

**FORMS AND TECHNIQUES
OF MODERN PAINTING**

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PREFACE

When I arrived at Rhodes University in 1995 to do advanced studies, I have noticed that many lecturers and students here were enthusiastic about modern painting and the techniques involved in its creation. This enhanced my recognition and understanding of modern painting and enabled me to appreciate the complexities involved in approaching art from a modernist standpoint.

During my study period of nearly three years, I have collected as much information as possible and have written down what I have learnt from my painting experience in South Africa. I have devoted all my attention to the exploration of modern painting. As a result, I have completed this thesis entitled "Forms and Techniques of Modern Painting". The aim of this thesis is to absorb its most valuable components in order to enrich painting language forms through understanding the techniques and regular patterns of the modern painting lexicon.

In this thesis, I have made an attempt to discuss and comment on oil painting from the angle of concepts, forms, both traditional as well as more recent techniques of modern painting.

Dedicated to Rhodes University and my supervisor Prof Mark Haywood.

CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORY OF TECHNIQUES AND INNOVATIONS IN PAINTING.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. BYZANTINE PAINTING

During Byzantine times painting was limited by religious restriction so that most art was either done as decoration in churches or directly related to some aspect of religious life. The Church controlled much of the work and so painting was conventional and stereotyped. The artist was not free to choose either his method of treatment or his subject. The church produced manuals specifying how the figures should be placed in relation to each other - the physical types suitable for Christ or for the Virgin, together with the form of face, hair, costume and pose - and which subjects should be represented in the different parts of the church. Hence the similarity of type and composition quickly seen in all Byzantine painting. These procedures did not permit the study of nature and insisted upon continual copying and recopying until the figures were so fixed in the mind that they could easily be reproduced from memory, with a consequent loss of imagination and spontaneity. Though narrowly restricted, the best artists nevertheless developed a wonderful technique and decorative quality, and imbued their pattern-like figures with a mystical hieratic feeling. The Burgundian school (Berzé-la-Ville) tried to imitate the polychromatic brilliance of Byzantine mosaic, while the Poitou school (St Savin) used a palette reduced to red and yellow ochre reminiscent of Oriental hues. These different ranges of colour can be found in the numerous wall paintings which survive in French churches. The use of paint, as opposed to other art forms - such as mosaics - increased by the end of the Byzantine era.

Foils and Metal

Thin leaves and foils of precious metals were used as embellishments or functioned as elements of design in paintings and for decoration in very early times, and their use in more modern ages, although by no means universal or widespread, has never halted completely. Our traditions of gilding as an element in easel and mural painting begin

with early European art; besides the gold used on illuminated manuscripts and miniatures in various civilizations, the most notable examples of this well-developed craft are to be seen in numerous Siennese and Florentine tempera paintings. Gold has particular properties which gives its presence symbolic overtones in all the different uses to which it was applied. When used in paint or in mosaics, the gold dust suspended in the glass or paint has a reflective quality that can give the illusion of actually being a light source itself. It was used not only for decorative reasons but was also used to represent the illumination of God who is often referred to as the God of Light. Its preciousness and rarity also made it seem like something representing holiness and a fit addition to pictures, mosaics and paintings which were so essentially religious in their meaning and execution.

Gold is highly inert and permanent; it does not tarnish or change its colour in any way. It is one of our most ductile or malleable substances, which means that it can be rolled or beaten out to infinitesimally thin leaves and drawn out to the most tenuous wires. Hence, despite its high intrinsic value, we can afford to use it in thin layers over large areas. Thompson points out that originally the use of gold leaf on religious paintings and their carved frames or settings was intended to create the impression that the work was a slab of solid gold. No one really believes that a gilded panel is a massive chunk of gold. Still, such an impression is the sought-after effect, and if the surface does not have a metallic, rather than a coated or painted effect, it is not successful. He also points out that gold and silver effects in the average run of paintings are to be considered dark in the composition or design, unless they are covered with stamping (designs pressed in by hammering on the finished gilding with small punches such as those sold for leather work), in which case the resulting frosted effect is equivalent to a light in the design. [Fig. 1.1]

2. THE INVENTION OF OIL PAINT

There are numerous references in the decorative arts to different forms of drying oils and of oil varnishes dating from the Middle Ages. Oil-based paint was used increasingly in the fourteenth century as an adjunct to tempera painting, either as glaze coats in the final stages of tempera paintings or in various egg-oil emulsion formulations. Some artists began to experiment with oil paint independent of tempera-based works. Oil paintings were slow to dry and tended eventually to crack and darken, yet early painters were strongly attracted to oil paints because this medium allowed them to paint in both glazes and impastos in various combinations and work was able to develop from darker to lighter tones. It also made for easier mixing and blending of colours whilst providing the artists with a more expanded and resonant colour range. The medium also enabled them to produce a wider range of visual effects. [Fig.1.2]

“Developments in the science and techniques of oil painting in the fifteenth century speeded the pace of the medium’s growing popularity and, by the sixteenth century, oil paint had become the principal medium for painting throughout Europe. It is still regarded by many painters as the standard medium for major pictorial endeavours, and by many painting teachers as the ideal medium for studio classwork. For oils, despite their several disadvantages (which sound technical practices can largely overcome), remain the most adaptable and easily managed of paints. The heavy impastos of vibrant colour and the clarity of even thin applications of paint are especially attractive features for many painters”¹

Tempera is an important media for both wall and panel painting. It can be variously used for portable panels or for murals, depending on the choice of emulsion. Ordinary egg tempera, diluted with water and glazed on a white background tends to resemble watercolour.

1. Goldstein :(1979) p.79.

If lightened with white, however, it provides a range of delicate, pastel-like colours similar to gouaches. Oil tempera is created by increasing its oil content. This is insoluble in water and must therefore be diluted with turpentine. When oil tempera dries, the colours have a matt finish. Oil painting was invented when water and the emulsifying agent were omitted from the process.

Although egg tempera is an ideal priming for oil paintings, it needs to be isolated by an intermediate coat of varnish. A combination of the oil and tempera techniques can be advantageous if the oil is used to determine the flatness of the background while details of form can be painted into the tacky oil paint in tempera. The effect of tempera colours varies according to whether or not the picture is varnished; many medieval works which the novice may mistake for oil paintings are actually varnished tempera, which gives a certain amount of depth and a glossy finish to the fundamentally matt colours.

Tempera is an old technique: it was initially used by the Egyptians and later by the Greeks and Romans. The Byzantine artists also used tempera, but they bound their colours with many different kinds of oil, some of which were non-drying, resulting in the darkening and yellowing of their paintings. Giotto, the great Italian painter of the early fourteenth century, reformed the tempera technique by returning to lean emulsions which were applied to a white background. He painted over parts of his pictures in oils, thus developing the practice of painting in oil on a tempera background. During the Renaissance and Baroque periods tempera was gradually used less in the view of the fact that oil painting was preferred by the artists of the time. [Fig 1.3]

Oil Paint and Painting Supports

In contrast to the Gothic era, the Renaissance period saw the emergence of a method of painting in which the sensuousness of the paint was used to maximum effect and which enabled quick applications of the paint. This was important at a time when commissions were the norm. Ever since the fifteenth Century oil painting has been the dominant technique.

"Compared with tempera, oil painting introduced some important advantages and possibilities, both technical and artistic. It does not change tone in drying like tempera and watercolour; when dry the picture looks almost the same as when it is freshly painted. This enables the artist to see the final colour relationships of the picture while he is still working on it and so allows the painting to progress steadily. What is more, oil paint dries very slowly, so that the tones can be worked into each other without difficulty in very subtle transitions, and alterations can be made, if necessary. The opacity of the colours also makes alterations easy; one layer can be scumbled over another and some passages left completely uncovered. An oil painting can be painted either al prima or carefully built up in layers." 2.

The oil technique enables one to put thin paint passages next to impasto. Artists such as Rembrandt, van Gogh, and Corinth used liberal amounts of paint to achieve relief-like effects in this way. The light passages were especially emphasised by impasto overpainted with a highlight. Moreover oil paint allows the artist to incorporate varied brush strokes, making the particular style of the artist identifiable.

Several techniques of painting in oils are practised. These vary from a smooth application to daubing on the paint in a thick mass. In addition, a diversity of primings may also be used. The variety is dependent on the painting method while the reason underlying a particular work will determine the texture of the background and fineness or coarseness of the canvas. The artist can choose between chalk primings, mixed chalk primings, mixed oil primings and white lead primings for canvas, and gesso primings for wooden panels. In oil painting the priming is crucial as it has a stronger effect on the appearance of the picture than in other techniques.

The technique of oil painting affects a painting in several ways. It is able to change the glow and lustre of the colours and it has a virtually unlimited range of tones. It allows, for almost imperceptible gradations to be achieved and colour can be used to maximum effect.

2. Herbert; (1958) p.148.

Since the earliest times wood, stone, leather, metal, parchment and paper have been used by the artist as supports for easel pictures. At first wood was the most commonly used material, later canvas. The "tooth" afforded by the grain of canvas is particularly suited to the oil medium.

Canvas

Canvas was at first glued to panels and then later was stretched on frames, making it possible to produce works of huge dimensions which could easily be moved. At first, canvas was treated with gesso and glue in the same manner as panels, with a coarse undercoating and a polished layer on top. Since the canvas contracted and the preparation itself lacked elasticity these preparations soon deteriorated. The Venetian painters knew how to make thin, elastic primings, which enabled the pictures to be rolled up without suffering any damage. Very often the canvas would be lightly smeared with a glue of starch and sugar and then with a thin coat of gesso and glue.

In order to work more quickly, artists later used oily grounds. Most canvas supplied by artists' colourmen is primed with an oil priming and there are at least three disadvantages with this. It is not as white as gesso priming; it darkens with time; and its somewhat greasy surface is less sympathetic than gesso. Moreover, the artist who primes his own canvas, primes it to suit his own purposes. The raw cloth can be bought in a great variety of surfaces either from the artist's colourman or from other sources, and it should be chosen with a view to its suitability to the nature of the work to be done. Where boldness of effect is desired ordinary hessian provides a delightful surface on which to paint, but it has the drawback of being extremely flimsy. Certain canvases made for tarpaulins or rickcloths have a very similar "touch" and are at the same time admirably substantial. Certain hearth cloths are procurable in a medium or fine grain, the latter being very suitable for delicate work. No.1 sailcloth is the most imperishable of all; it has a pronounced grain, but without coarseness, since it is very closely woven.

Once the canvas is chosen, it must be stretched or mounted onto a panel. For moderate sized work the panel has great advantages. Canvas expands and contracts very considerably with atmospheric changes of temperature or humidity, thus imposing a strain on the paint film, which is more rigid. This contraction and expansion are almost eliminated when the canvas is mounted on panel. An alternative method of mounting the canvas by means of white lead and varnish has been used, but for this method weeks must elapse before the panel is dry enough for use.

These oily preparations were not applied directly to the canvas, as the oil would have eaten into the fibre. Vegetable glues were used instead, but as these were inherently hygroscopic, the preparations and colours on pictures stored in damp places eventually decomposed.

At the end of the 18th century French artists experimented with various types of ground containing honey and wax but very soon stopped using these materials because of their poor qualities. Instead they found it was better to use a preparation consisting of an emulsified oil paint mixed with an equal quantity of the same pigment kneaded with water.

Grounds made of glue and gesso, if spread thinly, are still the best as they do not alter the tone and colour values of a picture. One can verify at once whether a canvas has been badly primed with gesso and glue. At the slightest rub or graze the priming cracks or comes off as dust, according to whether there is too much or too little glue in the ground. A canvas prepared with oil will last many years before cracks appear so an artist cannot test the elasticity of the priming and make a satisfactory examination before beginning to paint as he can with a gesso primed canvas.

The canvas should then receive a coat of glue or vellum size to prevent it decaying from exposure to damp. When the size is dry the surface should be lightly rubbed with fine sandpaper to remove any roughness.

Panels

"Panels were mostly of poplar, oak, white poplar, or chestnut. Only in rare instances were they made of resinous wood: careful artists, such as the Flemish masters, used to remove all gum and resin from the wood before painting, since these substances warp the panel, making the colours flake and crack. They therefore left their oak panels (oak was most frequently used in Flanders) immersed for a long time in running water to free them from an excess of tannin and resinous substances." ³

Nowadays steam is used to remove the gum and resin, rendering it less sensitive to temperature differences. Using steam causes the albuminous bodies to coagulate, decreasing tensions of the fibres which make colours and oily grounds crack. Further safeguard is to soak the wood with strong smelling essential oils, or with special preparations which prevent woodworm. A good example of these techniques is an oak panel by Van Eyck, which was protected on the back by a composition of gesso, glue and tow, and then coated with black varnish. It is still immune from woodworm and the paint is smooth and perfectly preserved.

For this reason it is recommended that modern panels be treated on the back and sides with a damp-proof coating such as a thickly applied mixture of common oil paint and varnish, glossy or matt lacquers like Duco or cement.

The protection of the back of a painting is crucial. Many triptychs which have stood in damp churches for centuries with a central panel (painted on one side only) have suffered from rot or woodworm and are warped and flaked, whereas the two-sided panels (painted on both sides) have remained perfectly preserved and smooth.

A previous method of preparing panels with gesso had been to work with wooden boards, freeing them from knots and blemishes, smoothing with a plane, and then removing all the grease. The different boards were joined with a glue made from cheese and lime. Short nails were used so as not to intrude on the priming, otherwise the nails would eventually rust and cause the priming to flake off. Thereafter the panel was carefully sized and fine strips of linen were glued over the joins. Sometimes the

3. Bazz :(1960) p.13.

entire panel would be covered with canvas or tanned leather. Once the first coat of glue had completely dried, a coat of gesso and glue was applied. A few days later all roughness was scraped off and followed by a second coat of finely ground gesso, applied with a bristle brush. It was then smoothed with the palm of the hand. The panel was then left for a short while. When the preparation was nearly dry, as many as eight successive coats of gesso and glue were applied with a bristly brush. Last of all, the panel was allowed to dry in a shady place in the open air before the surface was smoothed, rubbed and polished with a scraper.

Fresco

"Fresco is the name given to a picture painted over wet lime plaster with colours mixed with pure water. The process takes advantage of the fact that lime mixed with sand and water forms a surface into which colours will penetrate and remain fixed as it dries, thereafter becoming insoluble to water. It is necessary for the surface to dry slowly, since too rapid drying means uneven absorption and causes cracking and flaking." 4

Care must be taken with the surface painted on as a fresco can easily be ruined by excess damp, heat and quick changes in the weather.

Recently brushes made from long hog's bristles are mostly used. They are rounded in shape and tapered to a point. However, some painters prefer brushes made with calf's hair because these are able to hold more liquid colour. It is recommended that a brush be left to soak in water for a period of time before use so as to allow the colours to flow more effectively.

When preparing a wall for "a secco" and tempera painting, the dry plaster needs to be well brushed to remove all dust. A section of the wall must be moistened and a thin coat of lime applied. The wall must then be allowed to set and be painted over while still fresh. Old plaster needs to be washed with soap and water to remove all grease. Soap is not harmful and in fact assists the cohesion of the plaster. It is crucial that the wall be absolutely free from damp so that the painting does not cling.

4. Ibid p.168.

Gesso plaster can be coated with a solution of alum, and once it has dried, the plaster should be well brushed to remove the tiny alum crystals which tend to form. Once this process has been completed, colours will not be excessively absorbed, becoming insoluble to the water used in the glazes.

3. COLOUR

With the passing of time and different painting movements, colours changed. Professional colour manufacturers experimented with raw and prepared pigments and various artists, who were dissatisfied with the results and effects of these pigments, mixed their own.

Delacroix had his pigments prepared especially for him by a Madame Haro as he preferred liquid to powder colours. With art dealers increasing in number, competition was fierce and artists like Van Gogh had to shop around to see what he could afford on his brother's allowance and often he bought cheaper substitutes.

JH Bourdon, in 1669 expounded the theory that paint pigments were not capable of reproducing the natural light effects on a landscape. Poussin and Rubens' followers also believed this.

In the 18th Century, with the use of devices like the camera obscura, it was easier to compare the painted image with reality. Proportional relationships rather than absolute values became important. Limits imposed by pigments and colours could be overcome by skill and technique. Impressionism as a movement contained artists who were very concerned with the effects of light out of doors and how to represent that light with the appropriate painterly techniques and colour usage.

"The Impressionists made conspicuous use of the bright yellows, greens and violets to match their sensations in the open air. On the other hand, the painters and theorists in France who were most cautious about the new materials were themselves no strangers to the strong effects of outdoor colour. George Meusnier (Karl Robert) explained to his readers:

A white wall in full sunlight is never white: it is pinkish white, yellowish white, greenish white, according to the reflections which it receives. It is the same for all the colour, to such an extent that in the studies of some masters you will see the well-lit greens of the foreground rendered in pure blues or tender pinks made of white and cobalt or white and lake." 5.

Vibert also attacked the Impressionists - the eclatistes (dazzlers), for much the same reasons that they painted only with intense colours and without shading of tones.

It was more their individual interpretation of the ideas behind Impressionism than the actual style itself that set the Impressionists apart from many painters of the Establishment. It was Cezanne who remained truest to the Impressionist caution about materials. At no point in his career does Cezanne appear to have used any of the new synthetic pigments except viridian.

When he saw Bernard's limited palette in 1904 he was astonished:

"You paint with just these? Where is your Naples yellow? Where is your peach-black, where is your sienna earth, your cobalt blue, your burnt lake? ... It is impossible to paint without these colours" 6.

Renoir and Cezanne had in common a desire to maintain contact with the traditional art of the museums through a well-documented usage of transparent glazes and earthy colours.

5. Gage: (1993) p.223.

6. Ibid p.224.

Van Gogh's attitude to his materials could hardly be more different to that of Cezanne's: a large order for new paints, which Van Gogh sent his brother Theo from Arles in 1888, listed a dozen of the brightest available pigments, many of them unstable. He was however, well aware of the dangers of these materials; in his next letter to Theo he admitted:

"All the colours that the Impressionists have brought into fashion are unstable, so there is all the more reason not to be afraid to lay them on too crudely - time will tone them down only too much." ⁷. [Fig 1.9]

Modern picture restorers are often faced with the dilemma of how far to go in the restoration and lightening of old canvasses.

The yellowing and darkening of canvasses (often attributed to their being varnished), became popular and artists like Van Dyck tried to imitate Titian's mellow flesh tones.

In the 17th century and more commonly in the next century, artists deliberately painted lighter colours with the knowledge that time would darken their works - unfortunately not uniformly as different pigments aged diversely.

Besides hue and tonal value, surface texture is subject to changing with age. Impressionism, as well as the painterly movements which preceded and followed it have made us sensitive to the qualities of surface texture, in which rough canvas, stiff paints and vigorous brushwork all play their part.

Re-lining the canvas or even prolonged hanging can smooth heavy impasto in the most disturbing way and such smoothing can remove the evidence of the artist's intense involvement with material. Delacroix started his painting career using thin, liquid colours but progressed to pigment so thick that his art became almost a sculptural modelling onto his canvasses. Impressionism inherited this physical involvement which added to the movement's three dimensional and tactile character. This was apparent

7. Ibid p.224.

in Cezanne's 1870 paintings and in the works of Alfred Sisley who employed a variety of surface textures to emulate the effect of the sun which throws landscape sections into shadows and reliefs.

"In an essay, *Towards a Theory of Painting*, written just after the First World War, the art critic Nikolai Tarabukin argued: "Material colours themselves have an autonomous aesthetic value which is not exhausted by hue. They have a specific aesthetic potential which is an element in the sum of colouring...it is clear that the same art-object affects us differently according to whether it is painted in oil, watercolour or distemper." 8.

Modern artists, he said, draw attention to the substances of their painting, which are no longer the inferior element that they were for the masters of the past but an integral, constructive part of the paintings finished appearance.

Synthetic pigments developed as the demand for colours increased. Research and experimentation were necessary to meet the increasing demand by both professionals and amateur painters in the 19th Century. Two prominent theorists and colour manufacturers were J.F.L Merimee (France) and George Field (England). Merimee wrote a hand book in 1830 in which he noted down the results of experiments with old Master's recipes as far back as the Middle ages, copal varnish as used by Theophilus and research done by chemists in Napoleonic France.

One of these, L J Thenard, synthesized cobalt blue to substitute for the expensive ultramarine in 1802. Men like Louis-Bertrand Castel were already trying to find harmonious relationships between primary and complementary colours as early as 1720.

Delacroix was attracted by Merimee's colour wheel in which complementary colours made subtle greys. Field showed the juxtaposition of certain colours to form warm, cool or light effects : He developed a range of primary colours which were brilliant and stable. These appealed to painters like Holman Hurt and other Pre-Raphaelites.

8. Ibid p.225.

William Ostwald tried to develop a range of colours which, when applied according to mathematical principles, would rationalize colour harmony. Controversy arose amongst colour theorists. One might use Kings yellow and ultramarine while the next swore by Gamboge and Prussian Blue. Artists argued that too many pigments were being developed before pure primaries were stabilized. Clerk Maxwell delivered work on the properties of the colours of light with three co-ordinates spaced along the spectrum. Despite this, a lot of experiments tried to match pure primaries with commercially available colours.

Clerk Maxwell's work simplified the theories by discovering that all that was needed to reconstitute white light was three co-ordinates sufficiently widely spaced along the spectrum.

The Impact of Synthetic Pigments

Synthetic pigments like yellow, blue and green were developed in the early 19th century and later dyes underwent experimentation. Manuals written for artists included discoveries like mauve made from coal tar by Sir William Perkin, and Alizarin red discovered by Grebe and Lieberman in 1868.

The genre painter J G Vibert was employed by Ecole des Beaux-Arts to instruct students in the technical aspect of using these pigments. He advocated quality control through the establishment of a laboratory at the school itself.

Isaac Newton and his Opticks explained complementary colour relationships in a circular arrangement which was typical of the medieval way of simplifying complicated ideas. The first colour diagram appeared in a "Treatise on Urine" where it was considered a diagnostic essential, yet Newton's diagram has a clearer coherence in comparison. Based on Descarte's arrangements of musical intervals it is based on the prismatic spectrum. Johann Christoph Frish proposed an eight part circle and Wilhelm Ostwald a twenty four part colour circle.

Those involved in fine and decorative art believed in three primary and three secondary colours and the complementary and opposing relationship between their combinations. Leonardo da Vinci advocated beauty in direct opposite colour contrast without specifying which colours to oppose each other. In a paper published in 1672, Newton produced a mixing diagram which he perfected almost thirty years later. He produced grey by combining only two colours, red lead and copper green in the ratio 1:5. "Complementary" colours as a specific, was coined by Benjamin Thompson, an American scientist. Colour harmony occurred when the combination of two primaries results in the balance of a third. He was a follower of Darwin's theory of after images, which occurred when one looked at a colour for a long time resulting in visual duality. Green was accepted as the complementary of red.

From the complexities of the Renaissance age, two distinct approaches to human existence evolved. One stressed rationality, empirical science and a skeptical secularism. The other expressed many aspects of human experience suppressed by the Enlightenment's spirit of rationalism. The genius celebrated by the spirit of rationalism was a Newton, a Franklin or an Einstein, while for the Romantic temperament Goethe, Beethoven or Nietzsche were the keystones.

Goethe's "Theory of Colours", more than any publication of the time, drew the attention of scientists and the general public throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He concluded that light was homogeneous and created colour only when disturbed by darkness. Goethe's emphasis on the polar structure of both the formation of colour from light and dark and their reception by the eye made his system the ancestor of Hering's opponent colour theory.

Eugene Delacroix was one painter who alienated himself from the almost clinical analysis of colour harmony and contrast. He knew about complementary circles and studied Michel-Eugene Chevreul's lectures in 1848 as he was executing large scale murals and ceiling decorations in the Chamber of Deputies and St Denis du Saint Sacrament church.⁹

9. Ibid p.173-4.

He developed a method of colouring flesh by hatching reds and greens with forceful strokes. The distance from the spectators which occurred in high ceiling painting of the Salle d'Apollon in the Louvre led to scientific use of very bright colours to produce the necessary impact. He also overlaid threads of coloured wool as was done in Persian carpets to make elaborate colour mixtures and studied the effect of sunlight on natural surfaces and colours.

Chevreul's rules and laws of colour were understood by Delacroix. Blanc placed emphasis on the "masculine aspect" of art which was drawing, to take precedence over the colour or "feminine" side of art. He felt that Delacroix sacrificed too much of his art to colour experimentation.

Jules Jamin propounded that an artist works for effect, that it was impossible to emulate nature and that the realism depicted by the French landscape painters was idealistic.

Impressionism saw the advent of numerous artists' handbooks which claimed that the paintings did convey the recently discovered truths of optics. For the first time according to the critic, Edmond Durante, painters understood and reproduced these truths. They observed and reproduced spontaneously without concerning themselves too much about theoretical analysis.

Pointillism

Georges Seurat exhibited his painting "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grand Jatte" which was done in a technique he called *Peinture Optique*.¹⁰ It was done in a texture of uniform dots and strokes. Architectural human beings made out of infinitely graduated points of colour stood up like poles. He tried to reduce human sensation to a detached statement of colour, line and tone. Each colour type portrayed an abstract human emotion. He eliminated haphazard mixing of colours, and personality was substituted by precision. His painting was a still-life of vibrant life from which movement had been banished. All painting effects could be reduced to formulae.

10. Ibid p.173-4.

Taking line, tone and colour the three elements of painting, - and using them scientifically, he produced abstractions of emotions and the essence of a thing rather than the thing itself. He said that a painter needed only to read a book, go to the chemist, buy specified pots of colour and obey the rules to become a scientific and perfect painter and all his paintings would achieve the same architectural, impersonal perfection.

Camille Pissarro admired Seurat's use of colour enormously and in turn, Seurat praised Pissarro's understanding of Neo-Impressionist light division. In many ways Pissarro was a better colourist in that he understood the theories of scientific literature a little more completely than his mentor.

Traditionally Seurat was a scientific artist. His methodology and technique were so complicated that today it would impose intolerable restrictions onto an artist, stifling creativity.

He tried to juxtapose two incompatible antitheses - luminosity and high contrasts. He attempted this by grading the size of his dots.

"Newton had apparently brought order into the chaos of colour and had thus made it for painters as communicable a subject as drawing. Yet as the Viennese physiologist Ernst Brücke stated quite categorically in a handbook for artists which had some influence in France, the enormous developments in the science of optics in the nineteenth century made it out of the question for the painter to be up-to-date in the manner of a Leonardo da Vinci. So far from marking the beginnings of a scientific aesthetic, the optical concerns of the Neo-Impressionists signalled its demise, and helped to usher in that disdain for the methods and discoveries of the natural sciences which has had important consequences for the painterly study of colour in the twentieth century." 11

The meaning of colour, and its inherent ability to create associative effects, has been theorised in many different ways during the ages. Like the elements, colour serves several functions in its use on a visual plane. It represents the purely physical whilst expressing it. It also acts on the soul through the viewer's visual associations. Every

11. Ibid p.176.

movement and trend of the pre-abstract in western art, as well as non representational art, relies on one or more aspects of this function of colour. The Concretists and Neo-Impressionists based their work on the physical radiation of colour whilst the Expressionists approached it from an emotive angle. Kandinsky responded to colour in its spiritual functions - its ability to move the deepest layers of the soul - whilst Delauney appreciated the colours' relationship to each other.

Complications in the associative effect of colour were interpreted by Kandinsky. He saw yellow as a warm colour, it moves towards the spectator, it radiates outwards in an eccentric way. This increases with its lighter shades, there is no such thing as a deep, very dark yellow. Yellow has the properties of material energy which pours out unconsciously and diffuses aimlessly in all directions.

Goethe related the polarities of colour to the traditional four temperaments - optimistic, melancholic, phlegmatic and choleric. Sharing in his belief of the moral connotations of colour was Philip Runge whose sphere of colour was one of the first attempts by a painter to co-ordinate hues and values into a coherent whole.

William Turner was another artist greatly influenced by Goethe. He experimented with graduations and the interrelationship of light and colour. His instincts too, were to arrange the scale of colours in tonal order. He was particularly interested in a table of polarities that sought to show how colour, unlike light, was at all times specific. He linked yellow with characteristics such as action, light, brightness, force, warmth, proximity, repulsion and an affinity for acids. Goethe however listed blue as yellow's opposite with the attributes of negation, shadow, darkness, weakness, coldness, distance, attraction and an affinity with alkalis.

John Gage's work covers this entire history of colour theory and use in detail. I have merely sought a general over-view to add to my discussions on painting techniques in general and have found no other book as detailed or thorough as his on the subject of colour.

In Claude Monet's case there are no longer masses of preliminary sketches, no more pencil or watercolour drawings to be used in the studio, but, rather, one integral oil painting begun and completed out of doors in nature, in the presence of the subject, which is interpreted and rendered at first hand. And it is for this reason that he has become the leader of what has quite rightly been dubbed the "outdoor school" of painting. Among our landscape painters Monet was the first to have the boldness to go as far as the Japanese in the use of colour. It was this pursuit that aroused the loudest scoffing, because the lazy European eye – notwithstanding its utter truth and great delicacy – still found the breadth of colours employed by the Japanese artists somewhat gaudy.

In the *Rouen Cathedral Series*, Monet charged canvasses with the light and followed the hours of the day from early morning with the façade in misty blue shadow, to the afternoon, when it is flooded with sun, and finally to the end of day when the sunset, disappearing behind the buildings of the city, weaves the weathered stonework into a strange fabric of burnt orange and blue.

Monet poetically demonstrated, as motion and colour photography were to prove, that nature's colour lies in atmosphere and constantly changing light rather than inert materials; that during a short time, the appearance of a single substance can modulate through the entire spectral and tonal range. [Fig.1.4]

4. WATER-COLOUR

The invention of watercolour changed artists' methods of using colour and allowed them freer access to the outdoors. *Plein-air* painting in turn changed landscape painting by creating a greater understanding of nature.

Watercolours were used by the Egyptians in the second century AD. They illustrated their death-registers with water-colours. Watercolour was often used to illuminate medieval manuscripts and to colour in woodcuts on the broadsheets of the fifteenth century. Albrecht Dürer elevated watercolour painting to an independent art; and

although other important contemporary masters such as Giovanni Bellini and the painters of the Danube school, made use of it, their works do not have the artistic significance of Dürer's. These works were not regarded as significant in their day, and three hundred years passed before the technique was fully rediscovered by the English landscape painters, who used watercolours according to their own needs to paint great masterpieces.

Plein air painting

The interest in *plein air* painting resulted from the rediscovery of watercolour. This in turn influenced both the colours used and compositional aspects of painting in general.

"The atmospheric quality possessed by watercolours makes them more suitable for rendering light, mist, and fog, than solid substance. They expressed concepts better than they represent material objects, to put it in a somewhat exaggerated form. Willam Turner's watercolour (Venice after Sunset), illustrates this power to depict light and atmospheric movement, as well as the "sketchy" quality of watercolour - in the best sense of the word. Turner has completely sublimated the weight of the masonry and transformed it into a shimmer of light and water." 12.[Fig 1.5]

Turner's oil paintings were influenced by his watercolours in that he sought to express the insubstantiality of mist and fog by thin glazes of white oil paint. These have a look of a watercolour whilst retaining the richness of oil paint.

Eugene Boudin (1824-1898) painted sea and shore scenes around Le Havre on site and his colours were bright and brilliant. Charles Baudelaire and Gustave Courbet were intrigued by his work and it paved the way to the Impressionist movement through the medium of artists like Monet and Manet.

In mid 19th Century the Realists painted what they saw personally and not a photographic replica of nature or people. Nature was a flowing, everchanging scene and outdoor painters realized that the muddy browns and blacks of previous artists should change to cool, lighter colours giving a vibrant lightness to the canvasses.

12. Herbert opcit, p.127.

Oriental art

After photography, the most powerful and pervasive influence on the nineteenth century advance of modernist form probably came from Oriental art. The works of such masters as Utamaro, Hokusai and Hiroshige appeared as supremely confident statements of the belief that pictorial truth lay not in illusion but in the intrinsic qualities of the artist.

Oriental art held great attraction for Edouard Manet as is evident in every aspect of the "Portrait of Zola". Beside the altered perspective and curious handling of the paint, there are also several oriental drawings decorating the wall behind Zola's head. [Fig 1.6]

By 1870 Manet had turned his attention to "plein air painting" in which he sought to apply his brush-sketch technique to large figure compositions and to render these in full colour that caught all the lightness and brilliance of natural sunlight. He had been in touch with the Impressionists Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Bazille, and Sisley, and had been their spiritual leader since the exhibition of "Dejeuner sur l'herbe" in 1863.

During the 19th Century, artists sought to replace the artificial gloom of indoor studios and dark tones that were concomitant with the Neoclassicists. Delacroix and the Romantics still used tonal, atmospheric values but interspersed these with flashes of brilliant colours.

The Barbizon School of landscape painters copied natural scenes but usually with the diffused light of the forest, dawn or twilight. Camille Corot, painting after 1850, produced landscapes which were monochromatic and which copied photography which was still in its infancy. [Fig 1.7]

5. ORIENTAL INFLUENCE

Influence of the Orient on Degas and the Impressionists

"A new set of influences came from outside Europe. As far back as 1856 Japanese art had started to infiltrate into Paris, and six years later Madame Soye, who had lived in Japan, opened a shop, "LaPorte Chinoise", in the Rue de Rivoli; the simple colours and summary treatment of light and shade which were to be seen in the prints of Hokusai and others began to have their effect on a number of artists including Whistler, Rousseau, Degas, and later Van Gogh and Gauguin." ¹³

Degas met Manet as a young man while copying art in the Louvre, yet he remained throughout his life, aloof not only from the Impressionists personally, even while taking part in the group's exhibitions, but from most human contacts. This detachment only sharpened his formidable powers of observation and his incisive ability to convey a movement or a whole scene with a few lines. His emphasis upon linear effects derived from Ingres, and at first, like Ingres, he turned his penetrating gaze on contemporary life. But already in the *Bellelli* family, begun in 1859, there is an unconventional and natural air in the portrait group - an almost snapshot sense of improvisation.

Degas was influenced to some extent by the new sciences of photography, and even more by Japanese colour prints with their unexpected angles of vision, off-centre compositions and use of blank space, and their deceptive sense of being unplanned.

Oriental prints

These prints, suddenly available with Japan's new contact with the West were appreciated in Manet's circle and especially by Monet. They helped Degas towards that summing up of life in its essential gestures' which is his own definition of art. His wonderfully controlled and economical technique was equally at home in oil, pastel, watercolour and etching - though this by no means exhausts the list of his media. But everything comes back to his superb draughtsmanship and pitiless acid observation.

13. Britt :(1989) p.44.

Paul Cezanne, like Degas agreed and disagreed with Impressionism. While Cezanne opted for linear structuralism, extended and diffused by the interplay of light and shade, Degas worked within light in a way which is strengthened by chromatic masses and in the process enhances them. Both were interested in new concepts of space, which eventually revolutionized European art, but Cezanne went further in this direction than Degas by controlling perspective in several directions, and thus starting up an entirely new synthesis of visual expression.

As Cezanne observed directly from nature, he started to achieve the optical fusion of tones which was one of the liberating creations of Impressionists. [Fig.1.8]

His relationship over the next few years with official Impressionism was to be close, and he exhibited at the exhibitions of 1874 and 1877. To the first exhibition he contributed three works including "Man with Straw Hat", in which he realised his objective of solidity of form, achieved through the simple composition, the colour complementing and reinforcing the unity of the painting rather than being a mere gloss on its form.

In early 1839 a new mechanical technology was discovered that resolved and permanently fixed upon a flat surface in minute detail the exact tonal, image of the three-dimensional world. Thereafter most Western painters created their works incorporating some aspects of the special conditions introduced by the new medium. Photographers too worked with an awareness of the rival aesthetic standards, qualities, and prestige brought about by the handwrought image-making processes of painting and drawing.

Painters had already anticipated, long before anyone had ever seen a photograph, almost every salient characteristic of the new form of image making: a snapshot-like cutting off or cropping of figures by the framing edges, a feature especially pronounced in sixteenth-century Mannerism; motion frozen in full flight to reveal its physiognomy in a way seldom noticed by the naked eye; a related "stop-action" informality of human pose and gesture; ghostly residual or afterimages left in the wake of speeding objects;

imagery defined purely in terms of tone, free of bounding contour lines; wide-angle views and exaggerated foreshortenings. Most of all there is a generalised flatness of image even where there is depth illusion, an effect produced in normal photography by the camera's relative consistency of focus throughout the field. None of these characteristics, however, would become a commonplace of painting style until the mass proliferation of photographic imagery made them an unavoidable feature of modern life.

The Realists

The most immediate impact on art can be seen in the work of the Realists who were eager to achieve a special kind of optical veracity unknown until the advent of photography. Realism is often thought to have culminated in the "instanteity" of Impressionism, only to reappear in the Photorealism of the 1970's. Some artists took the fidelity of the photographic image as good reason to work imaginatively or conceptually.

Initially, however, photography, quite apart from its role as a model of pictorial mimes, served painters mainly as a shortcut substitute for closely observed preparatory drawings and as a vastly expanded repertoire of reliable imagery, drawn from whatever remote, exotic corner of the globe into which adventurous photographers had been able to lug their cumbersome nineteenth century equipment.

The Realist spirit inspired a number of progressive painters to seek truth in a more direct and simplified approach to both subject and medium, just as photographers sought to purge their work of the artificial and concentrate on what photography then did best - report life as candidly as possible. Mutely objective - or indifferent - pictures disclosed very clearly the harrowing calm brought by violence and the almost indistinguishable likeness of the dead on either side of the conflict, so that questions of war and peace took on a new meaning.

As a medium of communication, as well as expression, photography was both the product and the agent of the powerful social changes that had been taking place in Western civilization since the revolutions of the late eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 2

THE INNOVATIONS AND TECHNIQUES DEVELOPED IN MODERN PAINTING

1. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

The invention of photography and film initially seemed to pose a threat to painting. The visible communicative power of shapes and colours, with or without references to the visible world, points to a hidden language that is ultimately more powerful than spoken languages. Historically painting had been the central means of portraying the visible world through shapes and colours. However, with the advent of photographs and film, it seemed that those media could fulfill these functions more effectively than painting had ever done, especially in those instances where a work of art also serves as a description or narrative.

In general, people demand that a picture or a sculpture should reflect something appealing. If an artist does not fulfill this, it is often regarded as negligence of duty. Many artists have felt that representation must always be the basis of art. Even Picasso, endlessly experimenting and challenging, rejected an art of pure abstract form. A division arose between representational and abstract or non-representational art. This controversial barrier still remains, and both sides survive, despite foreseeing the collapse of each other. In some cases, both sides have been strengthened by the challenge.

Photography's role in the controversy was complex. When it was invented around 1840, some were convinced that photographs would soon make painting redundant. Instead, painters used photographs as aids and also used them for the exciting new effects of composition, light and space which they offered. However, photography did affect those kinds of painting whose primary function was to accurately record appearances. For example, portrait painting survives only with much diminished intensity. The press photographer is more effective than the "artist" whose "impressions" appeared in the illustrated papers of the mid-nineteenth century.

Similarly, cinema and television convey narrative so effectively that the history painting, the highest achievement of Renaissance art and long the apex of academic ambitions, has almost entirely disappeared.

Photography has also changed our way of seeing. The inundation of photographic images that now surround us has largely replaced the ancient sense of the image as an inherently valuable thing, possibly charged with supernatural powers. Now these images have become our measure of visual truth, even though we all know that human sight is binocular and selective whereas the camera is monocular and unselective; and more importantly, that unselective monocular seeing is purely visual. Human sight blends in all sorts of foreknowledge with what the eyes perceive: we see far and near, hard and soft, cold and hot, comforting and threatening, beautiful and ugly, fast, slow and static objects, without stopping to distinguish between visual data and conceptual interpretation. Human sight is especially closely linked to the sense of touch, and the artist's seeing-and-making involves a particularly close unison of eye and hand. Such associations have been weakened in us by our continual dependency on photography. This is one instance within a general tendency to construct a barrier between direct experience and ourselves: not just camera and cine-camera but also record and tape, and the invisible energy we use for light, heat and transportation. Whatever we have gained and lost, these aids have left a special legacy to art as directly expressed experience, and while they have encouraged some artists to use art to create objects not liable to the visible world, they have led others into representing the visible world more forcefully and at times more accurately than technology is able to.

2. CUBIST COLLAGE

In the work of Picasso and Braque, especially their paintings of about 1909 to 1911, the issue of figuration versus abstraction first becomes a conscious matter. This work is called Analytical Cubism and implies methods of dissection and rational enquiry not immediately obvious in the work itself.

Picasso and Braque's Cubist paintings were done without the use of models. This is significant because of the belief that Cubism derives from the art of Cezanne and involves the representation of objects from many different angles. Cubist paintings are evocative of those paintings and watercolours of Cezanne's in which objects seem to be featured by broad, juxtaposed brushstrokes. However, Cezanne represented his subjects distinctly by giving proper value to their physical existence and to the spaces between them. In order to achieve this effect, he would spend long hours studying his motif in order to fit it to his canvas. Picasso and Braque seemed to show a more playful rather than passionate regard for their subjects. They focused more on their pictorial discourse.

This debate over Cubism remains unresolved other than that the Cubists were doing something new - within the genre of traditional painting. Seurat and Cezanne processed reality through a controlling method or through an intuitive process of integration so as to achieve a pictorial wholeness which they found essential. Courbet, Manet and the Impressionists had, in their different ways, declared that it was the job of painters to represent the real world directly and exclusively. A further approach was the Symbolist of painters from the late 19th Century who were inspired by poetry and turned against reality. Their view was that art needed to deal with dreams and fantasy, not with the everyday world. Paul Gauguin is the best known Symbolist, although he is not typical of the movement. Most Symbolism painting aimed at hyper-sophistication, not primitivism. As Cubists, Picasso and Braque belong to the Courbet-Manet-Impressionism tradition of taking the ordinary world as subject, although they also felt that objects and their settings needed to be reconstructed on the canvas if a picture was to have character and strength as a painting. In this they shared the views of Seurat and Cezanne. Their acceptance of only a very small part of the world, and restricted subject matter based on a studio-centred, was an almost agoraphobic approach reminiscent of Symbolism.

The new approach that Picasso and Braque achieved soon gave rise to a variety of developments in international art and design. Paris, as a centre for artists and patrons, played an important role in this, along with the existence of an inner circle of young

artists close to Picasso and Braque who were eager to make their own contribution to this new form of expression, and the existence of writers and poets who supported it with creative explanations. Cubism was refreshingly new yet involved the bringing together of divergent strands from the recent past. The remarkable collaboration of Picasso and Braque itself illustrates this point. In addition, Cubism offered a range of freedoms such as the freedom to explore new languages or combinations thereof so as to be able to present original views of the world. It also freed artists from having to tirelessly imitate reality.

Picasso and Braque's work changed fundamentally in 1912 to become known as Synthetic Cubism. This implies creation of works which are built out of separate elements based in art or artifice and not in nature. Picasso used a piece of printed oilcloth in his "*Still Life with Chair Caning*" [Fig.2.1] of May 1912, as the surface on which his Cubist objects appear to be placed. Braque, in 1912 used charcoal for the man, and wallpaper printing to achieve a wood panelling effect for the background in his "*Man with Pipe*". He also produced "*Fruit Dish and Glass*" [Fig 2.2] with the same materials and a similar form of expression except that the naturalistically sketched grapes hint at a conflicting reality. The printed paper, like Picasso's oilcloth, asserts itself as the most realistic and reliable part of the picture, yet it is also an illusion. Braque's "*Still Life with Flute*" [Fig 2.3] (1913) looks like a more elaborate version of the past picture, and in a sense it is, except that everything in it is paint or charcoal. The areas of wood are painted and grained to look like imitation wood. A lie about a lie - it is as though it is to remind us that representation in painting is not a true reflection of reality. Picasso took this play on concepts and words even further. The violin in his "*Still Life with Violin and Fruit*" (1912-13) [Fig 2.4] is made in part of charcoal lines and partly of a shaped and stuck-on piece of imitation wood. On another piece of newspaper, which is used to outline the violin with its cut edge, is a sign for a glass. The bottle on the left is cut out of newspaper. The letters JOURNAL are pasted on but the newspaper they belong to is indicated only by an outline. The physical presence of each object is more or less the opposite to that which each has in real life. All objects are dispersed so as to create an uncertainty about their inter-relationship. Reality is therefore confused.

Works such as these by Braque and Picasso combine innovation and tradition, although perhaps the innovativeness is more apparent.

"The now complete dismissal of the convention that the picture surface should appear to the viewer like a window pane through which he looks into an illusory space. But of course, there had been sorts of painting, such as medieval art and stained glass, that showed little interest in creating illusions of space. Mixing different sorts of visual information in a painting is certainly against Renaissance tradition (though we can find instances of it there too), but not against the conventions of medieval or, say, Egyptian art. There is precedent for a multiplicity of materials in the old practice of enhancing the value and effect of a painting by affixing jewels or by cladding it in gold and silver. For the use of common materials such as newspaper there is another kind of precedent: the painter's trick of trying a piece of paper on his canvas as a way of testing the effect of a particular shape or colour, Picasso and Braque may well have used paper shapes in plotting the larger forms in their Analytical Cubist paintings"¹⁵

Appollinaire viewed collage as a technique most suited to relating the life experience of a contemporary urban dweller. He was a staunch proponent of the new art, but his enthusiasm for collage went beyond simply seeking new methods and expression.

Taking collage one step further were the works of Dadaism and Surrealism. Abstract painting as the expression of a flat surface soon became limited. Sculpture, and its combination of sculpture with painting took over as a form of experimentation. Dada's influence reappeared in the 1960's with the emergence of a collage-like art of "assemblage" which allowed for a wide range of possibilities in both form and materials. Assemblage ranges from works such as those of Louise Nevelson in which small found objects - bed-knobs, newel posts, and the like - are set in stacked crates and painted, to create an ever expanding world of miniature parts. Works such as the "combine" painting of Robert Rauschenberg, which draw on ordinary environments, using objects from our consumer-oriented, cast-off style of living in various combinations that are sometimes humorous and often gruesome. Assemblage sculpture is constructed from rubbish and cast-off objects found in city streets, or even pieces of

15. Lynton, *ibid*, p.32.

wrecked cars and broken machinery which symbolise the life of a wealthy society dependent on disposable goods.

Dada involved the irrational juxtaposition of pieces of information taken from the world. Dada had little in common with Cubism, although Braque's and Picasso's invention influenced it. It was more the technique of the modern poet who collects snippets of everyday speech or of journalism in the newspapers and combines them in his own formulations or replaces his words with theirs. Dadaists tended to write poetry of the same sort and their art proved successful on a visual level too, especially in figurative and abstract modes which many viewed as being opposed, mutually exclusive discourses.

In private, Kurt Schwitters, a German Dadaist, created *Merzabau*, environments, initially in his house in Hanover, where it spread through rooms on three floors, then in Norway and lastly in England. The ones in Norway and England were on a much smaller scale. These consisted of compilations of rubbish picked off the streets and reassembled in specific arrangements in his home. In these, rubbish and other available material was used including plaster, bits of wood and other referential material that interested him. These were fixed together and built up.

Max Ernst became one of the first and most productive of the Surrealist artists. It was most evident in the form of collages. His favourite means of working was to assemble images chosen from printed advertisements, sales catalogues and other such illustrations, which were combined to produce unexpected meanings by converting them from the mundane into the unusual.

"He had been quoted as describing these collages as 'the systematic exploitation of the fortuitous or engineered encounter of two or more intrinsically incompatible realities on a surface which is markedly inappropriate for the purpose', and of the effect as 'the spark of poetry which leaps across the gap as these two realities are brought together'.¹⁶

16. Lynton, *ibid*, p.146.

Surrealist frottage and grattage

Max Ernst discovered many varied techniques to express Surrealist ideas. In 1925 he began making rubbings from irregular surfaces. These rubbings were made from wood grains, leaves and similar surfaces which were then worked into representations of humanoids, forests, birds, and other images joined in strange combinations. Ernst's amazing imagination and creativity are clear in early Dada works, sometimes done in collaboration with Hans Arp, and in his later works in collage such as the *Woman without Heads*, *Dream of a Young Girl Anxious to Enter a Convent*, done in 1929 and 1930 respectively.

He relentlessly worked on new methods of realising the images of his imagination - revealing his private and ineffable thoughts. His paintings of forests, for example, refer to the enchantment and terror he experienced when his father - who was an amateur painter - took him into the woods on a painting trip. His memories influenced his work.

Ernst, Baargled and Arp established The Dada Conspiracy of the Rhineland in Cologne, which was committed to challenging existing traditions. Later, from 1921 onwards, Ernst's paintings and collages became reminiscent of Giorgio de Chirico's illusionist space and dream images. These proto-Surrealist works were mostly done in Paris, where he moved to in 1922. From 1921 to 1924, in a period known as the "hazy epoch", Andre Breton (self-proclaimed leader of Surrealist movement) and his friends attempted to define Surrealism as distinct from Dada. Meanwhile Ernst combined Dadaist collage with a spatial definition found in de Chirico's work. This synthesis provided a basis for the illusionist Surrealism that followed. Ernst had a Surrealist disinterest for the quality of the paint surface. Images were what mattered, especially incongruous combinations of unlikely elements carried out in a realistic manner. For example, the work of de Chirico, Rene Magritte, Yves Tanguy, and Salvador Dali.

While in the German Army, Ernst painted water colours, (most of which are now lost), and *Landscape Fantasy*. His painting is stylistically Cubist, but is closest to the paintings of Marc Chagall, Auguste Macke and Paul Klee, all of whom were members of the Young Rhineland Group which Ernst joined in 1911. This group's work includes elements of fantasy and images such as the bird - which are regularly found in Ernst's later works. Perspective and proportion are intentionally sacrificed and even reversed, and buildings and animals are crammed together in a tightly designed space. The work is not easily defined as Dadaist nor Surrealist, but it does reflect various astounding images that Ernst invented later on.

Ernst's series of drawings known as the *Histoire Naturelle* was most likely inspired by Odilon Redon's cosmic and biological imagery. The forest pictures were influenced by Ernst's development of the technique of "frottage" as a complement to automatism. Both are used to stimulate the creative process by improvisatory means. With automatism, the early marks derive their impetus from the artist, regardless of how unconscious the dictates may be, but with frottage chance is most important. Despite the fact that the surfaces are rubbed and selected by the artist, they are randomly chosen. Thus reading images into chance surface effects constituted an alternative to gestures of the unconscious.

By using frottage in the forest pictures, Ernst allowed a major role for intentional control. On an ongoing basis the relationship between accident and control led to poignant images that opened Breton's window onto the artist's inner landscape. In the Forest series, grattage (scraping the surface) was as important as frottage. "Forest", for example, was created by applying layers of paint to the canvas and then scraping parts away until the general configuration of the forest appeared. This ultimately gave rise to the final image. [Fig 2.6]

Frottage provided the technical basis for a series of unorthodox drawings; but it also intensified Ernst's perception of the textures in his environment - wood, cloth, leaves,

plaster and wallpaper. This perception caused his paintings of the late 1920's and the 1930's to take on an Expressionist appearance. Ernst wrote in reference to his own development of frottage:

" I came to assist as spectator at the birth of all my works from the tenth of August 1925, memorable day of the discovery of frottage. A man of "ordinary constitution" (I employ here the words of Rimsbaud), I have done everything to render my soul monstrous [meant in the sense of great or immense]. Blind swimmer, I have made myself see. I have seen. And I was surprised and enamoured of what I saw, wishing to identify myself with it." 17

His clever innovations were haunted by reminiscences of art he had admired and artists he had worked with. These include not only Late Gothic artists and nineteenth-century Romantics but also de Chirico, Picasso, Picabia, Klee, Magritte, Tanguy, Dali and Matta Echaurren. No one encompassed so completely the whole of Surrealism - with the exception of the abstract-organic wing of Arp and Miro. Artists entering the realm of Surrealism used photography to heighten or distort reality. Frenchman Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908) studied painting under a Cubist, Andre Lhote, then became a photojournalist covering amongst other major events the Spanish Civil war, amongst other major events. He used the camera to give him a composition in the moving world. His photographic images were split second flashes of reality, often bizarre but always carrying effective impact. His photojournalism reached the standing of art and embodied timeless beauty in its form and content.

Man Ray, an American living in France played a vital role in creating visual realities, through his painting photography, collage, drawing and sculpture. He was a leader in the Surrealist and Dadaist movements, pioneering and exploring novel forms and techniques of expression. He created surrealist objects full of mystery, humour and

17. Ernst (1949) p.9.

poignant feeling. He mastered many techniques of creativity and used them to explore and reveal the essence of life, in common objects, people and situation.

His works are full of surprises and in his photography he "photographs his fantasy". Although his livelihood was earned through photography art fashions and the rich famous, he privately worked at transforming Surrealist effects to a form of photographic art.

3. ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

Abstract Art of Wassily Kandinsky

Wassily Kandinsky was the first abstract artist to publish a theory justifying abstraction. He explored the possibility of creating an abstract art in an important essay called "On the Question of Form", published in the Blaue Reiter Almanac (1912). He thus set up an opposition between inner and outer elements in works of art, arguing that external, 'outer' form is less significant in the artist's work. That quality of the content is determined by 'inner necessity'.

Works of various periods and of totally different cultures were mingled together and representational images were set alongside others verging towards total abstraction.

According to Kandinsky, any object has a dual effect: it is both a 'sign' with a particular purpose and also a form, capable of producing an 'inner sound' that is self-sufficient and completely independent.

Kandinsky maintained that there are two essential issues to bear in mind: the composition of the whole picture and the creation of the individual forms within it. This strategy is apparent in Kandinsky's paintings. Nevertheless, his woodcuts show

an increasing and even total departure from references to the external world. In 1913, Kandinsky's paintings became still more abstract. His practice of creating a 'running-over of colour beyond the boundaries of form' in, for instance, "*Composition IV*" seems to relate to these ideas.

Using a variety of techniques Kandinsky emphasized personal feelings toward his subject matter and his work thus contains strong emotional content. Focus was put on the human condition using raw colour and often, non-descriptive and harsh line. Elements of Gothic architecture and sculpture are evident in his paintings. [Fig 2.9]

Abstract Expressionism

The American painter Adolf Gottlieb felt that the situation was so bad that he could try anything, no matter how absurd it seemed. He and many of his contemporaries were hesitantly moving towards an aesthetic by becoming more sensitive to the beautiful, which allowed the artist to express himself freely and subjectively. [Figures 2.7 and 2.8]

Concentrating on the act of painting, the painters found themselves not being obstructed or restricted by anything save the decision to paint. Their thinking rested on a well-established principle: if they emptied their minds of preconception, and applied colour with a maximum of spontaneity, the images they made would be an expression of the deepest levels of their being. Modern psychoanalysis appeared to show that the conscious mind could exert a repressive authority on the unconscious. By releasing its hold, painters were free to express their feelings. Art, therefore, became a method of self-realisation.

It was not only a re-evaluation of the contemporary Western tradition with its emphasis on the intellect that helped to bring about the new emphasis on gesture or "the act of painting". Artists found a great deal in Oriental art, and more particularly calligraphy. In Chinese calligraphy, the brush-stroke is of prime importance. The painter-scribe puts the contradiction between subject and object, (which was proving a crisis to Western painters) and, by concentration on the process of sign-making, becomes a

participant in a continuous and potentially endless series of events (paralleling the cosmic process of generation and regeneration).

Perhaps it is worth drawing a connection between graffiti in public places and calligraphy: graffiti too, are congealed gestures, and the fact that these gestures represent, not a sense of unity as with all things in Oriental art, but a social estrangement. It appealed to disillusioned men for whom painting was a heroic assertion of their identity. Far from escaping from self in the eastern manner, they wished to proclaim it. Creativity was a sequence of free, unconditioned choices, through which they could redeem their alienation from society and from the given aesthetic.

Oriental Ink paintings

Primitive painting invariably consisted of contour drawing, and if a contour drawing is enriched with colour and shading it can give the flat surface an illusion of three dimensions, therefore satisfying the artist's instinct for naturalistic representation; it is this which gives modern European art its realistic character.

The principle underlying this brush-drawing technique has been called *Koppo* (which means - "the formula determining the skeleton of things"), because the artist must select from an infinite spectrum of lines the one correct line which will suggest the skeleton. Secondary forms without any depth, feeling or knowledge can be left out so as to seal the linear interpretation of basic objective form, the individual creation of the artist which can only be achieved with the line of the brush.

The European brush-and-wash technique originates in the Baroque period, with the discovery of Far Eastern ink paintings. However it never became as popular in Europe as it was in China and Japan.

Painting in wash initially became popular in the seventeenth century because of a preoccupation with the nature of light, shadow, and reflected light. The contrasts and gentle gradations achieved with this technique met the need for variety. However, in

the long run variety of tone alone did not satisfy the European desire for colour. In the Far East in which ink painting was held with high regard, the desire was for black and the gradations obtainable with black were considered the most noble colours. The eastern technique also varied in the way that large areas were often left unpainted, giving the drawing a certain weight quite distinct from creating an illusion of space. Meanwhile in Europe the entire picture surface was generally covered with wash, with only small areas of the picture left unpainted.

Compared to black wash, colours (made from mineral and later plant dyes) were only of secondary importance, for the refined sensibility of the Oriental esteems black the most expressive colour. Black symbolises the deep and hidden meaning of the universe: so the Chinese "Hsuan" means "black" as well as "inexhaustibility of the essence of the world." The Chinese have developed such a high degree of sensitivity to the possible uses of black that they can use black alone as five different colours. The essence of Oriental painting consists of breaking up the picture plane with lines. [Fig 2.10]

The crucial significance attributed to the line in Oriental painting is because in China wash and brush are primarily writing materials, and that painting is a product of calligraphy and still connected with it. It does not therefore seem peculiar to the Chinese if Shih-Cheng, a painter of the Ming dynasty, says that a bamboo stem should be painted like the strokes of seal characters, a twig in the manner of cursive writing, leaves like ordinary writing, and the knots in bamboo like official script. In the Far East calligraphy and objective representation both read, and are often combined in the same picture. They are therefore not opposites.

The shapes of objects are stereotyped symbols like the characters, and the artist must memorise them individually before they can be combined in a picture. However, they are not representations of particular objects, but almost always have some symbolic significance as well, which the viewer "reads" as he looks at the picture. A rock, a flower, or an animal is never simply an object because each and every object points beyond itself to a realm of deeper meanings and associations. To the painter as well as the scribe, the line is not only a means to an end but an object in itself. The line has

developed to the extent that it is no longer able to represent objectivity. The composition of a picture in Chinese painting is also influenced by calligraphy in that the figures are set in a two dimensional plane and are mostly flat so that the effectiveness of the line will not be lost.

Mark Tobey was one of the first Westerners to pay serious attention to East Asian painting. Like his Oriental masters, he pursued a meditative goal. Influenced by American Indian Art and Japanese woodcuts, he converted to the Baha'i World Faith, a universalistic and optimistic religious sect and devoted himself to the reconciliation and union of Eastern and Western cultures. After studying and teaching eastern painting and travelling to China and Japan where he spent a month in a Zen monastery, he started the series of paintings called "*White Writings*" in the mid 1930's which continued through the 1940's and 1950's. In "*Edge of August*", painted in 1953, a culmination of Tobey's adaptation of calligraphy to painting can be seen. A maze of white thread-like script lies on a reddish background in such a way that perspective is destroyed and form obliterated. The communicative function of the sign surrenders to a rhythmic working which creates an all-over texture which effectively dematerialises the brushstroke. The best of Tobey's work has a slight fussy tranquillity. Given that his central area of concern is religious, he never identified himself with the Abstract Expressionists' radical re-evaluation of the basis of contemporary art.

[Figures 2.11 and 2.12]

Tobey's work is different to that of Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline in two important respects. Firstly, in terms of his very different sense of scale and secondly, with regard to his nostalgic feeling for the ancient (something which Pollock avoided even when he made use of primitive pictographs). However, on occasion the supposedly "direct" language of his gestural abstraction is actually more hermetic and more thoroughly cut off from the society that produced it than has been acknowledged by art historians. In fact, it is often as ambiguous as its own technical procedures.

For every different version of reality that has been explored, Modernism has a movement. Its multiplicity is its message and the source of its excitement.

People have been describing Modernism as being in a late phase from up to thirty years ago and new art forms are now spoken about from a Post-Modern viewpoint. Modernism evolved much faster than its Renaissance predecessors and many artists, including Marcel Duchamp proved that a work of art was no more than an idea expressed through an object. This object might be dispensable, renewable or only known by report. The twentieth century is, as a result, cluttered with what appears to be attempts to produce the last work of art. These range from Malevich's black square, to Kosuth's work and Duchamp's own notorious urinal. However, none of these end at all. Modernism was so protean that a new revolution could only replace it with nothing at all or incorporate it into a new complex pluralism.

Jackson Pollock said of his paintings,

" When I am *in* my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc, because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I loose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well."¹⁸

He preferred working on unstretched canvas placed against a hard wall or floor as he liked the resistance of a hard surface. The field effect of the lines of paint he flung on his drip paintings seem to stem from a form of calligraphy whilst also being an environment that surrounds the viewer. This effect reinforces the size of Pollock's paintings as the spectator senses that the network of threads and cords of paint extend beyond the edges of the canvas. [Figures 2.13 and 2.14]

Pollock was pre-occupied with such metaphysical questions as he thought art could pose; and the role of art Kandinsky insisted on - an evocation of the "basic rhythms" of the universe and their links to the mind - was of great importance to Pollock.

18. Lynton, *ibid*, p.231.

Willem de Koonig's work also showed some calligraphic aspects, especially his group of black paintings with white drawings executed around 1950. This particular aspect of many Abstract Expressionists work was related to their interests in Oriental art and the use of writing as an integral part of painting. [Fig 2.16 : 2.17]

Andre Masson and Oriental Influence

Venice, Rome and other Italian cities and landscapes were an important source of inspiration for Masson after 1914. However, other landscapes of the period derive as much of a fascination with Chinese painting of landscape as with Impressionism itself, and therefore relate to a particularly rich vein in his post-war work. While the scenes of Venice, painted in a broad, loose manner were inspired by his visit to Italy, there are some, particularly of torrents and cascades, that have a closer relation with Chinese painting. He first saw examples of Chinese art in Boston, and their complexity gradually affected his own practice. He related to the attitude towards nature that people are insignificant in the face of nature which he saw in them.

Masson was not only attracted by the message in Chinese Art, nature is perceived and expressed through the act of painting.

"Masson now revived the surrealist practice of automatism, but also transformed it by overlapping it with ideas drawn from Zen. Under the guidance of Zen, Masson abandoned the Freudian language of the early surrealist automatism and its appeal to the unconscious and emphasis on the image."¹⁹ [Fig 2.18]

Masson's paintings most graphically displayed his involvement with Chinese painting through the practice of calligraphy. Calligraphy adheres to strict rules but it must be - and must appear to be - spontaneous. Involving a junction between two moves of conduct regarded in the West as being oppositely opposed : spontaneity and skilful control.

Chinese art also affected artistic development by means of the way in which eastern calligraphy is not restricted to the need to communicate rationally. Western script,

19. Ades (1994) p.25.

insists on the priority of the spoken word (parole), and is limited to it. In contrast, the character or symbol, is a creature which returns to the body, and allows the gesture to blossom. Masson's calligraphy demonstrates the Western artistry between word and image. However, it is not simply an alternative meaning to the marks, but the marks themselves are vital.

4. Hard-edge Abstract and Pop Art

Colour field painters concentrated on chromatic values and the effects of colour on the eye as opposed to the expressive impact of line. Another aspect of colour field painting explored by artists of this time was their pre-occupation with myth.

"For Rothko and Gottlieb, the subject matter of painting, its content and meaning, remained crucial at this time."²⁰

"Aesthetically, they claimed to favour the simple expressions of the complex thought and the promotion of the large shape, flat forms and the reassertion of the picture plane."²¹

As its name indicates, colour-field painting has two components - colour and field. Rejecting illusions of depth and gestural brushwork, colour-field painters applied colour in swaths that often covered the entire canvas, suggesting that it was a detail of some larger field. Intent on excluding any distinction between a subject and its background, colour-field painters treated the canvas as a single plane. This emphasis on the flatness of the painting mirrored the formalist imperative that painting respect its two-dimensional nature rather than create an illusion of three-dimensionality.

Various other names for colour-field painting were composed during the 1950's and 1960's. The most notable was Post Painterly Abstraction, the title of an influential 1964 exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum, curated by the critic Clement Greenberg. It encompassed what is now call Hard-edge painting. Another once-popular term was Systematic Painting, the title of a 1966 exhibition curated by

20. Moszynska (1990) p.163.

21. *ibid.* p.163.

Lawrence Alloway at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, which featured colour-field and hard-edge painters who made systematic variations on a single geometric motif, such as a circle or chevron. Finally, there is stain painting, which should be regarded as a subset of colour-field painting.

There were two main issues which predominated in abstract art and criticism. One revolved around the appearance of the work whilst the other hinged upon its literal, object based quality. Clement Greenberg's critical standpoint was opposed to the prevalence of subject matter.

"In an essay of 1939, called 'Avant-garde and Kitsch', he propounded the view that content is to be dissolved so completely into form that the work of art or literature cannot be reduced in whole or in part to anything not itself ... subject matter or content becomes something to be avoided like the plague."²²

The initial attitude of Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko was not markedly different from that of the other leading Abstract Expressionists in that they saw their first duty in turning inwards upon themselves for subject matter. They did not look at social themes or criticise or celebrate their surroundings and yet their subjective exploration was in a search for universal significance. Rothko in particular insisted on the importance of what he called subject matter and that his abstract composition can carry implications that may be interpreted as "meaning". [Fig 2.19 : 2.20]

Hard-Edge Painting

The term hard-edge painting was first used in 1958 by the Los Angeles critics Jules Langsner to describe the abstract canvases of West Coast painters uninterested in the brushy gesturalism of Abstract Expressionism. The following year the critic Lawrence Alloway applied the term to American painting with surfaces treated as a single flat unit. The distinction between figure and background was eliminated in favour of the all-over approach pioneered by Jackson Pollock a decade earlier. Unlike Pollock's free-form compositions, hard-edge paintings are typically geometric, symmetrical, and

22. Moszynska opcit p.189.

limited in palette. Other precursors from the 1950's include Ad Reinhardt, Leon Pol Smith, and Alexander Liberman. Hard-edge paintings vary from Kenneth Noland's chevron-patterned compositions to Ellsworth Kelly's oddly shaped monochrome paintings on canvas or metal. The machine-made look of such works pointed ahead to the three-dimensional "primary structures" of Minimalism. Although the precision and impersonality of hard-edge painting distinguish it from the spontaneous-looking compositions of colour-field painting, the two styles overlapped, and artists such as Noland worked in both modes.

"Hard-edge was an authentic movement of America: as a contrast to the softness of some abstract work "hardness" became necessary. "It consists usually of an emblematic sign which is larger than earlier idiom. Most of all it is not geometrical in general, but a sharply constructed free form which only appears geometrical by virtue of its decisive precision" (L.Lippard). The best known exponents of Hard-edge were Leon Pol Smith (already since 1950), Ellsworth Kelly, who saw the surfaces of paintings as containers for vibrating colour, and then two painters from Washington, Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland."²³

The colours they used recreated space beyond the edges of the canvas by their suggestive intensity. [Figures 2.21 : 2.22 and 2.23]

POP ART

The term Pop Art first appeared in print in an article by the British critic Lawrence Alloway "The Arts and the mass Media". Precedents for Pop art include Dada, with its interest in consumer objects and urban debris, and the paintings and collages of Stuart Davis, an early American Modernist who used Lucky Strike cigarette packaging as a subject in the 1920's. Chronologically closer at hand, Jasper Johns' Neo-Dada painting of everyday symbols like the American flag were crucially important. Some observers regard Nouveau Realisme as the precursor of Pop. In fact, the rapprochement with popular culture that was epitomized by Pop art seems to have been part of the Zeitgeist of the 1950's in England, France and the United States.

23. Arsen (1979) p.34.

Modern Art was a revolution in perception, won first by certain artists and then more gradually by spectators of art. From the seventeenth through to the nineteenth century, the French Academies and official art institutions, as well as those of other countries were in their time, major forces for the support of all the arts. It was not only through these academies that the arts were encouraged by governments but also their tradition of salons for the regular display of arts was for a century almost the only way in which an artist could display his work to the public.

The strict regulations and closed- minded view point of these very traditional institutions led to the artistic revolution that became Modernism. Experimental artists were driven to seek other solutions because of the rigid formalised structure of these institutions.

Pop art was simultaneously a celebration of post-war consumerism and a reaction to Abstract Expressionism. Rejecting the Abstract Expressionist artist's heroic personal stance and the spiritual or psychological content of his work, Pop artists took a more playful and ironic approach to art and life.

Post Modernism, Neo-Geo, and Appropriation art - grounded in popular culture, the mass media, and semiotic interpretation - could never have happened without the precedent of Pop Art.

Although Pop Art has often been regarded as an American phenomenon, it actually originated in England in the mid-1950's. For some young artists in England the landscape of commercial America, that vast range of signs and commercial messages that flourished on the far shore of the Atlantic, was deeply fascinating. For them, the imagery of American capital was an equalizer, an escape from social class - as "good" culture in England was inextricably bound up with social ranking, the property of the genteel and the paternal.

English artists saw culture as being dominated by two predominant aspects. Cultural alternatives were spread across a field of choice generated by mass production and machine reproduction. The other dominating aspect was that of the socially dominant media- books and painting were no longer the socially dominant media: films, records

and the television had taken over as the leading media. As Lawrence Alloway, the English critic who first used the phrase POP ART, in 1959 wrote:

"Mass production techniques, applied to accurately repeatable words, pictures and music, have resulted in an expendable multitude of signs and symbols. To approach this exploding field with Renaissance-based ideal of the uniqueness of art is crippling. Acceptance of the mass media entails a shift in our notion of what culture is. Instead of reserving the word for the highest artifacts and the noblest thoughts of history's top ten, it needs to be used more widely as a description of "what society does".²⁴

Richard Hamilton wrote that Pop art should be:

"Popular (designed for a mass audience)
Transient (short-term solution)
Expendable (easily forgotten)
Low-cost
Mass-produced
Young (aimed at youth)
Witty
Sexy
Gimmicky
Glamorous
Big Business..."

Pop Art, far from being popular art, was made by highly professionally trained experts for a mass audience. It was done **to** the people. It grew by analogy to what it admired, advertising and the media through which advertisements were replicated. And it grew dandistically, casting itself in the realm of the detached, amused, lenient, but inflexibly ironic spectator at the vast theatre of desire and illusion which the mass media of the twentieth century had erected."²⁵

Television brought new choices to society's visual absorption. In flipping from one channel to the next, people were editing their own montages based on chance whilst looking for the news programme or game show that takes their fancy. What is taken for granted is a stream of images. Russian filmmaker such as Dziga Vertov and the German Dadaists such as Heartfield and Hoch believed that television would realise this potential. They believed that whole societies would learn to experience the world vicariously through rapid montage and juxtaposition.

24. Hughes (1966) p.342.

25. *ibid* (1966) p.342.

However the effect of television has not been to expose the truth of reality, but rather to obscure reality and to estrange viewers from the world around them, turning everything into a merely disposable spectacle, whether it be a natural disaster, love, war or "soap". Television brought about the cult of the electronic fragment.

In addition, television images had a contradictory note. Although the images were real and were right there, present in the room, they were also artificial, because their illusion could not always be concealed. They would creep up the screen, or break off into dots and lines and flicker. However, if the reality of TV was tentative, its colour was ultra-vivid and wholly abstract, especially in America. It comprised electron colour, not the colour of ink, nature or paint.

One of the artists most affected by television in the sixties was Robert Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg's view of his landscape of media was both affectionate and ironic. He liked excavating whole histories within an image - histories of the media themselves.

"In 1962, he began to apply printed images to canvas with silkscreen - the found image, not the found object, was incorporated into the work. "I was bombarded with TV sets and magazines," he recalls, "by the refuse, by the excess of the world ... I thought that if I could paint or make an honest work, it should incorporate all of these elements, which were and are a reality. Collage is a way of getting an additional piece of information that's impersonal. I've always tried to work impersonally." With access to anything printed, Rauschenberg could draw on an unlimited bank of images for his new paintings, and he set them together with a casual narrative style. In heightening the documentary flavour of his work, he strove to give canvas the accumulative flicker of a colour TV set. The bawling pressure of images - rocket, eagle, Kennedy, crowd, street sign, dancer, oranges, box, mosquito - creates an inventory of modern life, the lyrical outpourings of a mind jammed to satiation with the rapid, the quotidian, the real."²⁶

This plethora of images is excessive so that it is impossible to internalise all of them; as a result, we skim. The images retained are the ones that most resemble a sign:

26. *ibid.* p.345.

which are simple, clear and repetitious. The extension of this glut of images is celebrity, replacing the Renaissance idea of fame. [Figures 2.26 and 2.27]

Jasper Johns' series of *Flag* paintings dating from 1955 set in motion the anti-Abstract Expressionist reaction, and two important exhibitions of American painting. "Toward a New Abstraction" and "Post-Painterly Abstraction", held in 1963 and 1964 respectively, confirmed that it was complete.

The Pop Art movement was best understood by American graphic artist Andy Warhol (b.1930). He captured the essence of the culture of packaging during a six year period, ending in 1968, by which time his inventiveness seemed to burn out.

Many people were drawn to Andy Warhol and his studio called the Factory. For some, he and it were the New York scene of the sixties. The factory was in an uptown neighbourhood which effectively separated it from the downtown art community. It was more than merely a studio, it was a gathering point for the complex group of artists, actors, celebrities and friends of Andy Warhol. Billy Name one of the people who worked with Andy in the factory said:

"Andy took that place because it was available, cheap, a big space. But there was a difference about Andy. Even though he was integrated - Andy was part of that art scene, where everybody interacted - once he was selected by the media to become the representative of the new Pop Art movement, which grew out of the avant-garde, but was no longer avant-garde - it had a panache, a style to it - he was treated as a separate entity instead of part of the entity out of which he grew. The culture he grew out of was disregarded; Andy was treated specially. Because we were located in the studio, they would come over, to see what we were doing. It was still the interactive arts scene. But that wasn't seen much by the media. They were interested in the sensation. In the effect. "27

He produced serial images rather than unique originals. This imagery changed art and the way it was observed as well as reflecting on changing social images and concepts.

27. Guo Qiang (1991) p.278.

"I don't really feel all these people with me every day at the Factory are just hanging around me. I'm more hanging around them ... I think we're a vacuum here at the Factory; it's great. I like being a vacuum; it leaves me alone to work. We are bothered, though, we have cops coming up all the time, they think we're doing awful things and we aren't ... Anybody who comes by here is welcome, it's just that we're trying to do some work here." Andy Warhol 28

Warhol seemed barely explicable. He believed that you do not have to act crazy; you can let others do it for you. The media could find no explanation for Warhol's behaviour and theories and speculation was rife as to his motives. He became a famous artist by stating through his work that "art could not change life".

Fifteen years previously Jackson Pollock had wanted to be a unique, unpredictable energy force. By contrast Andy Warhol loved the uniformity of mass production, using repetitions of identical objects silkscreened repeatedly. His work made a mockery of advertising.

It was about the way advertising promises that the same product with different labels will give you special, unrepeatably gratifications. His "Soupcan" is one of a number produced on the same theme. The images were initially painted by hand but Warhol then went on to screenpaint them, attaching a stencil to a screen stretched on a frame and forcing the colour through the unmasked areas of the screen. Through diverse subject matter Warhol aimed to demystify themes such as fame and death. His images were less painted than registered. The silkscreen was without nuances - a surface with slips, but no adjustments. It looked coarse, ephemeral, and faintly squalid. His silkscreen copies were dogmatic and rather crude. His intention, with these copies, was for them to be glanced at, not studied and analysed. He managed to turn the art world into the Art Business, available and accessible to the masses without intending it to be criticised and analysed for depths which it did not possess.

28. Tillman.(1995) p.74.

This mass imagery movement was followed (albeit in a different medium) by Roy Lichtenstein. He produced paintings based on American comic strips. His designs were flat, to-the-point and schematic and gave him ample leeway for improvisation. He directed his 'ugliness' at middle class collectors defying them to buy but it had the opposite effect as collectors sought out his 'bad taste'.

Lichtenstein's famous use of the cartoon Genre is in keeping with the recycling of found objects and common household items typical of Pop Art in the 1960's. Ed Ruscha was the first to appropriate the comic strip, with Lichtenstein and Warhol following. Lichtenstein composed his cartoon images from minute circles which simulated Ben Day dots - a screening technique used in printing.

But there was much more to Lichtenstein's work than it simply being a reaction and aggressive statement against to accepted painting techniques. His work was formal and meticulous, and often painstakingly reworked to achieve commercial boldness as well as quality images. He did not produce art to shock the public or compare his work to accepted traditional artists.

Every level of advertising, illustrations in magazines and newspapers, clothes, foods, film stars and cartoons was appropriated by Pop Art. Nothing was considered sacred and the cheaper and more despicable the better. Not even the traditional techniques of creating art was respected (viz. Lichtenstein's "Big Brushstroke").

Lichtenstein used a projector to enlarge his source material and filled in his dots with a screen. He had his baked-enamel paintings produced in multiple editions. Warhol also chose to do this. Andy Warhol may have hand-painted *his* work to begin with but then began to silkscreen them using commercial techniques - hiring others to duplicate and execute his work in a factory-like process.

Another source of mass imagery appropriated for subject matter and technical appearance was the billboard, James Rosenquist used to paint them for a living. The giant images he was accustomed to dealing with - "hundreds of square feet of Franco-American spaghetti, and a large beer glass sixty feet long" - surfaced again in his fine-

art work in the sixties as a montage of huge, bland visual fragments. Transparency, grisaille, relief panels and chromatic dislocation were among the devices he used. The complex chaos of the variously scaled images are knit into a unity. Once an ambiguous object in his painting, for example, an umbrella, is recognised, the pattern across it can be interpreted as linear rain. After 1962 he employed extraneous materials such as neon lights, wood, twine, plastic sheets and mirror pieces. Free standing constructions, shaped canvases, hinged or pierced surfaces and new materials were all an integral part of his repertoire.

Tom Wesselman's work consisted of integrating objects into his paintings. He differs from the other Pop Artists in that he did not paint from magazine advertisements, billboards and objects but used them directly on the canvas, using collage-assemblage methods. He only abandoned real materials as his work became bigger and finally outgrew its components. He used adverts from magazines, then from billboards.

As the paintings grew larger he also tightened up his technique, the edges of the images became harder and his colour became flatter and sharper.

Claes Oldenburg was one of the most radical and inventive of the Pop artists in the sixties. His conversion job on popular imagery was wider than anyone else's; there seemed to be no area of human appetite into which the metaphors of his art did not reach from their broad range of technique and vocabulary. Oldenburg wanted to experience and become what he saw, and in the process convert the most unlikely objects into metaphors of the body and the self. He incorporated a wide range of textures and substances from the excremental to blobby paint and gesso as well as shiny folds of vinyl or rigid steel.

Oldenburg's images are often contradictory, expressing antithesis in the objects he portrayed. Topics were at the same time part of a whole, yet functioning autonomously.

"But for every artist of Oldenburg's seriousness, there were dozens of less authentic hangers on. The "democratic", uncritical view of mass reality that was supposed to be part and parcel of Pop (although

it was never shared by Oldenburg) had begun, by 1965, to affect the very structure of the art world itself, altering its implied contracts, changing what the audience (and so the artists) expected of art." 29

Sigmar Polke, following the example of Robert Rauschenberg and Warhol, made a series of pictures in which he enlarged photographs of arbitrary events such as those that may be found in cheap tabloids. He borrowed the use of dots from Liechtenstein but painted them so that they were off-registered and almost obliterated the image. In this way he invented his own brand of optical photorealism.

He also made fabric pictures, trashy images reproduced on cheap, ready made, pre-printed fabric. In the early 1980's Polke began to experiment with unconventional techniques and materials, including aluminium, arsenic, barium and other metals and minerals as well as lacquers, pigments, wax, alcohol and depilatories. He scattered or spread these substances on resin-coated canvasses to create areas of translucent, changeable colour. They are transformed by the influences of temperature, humidity and the decomposition and recombination of the chemicals. [Figures 2.29 Lichensein, 2.30 Rosenquist and 2.31 Rauschenberg]

The quasi-scientific idea of a solid world with atoms like billiard balls was something that artists were the first to modify. The last century and a quarter shows them constantly striving to alter the perception of society as a whole. The controversy that has greeted many of their efforts has much to do with the infinity of alternative universes that they present - from the Impressionists, to the Surreal images of de Chirico to the Pop art of Sigmar Polke.

If art from the third quarter of the nineteenth century to the last quarter of the twentieth is an "era" corresponding in some way to the era inaugurated by the Renaissance, then this modern era is one that contains a confusing multiplicity of styles. The link between them in this case is through the idea of "Modernism" itself - the name of a profoundly real historical shift in the direction of cultural perceptions.

29. Hughes opcit p.359.

CHAPTER 3

THE TECHNIQUES AND INNOVATIONS DEVELOPED IN POST MODERN ART

1. POSTMODERNISM

The Spanish writer Frederico De Onis was supposedly the father of Post Modernism. For historian, Arnold Toynbee, Post Modernism was an epoch which started in 1875 when individualism, Christianity and non-Western cultures came to the fore.

The Post Modern culture was fundamental and critical to the aestheticism which gripped the Museum of Modern Art.

Post Modernism was no longer confined to art but included a variety of trends and its revolutionary impact became more rational and ordered. The modernists combined numerous traditions with free choice, ambiguity and an ironic selection of eclectic options.

The word Eclecticism was first used in the last classical period to describe a school of Greek philosophers who claimed to think no thoughts of their own, but rather selected ideas from existing schools. Eclecticism, as a picking and mixing of styles and themes, is obviously endemic to all cultures, but some periods combine materials more wilfully and more self-consciously than others.

Modernism intensified the use of eclectic practices through the exploitation of collage and realtered strategies such as montage and photo-montage. But Post Modernism is often characterized as a radically eclectic mode, whether in architecture, writing, fashion and design, visual arts or media production. In this way it also challenges if not offends decorum by contravening ideas about the regulated hierarchy of cultural values.

Post Modernism concentrated on the religious aspect of art in contrast to the Modernists who emphasized the autonomy and expression of individualism. Artists like Hockney, Morley, Fischl, Anderson and Georges painted anything from allegories to classical narratives, concerning themselves with content.

Carlomaria Mariani painted a modern version of Raphael's *Parnassus* and friends, layering his texts to create the illusion of a mythical structure - Anachronisti.

Post Modernists render modern life's reality in an abstract form. Their work is complex and hybrid in its style. Ron Kitaj, a cultural artist, combines Renaissance traditions with collage and graphics. His painting, *If Not, Not*, is an interpretation of poet T S Elliot's "Wasteland". In it he combines classical traditional landscape with primitive directness.

One of the most frequently used styles by young artists in the 1980's was appropriation. in true form of graffiti or street art. This was an attempt to push the barriers; Practised by New York painters such as Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960 - 88) and Keith Haring, it was indicative of frenetic street culture with its graffiti scrawled on walls or subway trains. [Figures 3.1 and 3.2]

Another American, Julian Schnabel, often engaged in violent assaults on his chosen images and materials alike: His best-known works are painted on a surface of broken crockery that was unevenly cut or had a torn edge. In this work he seemed intent on literally destroying all conventions by a sheer act of will. As was the case with art of earlier Modernists, it seems that everything is possible and that art can be created from whatever materials, images and subjects are most easily acceptable. However, such tendencies seem to be inescapably tainted with the demands of competition, career and ego especially in the light of their previous associations.

Although the debate between abstraction and representation was dominant at the start of the 1960's, it no longer holds much meaning in the work of many artists. For example, the English painter Howard Hodgkin, utilises simple brushmarks and basic

geometric forms. His layering of the surface with coloured patterns has a specific role to play in reconstructing the memory of a person or group of people in a particular location. This is often an interior space, so that his work uses a language that is a likeness to abstraction while remaining an intimate art of human behaviour and emotion. In contrast to Hodgkin, the German painter Gerhard Richter is dependent on the photograph as a mediator. His Pop work of the 1960's has served to draw attention to the identity of the image as an abstraction as well as a representation. [Figures 3.4 , 3.5]

In many of David Hockney's paintings of the 1980's the human figure is no longer directly represented. However, interior spaces are organized so that viewers are aware of their presence and of their role in completing the picture. [Fig 3.6]

The complementary relationship between reality and illusion between a work of art as a symbol in itself and as a sign for another level of experience, were central to much art of the 1980's. Accordingly a number of British sculptors such as Tony Cragg and Bill Woodrow used any objects they could find as their basic material. They sometimes altered these but presented them without disguising them. For example, Cragg's *Plastic Palette 11* (1985) was formed from individual broken pieces of cheap plastic. While it may at first appear to be a sarcastic comment about a now-outmoded concept of what it means to be an artist, it is a clear and honest mood of celebration, transforming his raw materials into art to be acclaimed for the very fact that they had been discarded by others. Woodrow's inventive fabrication of metaphoric images from discarded consumer items, their original identity still clearly visible, also demonstrates the artist's duty as one of salvaging and recycling.

It can be said that not since the advent of Modernism at the end of the nineteenth century have artists been faced with such an openness and wealth of possibilities. Instead of believing in one or a few styles, or a progressive style in architecture, the options force us to reassert a freedom of choice and comparative judgement.

Modern masters like Picasso, DuChamp, Stravinsky and Le Corbusier progressed through a variety of stylistic periods, choosing and combining styles, methods and movements and creating a unity which worked.

2. USE OF COLOUR (PIGMENTS)

Nouveau Realisme was founded in 1960 by the French critic Pierre Restany and a small group of artists. This was a European version of American Pop Art and made way for a similar revolt against Abstract Expressionism. The most innovative and influential of the Nouvelle Realistes was Yves Klein, whose aims were ultimately quite different from those of the rest of the group. Klein's most relevant works, (in terms of New Realism) are his Anthropometrist paintings of the female nude made by applying the paint direct to the girl's body and imprinting her on the canvas. His real concern was with the reality of art rather than with the real world. He was particularly interested in the reality of colour, which he felt embodied the essence of art. From 1949 onwards he produced monochrome paintings in pink, blue and gold, and finally in 1957, settled on blue as representing the essence of colour. During the last six years of his life he produced a series of 194 paintings in an unearthly pure ultramarine blue which became known to the art world simply as IKB - International Klein Blue. He used IKB as a dry powder with a special resin medium or binder, Rhodopas M 60A, to protect each grain of pigment from alteration. The remarkable yielding and caressing velvety surfaces of Klein's blue monochromes, - which are very small and icon-like by American standards, - provide a sense of the spirituality to which he was aspiring. His emphasis on materials was not related to any belief in their absolute autonomy. Being the essence of art, this blue could be applied to any support and *Lecturer IKB Elegant* is one of the many works Klein made basically from sponges soaked in his blue. [Fig 3.8]

Both Frank Stella and Ad Reinhardt expressed the opinion that "Less is more". They prefigured and influenced the emphasis on literalness that characterized Minimal Art. Reinhardt's black paintings of the 1960's, each of which comprised an almost invisible cruciform shape imposed on a dark background of a square canvas, were intended to appear as almost identical to induce the viewer to scrutinise the surface for very slight or gradual variations of hue and tone.

All of Robert Ryman's works since the late 1950's have involved white paintings in a square format. Within these severe limitations, he incorporated a wide variety of the

properties of the medium - different types of paint, ink and drawing materials (oil, acrylic, gouache, casein, enamel, gesso, emulsion, pastel) on supports ranging from stretched canvas, wood and paper to copper, steel and plexiglass. In addition, he has explored changes wrought by scale, different types of brushwork, and has focused on a variety of methods of attaching the surface to the wall.

"Colour-music was an art form which was always about to be the most important twentieth-century art but never quite became it. It was, wrote Willard Huntingdon Wright (brother of Macdonald-Wright) in 1923, the logical development of all the modern researches in the art of colour. Yet it was not until the late 1920's that much attention was given to the crucial question of how a spectator might perceive, and respond to, rhythmically moving abstract forms." ³⁰

Colour became the obsessive focus of European painters by the late 19th century. Both the outdoor painting of the Impressionists and the Symbolists with their indoor topics and tones led the tendency towards bright, uncontrived colour.

"Whichever endeavour we look at," wrote the critic Waldemar von Seidlitz in 1900, "a decisive striving for colouristic fullness is emerging everywhere." ³¹

To this end, painters of the 1950's experimented with different techniques and variable materials which did not always survive. Oils painted directly onto untreated canvas and transparent acrylics were tried, and shadow was emphasized as being a positive element in painting.

Divisionism, an attempt for painters to draw from natural science was primarily taken seriously by the Italian Futurist Giacomo Balla and was the term used by Italians for French Neo Impressionism or Pointillism.

Robert Delaunay painted 22 windows using a colourful mosaic of yellow, purple and blue-green. His wife whose art originated in Fauvism, and later Cubist-like colour planes influenced his style. This consisted of unusual combinations of orange juxtaposed in flat areas of colour.

30. Gage. *opcit.* p.246.

31. *ibid* p.247.

3. RISE OF ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS AND SPACE

German conceptual artist Joseph Beuys used materials such as felt and fat to communicate an essentially private mythology based on his wartime experiences of protection and survival when near death. He was prevented from becoming too esoteric by his intuitive sense of the qualities of different materials and the emotive effects and physical sensations stimulated by sculptures on an environmental scale. One of his last major works, an installation titled *Plight* involved the virtual sealing off of the interior of the exhibition space in bundles of felt to create a still, silent, warm and almost claustrophobically sealed shelter or womb-like space. Although he was perhaps not fully understood, he remained a very influential figure, particularly in Germany, because he believed that art could heal the wounds of society and that Germany in particular, was in need of healing in the aftermath of two wars.

[Fig 3.9]

Beuys and other 60's artists regarded gallery space not as a passive receptacle for art but an essential component of the art-work itself. For example, the Minimal artists, used presentation as a means of expressing the meaning of individual works and their inter-relationships in a particular context: Barnett Newman's term "hereness" bears witness to this. Minimal artists and composers such as Steve Reich and Philip Glass also concentrated on perception and physical being as germane to the immediate moment and particularity of place. This emphasis on the exhibition itself as part of the work of art, has given rise to a situation where a wide range of artists have stressed the installation in its entirety rather than a sum of its individual components.

By the late 1960's the emphasis on the work of art as a total environment, combined with a desire to remove art from the commercial manipulation and rarefied context of galleries and museums, had facilitated a new art form known as Land art or Earth art. In the United States in particular, Land art often occupied a vast space in remote locations and involved the direct interaction of people with nature. The earth itself became a raw sculptural material. Some artists such as Richard Long [Fig 3.10], Hamish Fulton and David Tremlett have travelled as far as Greenland and Tibet in

search of locations that suit their attempts to interact with nature. Considering the availability of vast areas of uninhabited land in North America, it was always likely that many of the major artists associated with the movement would come from America. People such as Michael Heizer [Fig 3.11], Dennis Oppenheim and Walter de Maria who produced works characterised by grandeur of scale.

Andy Goldsworthy is a British Land Artist who has worked on sites around the world. He uses natural materials, such as stones, leaves, wood and snow to create ephemeral site-specific work. His work is characterised by its harmony with the site and the temporary nature of his sculptures. He documents his work photographically which enables him to choose and work in remote sites. [Fig 3.12]

Land Art is often immediate, involving the digging or removal of soil or rock or the restructuring of a site into an elemental and symbolic form such as a spiral. An example of this include Robert Smithson's (1938-73) *Spiral Jetty*, which is a 1500 foot long coil of mud, salt crystals, rock and water at Rozel Point, Great Salt Lake, Utah and *Spiral Hill* which is a hill at Emmen, Holland, made of earth, black topsoil and white sand, measuring approximately 75 feet at its base and created in 1971. Land art has also involved a simple relocation of natural elements indicating the path of a human being through a hitherto untouched environment. For example Richard Long's *England* (1968) which involved a large X shape made on a grassy field by removing the heads of daisies: Works such as this were necessarily documented in photographs because of their temporary nature - which in itself is a conscious effort to build natural cycles into the structure of the art. [Figures 3.13 and 3.14]

4. TRADITIONAL PAINTING

"Perhaps the ultimate paradox of the Post-Modern situation, the condition built on paradox and irony, is that it can willingly include the Modern and Pre-Modern conditions as essential parts of its existence. It has not taken an aggressive stance with respect to an agricultural civilisation, it has not sought to destroy industrialisation, nor put forward a single totalising ideology. The Post-Modern sensibility thrives on dispositions different from its own and recognises how dull life would be if it all took place in the world village. This enjoyment of difference helps explain why the content of so much Post-Modernism is the past seen with irony or displacement. It's the realisation that we can return to a previous era and technology, at the price of finding it slightly different".³²

Ever since the late 1940's British painter Francis Bacon had continually attempted to create figure inventions of such physical immediacy and energy that they appear to evolve directly from his nervous system. His work especially inspired other painters working in Britain, such as Leon Kossoff (1926) as well as German-born artists like Frank Auerbach (born 1931) and Lucian Freud (born 1922). Each of these artists perceived the physical substance of the painting as an immediate materialization of the subject, often another human being painted from life. Auerbach felt that each painting exemplified an ongoing process of creating an image, scraping it down and then reconstructing it until it corresponded in form, texture, weight, tone and colour to his sense of the subject it represented. In this process the accretion of paint became a symbol of the time and effort that went into the production of the image. In Freud's case the careful application of each brush-stroke evoked a human presence which emphasised his obsessive examination of the subject and which functioned as a material counterpart to the suppleness of human flesh. Avigdor Arikha (born 1929) merged Surrealist principles of juxtaposition with a concept of allegory based on Renaissance and Symbolist art. Images were chosen for their layering of meaning through re-use. Ronald Kitaj has exploited the availability of historical styles and images in his work.

In the 1980's various Italian Painters such as Francesco Clemente (born in 1952), Sandro Chia (born in 1946), Enzo Cucchi (born in 1950), and Mimmo Paladino (born

32. Jencks. (1986) p56

1948), have produced work which was characterised by a strong sense of tradition, phrased in a personal and often intimate tone. The movement known as the Transavantgarde incorporate Modernist traditions. For example Chia alluded to an earlier Italian movement known as Futurism. Nevertheless they stressed their inherent subjectivity and their elevation of the imagination over intellect. Clemente's small-scale, attractively coloured and sensual pastel drawings are conceived as emblematic representations of the human body. However, in the New Image tradition, he purposefully worked in a wide variety of styles and media so as to portray the unsettled nature of his visual life and to define the complexity of his relationships to conflicting traditions based in a variety of cultures and historical eras. [Figures 3.15 - 3.23]

5. MATERIALS USED FOR SPECIFIC REASONS (SYMBOLIC, METAPHYSICAL AND ALCHEMICAL)

The return of historical figurative imagery and - as opposed to abstract art made the return of allegory almost inevitable. The premier allegorical artists of the late twentieth century are Italian and German - Francesco Clemente, Enzo Cucchi, Jorg Immendorff, Anselm Kiefer and Helmut Middendorf among them. Obsessed with the effects of Nazism, German artists have attempted to reclaim their cultural past in a society committed to repudiating all that transpired before 1946. The paradigmatic figure in this regard is Kiefer, whose works use biblical history, historical sites, Teutonic myth, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "Faust" (1808/32), and other cultural emblems as allegories of contemporary German life. He conveys a heavy authorial presence and, like Beuys, his materials - lead, straw, and dense pastes of pigment - seem at once linked to nature and also to some esoteric mystery that transcends the physicality of nature. Kiefer's search for parallels in a world mythology- Nordic, Greek, Egyptian, Early Christian and the Jewish Cabbala, to name a few - is a romantic portrayal as in his morbid preoccupation with death, destruction and renewal. He included straw into the heavily painted surface of other paintings after 1980, intending the organic deterioration of the straw to mirror the natural cycle of life descending to death and

dissolution. The straw is transfigured (to use the artists own term) by fermentation evoking not only the metaphor of alchemy and redemption but Kiefer's gloomy forecast on the fate of Germany.

In *Wayland's Song with Wing* of 1982 a huge lead wing surmounts the burnt black field. The grand scale of Kiefer's painting - this work measures nearly 10 by 12 feet - and the density of the materials express the monumentality of his theme as his attention shifted from the imagery of the German forest and the spiritually inhabited wooden rooms based on his attic studio to the scorched landscapes on which he fantasized the battles of German history having taken place.

The self-destructing organic materials in Kiefer's work had precedents in the Italian Arte Povera movement in which artists also brought home the nearness of nature. However, for the Italians of the Arte Povera movement the resulting impermanence of the object also serves as an attack on the modification of art - the commerce in objects that change the spiritual act of making art into a something that is fit to be sold. By contrast it is only the material presence and the symbolism that attract Kiefer to such material. Kiefer also admired the materiality of Joseph Beuys' work.

Zohar believed that creation is founded in the act of Zim Zum in which the boundless Ain Soph contracted inside Himself to make way for the existence of something other than Himself. Vessels were created to catch the emanations that fell from primordial space and, in the process, six of them were shattered, releasing evil into the world. In Anselm Kiefer's *Breaking of the Vessels* 1990, spears of shattered glass project out from the books and litter the floor. The books symbolise knowledge, the secret containing wisdom and history. Therefore the *Breaking of the Vessels* envelops the totality of good and evil, heaven and hell, resurrection and death while the shattered glass acts as an illusion to the broken dome of heaven which symbolises Kiefer's relentless examination of German identity when Nazis broke the windows of Jewish-owned shops all over Germany - a warning sign of the holocaust which lay ahead.

The pessimism of Anselm Kiefer's work and the apparent terminal approach of so many Postmodern artists need not be viewed as a sign that the end of art is near. A new era in the cultural representation of art is developing and the death with which many artists are concerned is a signal of regeneration indicating the birth of a new period in the history of art.

CONCLUSION

Modern painting exaggerates in part the aesthetic value of each element, stresses the expressive effect of certain elements, and does not seek for the integrity of traditional painting. For example, some painting only expresses an idea or a kind of thought to an audience without other elements required to demonstrate forms and techniques. This becomes a kind of ideal art that merely abandons painting. Others put all their emphasis in exploiting colour into their paintings and play on a symphony of colour, whilst some are enthusiastic about the technical expression of materials' For every different version of reality that has been explored, Modernism has a movement. Its multiplicity is its message and the resource of its excitement.

People have been describing modernism as being in a late phase from up to thirty years ago and now reviews of art forms are approached from a Post Modern view point. Modernism evolved much faster than its Renaissance predecessor and many artists, including Marcel Duchamp proved that a work of art was no more than an idea expressed through an object. This object might be dispensable, renewable or only known by report. The twentieth century, is as a result, cluttered with what appears to be attempts to produce the last work of art. These range from Malevich's black square, to Kosuth's work and Duchamp's own notorious urinal! However, none of these end at all. Modernism was no guarantee that a new revolution could only replace it with nothing at all or incorporate it into a new complete pluralism.

Modern Art was a revolution in perception, won first by certain artists and then more gradually by expectations of the art viewing public.

From the seventeenth through to the nineteenth century, the French Academies and official art institutions, as well as those of other countries were in their time major forces for the support of all the arts.

The strict regulations and closed-minded view point of these very traditional institutions led to a revolution that became Modernism. Experimental artists were driven to seek

solutions other than those generally accepted.

This kind of unilateral trend among artists leads to a new, diversified art style without abandoning the integrity of traditional painting. Owing to the change of pursuit direction of artists and the mushrooming of many new art forms, their audience should also learn something new in terms of their ability to appreciate art. Only when audience and artists stand on the same cultural level can a real mutual understanding be reached. In fact, people often demand that the work of artists must follow the audience's appreciation level, instead of the work demanding that the audience should upgrade their appreciation ability through more learning. Kandinsky said, "An audience should learn how to appreciate painting ...". His viewpoint is suitable to Western and the Oriental audiences. Because of the difference of cultural backgrounds, the appreciation level of individuals is not the same, so it becomes necessary for audiences to improve their ability to appreciate through persistent study in order to decode the complexities of modern painting.

As we move to the next millennium, there have been revivals of the academic traditions in the midst of the continuing explorations of new ideas by many artists. The modern movement has come full circle not only in the interests of artists but in the interests of critics, art historians and society as a whole. The pluralism of Post Modernism includes the ancient traditions of gilded paintings from the Byzantine era with completely disassociated works such as those by Marcel Duchamp. From a present-day perspective, the possibilities seem more varied than ever. Figuration is not dead; abstract art is not dead either and conceptual art is still with us. What happens next is unpredictable and anybody's guess.

The revolutions of Modern art and Post Modern art have been associated with vast and amazing phases of economic and technological expansion. Yet the apparent terminal pessimism in much contemporary Modern work may be a sign that art is responding first to a great historical shift. This pessimism, in fact, may not be entirely what it seems. Here and there, artists like Anselm Kiefer, who present death in all its horror, are already implying a message of regeneration.

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Fig 1.1 BYZANTINE, The Annunciation. Icon from the church of St Clement. Orchid, Early 14th Century, Macedonian State Collections, Skopje Photo, M. Hirmer.



Fig 1.2 ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN, Jan de Gros. (ca. 1450-60)
Oil and tempera. 15 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ ins.
The Art Institute of Chicago



Fig 1.3 Veronese School: "The Virgin in the rose garden", fifteenth century, Tempera.

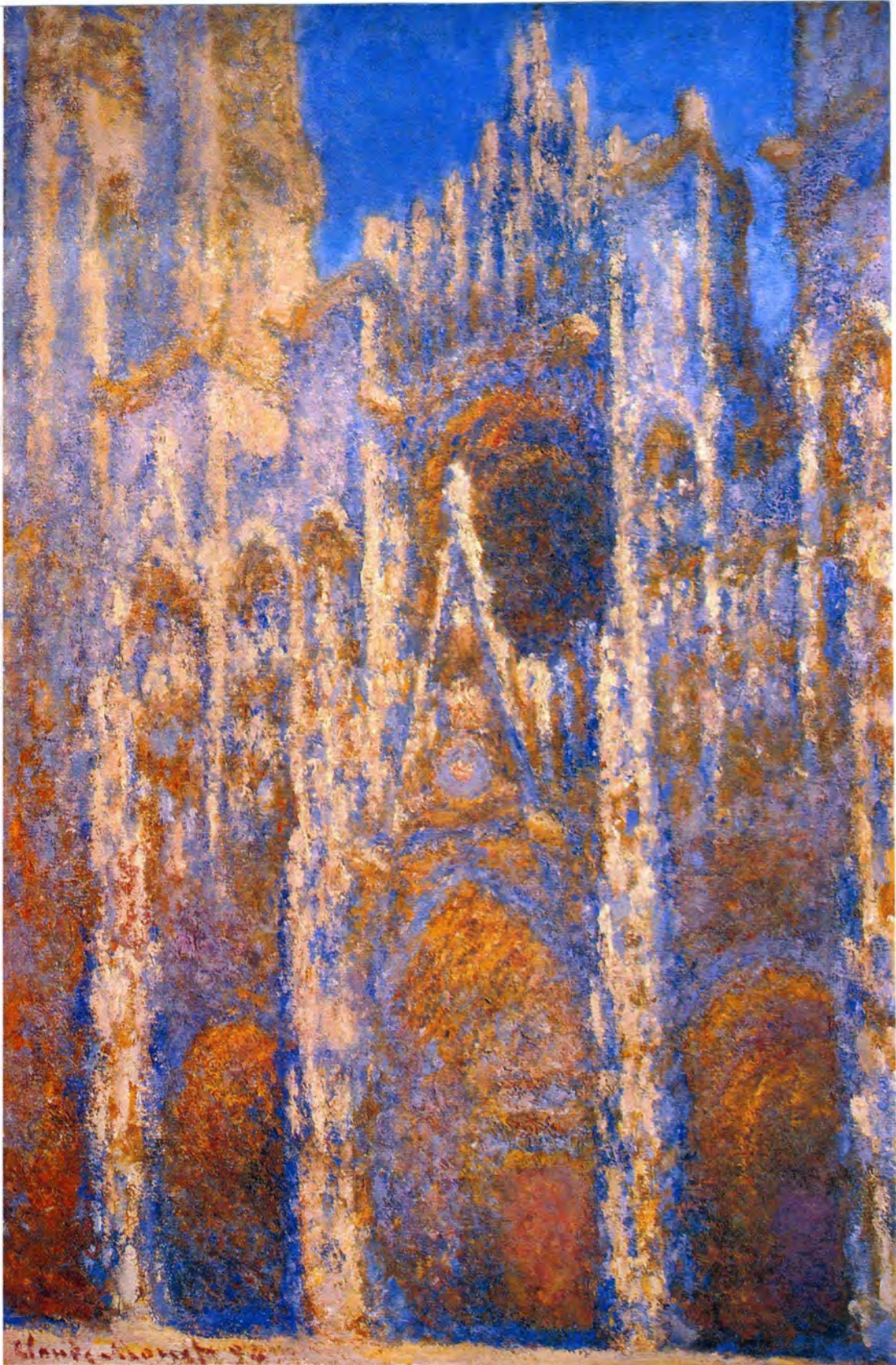


Fig 1.4 CLAUDE MONET, "Rouen Cathedral, The Facade at Sunset".
Oil on canvas , 39 1/2 x 25 3/4 "



Fig 1.5 WILLIAM TURNER "Venice after Sunset", 1839



Fig 1.6 EDOUARD MANET "Emile Zola" 49½ x 39, 1918

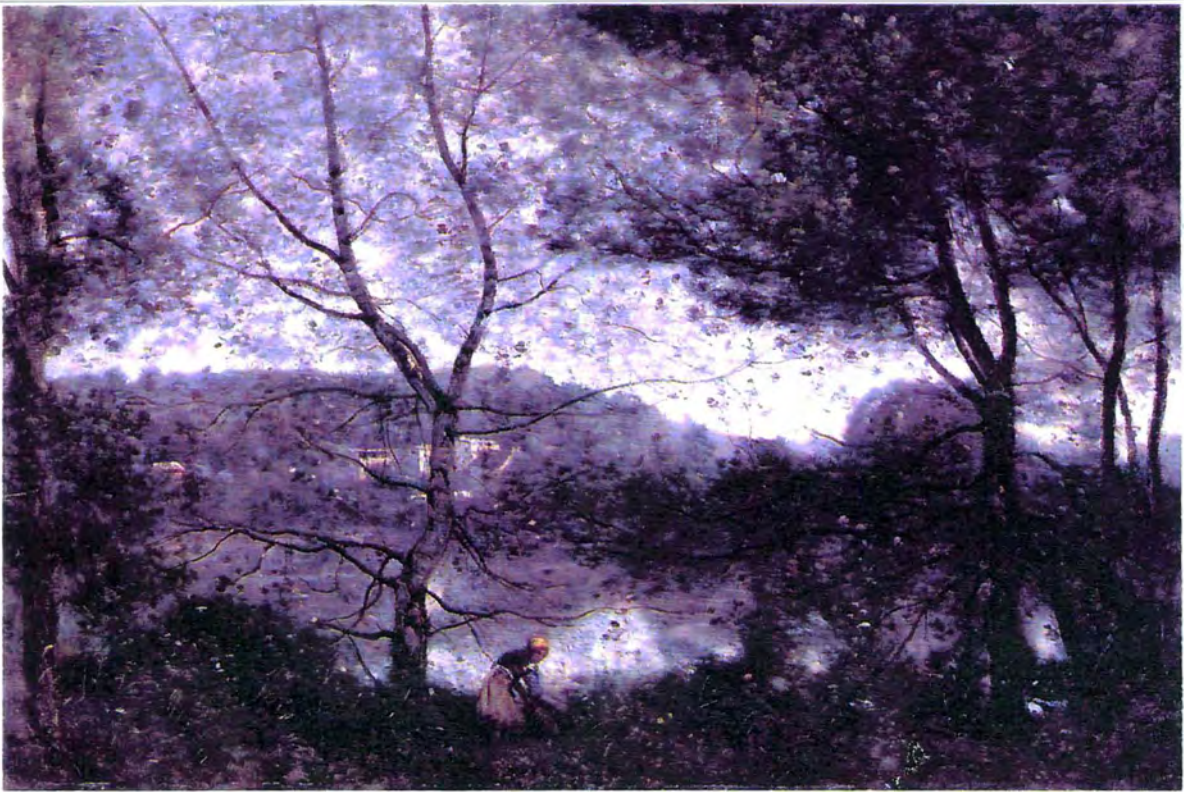


Fig 1.7 CAMILLE COROT, "Ville d'Avray", 1871-74, 21 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$.



Fig 1.8 PAUL CEZANNE, Chestnut Trees at the "Fas de Bouffan", 1885-7, Institute of Arts, Minneapolis

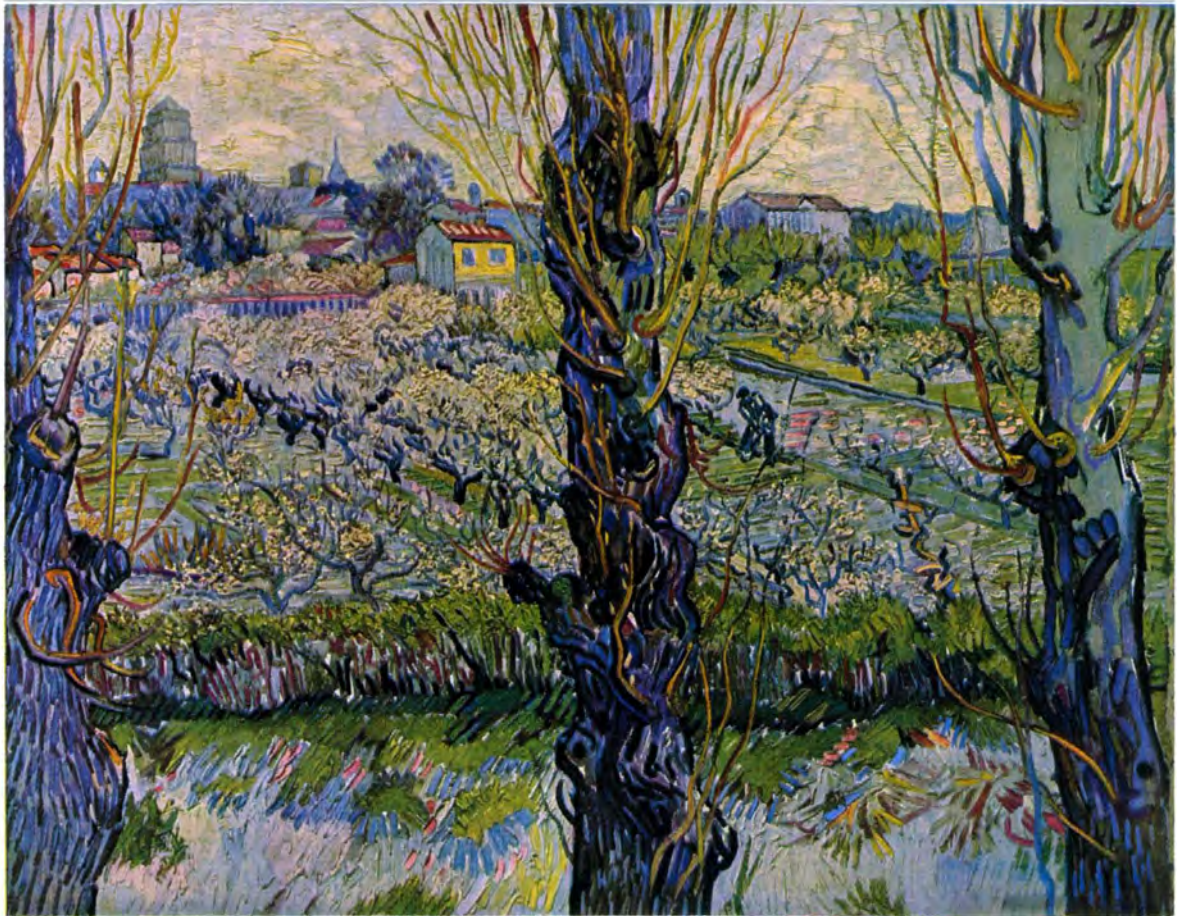


Fig 1.9 VAN GOGH, "View of Arles"

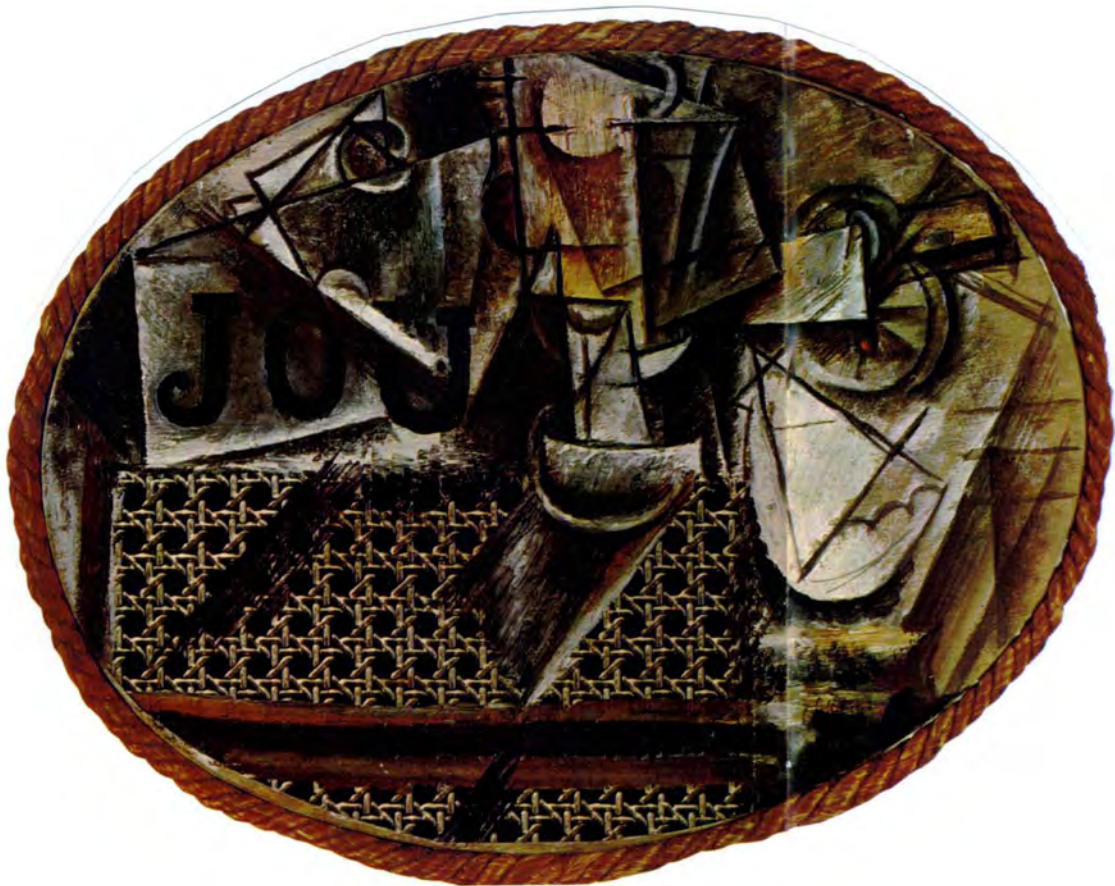


Fig 2.1 PABLO PICASSO "Still Life with Chair Caning", 1912.

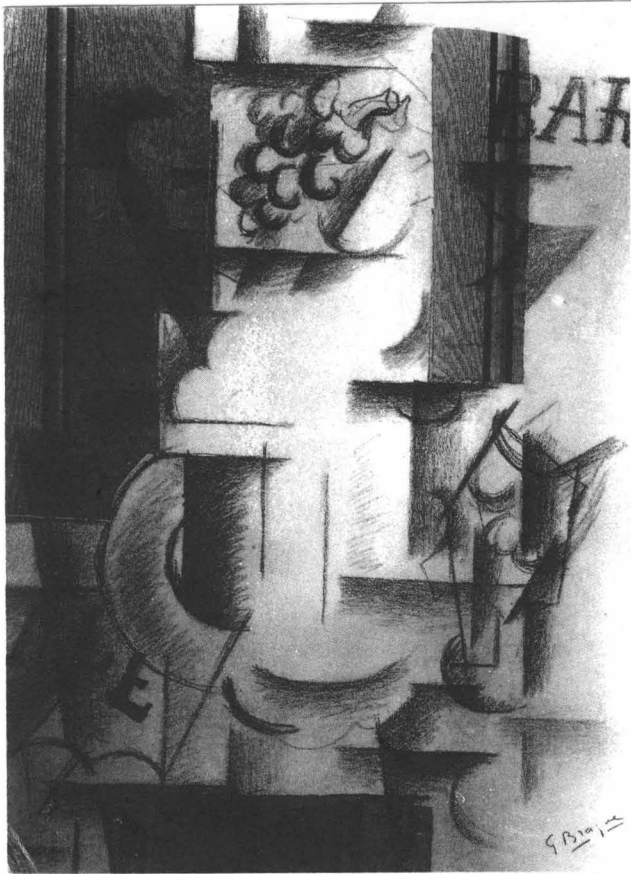


Fig 2.2 GEORGES BRAQUE
"Fruit Dish and Glass", 1912
Charcoal and pastel paper on paper
243/8 x 187/8 in
Private Collection

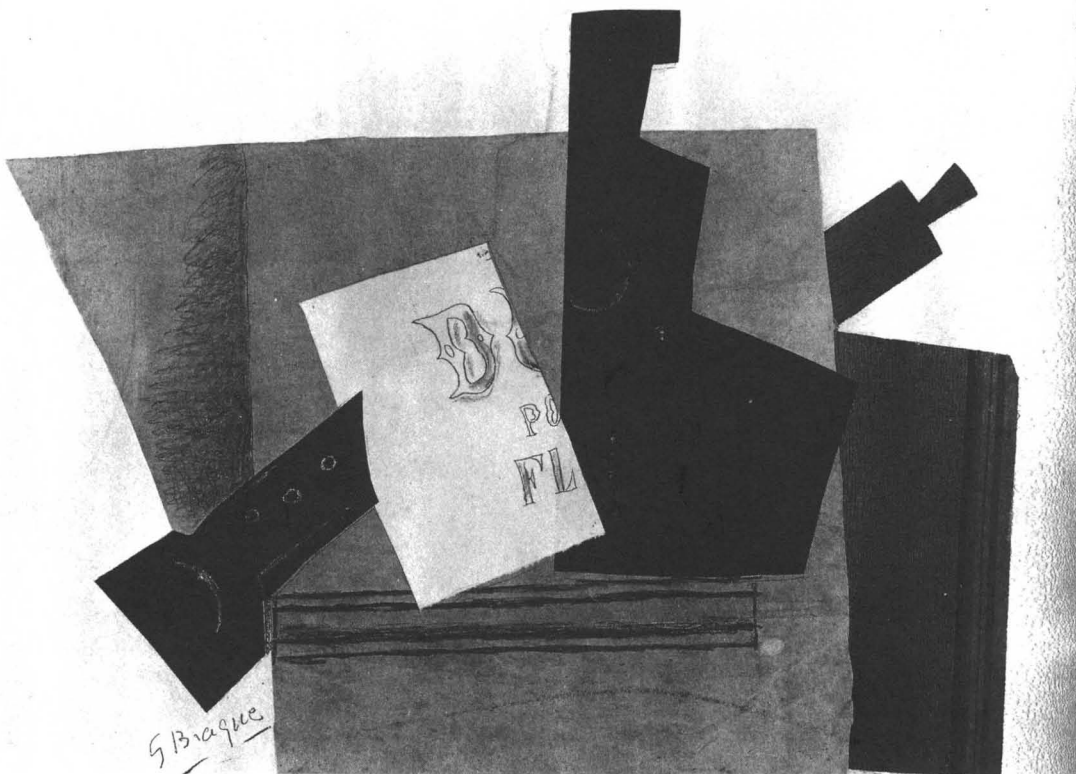


Fig 2.3 GEORGES BRAQUE "Still Life with Flute", 1913
Paper, pencil, gouache and distemper on cardboard. 20 1/2 x 29 1/2 in

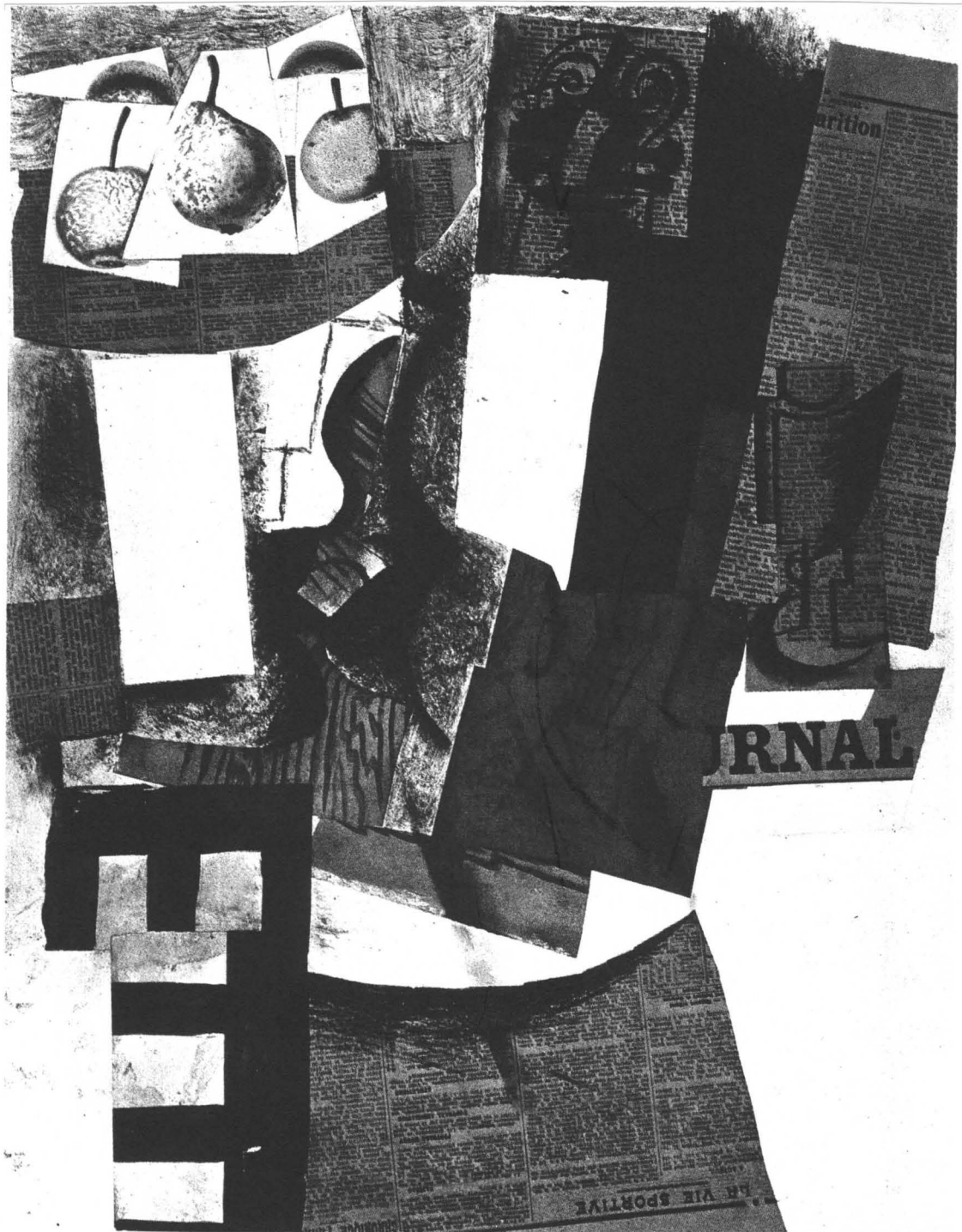


Fig 2.4 PABLO PICASSO, *Still Life with Violin and Fruit*, 1913.
Papier Colle and charcoal on paper 25 5/8 x 19 5/8 in.



Fig 2.5 KURT SCHWITTERS,
Collage-Mirror. 1920.
Various materials. approx.

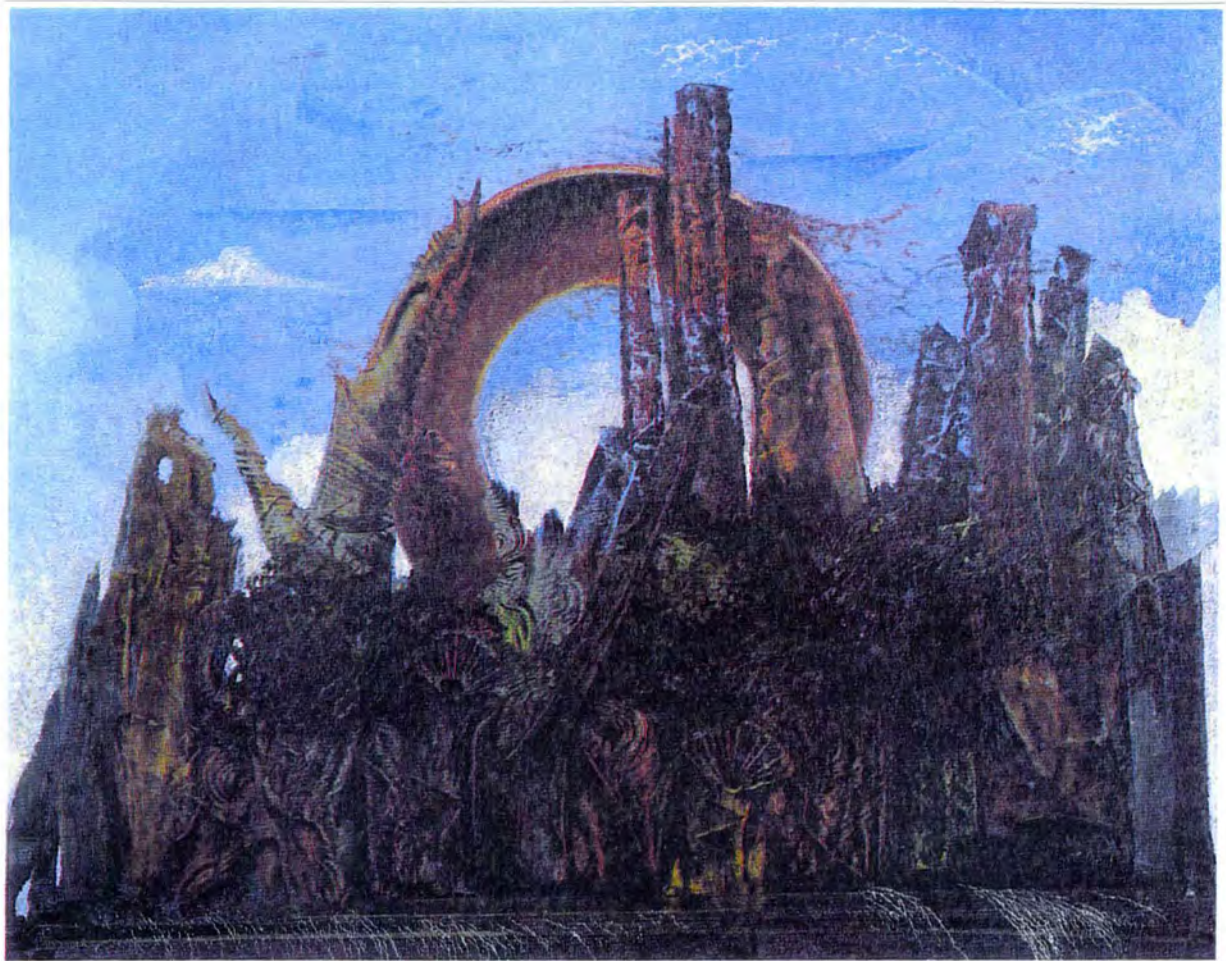


Fig 2.6 MAX ERNST, "The Great Forest", 1927
Basle, Kunstmuseum

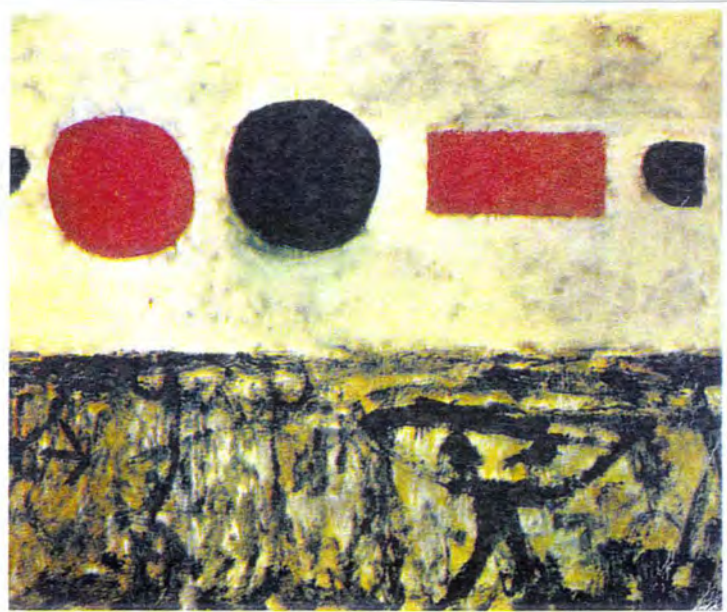


Fig 2.7 ADOLPH GOTTLIEB
"The Frozen Sounds Number 1",
1951
Oil on canvas 36 x 48 in



Fig 2.8 ADOLPH GOTTLIEB
"Brink", 1959
Acrylic on canvas. 90 x 108 in



Fig 2.9 WASSILY KANDINSKY, *Composition VI*. 1913. Oil on Canvas 195 x 300m
(76 3/4 x 118 1/8 in)

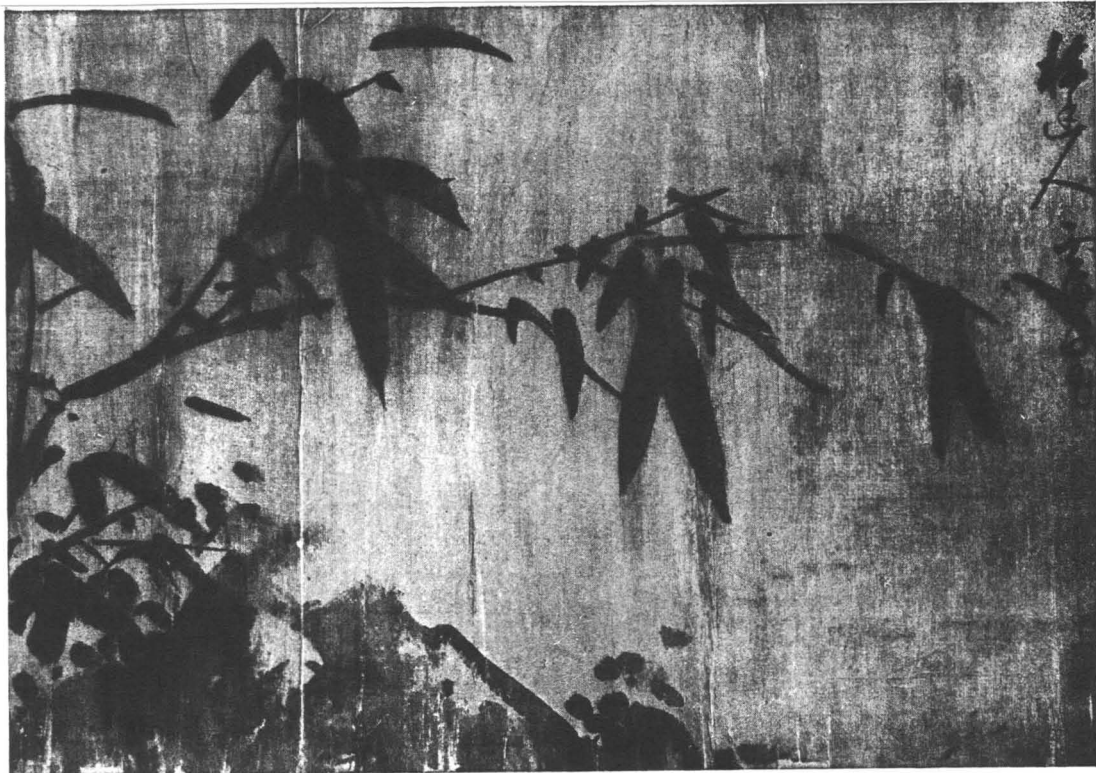


Fig 2.10

Wu Chen:

Bamboos in Monochrome

73cm x 52cm



Fig 2.11 MARK TOBEY
"Festival", 1953
100,5 x 75cm



Fig 2.12 MARK TOBEY
"Edge of August", 1953
121.9 x 71.1 cm



Fig 2.13 JACKSON POLLOCK
Cathedral, 1947
Duco and aluminium paint on canvas



Fig 2.14 JACKSON POLLOCK,
Easter and the Totem, 1953.
Oil and canvas. 208.6 x 147.3cm



Fig 2.15 JACKSON POLLOCK

Blue poles, Number 11, 1952. Oil, enamel and aluminium
paint, glass on canvas (2.11 x 4.87m).

Fig 2.16 WILLEM DE KOONING
Two Figures, 1967.
Oil on paper, mounted on canvas.
90.8 x 60.3cm



Fig 2.17 WILLEM DE KOONING
Gotham News, 1955-6
Oil on Canvas
1.75 x 2.01m





Fig 2.18 ANDRE MASSON, Colour plate XXV, 1943

Fig 2.19 MARK ROTHKO,
Red, White and Brown, 1957
Oil on canvas. 252.8 x 207.9 cm

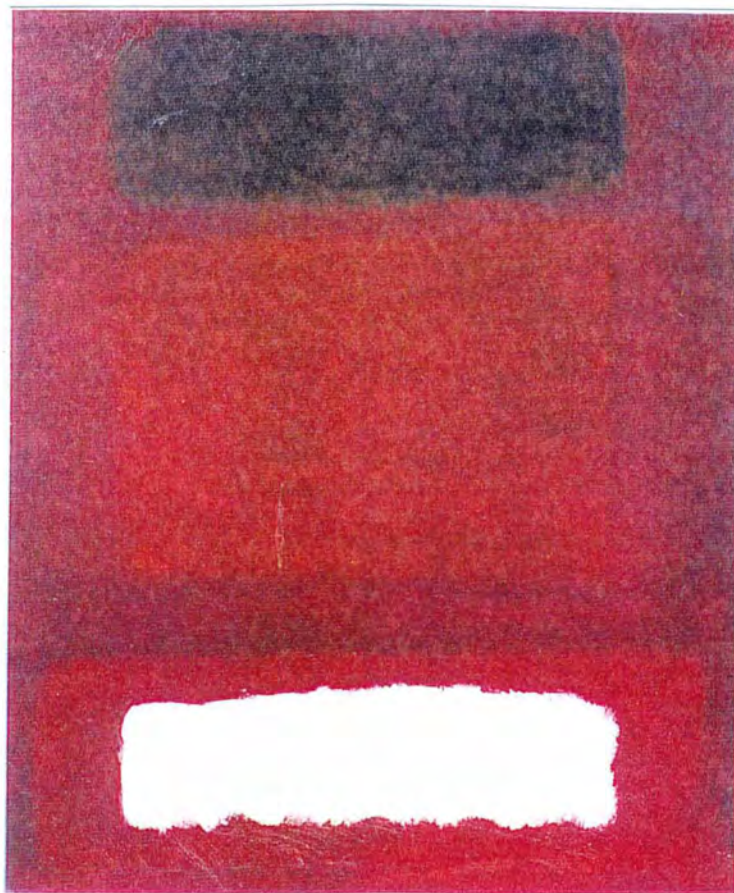
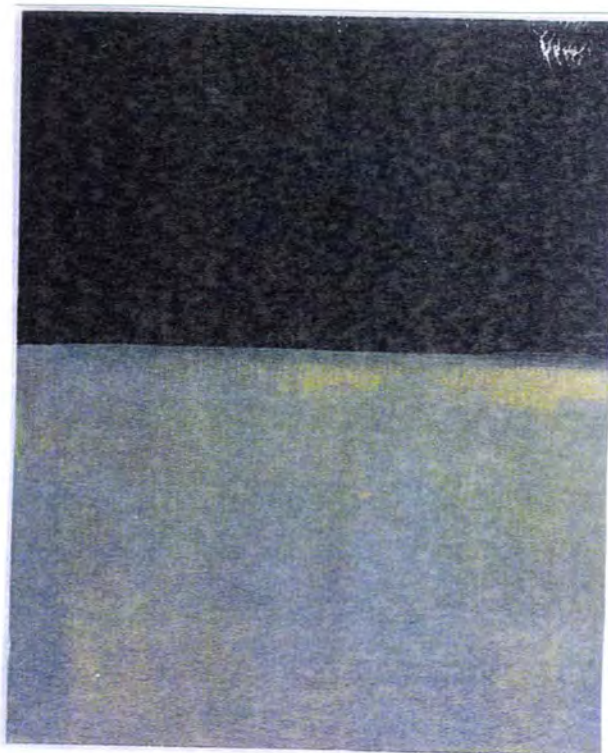


Fig 2.20 MARK ROTHKO
Black on Grey, 1970.
Acrylic on canvas. 173 x 162.5cm



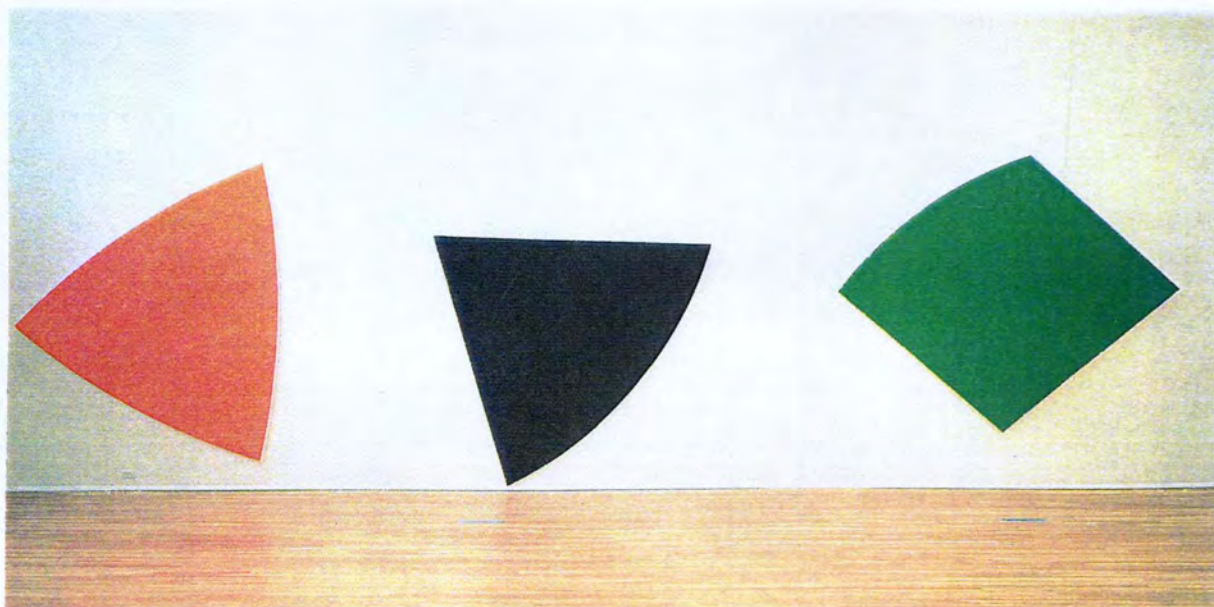


Fig 2.21 ELLSWORTH KELLY, Three panels: Orange, Dark Gray, Green. 1986.
Collection Douglas S Cramer Foudnation, Los Angeles



Fig 2.22 MORRIS LOUIS, Alpha-Pi, 1960.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

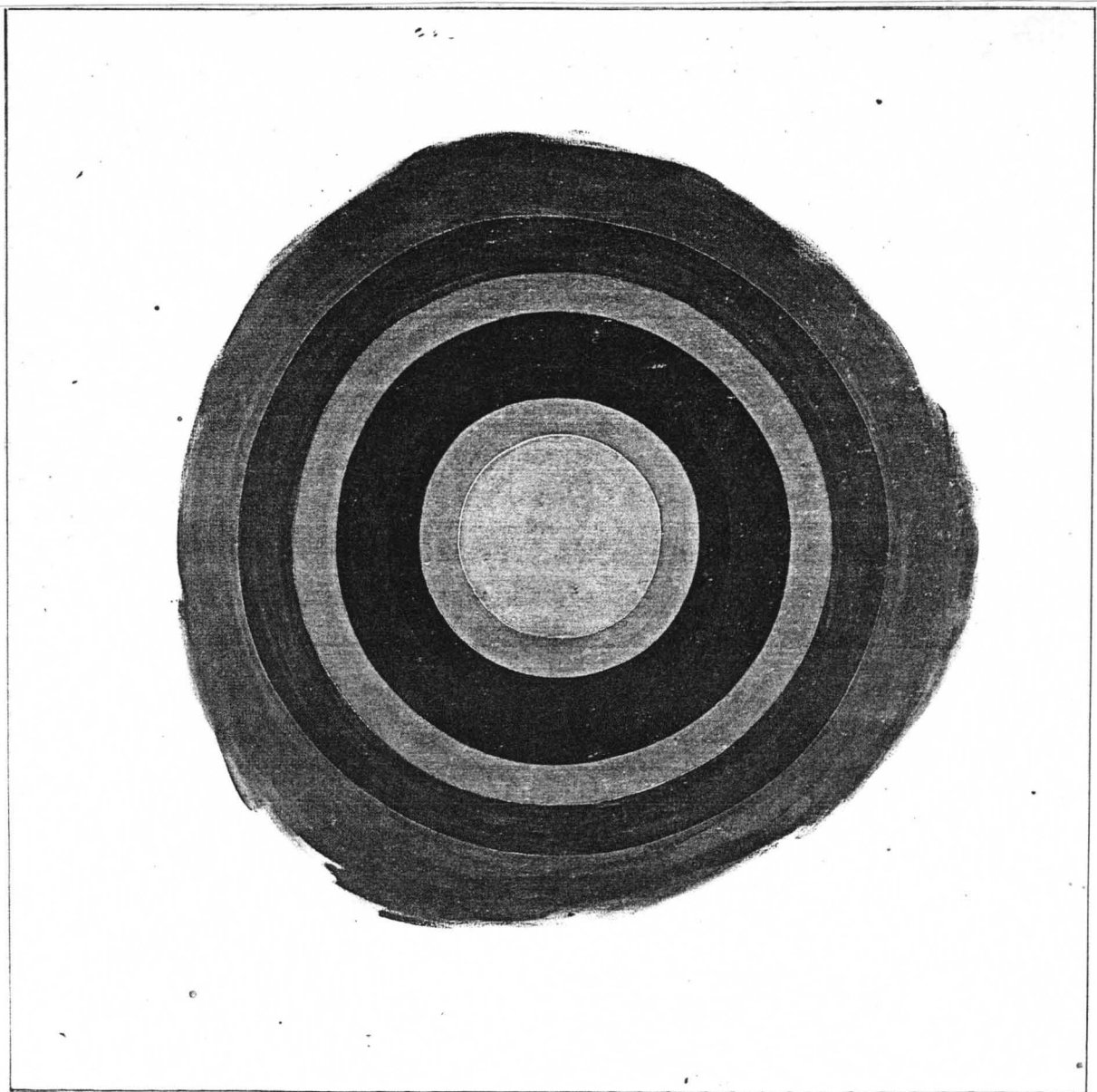


Fig 2.23 KENNETH NOLAND, *Song*, 1958 Synthetic polymer 65 x 65 in
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Fig 2.24 Roy Lichtenstein
Blonde Waiting 1964
Oil on canvas
(121.9x121.9)



Fig 2.25
Tom Wesselmann
Great American Nude no. 99,
1968

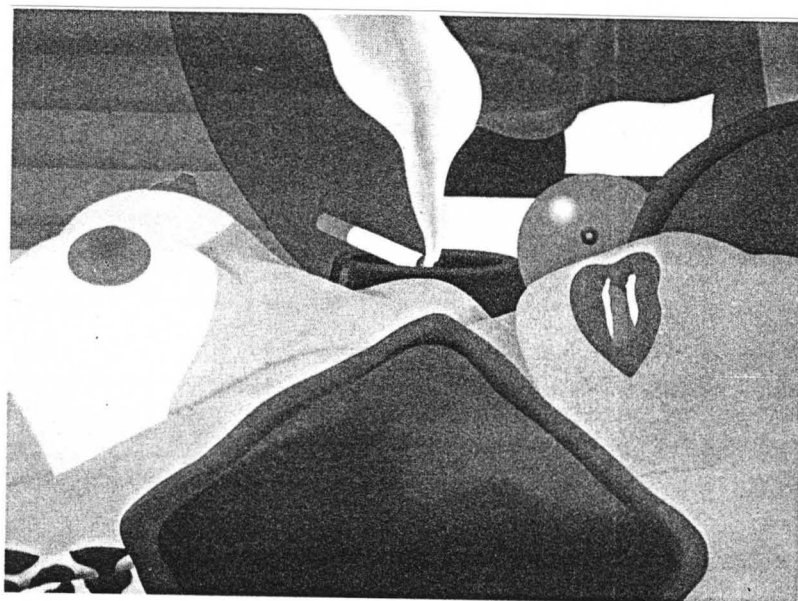




Fig 2.26 ANDY WARHOL
Dick Tracy, 1960
Casein on canvas 178 x 133.4m



Fig 2.27 ANDY WARHOL
Green Coca-Cola Bottles, 1962
Oil on canvas 208 x 148m



Fig 2.28

Andy Warhol

Gold Marilyn Monroe

1962

Synthetic polymer paint

silkscreened on canvas

(2.12 x 1.45m)

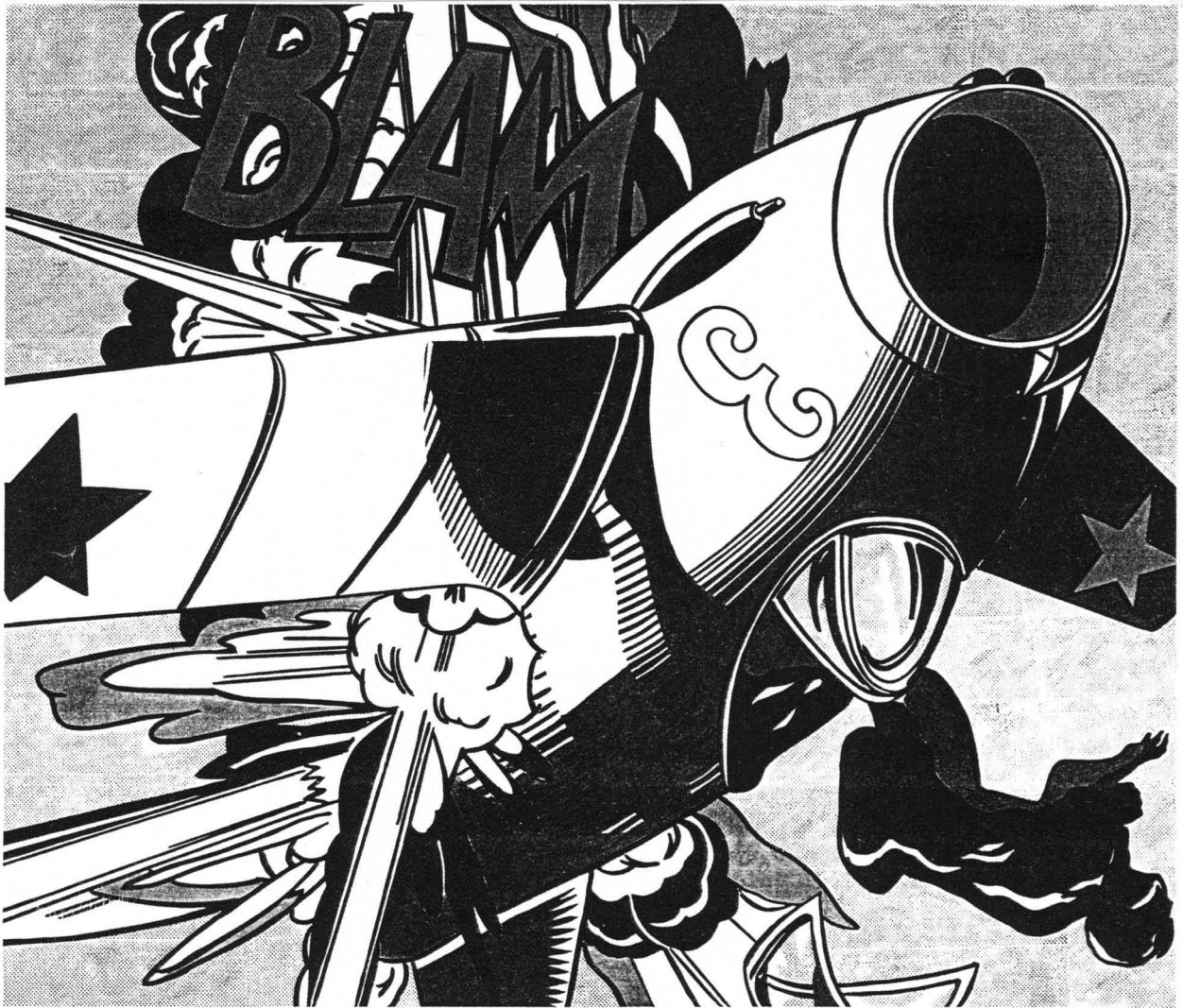


Fig 2.29 ROY LICHTENSTEIN, Blam, 1962.
Oil on canvas. 1.72 x 2.03m
Collection
Yale University Art Gallery
Gift of Richard Brown Baker



Fig 2.30 JAMES ROSENQUIST, The F-111, 1965 120 x 1032 ins
Private Collection, New York



Fig 2.31 ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG, Retroactive 1, 1964
Silkscreen: Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford



Fig 3.1 JEAN MICHEL BAQUIAT, "Boy and Dog in Johnnypump", 1982. Acrylic, oil paintstick and spray paint on canvas. 2.4 x 4.2cm



Fig 3.2 KEITH HARING All work untitled, black light, 1982. Installation for an exhibition in the Tony Shafrazi Gallery.



Top
Fig 3.4 GERHARD RICHTER,
Sulphur, 1985
200 x 300m



Bottom
Fig 3.5 HOWARD HODGKIN
Dinner at Smith Square, 1978-9
Oil on wood 94.5 x 125.5m



Fig 3.6 DAVID HOCKNEY, Large Interior, Los Angeles, 1988.
Oil on paper and ink on canvas. 183 x 304.8.

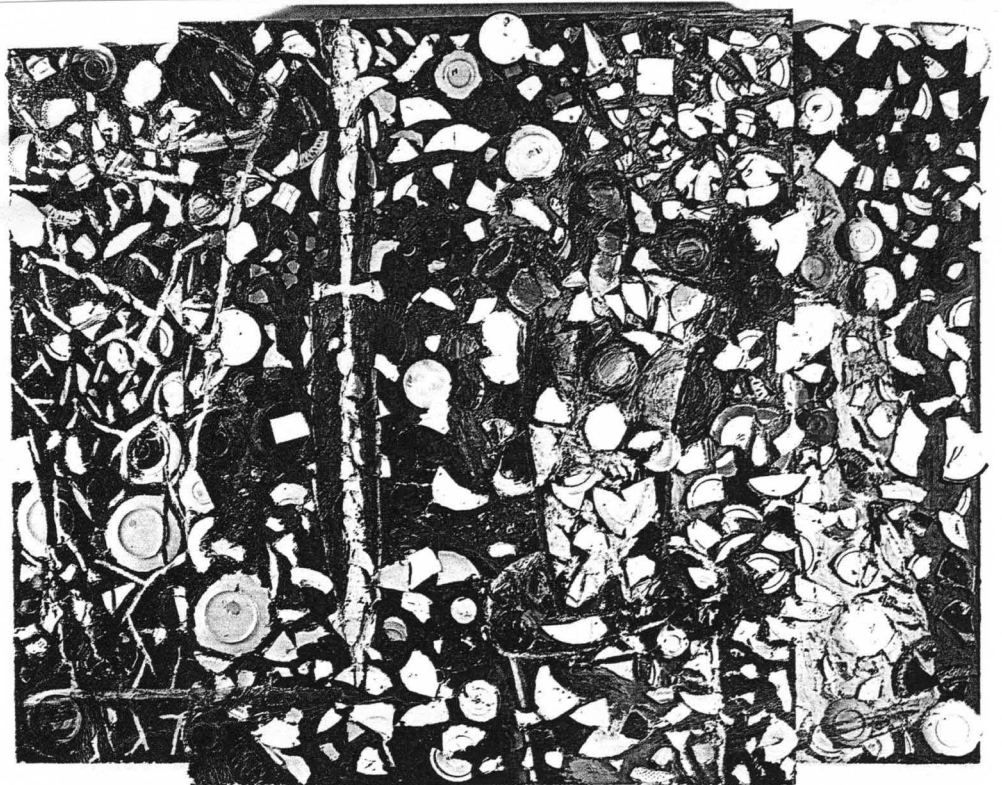


Fig 3.3
Julian Schnabel
The death of Fashion
1978

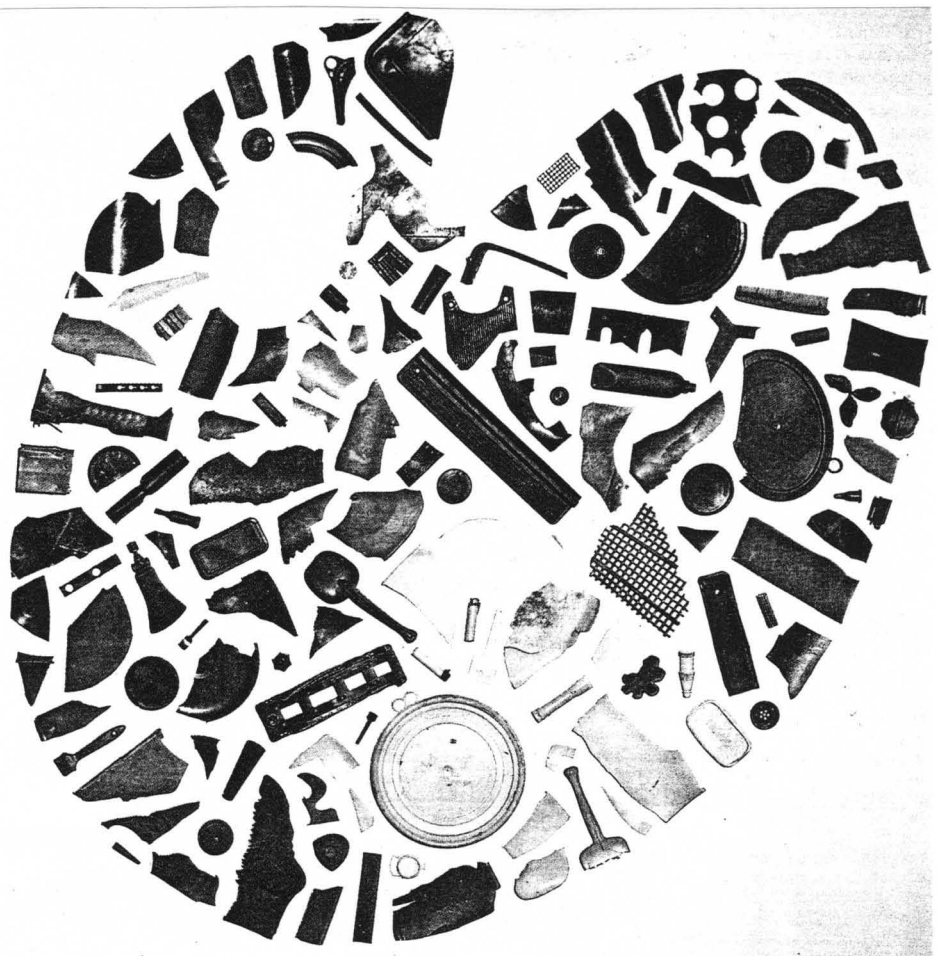


Fig 3.7
Tony Cragg
Plastic Palette II
1985

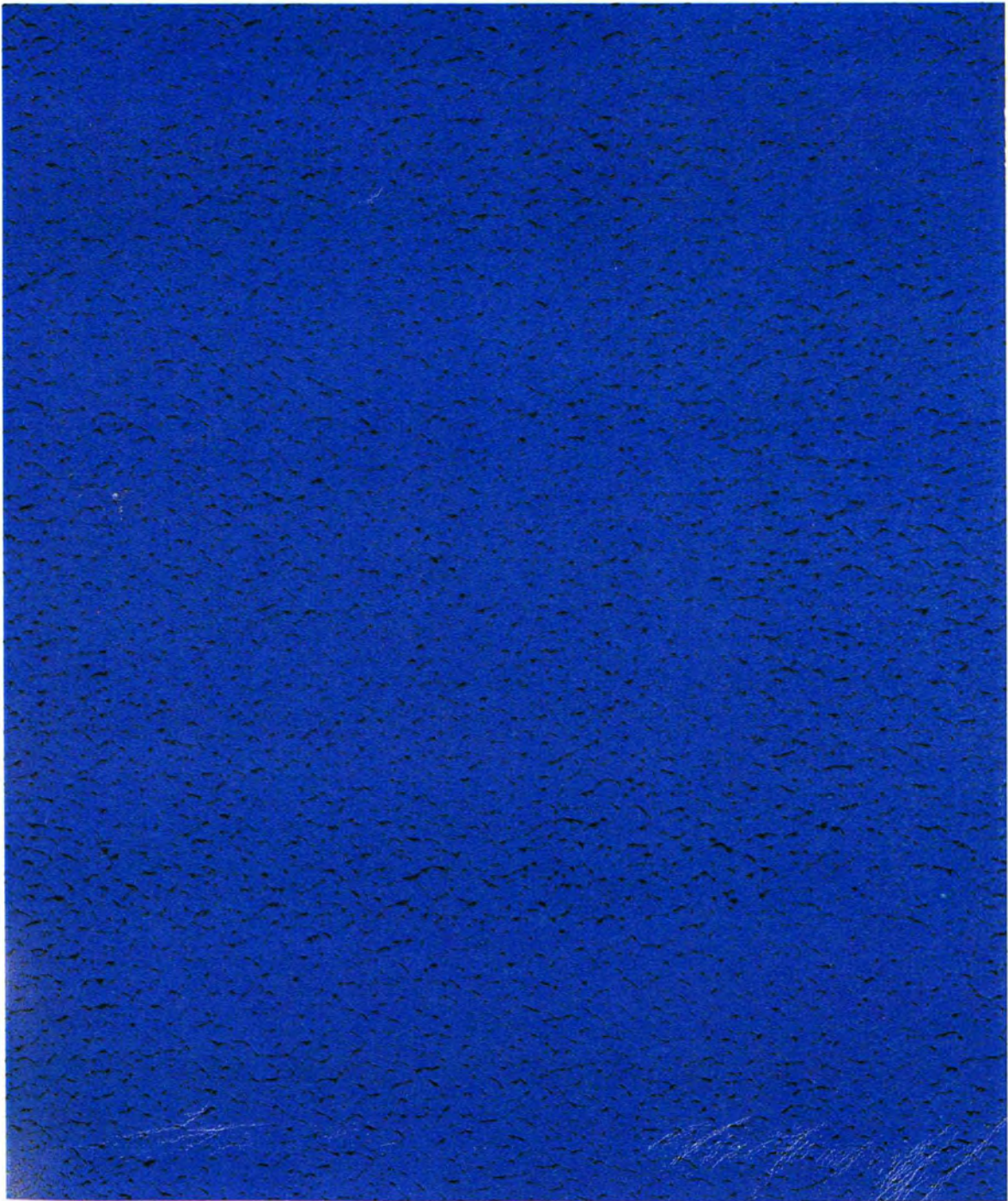


Fig 3.8 YVES KLEIN, Untitled blue Monochrome, 1959.
Menin Collection
Dry pigment in synthetic resin on paper (21.6 x 18.1cm)



Fig 3.9 JOSPEH BEUYS, The Pack, 1969.
Volkswagen bus with twenty sleds,
each carrying felt, fat and a flashlight.
Dimensions vary.

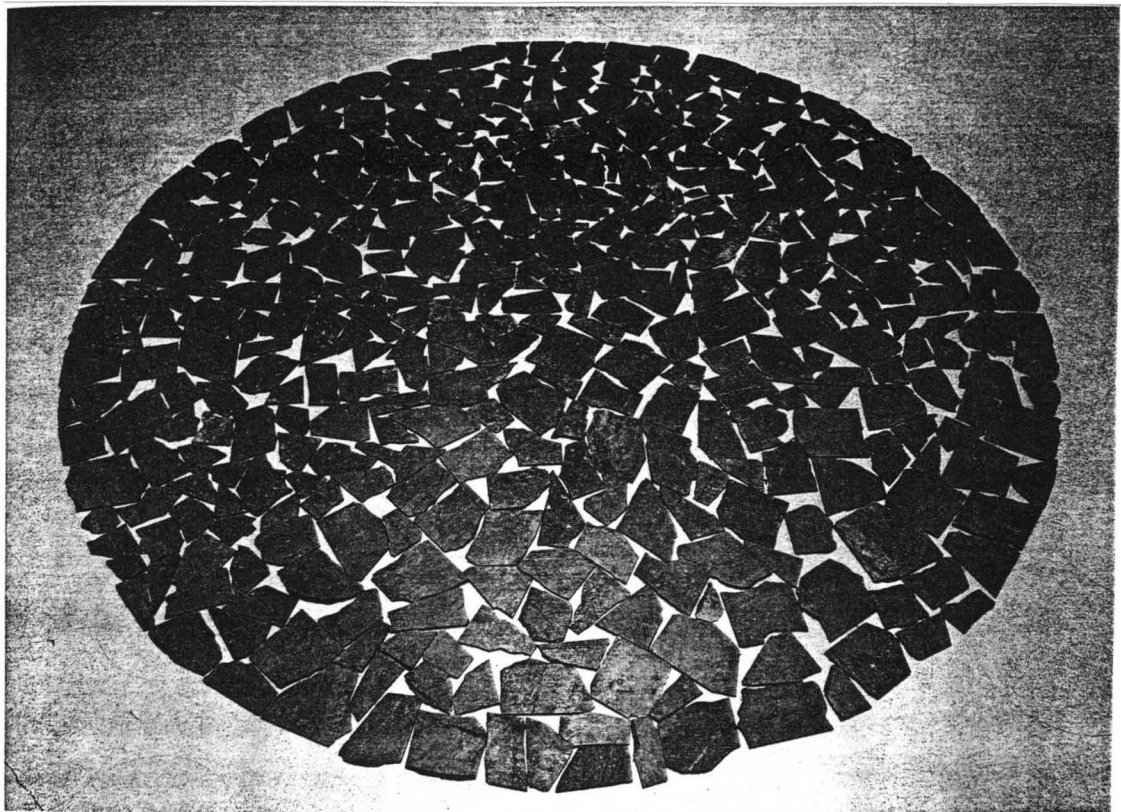


Fig 3.10 RICHARD LONG, Red Slate Circle, 1980. Red Slate (8.53m)

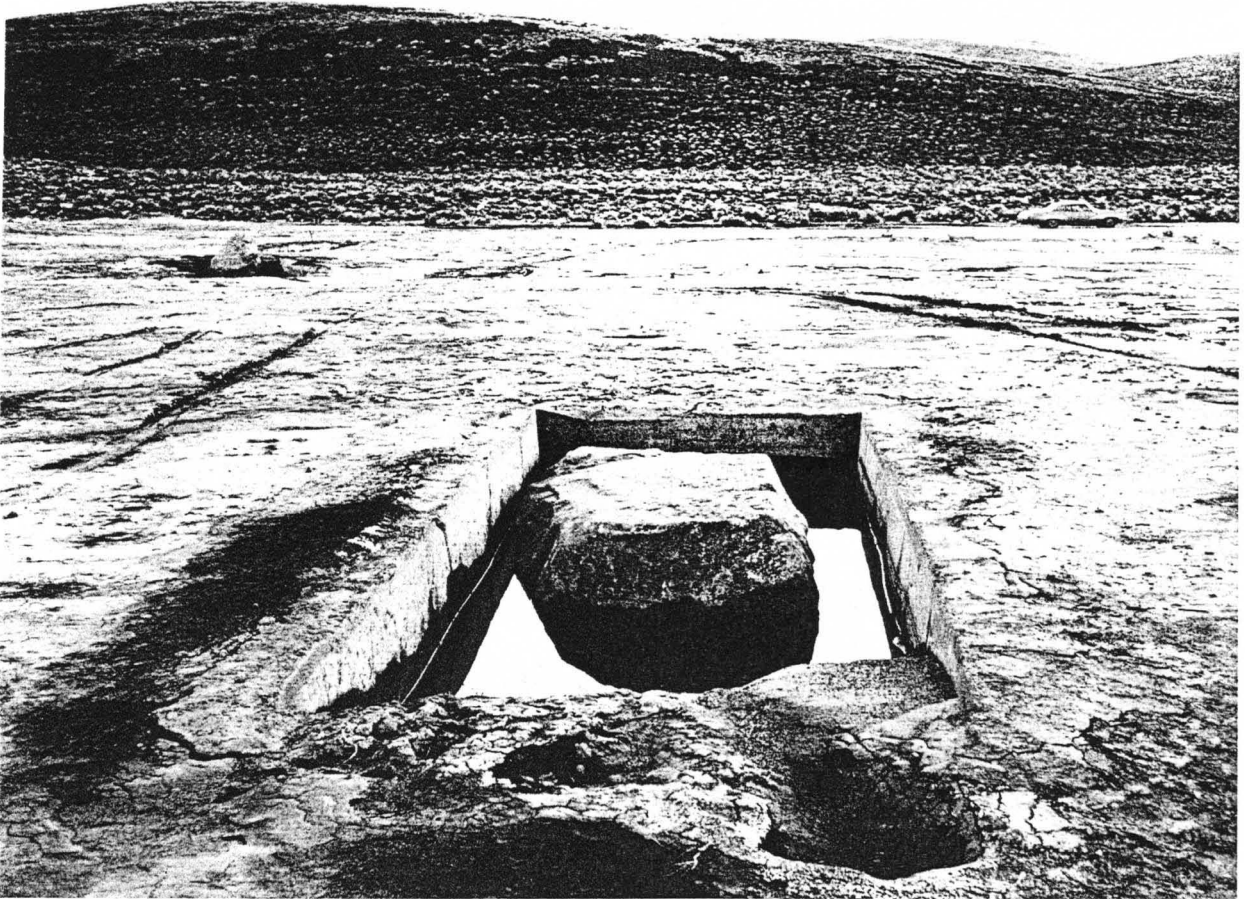


Fig 3.11 MICHAEL HEIZER, Displaced-Replaced Mass, 1969. Granite and concrete in
playa surface. (30.48 x 243.84 x 2.89m)

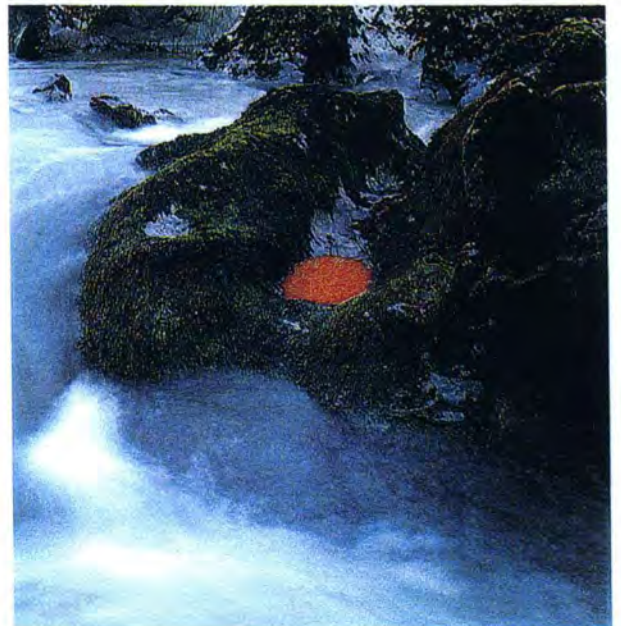


Fig 3.12 ANDY GOLDSWORTHY, *Red River rock pools soft red stones*, 1993.



Fig 3.13 ROBERT SMITHSON, Spiral Jetty, 1970.

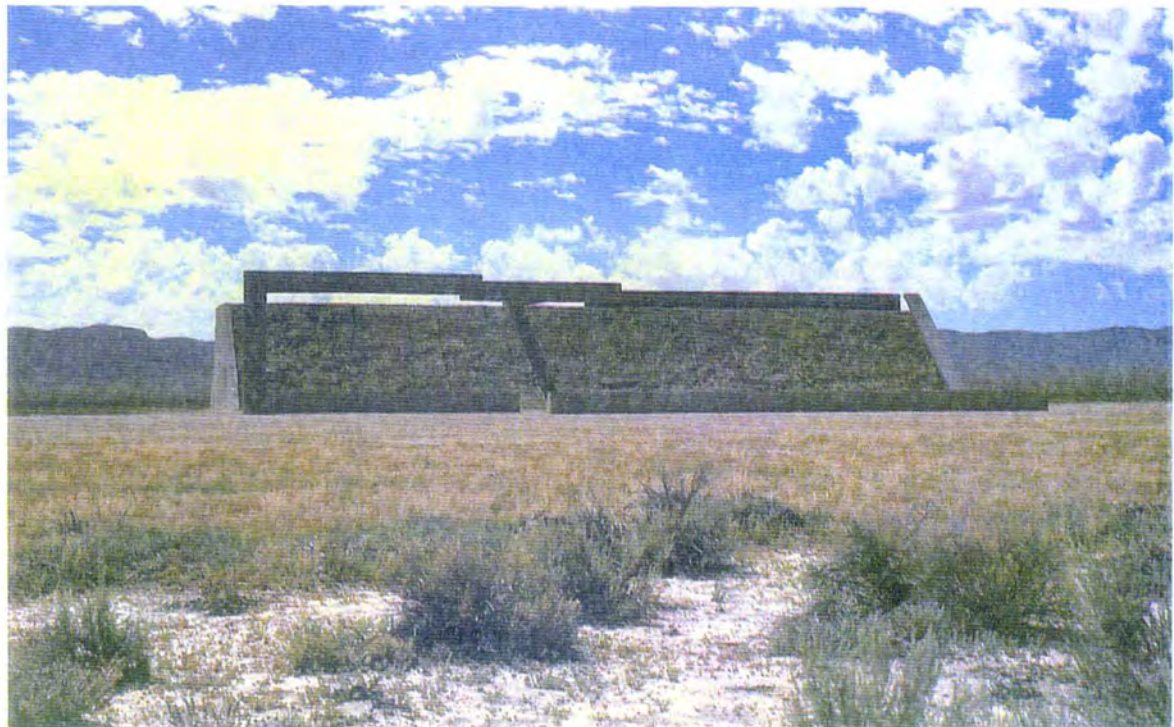


Fig 3.14 MICHAEL HEIZER, Complex one, 1972.



Fig 3.15 FRANCIS BACON, Study after Velasquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X, 1953.
Oil on canvas 60¼ x 46½ ins



Fig 3.16 FRANK AUERBACH,
Looking towards morning for Grescent
Station, 1972-3

Fig 3.17 LUCIAN FREUD
Esther, 1980.
Oil on canvas

Fig 3.18 SANDRO CHIA
The water bearer, 1981.
Oil and oil pastel on canvas
(2.07 x 1.70m)

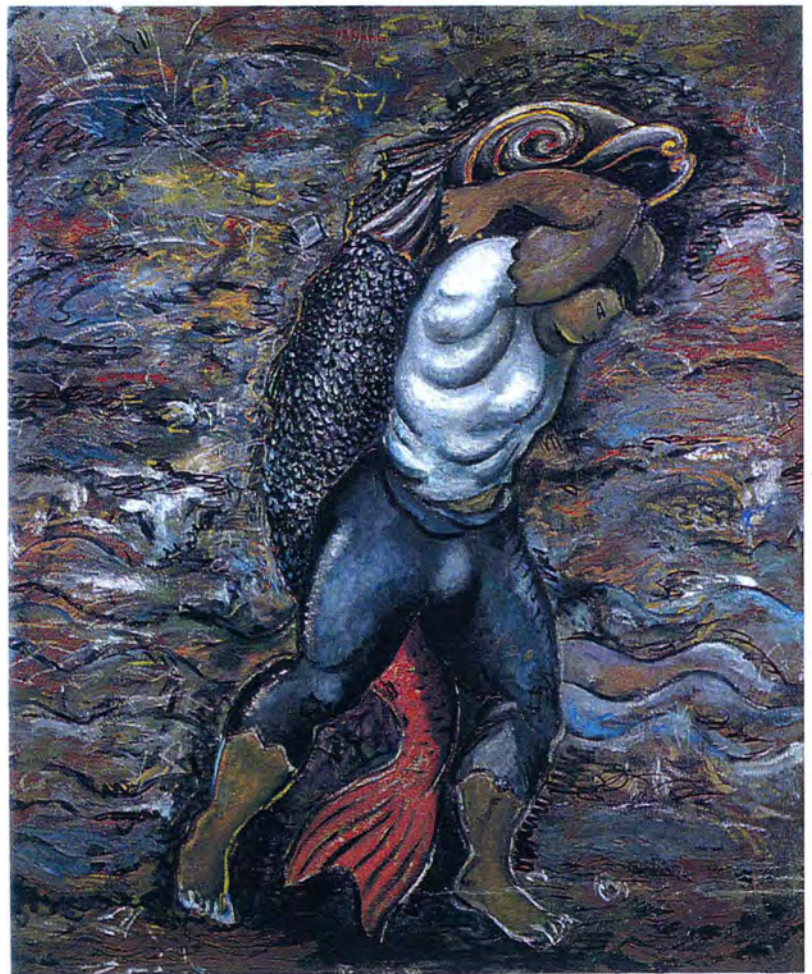




Fig 3.19 MIMMO PALADINO, Sull'orla della Sera, 1982-3. Oil on canvas. (2 x 2.41m)



Fig 3.20 A R PENCK, Standart. Acrylic on Canvas (2.9 x 2.9m)

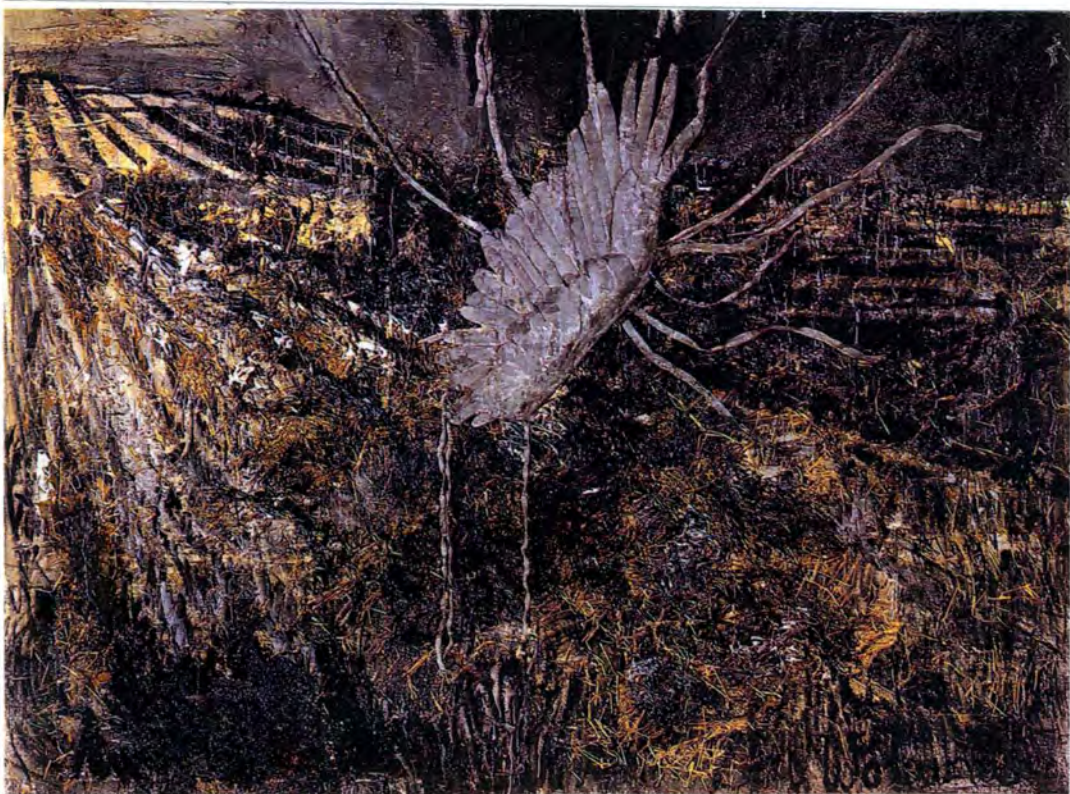


Fig 3.21 ANSELM KIEFER, Waylands song, 1982
Oil emulsion and straw photograph. Mounted on canvas

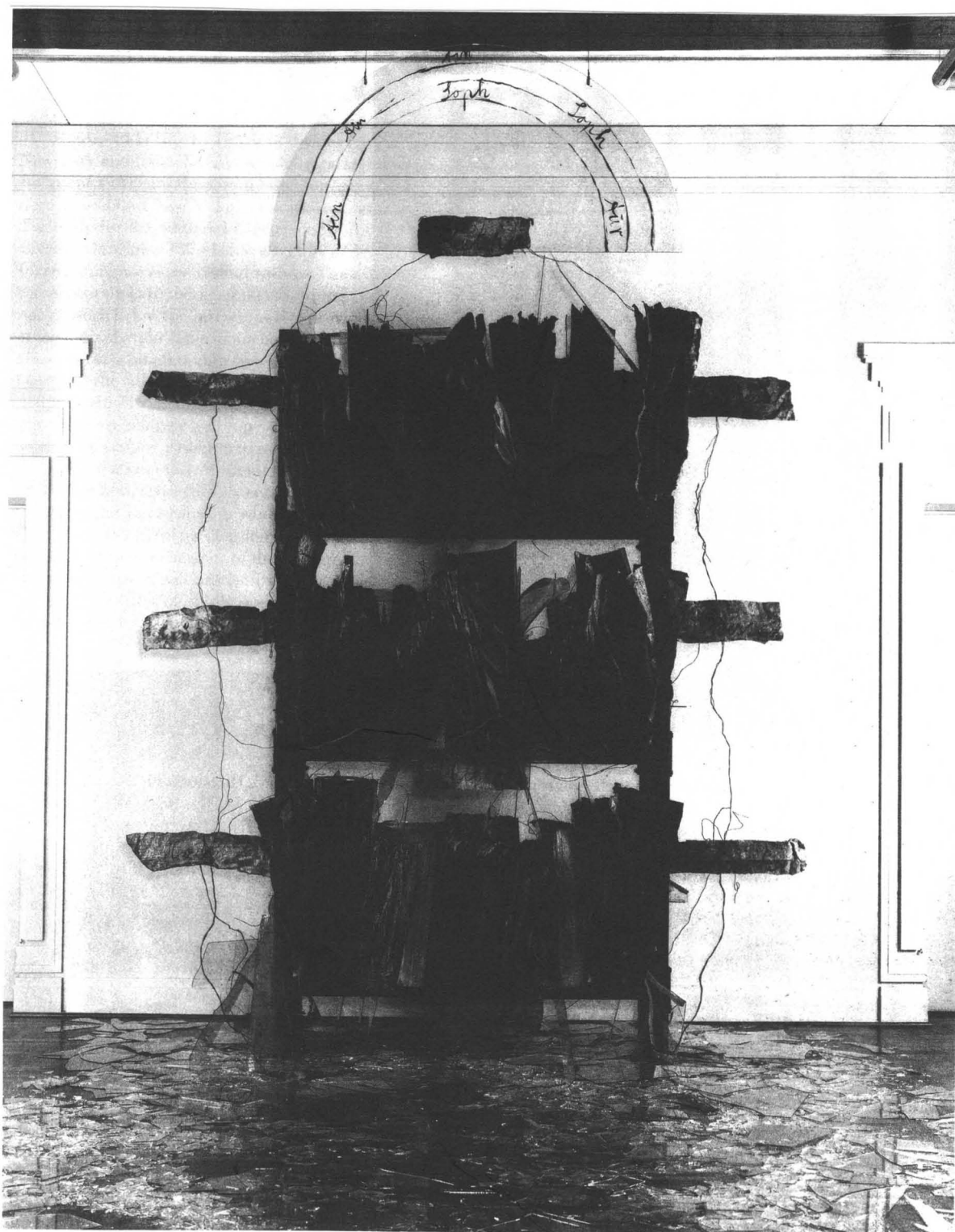


Fig 3.22 ANSELM KIEFER, *Breaking of the Vessels*, 1990. Lead, iron, glass, copper wire, charcoal and aquatec. (48.7 x 1.82 x 1.37m)