, his vision.

This constitutes an important role in any art of direct creation, preventing the artist from falling into the destructive mechanical snare which now envelops most science. If, however, the mechanical is not interjected between the artist and his experience of nature, it is interjected between him and his realisation of creative art with the machine medium. How very serious this has become when most machine artists are bereft of any serious experiences with nature! The technologists are a prime example. For they turn to the gadgetry of science to replace nature as the source for the experience of art.

The overwhelming scientific discoveries from the turn of the century on led scientists to consider the world of our senses as but an illusion; the 'real' reality was structured in nature's unseen aspects. This view was to have a destructive effect upon art, coming as it did when artists generally had lost their sensory grasp of nature, unable to extend perception beyond mimetic vision. Science thus served as a very impressive support for artists wishing to dismiss the problem of perceptive nature as the pivot for man's art.

Thus the structural confusion of the Constructivists seemed to be the result of confusing art with the then new, revolutionary scientific discoveries, those startling insights into the invisible structure of the world. But what had this to do with the unique problems of art? Nothing. The artist deals with space on the

seen, not unseen, level of nature. Failing this distinction, the neo-sculptor appealed to thought to contrive his space, which, of course, would then have to be 'made visible' by the artist. This explains why Constructivist structural theory falls into the arbitrary obscurities of thought, verbalisms having no foundations in the actualities of structure. No space was ever 'made visible' by any neo-sculptor; it was there all the time. Above all, they were unaware that painting predecessors had already prepared, and correctly, for the new structural concerns of art through the example of nature.

The tragedy is that the vision of nature had hardly been exhausted by mimesis, for a whole new level of structural perception exists, nature seen as a creative process. The achievements of Monet and Cezanne made this clear. If the sciences have penetrated the seen world to that of the unseen, the artist's task is to penetrate to a deeper perception of the seen world. There is a parallel here, not identity, in these perceptual evolutions of both art and science.

This leads to an important conclusion, fundamental to the existence of man: that the reality of nature consists of many realities in the experience of man; that whatever the totality of reality may be it consists of a plural reality for man. Thus, no field alone can claim the one and only reality, which, if it exists, no man yet knows. Reality is

realised in diverse forms from the poet to the composer, the scientist, the artist and others. Each engages a unique view of nature; all are somehow related, each having originated in the same world. In this way a rich and creative understanding of reality is realised from generation to generation. If artists and scientists, because they are pivotal to human existence, fail to heed these facts now of critical importance, man may yet make a reality out of Huxley's nightmarish tale.

It has been suggested that technologists are the folk artists of the machine. If so, it makes for an odd situation. Earlier in our century the machine developed to the point of producing conditions that made folk art obsolete, as it did with all forms of hand-art such as painting and sculpture. In fact, the machine literally destroyed folk art because, in trying to imitate it, it vulgarised it. The technologists supply a curious reversal—folk artists imitating the machine. Is this another effort of the artist to recover the old security—imitation? Is this still another example of conditioning to the past, roaming on its unhampered course? Fittingly, the technologists have their Father Divine, as he has been called [Marshall McLuhan], who recently corrected his own message to read, 'The medium is the message.' The technologists do not disappoint him, while, at the same time, they continue to replace art with 'show business'.

One cannot blame the

technologists entirely for seeking relief from the romantic sighs, the nineteenth century heroics, characteristic of so many recent American efforts to revive painting or sculpture. Better to embrace the prospects of scientific expressionism. But even if art were to join in the fundamental activities of science, it would end only in futility. As absurd as if Cezanne had relied on Poincare, or Einstein upon Cezanne. Each field deals with a different aspect of reality, which makes for such distinctions of human concern as art and science.

Denouncing Monet and ignoring Cezanne, lauding engineers and scientists, the Constructivists failed to realise a structural extension of vision so necessary for the further evolution of art. Confusing art and science, the reality of art was conjured out of thought in place of the structural perception of nature. It is this false direction the present technologists pursue, explaining why they have nothing to say about the unique reality of art, being only concerned with the supposed reality pursuits of science.

Expectedly, then, technologists wonder if art as we know it 'will survive', a silent admission that they no longer experience art. When science becomes a substitute for art, art has indeed ceased to survive. To flatter scientists with imitation, however, will only compound the scientists' ignorance about art.

Since the last world war

American art has replayed, amidst mounting confusion, the efforts of European artists who first confronted the loss of the old image and later the frustrations of the new. The wish of the Americans to be unique, superior to the European past, has blinded them to their deep reliance upon the art of Europe, even to those influences they admit, such as Dada and Surrealism, which became the main pivots of American art. Tragically, Americans replayed the failures of European artists with an American disguise, and neglected its great artists who had prepared the way to the new, which Americans were uniquely fitted to grasp and continue.

How the American artist was influenced by European exiles, how he elaborated with Americanisms art attitudes that had originated in the European past, these are not the most significant facts. Somehow all this would have happened anyway. His own art past gave the American artist nothing to draw on appropriate to the needs of an artist in the twentieth century. While European art was in the throes of the old come to its end and the search for the new, American artists from Eakins, Sargent, Chase to Benton, Curry and Wood worked the old realism which was struggling more and more feebly to live. The few who left for Paris never fully engaged themselves in the turmoil of European art, but returned with a 'modern' style that came to grips with none of the great issues that were tearing

European art apart.

Almost a century before the Americans 'woke up' to the events of world art, the whole ancient history of mimesis had closed with Courbet, and the search for the new had moved in many directions. The whole cycle of 'modernism' had been traversed, with all its successes and failures, exclusively by European artists. All this was done with; the results needed only to be understood and acted upon. To replay these events was to unleash a confusion far worse than Europe ever saw, as events have proven. Thus American artists missed their opportunity, failing to see that Europe offered them what their own art past denied them, a direction of art appropriate to the needs of their own century.

The artist whose life has been formed in America utterly lacks any of the prerequisites to be taken seriously as Dadaist or Surrealist. Such art will remain the unique product of the European past, because it is indigenous to that past which was literally the ground for it. No American could ever have contrived such art. No American, however neo-Dadaist, or neo-Surrealist, has ever achieved the genuine article—the black genius which the European artist produced.

The American is not the total living product of, his whole life has not been surrounded and formed by the ruins and remains of twenty-five centuries of aristotelian culture, from Greece to Italy to France, where it began to break down

1: Charles Tomlinson, 'Face and Image' in *American Scenes*, Oxford University Press, London 1966, with the permission of the author

Variations on a Theme by Albert von Schirnding
by R. C. Kenedy

in the last century. It is this very breakdown, which became for European artists the source and the object of a vacillating, violent hatred, which erupted in many arts, particularly in Dada and Surrealism. It was this traumatic experience alone which made such art possible. The American artist was without such experiences, which explains why his efforts to effect such art did not come off. What was tragic for the European artist could only be an affectation by the American. While thinking thus to free himself, he only replayed the European past in the manner of old Hollywood, wide-screen, sound and all.

He is not yet free, having failed to seek *his* freedom, having tried to be what he *is not* and cannot be. The evidence is in himself and all around him.

To understand himself the American artist must comprehend the whole of the European past, especially the last hundred years. He must understand how Europe's great artists, from Greece to Italy and Paris, created and sustained the amazing creations of mimetic art, until its final exuberant burst out of Gustave Courbet. He must fully understand the last two giants of European art, Claude Monet and Paul Cezanne, who almost completed the way from the old to the new.

He must see that when it became necessary to give up the last vestiges of mimesis that lingered in art, European artists felt the whole thrust of

the aristotelian past, which left them in the confusion of violence. He must see how the artists of Europe, after having faced the future, turned their backs to it, to face the past in moral combat. He must see how, when the moment arrived to let go the past so as to enter the new completely, the European artist felt an ambivalent hatred for his whole past, as if he knew that it had suddenly washed over him, drowning out his courage to pursue the new. He expressed the violence of his defeat with Dada and Surrealism.

Not burdened by these tragic experiences, the American artist was free—he did not need to be freed—to accept and continue the new to which Europe had given birth. The recent remark by an American artist that he hoped European art would go 'down the drain', profoundly ignorant as it is, does, if crudely, indicate the American's remoteness from the European past. This example was chosen, however, because it is just this ignorance that has so far defeated the American in search of his freedom to be an artist. His advantage can as well be his defeat.

The American artist lives where the life needed for the new exists. None of this has yet taken place in the general consciousness of the American artist. Instead he has gathered in his outstretched, empty arms that which pummels him from every direction, all beyond his control and understanding. He has become a man in flight from himself, if not from art.

Hence the instability of the American artist, ceaselessly searching for an art that will at last free the artist in him to be what he has not yet become. Meanwhile, Europe runs pell-mell through him, whether he wishes it or not, waiting for him to open his eyes to its creative and destructive forces with all the understanding he can give it, to meet the challenges of the new and truly world art born in the remarkable achievements of two French artists.

The American artist lives where the space is as open from the past, as open to the new, as was the space when the first Europeans came to this continent to engage nature and man anew. It is such an engagement that art now demands.

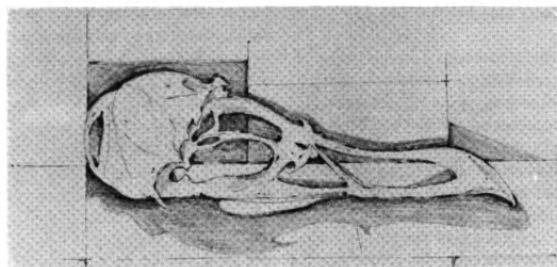
'Between the image of it and your face: Between is the unchartable country, variable, virgin terror and territory.'¹

Red Wing, December 1967

Stars: are sweat-
Beads on the wind
Wrinkled forehead
Of the night. The
Armpit of the sky
Perspires: light.



Drawings by Charles Tomlinson, 1968. Above: Horizontal Skull, ink and water-colour. Below: Seagull Skull, pencil. Centre right: Rugged Skull Shape, ink and water-colour. Far right: Blunt Skull, ink and water-colour. Photos: Bruce Chatwin



Skulls. Finalities. They emerge towards new beginnings from undergrowth. Along with stones, fossils, flint keel-scrapers and spoke-shaves, along with bowls of clay pipes heel-stamped with their makers' marks, comes the rural detritus of cattle skulls brought home by children. They are moss-stained, filthy with soil. Washing them of their mottlings, the hand grows conscious of weight, weight sharp with jaggednesses. Suspend them from a nail and one feels the bone-clumsiness go out of them: there is weight still in their vertical pull downwards from the nail, but there is also a hanging fragility. The two qualities fuse

and the brush translates this fusion as wit, where leg-like appendages conclude the skulls' dangling mass. Shadow explores them. It sockets the eye-holes with black. It reaches like fingers into the places one cannot see. Skulls are a keen instance of this duality of the visible: it borders what the eye cannot make out, it transcends itself with the suggestion of all that is there besides what lies within the eyes' possession: it cannot be possessed. Flooded with light, the skull is at once manifest surface and labyrinth of recesses. Shadow reaches down out of this world of helmeted cavities and declares it.

One sees. But not merely the passive mirrorings of the retinal mosaic—nor, like Ruskin's blind man struck suddenly by vision, without memory or conception. The senses, reminded by other seeings, bring to bear on the act of vision their pattern of images; they give point and place to an otherwise naked and homeless impression. It is the mind sees. But what it sees consists not solely of that by which it is confronted grasped in the light of that which it remembers. It sees possibility.

Association enters into the future opened up by drawing. Left to itself, it would breed incrustations and nostalgias until, at last, aesthetic pleasure would be no more than the pleasure of recognition, the tactics of drawing the tactics of shock. Death associates with the skull, but how much there is beside death to withstand and balance the tug in a single direction. In *Rugged Skull Shape*, the sense of disintegration lays hold on the forms at the bottom of the picture. If it succeeds, the life

of line and shadow war the incipient deliquescence to a truce.

The skulls of birds, hard to the touch, are delicate to the eye. Egg-like in the round of the skull itself and as if the spherical shape were the result of an act like glass-blowing, they resist the eyes' imagination with the blade of the beak which no lyrical admiration can attenuate to frailty.

The skull of nature is recess and volume. The skull of art—of possibility—is recess, volume and also lines—lines of containment, lines of extension. In seeing, one already extends the retinal impression searchingly and instantaneously. Brush and pen extend the search beyond the instant, touch opening a future. Volume, knived across by the challenge of a line, the raggedness of flaking bone countered by ruled, triangular facets, a cowskull opens a visionary field, a play of universals.

A complete author index to 'LEF' and a further selection of translations from later issues of the magazine will appear in Form 11.

Of the numerous literary journals taking part in the cultural battle that raged in the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1932 *LEF* was the most exciting and most controversial. From one literary camp to the next polemics on the nature of the new art needed for the new society were carried on in an atmosphere that frequently involved personal attacks, bombastic self-aggrandisement, and preposterous claims to a monopoly of Communist culture. This type of literary campaigning was not new for the Futurists. To establish their presence on the literary scene their earliest pre-war publications and manifestoes had been designed to shock established literary and social conventions, as in the famous lines of the manifesto 'A Slap in the Face of Public Taste' (1912): 'Only *we are the face of our Times*. The horn of time is sounded by us in literary art. The past is cramped. The Academy and Pushkin are less comprehensible than hieroglyphs. Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy etc. etc. from the Steamer of modernity.'

One of the features of early Futurism was the use of 'trans-sense' language—a semi-comprehensible collation of nonsense-words and neologisms—a play on words, their roots and suffixes.

The Revolution forced all artists to reappraise their aesthetic aims. The early Futurists, and Mayakovsky in particular, had foreseen that

new demands would need to be met, and for the first time Futurism underwent a profound change. The Futurists were the only art group to cooperate wholeheartedly with the new regime, though for the Party this was regarded very much as a matter of convenience until the chaotic period of the Civil War ended, and more attention could be given to Party policy in the arts.

On March 15th, 1918, the Futurists issued the *Futurists' Paper No. 1* from the 'Poets' Cafe'. It continued the attacks on old art, and demanded the separation of art from the state, the abolition of titles, ranks, diplomas etc., artists' control of all art schools, galleries, theatres etc., universal art education, and the requisitioning and fair redistribution of all 'aesthetic stockpiles'. David Burliuk, Vasilii Kamensky and Mayakovsky announced 'The 3rd Revolution—the Revolution of the Spirit'. Futurist aims were still idealistic, lyrical, and partially utopian. Burliuk called for equitable distribution of art studios among all the various art tendencies to promote free competition between them.

The tone changed significantly in the paper *Art of the Commune* (19 issues, December 1918 to April 1919), the first of the three successive post-Revolutionary Futurist journals. The editor was Osip Brik. This paper was officially the organ of the Section of Fine Arts (IZO) of the Narkompros, and was therefore

published by the authority of A. V. Lunacharsky, the first Soviet Commissar for Education. As no other body of artists was yet willing to cooperate with the Party (the 'proletarian writers' were not yet sufficiently organized) the Futurists managed to secure control of leading positions within IZO (along with other 'left' artists), and for a short time Futurism became the *de facto* Party-supported art tendency. The 'old knights' of Futurism, as Chuzhak called them—the poets Khlebnikov, Kruchonykh, Kamensky, were replaced in the vanguard of Futurism by new men, principally the art theorists Osip Brik, Nikolai Punin, Boris Kushner. Artists Kasimir Malevich and Ivan Puni, the leading Formalist theoretician Viktor Shklovsky, and the artist head of the Petrograd IZO Natan Al'tman also made valuable contributions to the paper. Mayakovsky remained as leader of the new-found movement, but his very first Futurist friend, the artist David Burliuk, had emigrated in 1918, and the other two Burliuk brothers, also artists, had been killed in the War. The 'Ego-Futurists'—Igor Severyanin, Vadim Shershenevich and others—after a brief period of cooperation with the main group of 'Cubo-Futurists', split away from them through aesthetic differences of opinion.

For a few hectic months the new Futurists trumpeted their claims on Soviet art. 'Old art' continued to be attacked. The man-made object became a cult—the physical presence of

material things, whether made by artists or factory workers, was held to be more valuable than any 'idea' behind them. 'Embellishment' was to be replaced by participation in production processes, imitation of natural objects by creation of man-made objects. Art was to be 'organised', instead of the destructive 'bomb-throwing' of early Futurism, as Punin put it. The Futurists claimed to represent the proletariat (they thought it axiomatic that Futurism should be the art counterpart of the social revolution), and called on the political controllers of the Narkompros, for example, to exclude from the Literary Arts Section all writers not of a 'left art' tendency, i.e. they demanded official adoption. Brik explained that proletarian art was not 'art for the proletariat', or 'art of the proletariat', but 'art created by an artist with talent and a proletarian consciousness'. Kushner led the Com-Fut organisation, founded in January 1919, which attempted to fuse Communism and Futurism into a single way of life. At this stage the Futurists still emphasised the importance of the artist's skill, defended art that was 'not intelligible to the masses', and still talked of the 'creation' of art objects. The idea of 'collective creation' was formed, i.e. that the individual artists should be thought of as expressing the feeling of the collective through an intuitive consciousness of the collective will. This notion was the genesis of the later theory of the 'social command' in art.

There were certain conflicting views within *Art of the Commune*, for example Punin hopefully called for the distinction between 'left' and 'right' artists to be abolished, so that the artist's sole criterion should be his talent, while at the same time calls were being made for a 'left art' dictatorship in Soviet culture; and while claiming that Futurism was proletarian art Punin hinted that true art could always only be led by an avant-garde elite. Malevich's Suprematist theories of pure form and colour co-existed with Tatlin's preference for texture and relief in art objects.

The period of *Art of the Commune* was one of real influence and power in Soviet art for the Futurists, but one that found them rather uncertain and sometimes divided about the future trend of Futurism. The attacks on old art, on Symbolism and classical realist art, Shklovsky's and Brik's Formalist/Futurist ideas, the theoretical justification of the early Futurist experiments as necessary groundwork for the future and the defence of the 'difficultness' of Futurist art: all these were distasteful to the proletariat, to the old bourgeoisie, and to the party leaders, including Lenin, whose tastes in art were generally very conservative. But certain ideas in *Art of the Commune* pointed the way to a further adaptation of Futurism to suit the changing social conditions. Mayakovsky stated in the poem 'Poet worker': 'I also am a factory. And if I have

no chimneys then perhaps it is harder for me. Who is higher—the poet or technician, who leads the people to material benefit? Both—their hearts are similar motors, their souls the same cunning engine. We are equal.'

Brik anticipated production art as early as December 1918: 'Go to the factories, this is the only task for artists. Creation of beauty is necessary not only for exhibitions and private mansions, but it must be brought into production . . . Artists must become producers. We must think less about beauty and create real things.' Kushner said that 'art is simply work, expertise, a profession, a craft'. Vs. Dmitriev took the most extreme view at the time, and declared: 'Art, painting as it was previously understood, is now giving way to *craft* . . . Craft—the manufacture of furniture, utensils, signs, clothes—as basic creation in life, is becoming the foundation for new inspiration, is becoming the basis and meaning of art . . . The artist is now simply a constructor and technician, a leader and foreman . . . In this *craft* which we are going over to we need a refined knowledge of materials, stubborn experience, we must get used to stone, wood, metal, we must have a faultless, exact eye, and a muscular arm.' (March 1919).

Punin said that 'in the 'creation of life' and the production of new things art cannot be in any way useful . . . it contradicts the general, indubitable principle of *utility* in modern production, for

aesthetics does not lead life but trails along in its wake . . . the construction of a thing is *totally* dependent on its *intended purpose*, artists can only add to it something superfluous from this point of view, for everything that is good in it is made without the artist's aid . . . the unity of the principle of construction, utility, will create beauty, and beauty will create us as artists. All modern things are therefore beautiful and good, because the combination of their parts, the necessity of each part, is dictated solely by usefulness, and the more basically this principle is applied, the better the thing will be.' (January 1919). Significantly it was a practising artist who predicted most exactly the shape of things to come. Punin rather sadly concluded that the artist would be left with only petty applied art such as designing trade-marks. In the last issue of *Art of the Commune* Punin correctly predicted the trend to the eventual anti-art movement of production art, and the tendency to liquidate art altogether as a separate discipline.

Futurism had now passed from the early 'embellishment of life' theory to advocacy of art in productional processes, and the notion of the artist as a constructor of materials had now been raised.

Art of the Commune was closed by the Narkompros after numerous attacks on the Futurists' strident demands for art dictatorship. Mayakovsky's poem 'It is too early to rejoice' (No. 2, December 1918) had,

if taken literally, called for the physical destruction of old art ('And does Tsar Alexander still stand on Uprising Square? Dynamite it! . . . Why has Pushkin not been attacked, along with the other generals of the classics?'). With this poem, and a following one in the next issue, in mind, Lunacharsky wrote the article 'A Spoonful of Antidote' in issue No. 4 (December 1918), condemning the destructive bent towards past art of some of the Futurists, stressing that the Narkompros must be impartial to all art groups, and rejecting Futurist demands to be acknowledged as the official State Art school. Even Lunacharsky, liberal and tolerant though he was, could not condone the militant exclusiveness and dogmatism of the new Futurist platform.

A small booklet of Futurist-inspired articles called *Art in Production* (published by the Art-Productional Council of the Section of Fine Arts of the Narkompros, 1921) developed the theory of bringing art into production, but retained also the early Futurist 'transformationalist' ideas of transforming life itself through art. The term 'production-art' was now firmly established.

The first years of Lenin's New Economic Policy, from 1921, were a bitter disappointment to the left artists. NEP was regarded as a betrayal of the social revolution, and attacks were also made on the 'NEPmen' in art—the traditional writers from the intelligentsia whom Trotsky called the 'fellow-travellers'.

In the atmosphere of considerable artistic freedom and relaxed social conditions Mayakovsky attempted to galvanise left artists into concerted action to maintain the momentum of the new art. Futurists had lost their domination of Russian art, and new groups were now contesting for influence (ironically summarised in the manifesto 'What is LEF fighting for?').

Mayakovsky described *LEF* in his autobiography *I Myself* thus: '1923. We organise *LEF*. *LEF* is the envelopment of a great social theme by all the weapons of Futurism. This definition does not exhaust the matter of course—I refer those interested to *LEF* itself. Those who united closely together: Brik, Aseev, Kushner, Arvatov, Tret'yakov, Rodchenko, Lavinsky. ... One of the slogans, one of the great achievements of *LEF*—the de-aesthetisation of the productional arts, constructivism. A poetic supplement: agit-art and economic agitation: the advertisement.' Mayakovsky adds that he considered the latter type of work 'poetry of the highest quality'.

The editorial office of *LEF* was the 2nd floor Moscow flat of Osip and Lily Brik, to which people were constantly coming and going, and where lengthy discussions were frequently conducted. The piano was both played and used as a flat surface for drawing. Mayakovsky also often drew placards there on the bare

floor.

LEF stands for 'Left Front of the Arts'. But who were the 'left' artists exactly? The 'we' of the *LEF* collective editorial board contained several new adherents. Arvatov was a theorist and critic, who, with Brik, supplied the theoretical reasoning behind the Constructivists. Aseev was a poet very close to Mayakovsky, who also made experiments in prose. Chuzhak and Tret'yakov supplied the 'heavy' theoretical reasoning behind *LEF*'s programme, and Chuzhak in particular stressed the importance of Marxist dialectics in the theory of contemporary art. He resigned from the editorial board after issue No. 3, dissatisfied with the persistence of the old Futurists' influence within the journal, and with the lack of emphasis on Marxist political thought by Futurist art and art theory. Tret'yakov was also a poet and dramatist, and experimented with new forms such as the 'travel-film'. Aseev, Chuzhak and Tret'yakov had come from the Far East, where Futurist propaganda had been carried on simultaneously with the campaign in Russia. Brik and Kushner survived from *Art of the Commune*. Kushner played a lesser role now, but Brik was as always one of the most active organisers behind the scenes; his own literary output was limited, his contributions in *LEF* being experimental prose and the theory of Constructivism, but one of his most important roles was to be a link between Futurism and the Russian Formalist school. The

Formalists contributed to *LEF* from time to time, chiefly Viktor Shklovsky with valuable studies of Babel' and Pil'nyak, and a theoretical article on the novel, and the linguist Formalist Grigorii Vinokur, giving several studies of Futurism and language. Yuri Tynyanov also published an important article on the development of Formalist theory: 'On the Literary Fact'. Issue No. 5 of *LEF* was chiefly composed of Formalist articles on Lenin and language (shortly after Lenin's death) by Shklovsky, Tynyanov, Boris Eikhenbaum, Lev Yakubinsky, V. Kazansky and Boris Tomashevsky.

The other major group participating in *LEF* were the Constructivists. Constructivism was started as a conscious movement in 1920, its origins being the 'art in production' theories of *Art of the Commune*, and the Cubo-Futurist style of painting from which emerged the three-dimensional abstract sculptures of Tatlin and Rodchenko. The latter designed all the covers of *LEF*, with bold square lettering in two colours, that of No. 2 being one of the first experiments in photo-montage—one minor aspect of Constructivist activity. Rodchenko worked with Mayakovsky directly from 1923 on placards, agit-posters, and designs for Mayakovsky's books and stage productions. Lavinsky contributed practical designs, and Lyubov Popova. Varvara Stepanova (Rodchenko's wife), as well as Rodchenko himself published designs for textiles as one of the spheres of production in

which the artist could usefully take part. Stepanova and Popova, and Tatlin too, actually went to work in textile factories to put production-art theory into practice. The three Vesnin brothers printed their Constructivist architectural designs. The terms 'production-art' and 'Constructivism' were now used interchangeably.

Some of the original Futurist poets contributed; Khlebnikov, Kruchonykh, Kamensky (whose 'The Juggler' helped stir up opposition to *LEF* from hostile critics in other camps), and Mayakovsky himself printed the important poem 'About That' in issue No. 1. Mayakovsky also drafted the manifestoes in No. 1 (published collectively) and most of the other editorial material. The survival in *LEF* of the experimental poets was one of the factors causing constant disputes within the journal. The new 'production artists' considered that it was time for the 'trans-sense' period of Futurist verse to be quietly consigned to the archives.

Other notable occasional contributors were rather outside the scope of the 'left front': Pasternak, who had been connected with the Futurists from their very early days, Babel (extracts from *Red Cavalry* appeared before publication of the book) and the prose of Artem Veseluy. Finally there was an article each from film directors Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov on the theory of the 'montage of attractions' and 'eccentrism', and the 'cinema-eye', each of which has substantial

connections with the theory of left art.

The 'Left Front of the Arts' was therefore a rather heterogeneous grouping of artists in many fields who felt that the new art spread over and blurred the old dividing lines of art. The term 'left artist' could only be defined roughly as an artist influenced by Futurist, Formalist or Constructivist theories on art, i.e. a general hostility to imitation of life, in favour of 'creation' or 'construction' of life; hostility to realism in art, or a tendency to utilitarianism; rejection of 'belles-lettres' in literature, of 'pure' or 'easel-art' in painting, and of 'applied art' (in the sense of art 'applied' to a ready-made object). The term 'left' artist does not, of course, imply any specific political allegiance on the artists' part. The range of theories, too numerous to discuss in detail, went from the 'trans-sense' poetic experimentation of some of the Futurists, supported by a part of Formalist theory, all of which was impatiently dismissed by the most rapidly evolving section of Constructivists as 'laboratory work', to the 'production art' theory of these same Constructivists, that was already not only an anti-aesthetic tendency, but one leading rapidly to an anti-art programme. As Shklovsky later said: 'Often, in destroying ornamentation, we also destroyed the construction.' This latter tendency had already dismissed the terms 'creation' and 'inspiration' (still used in *Art of the*

Commune) for 'production' and 'technical expertise'. The 'creation of life' now became 'construction of life', and the efficiency of the machine was to be the ideal standard for human production (by artists). In short, the 'art *in* production' of 1921 had now become simply art as production. The making of an art 'thing' was to be of the same nature as the manufacture of a pair of shoes or a motor-car. 'Organisation' or 'tailorisation' of art meant that the only justification left for the existence of the artist would be his traditional feeling for the possibilities of his materials, organised into forms according to a utilitarian principle. This would be his only advantage over the factory specialist-engineer.

The literary Constructivists, headed by Zelinsky and Sel'vinsky, published a manifesto in the last issue of *LEF* in which they extended the theory to the realm of literature, adding to it the principle of 'loadification' of the literary language.

LEF ceased publication with the single issue of 1925. The number of copies of the journal printed declined from 5,000 to 1,500 for the last issue. In his autobiography for 1924 Mayakovsky claimed that in spite of falling printing figures the activity of *LEF* was still increasing. He claimed that the figures showed 'just the usual bureaucratic lack of interest in the separate journals of the large and cold-blooded mechanism of GIZ (State Publishing House). But the fact was that *LEF*'s programme

was just not popular with the public (the old accusation of 'unintelligibility to the masses' was still being flung at the Futurists) who still preferred the literature of the 'fellow-travellers'. After high initial hopes *LEF*, with all its internal contradictions and under pressure from elsewhere, seemed to exhaust for the time being the evolution of left art, and publication was terminated by the State Publishing House.

Mayakovsky revived the journal in 1927 under the title *New LEF*, which was, he said, to be 'left of *LEF*'. 24 monthly issues were published until the end of 1928, but Mayakovsky, for rather mysterious reasons (probably a disillusionment with the relentless continuing anti-art trend of left art) resigned the editorship to Tret'yakov in July 1928. *New LEF* took production art to its logical limit. A new emphasis on the 'fact' as the sole valid material for literature, and on the writer as the craftsman of language, just like a craftsman in any form of industrial activity, became almost the sole theme of this latest evolution of Futurism. Art genres now considered most worthy were those comprising 'factography', i.e. the newspaper report, the diary, the travel-sketch, the documentary film, etc. This *Literature of Fact* was collated in a book of that title (made of articles drawn mostly from *New LEF*) published in 1929 under the editorship of Chuzhak.

Futurism had therefore passed through a whole revolution in

outlook, from the original 'art for art' view of the earliest experimental verse, through 'art in production', utilitarian or 'production' art and Constructivism, and on to mere reportage or 'literature of fact'. As an art movement Futurism had destroyed itself, partly in a voluntary attempt to change with the changing times, and partly through public and Party hostility or indifference. In 1930 Mayakovsky committed suicide and in 1932 all writers were forced to join the single Union of Soviet Writers, and all previous groupings were abolished. The articles in *LEF* show us left art theory and practice somewhere rather past the middle stage of its evolution.



Cover of 'LEF' No. 1, by
Alexandr Rodchenko

1905. Then reaction. Reaction set in with the autocracy and redoubled oppression of the merchant and factory-owner. Reaction created, art, life—in its own image and taste. The art of the Symbolists (Bely, Bal'mont), of the Mystics (Chulkov, Gippius) and of the sexual psychopaths (Rozanov)—the life of the petty bourgeois and Philistines. *The revolutionary parties waged war on reality, art rose up to wage war on taste.* The first impressionistic outburst—in 1909 (the collection 'The Fishpond of Judges'). The outburst was fanned for three years. It was fanned into Futurism. The first book of the union of Futurists—'A Slap in the Face of Public Taste' (1914—Burlyuk D., Kamensky, Kruchonykh, Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov). The old order correctly assessed the experimental work of the future dynamiters. *The Futurists were answered with castigations of censure, prohibition of expression of views, with the barking and howling of all the press.* Capitalists, of course, never patronised our whip-lines, our splinter-strokes. Surrounding diocesan life made the Futurists jeer with their yellow shirts and painted faces. These scarcely 'academic' devices of the struggle, a presentiment of our subsequent range, immediately scared off the adhering aesthetisers (Kandinsky, Knave of Diamonds group and others). So, whoever had nothing to lose tagged on to Futurism, or

draped themselves with its name (Shershenevich, Igor Severyanin, the Ass's Tail and others). The Futurist movement, led by people in art, who scarcely understood politics, was sometimes also painted with the colours of anarchy. Alongside people of the future went those trying to look young, screening their aesthetic putrefaction with the left flag. The 1914 war was the first test of our social spirit. *Russian Futurists once and for all broke with the poetic imperialism of Marinetti, having already whistled at him earlier during his visit to Moscow (1913).* *The Futurists, first and alone in Russian art, smothering the clanking of the poets of war (Gorodetsky, Gumilev and others), execrated war, fought against it with all the weapons of art (Mayakovsky's 'War and Peace').* War set off the Futurist purge (the 'Mezzonine' poets broke away, Severyanin went to Berlin). *War forced us to see the future revolution ('The Cloud in Trousers').* The February revolution deepened the purge, split Futurism into 'right' and 'left'. The rights became echoes of democratic fascinations (their names are in 'Fashionable Moscow'). The lefts, waiting for October, were christened the 'bolsheviks of art' (Mayakovsky, Kamensky, Burlyuk, Kruchonykh). Joining this Futurist group were the first production-Futurists (Brik, Arvatov), and the Constructivists

(Rodchenko, Lavinsky). *The Futurists from the very outset, even while still in the Kshesinsky Palace, tried to come to an understanding with groups of worker-writers (the future Proletkul't), but these writers thought, looking around at things, that revolutionary spirit is totally encompassed by agitational content alone, and in the realm of organisation remained complete reactionaries, quite unable to weld themselves together.* *October purged, shaped, reorganised. Futurism became the left front of art. We became 'We'.* October taught us through work. Already on October 25th we set to work. It was obvious—at the sight of five members of the hot-footed intelligentsia they didn't ask us much about our aesthetic beliefs. We created, at that time revolutionary, 'IZO', 'TEO', 'MUZO'; we led participants in the storming of the academy. Together with the organisational work we gave the first things of art of the October era (Tatlin—Monument to the 3rd International, 'Mystery-Bouffe' staged by Meierkhol'd, Kamensky's 'Stenka Razin'). We did not aesthetise, making things for self-admiration. We applied acquired skills for agitational-art work demanded by the revolution (placards for RosTA, newspaper feuilletons etc.). In order to propagate our ideas by agitation we organised the paper 'Art of the Commune' and a tour of factories and workshops with discussions and readings of

our things. *Our ideas gained a workers' audience.* The Vyborg region organised the Com-Fut. The impetus of our art showed our strength of organisation of fortresses of the left front throughout the whole RSFSR. Parallel to this was the work of our Far-Eastern comrades (the journal 'Creation'), who asserted theoretically the social necessity of our movement, our social unity with October (Chuzhak, Assev, Pal'mov, Tret'yakov). 'Creation', after undergoing all sorts of persecutions, took upon itself the whole struggle for the new culture in the confines of the Far Eastern Republic and in Siberia. Gradually becoming disillusioned in their belief in the nine-day wonder existence of Soviet power the academics, singly and in bunches, began to knock at the doors of the Narkompros. Not risking using them in responsible work Soviet power gave them, or, more exactly, their European names, the cultural and educational backwaters. From these backwaters began the baiting of left art, which culminated brilliantly in the closure of 'Art of the Commune' etc. The authorities, busy with the war fronts and devastation, hardly enquired into aesthetic disputes, trying simply to keep the rear from making too much noise, and to make us see reason out of respect for the 'most eminent'. Now there is a respite from war and hunger. *LEF is obliged to demonstrate the panorama of art of the RSFSR, to set perspectives and to occupy our rightful place.*

Art of the RSFSR on 1st February 1923:

1) Prolet-art. One part has degenerated into trite writers, wearying you with their bureaucratic language and repetition of their political ABC. Another part fell under the total influence of academism, reminding you of October only by the names of their organisation. The third and best part, leaving behind the rose-coloured Belys, is re-learning with our things as guides, and, we believe, will go further with us.

2) Official literature. In the theory of art each has his own personal opinion: Osinsky praises Akhmatova, Bukharin —Pinkerton. In practice they simply deck out the magazines with all the names in circulation.

3) The 'latest' literature (the Serapions, Pil'nyak and so on), having mastered and diluted our devices, lard them with the Symbolists and respectfully and ponderously adapt them to facile NEP-reading.

4) Change of landmarks. From the West the invasion of the enlightened venerables is drawing night. Alexei Tolstoy is already polishing up the white horse of the complete collection of his works ready for his triumphant entry into Moscow.

5) And finally, violating the blessedly sedate perspective—in various corners the *individual 'lefts'*. People and organisations (INKHUK, VKHUTEMAS, GITIS of Meierkhol'd, OPOYAZ and others). Some strive heroically on their own to raise up over-weighty virgin soil, others with their file-sharp lines still sever

the shackles of antiquation. *LEF must collect together the forces of the left. LEF must review its ranks, rejecting the superfluous past. LEF must unite a front for the explosion of antiquity, for the fight for the embracement of the new culture.*

We shall resolve the problems of art not by the majority of voices of the mythical left front, which has existed up to now only as an idea, but by deed, by the energy of our enterprising group which year after year has been leading the work of the lefts and guiding it ideologically all the time. The Revolution taught us a lot.

LEF knows:

LEF will:

In working for the strengthening of the victories of the October Revolution, while reinforcing left art, *LEF will agitate art with the ideas of the commune, opening up for art the road to tomorrow. LEF will agitate the masses with our art, acquiring organised strength in them. LEF will support our theories with active art, raising it to the highest working skill. LEF will fight for the art-construction of life.*

We do not lay claim to a monopolisation of revolutionism in art. We shall find things out by competition. We believe that: by the correctness of our agitation, by the strength of the things we make, *we shall prove: we are on the correct road to the future.*

N. Aseev, B. Arvatov, O. Brik, B. Kushner, V. Mayakovsky, S. Tret'yakov, N. Chuzhak

This is addressed to us.

Comrades in LEF!

We know that we, the 'left' master-craftsmen, are the best workers in today's art. Up to the Revolution we piled up highly correct draft-plans, clever theorems and cunning formulae, for the forms of the new art.

One thing is clear: the slippery, globular belly of the bourgeoisie was a bad site for building.

During the Revolution we amassed a great many truths, we studied life, we received the task of building a very real structure for the centuries ahead.

A world shaken by the booming of war and revolution is difficult soil for grandiose constructions.

We temporarily filed away our formulae, while helping to consolidate the days of revolution.

Now the globe of the bourgeois paunch exists no longer.

Sweeping away the old with the revolution we cleared the field for the new structures of art at the same time.

The earthquake is over. Cemented by spilt blood the USSR stands firmly.

It is time to start *big things*.

The seriousness of our attitude to ourselves is the one solid foundation for our work.

Futurists!

Your services to art are great; but don't dream of living on the dividend of yesterday's revolutionary spirit. Show by your work today that your outburst is not the desperate wailing of the wounded intelligentsia, but a struggle, labouring shoulder to shoulder with all those who are straining

towards the victory of the commune.

Constructivists!

Be on your guard against becoming just another aesthetic school.

Constructivism in art alone is nothing. It is a question of the very existence of art.

Constructivism must become the supreme formal engineering of the whole of life. Constructivism in a performance of shepherd

pastorals is nonsense. Our ideas must be developed on the basis of present-day things.

Production artists!

Be on your guard against becoming applied-artist handicraftsmen.

In teaching the workers learn from the worker. In dictating aesthetic orders to the factory from your studios you become simply customers.

Your school is the factory floor. *Formalists!*

The formal method is the key to the study of art. Every flea of a rhyme must be accounted for. But avoid catching fleas in a vacuum. Only together with the sociological study of art will your work become not only interesting, but necessary.

Students!

Avoid giving out the chance distortions of the dilettante striving for innovation, for the 'de:nier cri' of art. The innovation of the dilettante is a steamship on the legs of a chicken.

Only in craftsmanship have you the right to throw out the old.

Everyone together!

As you go from theory to practice remember your craftsmanship, your technical skill.

Hackwork on the part of the

young, who have the strength for colossal things, is even more repulsive than the hackwork of the flabby little academics.

Masters and students of 'LEF'!
The question of our very existence is being decided. The very greatest idea will perish if we do not mould it skilfully.

The most skilful forms will remain black threads in blackest night, will evoke merely the annoyance and irritation of those who stumble over them if we do not apply them to the shaping of the present day, the day of revolution.

LEF is on guard.

LEF is the defender for all inventors.

LEF is on guard.

LEF will throw off all the old fuddy-duddies, all the ultra-aesthetes, all the copiers.

LEF

Rodchenko was an abstract artist. He has become a Constructivist and production artist. Not just in name, but in practice.

There are artists who have rapidly adopted the fashionable jargon of Constructivism.

Instead of 'composition' they say 'construction'; instead of 'to write' they say 'to shape'; instead of 'to create'—'to construct'. But they are all doing the same old thing: little pictures, landscapes, portraits. There are others who do not paint pictures, and work in production, who also talk about material, texture, construction, but once again out come the very same age-old ornamental and applied types of art, little cockerels and flowers, or circles and dashes.

And there are still others, who do not paint pictures, and do not work in production—they 'creatively apprehend' the 'eternal laws' of colour and form. For them the real world of things does not exist, they wash their hands of it. From the heights of their mystical insights they contemptuously gaze upon anyone who profanes the 'holy dogmas' of art through work in production, or any other sphere of material culture.

Rodchenko is no such artist. Rodchenko sees that the problem of the artist is not the abstract apprehension of colour and form, but the practical ability to resolve any task of shaping a concrete object. Rodchenko knows that there aren't once-for-all set laws of construction, but that every new task must be resolved afresh, starting from the conditions set by the

individual case.

Rodchenko knows that you won't do anything by sitting in your own studio, that you must go into real work, carry your own organising talent where it is needed—into production.

Many who have glanced at Rodchenko's work will say: 'Where's the Constructivism in this? Where's he any different from applied art?' To them I say: the applied artist embellishes the object,

Rodchenko shapes it. The applied artist looks at the object as a place for applying his own ornamental composition, while Rodchenko sees in the object the material that underlies the design. The applied artist has nothing to do if he can't embellish an object—for Rodchenko a complete lack of embellishment is a necessary condition for the proper construction of the object.

It is not aesthetic considerations, but the purpose of the object which defines the organisation of its colour and form.

At the moment things are hard for the Constructivist-production-artist. Artists turn their backs on him.

Industrialists wave him away in annoyance. The man in the street goggles and, frightened, whispers: 'Futurist!' It needs tenacity and willpower not to lapse into the peaceful bosom of canonised art, to avoid starting to 'create' like the 'fair copy' artists, or to concoct ornaments for cups and handkerchiefs, or daub pictures for cosy dining-rooms and bedrooms.

Rodchenko will not go astray. He can spit on the artists and

philistines and as for the industrialists he will break through and prove to them that only the productional-constructive approach to the object gives the highest proficiency to production.

Of course, this will not happen quickly. It will come when the question of 'quality' moves to the forefront; but now, when everything is concentrated on 'quantity', what talk can there be of proficiency!

Rodchenko is patient. He will wait; meanwhile he is doing what he can—he is revolutionising taste, clearing the ground for the future non-aesthetic, but expedient, material culture.

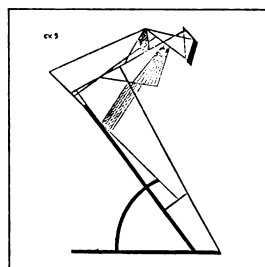
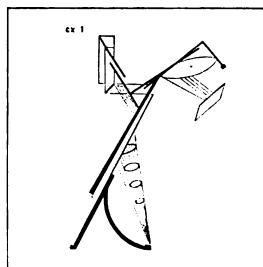
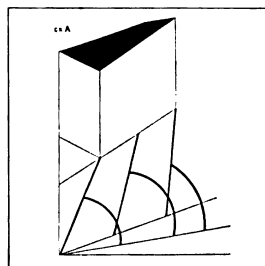
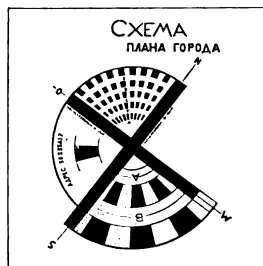
Rodchenko is right. It is evident to anyone with his eyes open that there is no other road for art than into production.

Let the company of 'fair-copyists' laugh as they foist their daubings onto the Philistine aesthetes.

Let the 'applied artists' delight in dumping their 'stylish ornaments' on the factories and workshops.

Let the man in the street spit with disgust at the iron constructive power of Rodchenko's construction. There is a consumer: who does not need pictures and ornaments, and who is not afraid of iron and steel.

This consumer is the proletariat. With the victory of the proletariat will come the victory of constructivism.



From 'LEF': designs by Anton Lavinsky. Top left: plan of town of the future. Top right: plan of house block. Below: construction of erections for radio-mast.

Towns of the future have existed in the past too: More, Fourier, Morris etc. Yet Lavinsky's project has a quite special new significance. Lavinsky has also created a town of the future. And this was naturally only to be expected. Not from Lavinsky. From today's revolutionary artists in general. For Lavinsky, of course, is only one particular case.

The romance of the commune, and not the idyll of the cottage. That is the first thing. Secondly: previously it was only discussed (Wells and others), but Lavinsky has simply sketched it out. He has drawn it in his own style, unusually depictive—but what of it? There was just one purpose: to demonstrate, and not to discuss, and the purpose has

been achieved. Thirdly, and most important: *the artist wanted to construct*.

One could name hundreds of professors, academics and so on who did not even 'want'. Yet architecture turned into form, ornamentation, the aesthetic cult of beauty. But what of the engineers? Of course they have been building, and still are. They build straightforwardly, in modern fashion, on the basis of the latest industrial techniques. But there's one odd thing: as long as they occupy themselves with specific structures (bridges, cranes, platforms) all goes well; but as soon as they take on a larger-scale construction it's enough to make the old familiar face of the aesthete peer out from beneath the mask of the engineer. Brought up to the canons of bourgeois art the engineer is almost always just as much of a fetishist as his blood-brother the architect. So engineering falls into the sweet embrace of aestheticism, and thereby voluntarily condemns itself either to a narrowing of the problems, or to social conservatism.

With all these facts in mind I maintain that Lavinsky's project, using engineering in its future dynamics, engineering as a universal method, engineering released from beneath the moulds of art and subordinated only to the law of socio-technical expediency, this project strikes at both the artist and the engineer. To the former it says plainly: *hands off the business of life, you have remained on Parnassus*. The latter it

summons to revolutionary boldness and to a break with traditional aesthetising, towards the organisation of life in all its extent.

This does not exhaust the significance of Lavinsky's experiment, however. Lavinsky is a Constructivist. What is Constructivism?

When the former artist set about using his material (paint etc.), he regarded it only as a means of creating an impression. Such an impression was attained in the various forms of depiction. The artist 'reflected' the world, as people like to say. The furious growth of individualism broke up depictive art. Abstract art appeared. And at one and the same time, while some (the expressionists for example) were highly delighted with such a novelty, and, even though they did not crawl from the swamp of 'impressionistic' creation, tailored it in the style of metaphysics—others saw in the abstract form a new, unprecedented possibility. Not the creation of forms of the supremely 'aesthetic', but the expeditious construction of materials.

Not the 'end in itself', but 'value of content'. Replace the word 'content' by the word 'purpose', and you will understand what it's all about. But how can one speak of a 'purpose' in an abstract construction? Between the construction and the object there is a gulf: the same sort as between art and production. But the Constructivists are still artists. The last of the Monicans of a form of creation from life represent themselves

as the finish of the 'end in itself' nonsense, which eventually revolted against itself. Herein lies their great historical significance. But therein also is the tragedy of their situation. The crusaders of aestheticism are condemned to aestheticism until a bridge towards production can be found. But how can this bridge be built in a country where production itself is scarcely alive? Who will turn to the artist, who will permit himself the luxury of a gigantic, unprecedented experiment where it is necessary at present simply to 'hold-out'? And the proffered hand of the Constructivist will stay hanging in mid-air. That is why I do not smile when I look at Lavinsky's sketches. Pioneers always hold in their hands just a banner, and often a torn one at that. Surely they do not cease to be pioneers for that?

Manilov busied himself with utopias in his spare time: a little bridge, and on the bridge etc. etc. His utopias were born passively. The economist Sismondi created utopias of another sort—it was the past that fascinated him. Fourier was also a utopian, his utopia was a revolutionary one. Taking root in the bosom of the historical process such a utopia becomes a material force, which organises mankind. And that is when we can say with a capital letter: Utopia. For who does not know that without Fourier and others there would have been no Marx? It is to this particular category of utopias that Lavinsky's project belongs. If a 'materialised' utopia is at

present only alliteratively similar to a 'realised' utopia, then one conclusion must follow: *help to realise the path indicated*. Or, finally: develop, continue further, reform, but do not turn aside. May this individual attempt, this romantic leap across the abyss turn into a collective, deliberate collaboration organised on laboratory lines. Abroad (e.g. in Germany) we are already aware of a series of experiments and projects for a future city. These efforts are considerably nearer to present-day Western resources than is Lavinsky's project to Russian resources. They are 'simpler', more realisable, more production-like. But they have a bad heredity: with an old architect for a father, and an expressionist painting for a mother, you won't get far beyond aestheticism!

A city in the air. A city of glass and asbestos. A city on springs. What is this—an eccentricity, a modish novelty, a trick? No—simply *maximum expediency*. In the air—to release the earth. Made of glass—to fill it with light. Asbestos—to lighten the structure. On springs—to create equilibrium. All right, but as to the circular plan, surely it's that cursed old symmetry again? Yes, but not as form, but as an economic principle. It's marvellous, but what purpose is there in these strange houses rotating. Who will dare say that this is not Futurism, the Futuristic aesthetisation of life? In other

words: surely this is that same old aestheticism, but in a new guise? Such an objection may apply not only to the houses: it bears down even more heavily on the unusual appearance of the springs and the radio-station. This is surely Futurism, dynamics, a fracture, a confusion of planes and lines, antiquated displacements, all that old assortment of Italian Futurist pictorial rubbish. Not at all! Because:

1. The rotation of the buildings pursues the very same object as do Japanese houses made of paper. The difference is in the technique.

2. The springs and the radio are built as they are, and not otherwise, in the name of freedom and economy of space.

There is still one question, this time the last: are such systems technically possible? How will theoretical mechanics react to them? I do not know. I am ready to assume the worst—that a literal realisation of the plan in all its details is unthinkable either with today's or with any other level of technique. 'My business is to make suggestions . . .' as Mayakovsky declared to the angels. Lavinsky declares the very same thing to the engineers, since what has chiefly concerned Lavinsky is the social side of the matter—the *form of the new life*. Let the engineers now say (they are not angels, fortunately) what is possible and what is not possible, how they can amend, and where they can amplify. That would not be useless work.

The ancients divided artistic literature into poetry and prose. Both poetry and prose had their own linguistic canons.

Poetry: sugared metres (iambics, trochees, or the mishmash of 'free verse'), a special poetic vocabulary ('steed', and not 'horse'; 'offspring', and not 'child', and all the other 'moon-June', 'eyes-sighs' rhymes), and its own petty little 'poetic' themes (previously love and the night, nowadays flames and blacksmiths).

Prose: specially stilted heroes (he + she + lover = the short-story writers; intellectual + girl + policeman = the realists; someone in grey + a strange woman + Christ = the Symbolists) and its own literary-artistic style (1. 'the sun was setting behind the hill' + 'they loved or killed' = 'outside the poplars are rustling'; 2. 'I'll tell you this, Vanyatka' + 'the chairman of the orphans' court was a hard drinker' = 'we will glimpse heaven in diamonds yet'; 3. 'how strange, Adelaida Ivanovna' + 'the terrible secret was spreading' = 'in a white halo of roses').

Both the poetry and the prose of the ancients were equally distant from practical speech, from the slang of the streets, and from the exact language of science.

We have dispersed the old literary dust, using only the scrap-iron of antiquity. We do not want to know the difference between poetry, prose and practical language. We know only a single material of the word, and we throw it into a modern treatment.

We are working on the organisation of the sounds of

language, on polyphony of rhythm, on the simplification of word constructions, on the greater preciseness of linguistic expressivity, on the manufacture of new thematic devices.

All this work is for us—not an aesthetic end in itself, but a laboratory for the best possible expression of the facts of the present day.

We are not priest-creators, but master-executors of the social command. The practical works published in 'LEF' are not 'absolute artistic revelations', but merely specimens of our current work.

Aseev: Experiment of a linguistic flight into the future. *Kamensky*: Play on the word in all its tonality.

Kruchonykh: Experiment of using the phonetics of slang to construct anti-religious and political themes.

Pasternak: Application of dynamic syntax to a revolutionary task.

Tret'yakov: Experiment of a Marching-type construction, organising revolutionary spontaneity.

Khlebnikov: Attainment of maximal expressivity through conversational speech free of any former poetic spirit.

Mayakovsky: Experiment of polyphonic rhythm in wide-ranging poetry of social and everyday matters.

Brik: Experiment of laconic prose on a contemporary theme.

Wittvogel: Experiment of the Communist agit-stage without the usual Kaiser/Toller revolutionary mysticism.

'Opoyaz' and its so-called 'formal method' has become a bugbear to the literary pontiffs and priestling dabblers in literature. This impudent attempt to approach the poetic icons from a scientific point of view evoked a storm of indignation. A 'league of resistance to the formal method' was formed, or, to be more exact, a 'league of resistance to the removal of poetic values'.

This would not be worth mentioning, were there not several Marxists, albeit motheaten ones, among the 'resisters'. This calls for an explanation.

'Opoyaz' maintains that *there are no poets and writers—there are just poetry and writing*. Everything that a poet writes is meaningful as a part of his general work, and is totally worthless as an expression of his 'I'. If a poetic work can be comprehended as a 'human document', like an entry in a diary, it is interesting to the author, to his wife, relatives, friends and maniacs of the type who passionately seek the answer to the riddle 'was Pushkin a smoker?'—and to noone else.

The poet is an expert in his own business. And that is all. But to be a good expert you must know the needs of those for whom you are working, you must live one life with them. Otherwise your work won't come off and will be useless. The social role of the poet cannot be understood from an analysis of his individual qualities and habits. *A mass study of the devices of the poetic craft is necessary*, these

devices to be distinguished from the estimative areas of human labour; also the laws of their historical development. Pushkin was not the founder of the school, but simply its leader. If Pushkin had never existed 'Eugene Onegin' would still have been written. And America would have been discovered without Columbus. We have no history of literature yet. There is just a history of the 'generals' of literature; 'Opoyaz' will make possible the writing of this history.

The poet is an expert of the word, a word-creator, serving his own class, his own social group. What to write about is intimated to him by the consumer. *Poets do not invent themes, they take them from their surrounding milieu*. The work of the poet starts with the processing of the theme, with finding a corresponding linguistic form for it.

Studying poetry means studying the laws of this linguistic processing. *The history of poetry is the history of the development of the device of linguistic fashioning*. Why poets have taken this or that actual theme, and not others, is explained by their belonging to this or that social group, and has no connection with their poetic work. This is important for the poet's biography, but the history of poetry is not a book of 'Lives of the Saints', and must not be like one.

Why poets used certain devices, and not others, in the processing of themes, what causes the appearance of a new device, how an old one dies off—this is the subject for

the most thorough research of scientific poetics. 'Opoyaz' marks off its work from the work of adjacent scientific disciplines not in order to go 'out of this world' but in order to establish and expand a series of the most vital problems of man's literary activity in the neatest way possible.

'Opoyaz' studies the laws of poetic production. Who will dare prevent it doing so?

What does 'Opoyaz' contribute to the proletarian construction of culture?

- 1) A scientific system instead of a chaotic accumulation of facts and personal opinions.
- 2) A social evaluation of creative people instead of an idolatrous interpretation of the 'language of the gods'.
- 3) A knowledge of the laws of production instead of a 'mystical' penetration into the creation.

'Opoyaz' is the best educator for the young proletarian writers.

The 'prolet-poets' are still afflicted with the thirst for 'self-revelation'. They constantly tear themselves away from their class. They do not want to be simply 'prolet-poets'. They look for 'cosmic', 'planetary' or 'deep' themes. They think that in his theme the poet must leap out of his milieu, that only then will he reveal himself and create—the 'eternal'.

'Opoyaz' will show them that everything great has been created in answer to questions of the day, that the 'eternal' today was then a topic of the time, and that the great poet does not reveal himself, but

simply carries out the social command.

'Opoyaz' will help its comrade prolet-poets to overcome the traditions of bourgeois literature, by scientifically proving its moribundity and counter-revolutionism.

'Opoyaz' will come to the aid of proletarian creation not with hazy little chats about the 'proletarian spirit' and 'communist consciousness', but with the exact technical meanings of the devices of contemporary poetic creation. *'Opoyaz' is the grave-digger of poetic idealistics*. It is useless to fight it. And all the more so for Marxists.

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