

THE SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS OF MY EVOLUTION

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INTRODUCTION

I evolved as a painter by steering the difficult path between Scylla and Charybdis: Scylla, the lofty rock of authority, art critic Clement Greenberg; the Charybdis, my whirlpool of doubt as to the validity of Greenberg's views. How should I take the advice of a respected art critic, while listening to my own intuition as well? As a young artist, I found the necessity of challenging an authority such as Greenberg to be bold and risky. Although I had reservations about his views, I was assailed by doubts about those very reservations. I saw Greenberg's views as rules, and my deviations from them almost blasphemous.

The role of the professional art critic is a relatively new phenomenon. By the first half of the nineteenth century, artists in the Western World encountered changes in their traditional way of living and working. Their traditional type of patron, one nurtured in an aristocratic background of taste and connoisseurship, had drastically dwindled in numbers.¹ The social structure of society had changed, and with this change came democracy and the emergence of the population masses. The local, regional culture of pre-industrial times gave way to the mass culture propagated by the Industrial Revolution. The hallmark of industrialization was the mass production, distribution and consumption of goods. There was no longer any demand for the artist's role as workers whose activities and

products were respected, needed and supported. Artists now lost the master and apprentice workshops of pre-industrial times. The individual production of goods by the craftsmen in these workshops was replaced by group production in quantity by specialized labor.²

Another important development that artists had to contend with during the early nineteenth century was the great emphasis the romantic movement placed on individual sensibility. Artists took up the banner of artistic independence, autonomy and self-sufficiency. Consequently, "L'Art pour l'art" sprang from romanticism and represents one of the weapons in its struggle for freedom; it is the result and to some extent the sum total of romantic aesthetic theory. What was originally merely a revolt against the classical rules has become a revolt against all external ties, an emancipation from non-artistic, moral and intellectual value."³ 'Art for art's sake' meant the right of art to be judged for its own sake rather than on moral and other external grounds. Artists then withdrew into their own clubs and worked for the sake of art alone to a degree for which there had been no precedent. When these artists offered their works in public viewing galleries, particularly those making it a policy to show works that departed from what viewers were used to seeing, critics began to emerge. Here in these art galleries were art objects which were unsolicited, unapproved, and unpatronized (either by juries

or private collectors) and passing comment on these phenomena seemed to be inevitable. As the art historian, Giorgio Vasari of Arezzo had emerged during the Renaissance to document the past story,⁴ so the art critic emerged to document and assess the present. Bernard Denvir describes the situation in this way:

A new type of patron, no longer the instinctive heir to a tradition of taste and connoisseurship, needed guidance and reassurance; an ever-expanding art-conscious public, stimulated by large scale exhibitions and the sudden growth of public art galleries and museums, demanded simple formulae for appreciation; the harnessing of the steam engine to the printing press provided, by expanding the periodical world, an outlet and a platform for anyone who was ready or able to guide faltering steps along the paths of artistic rectitude.⁵

In contemporary North America, Clement Greenberg is a very influential art critic. He is the leader of the school of Formalist Criticism.⁶ Like most critics he is involved with educating the viewing public, selecting and approving "the best" work for the public to see and to purchase, and, advertently or inadvertently, with giving direction to contemporary artists. Clement Greenberg has performed these functions in the following manner. His analysis of the history of modern art and of the formal properties of newly exhibited art (primarily in New York City) have been set out in didactic and lucid prose; in fact, it may be Greenberg's skill as a writer which has made his ideas so influential among the public, artists, and critics. Greenberg's stature among both groups during the sixties was "monumental".⁷ Critics, especially close

followers, like Sidney Tillim, Jane Harrison Cone, Rosiland Krauss and Michael Fried, regularly quoted him as an authority whenever they wished to reinforce an argument.⁸ The artists Anthony Caro, Morris Louis, and Kenneth Noland sought his criticism and advice, and gallery directors sought his predictions.⁹

Greenberg's influence began with his assessment of Abstract Expressionism, America's first great national school of painting. The style was centered in New York City and it came into being during the early 1940's. His efforts to champion the cause of the artists involved national recognition for the movement by the mid-fifties. His first art criticism appeared in The Nation in 1943.

From then on, his essays were deeply committed to the formal and historical significance of the art he discussed. Greenberg regarded subject content in the form of symbolism or narration as extraneous to the essential purpose of the painting. His interpretation of Abstract Expressionism was narrowed down to the descriptive analysis of the formal features of the art work. The intentions, opinions and beliefs of the artist were ignored. Greenberg cited the formal characteristics of Abstract Expressionism in his essay "After Abstract Expressionism" as follows:

If the term "Abstract Expressionist" means anything verifiable, it means painterliness: loose, rapid handling, or the look of it; masses that blot and fuse instead of shapes that stay distinct; large, conspicuous rhythms; broken color; uneven saturations or densities of paint; exhibited brush, knife, finger, or rag marks.¹⁰

Certain artists would incorporate figurative elements into their paintings. Greenberg used the term "homeless representation" to describe the figurative elements that were found in Pollock's paintings of the 1950's and that characterized De Kooning "Women" series. Greenberg thought representation had "no place in art."¹¹

An antithetical attitude about Abstract Expressionism was expressed by two other critics Thomas Hess and Harold Rosenberg. Rosenberg was Greenberg's chief rival as an interpreter of Abstract Expressionism.¹² Rosenberg's style of writing was metaphoric rather than didactic. His writings showed more concern for the character and context of the creative act than in its resulting pictorial form.

"Action Painting" was the term Rosenberg designated to the painterly style of the Abstract Expressionists. He claimed "Action painting" was an unprecedented departure from any previous style and from any aesthetic criteria. Rosenberg was convinced that the artist's existential experience was the exclusive mainspring of action painting. He said ... "painting meant more to the action painters than mere picture making; its purpose was emotional discovery, which involved freeing themselves of received ideas."¹³

They (Hess and Rosenberg) based their critical approach to Abstract Expressionism on the broader attributes of the process of stylistic change which were ignored by formalist writers. They firmly acknowledged the great importance the Abstract Expressionists placed on the process of painting,

and the motivation behind this process.

In the view of Hess and Rosenberg, the Abstract Expressionists were responding to the intellectual climate generated by World War II. Styles prevalent at the time such as Social Realism, Regionalism and Geometric Abstraction were no longer in keeping with the pulse of the times. Neither did the ideologies of socialism and Nationalism hold any meaning for them. The Abstract Expressionists felt compelled to invest forms with meaning that related to the whole of human experience.

Ad Reinhardt, an Abstract Expressionist, expressed some of the questions confronting him. "What about the reality of the everyday world and the reality of painting? They are not the same realities. What is this creative thing that you have struggled to get and where did it come from? What reference or value does it have outside of the painting itself?"¹⁴

Barry Lord summarizes the critical approach of both critics:

"... Harold Rosenberg and Thomas Hess ... first identified action painting as a new and anti-academic way of approaching the canvas as the product of the artist's actions, interpreted in relation to a crisis of personal identity or some similar existentialist category of painterly decision, made in radical freedom and complete responsibility."¹⁵

It is the above attitudes of Hess and Rosenberg concerning Abstract Expressionism, as opposed to those of Greenberg, which puzzled me. In his criticism of

Abstract Expressionism, Greenberg emphasized the final form of art works. In their criticism of the same works, Hess and Rosenberg showed more concern for the process, the means towards the end, the motivation for the form. I felt a kinship for Hess and Rosenberg, regarding Abstract Expressionism. I found Greenberg too confining because of his reduction of painting to a single concept: formal organization. However, the remarkable stature of Greenberg in the art world, and my wish to align myself with the "best", prompted my struggle to follow Greenberg's advice while pulling away with both doubt and mistrust.

PART I GREENBERG'S THEORIES

As I read Greenberg's art criticism, I found that his approach was based on four ideas: first, that art is evolutionary; second, that the only appropriate direction for contemporary art to follow was "Modernism",¹⁶ third, that the resultant stream of advanced art is superior to other streams; and fourth, that the avant-garde is the defender and promoter of "advanced" art.¹⁷

CHAPTER I THE EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

In his essay, "After Abstract Expressionism," Greenberg states that Abstract Expressionism was essentially a formal revolution, a painterly" ... reaction against the tightness of Synthetic Cubism, ... combined with what remained an essentially Cubist sense of design".¹⁸ Greenberg attaches importance to this statement by emphasizing that the basic idea was in keeping with Heinrich Wölfflin's theory which distinguished between linear and painterly qualities in art. In his attempt to solve the problem of the development of style in art history, Wölfflin formulated five pairs of contrary concepts between which artists oscillate from one period to the next.¹⁹ He contrasted the "Classic" art prevalent throughout Europe in the Cinquecento with the "Baroque" art of the Seicento in the following way. Evident in the linear type of painting of the Early and High Renaissance was an emphasis on the hard, clear contours of figures and objects; during the age of the Baroque, the emphasis was placed on conceiving a picture in terms of light

and colour, what Wölfflin called a painterly style. In the development from plane to recession, figures in Classic art are aligned on one plane or in a sequence of planes parallel to the picture plane; Baroque artists placed their figures in a receding and diagonal space which immediately carried the eye to the back of the canvas. In the development from closed form to open form the composition of a classic work of art is enclosed and self-contained within the frame of the painting; in Baroque art the composition carried the eye out of the limits of the picture. In the development from unity to multiplicity, a single focus of interest is stressed in Classic Art in contrast to the several centers of interest in Baroque art. The last pair of concepts concerns absolute and relative clarity of the subject. Absolute clarity of the subject requires the explicit rendering of the subject whereas relative clarity is an all-embracing mode of representation. Composition, light, and colour no longer merely serve to define form, but have their own existence. In the "Conclusion" to his "Principles of Art History", Wölfflin mentioned that the change from Classic to Baroque in the visual arts was not peculiar to sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, but had happened many times throughout history.²⁰

A hundred years after Wölfflin made this pronouncement, Greenberg offered another instance of that cyclical alternation of non-painterly, or linear, and painterly which has marked the evolution of Western Art, since the sixteenth

century. Now, the painterly style of Abstract Expressionism was displacing the linear style of synthetic cubism as the dominant mode in abstract art after 1943.

... Greenberg not only accepted Wölfflin's Classifications as useful tools for visual analysis, but also accepted Wölfflin's theory of the absolute inevitability of a cyclical alternation of these formal categories. As a result, Abstract Expressionism is reduced in Greenberg's essay to merely another instance of the cyclical alternation of painterly and non-painterly which he feels has marked the evolution of Western Art ... since the sixteenth century! 21

Mannerism

It seems to me that the cyclical alternation theory of the evolution of art is applicable, if at all, only to some five hundred years of Western art. I say if at all, because the discovery of those post Renaissance and pre-Baroque works named "Mannerist" clearly questions its validity even in that small segment of world art. Barbara Reise explains how Mannerism, rather than being a reaction against the linearity of the Renaissance, is in fact, an extension of it, as is the Baroque.

The discovery of Mannerism as a style epoch between Renaissance and Baroque has required modification of the acceptance of Wölfflin's historical theory. One of Sydney Freedberg's contributions to the philosophy about Renaissance style is his description of it as carrying seeds of Mannerism within its own formal evolution. He also finds seeds of Baroque form within Mannerism and thus a continuation between Renaissance and Baroque Style.²²

As a result of Freedberg's findings, Greenberg recognizes the necessity of revising and updating Wölfflin's

evolutionary theory. Greenberg modifies his approach and finds the seeds of Post-Painterly Abstraction in Abstract Expressionism. This revision allows Greenberg to situate and recognize the works of the painters Clifford Still, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko as a transitional style between Abstract Expressionism and the new Post-Painterly Abstraction.²³ He said that " ... Still, Newman, and Rothko turn away from the painterliness of Abstract Expressionism as though to save the objects of painterliness--colour and openness--from painterliness itself."²⁴

I would agree that Still, Newman, and Rothko were primarily concerned with the expressive qualities of colour. In order to maximize the visual impact of colours, they found they had to apply them in large expanses which saturate the eye, while eliminating figuration and symbolism, and simplifying drawing and gesture. In other words, rather than having a rich complexity of interwoven areas of colour which lessened the impact of the individual colours (as in the case of de Kooning,) Still, Rothko and Newman isolated colour in order to emphasize its expressive possibilities.

Greenberg has gone to great lengths to convince us that Post-Painterly Abstraction gradually emerged out of Abstract Expressionism. However, his explanation seems to me rather questionable when one considers the general framework under which the Abstract Expressionists worked.

All the artists of this style were bound together by the common belief that painting had to be primarily expressive and by their desire to create an original abstract art that would convey their personal expressions directly to the viewer.

Two groups of artists thrived under this framework. One group, which included Pollock, Kline, Hofmann, and de Kooning, relied on gesture or brushmarks to convey expressiveness. They were called gestural abstractionists. The second group relied on large fields of centrally focused colour to express emotions and therefore were known as the chromatic abstractionists. This group included Still, Newman, Reinhardt, and Rothko.

From the beginnings of Abstract Expressionism, all the artists had very individual approaches to their works. The term Abstract Expressionism is misleading, because it encompasses at one extreme the work of William de Kooning, which is rarely abstract, and at the other the work of Barnett Newman, which is not characteristically expressionistic. Consequently, Newman, Still, and Rothko, whom Greenberg claims turned away from the painterliness of Abstract Expressionism, are not necessarily seen as emerging from this movement, but rather as developing along side of it. However, the parallel development of a painterly style and a linear style could not accommodate Wölfflin's evolutionary theory, where one style displaces the other.

Not only has the cyclical theory of the evolution of art been challenged by the discovery of "mannerism", but it has also raised doubts concerning its applicability to art styles in the twentieth century. Today the great diversity of styles in art makes this theory seem useless. So many of the artistic trends do not even apply to Wölfflin's criteria, for example, Environment works, Earth works, Happenings, and Conceptual Art. These styles of art are dismissed as irrelevant to the dominating trend since Greenberg's account of twentieth century "advanced" art pointed out the cyclical alternation of painterly and linear styles. According to Greenberg, the dominating trends in the last hundred years have been Impressionism (painterly) to Cubism (linear) to Abstract Expressionism (painterly) and on to Post-Painterly Abstraction (allegedly linear).

Greenberg's exclusion of so many artistic fields of endeavor and his revision of Wölfflin's theories to incorporate his own point of view further supported my doubts about the validity of the cyclical alternation of styles in the evolution of art.

Without the pressure of that theory, I no longer had to force my own work to form a sequential order of contemporary approaches to painting or to demand that my own works follow Greenberg's approach.

Before that liberation, however, my response to Green-

berg's prescriptions was to purge my paintings of any prevailing Abstract Expressionist elements. It was a struggle to discard the mannerisms to which I was accustomed. I began to limit my reliance on gesture. This was a good discipline since I believe that gesture should appear out of necessity and not habit. I also forced myself to work from complexity to a minimal or reductive solution. I imitated the "deductive" style of Stella and Noland as well as Louis' stain paintings.

It is my opinion that my paintings during this time were studio exercise, mere experiments in theory. I found that imitation of other painters works was very boring and stifling. The experience was so frustrating that no record or canvas was kept. It was false to suppress my "self" and my spontaneous intuitive response to experience, particularly since my goal was not to learn from those. I was not attempting to imitate, or to assimilate their lessons into my own expressive skills, but rather only to paint "up-to-date" art. My painting decisions were not the result of an inner necessity.

It was during this period of being a poor disciple that I finally came to terms with the troublesome ideas of Greenberg. I stopped making the minimal studies I found so stifling and unrewarding, and decided to allow the reappearance of imagery, and to enjoy the surface qualities of paint and its application, and of collaged papers. The paintings

of early 1972 were approached with formal restraint until the appearance of "Psychic Dendrites". The paintings which followed included "Why?", "Safari 1", "Safari 11", "In the Beginning", "Peace with Honor", "Cerebral Jigsaw", and were approached more freely, with trial and error. They demonstrate my concern with surface qualities and imagery. I was working with my own sensibilities and not with the theory that required me to be working in the latest stage of the evolution of art.

CHAPTER II ADVANCED ART AND THE AVANT-GARDE

Having involved myself with Greenberg's allegiance to the Evolutionary theory and my questions concerning it, I was still confused when I compared the wide diversity of styles of twentieth century art with Greenberg's "rules" for advanced art.

According to Greenberg, serious artists of the Sixties were united by a common attitude called "Modernism". Modernism presupposes a special way of thinking about a work of art: a painting or sculpture is not an image of anything but an autonomous object. Greenberg regards Modernist Painting as a mainstream of painting since Manet, painting which openly acknowledges as virtues its physical constraints: flat surface, properties of pigments and shape of support.

One of Greenberg's concerns with Modernism is the role of the avant-garde in supporting modern art. Greenberg defines the avant-garde as the defender of advanced art in reaction to the industrialized society of the early nineteenth century.²⁵

The increasing insistence of the common man upon shaping his own political destiny inspired the artist to do likewise; artists began to defend their own sphere of interest, the making of art.

The avant-garde artist "sought to maintain the high level of his art by both narrowing and raising it to the expression of an absolute in which all relativities and

contradictions would be either resolved or beside the point ..., subject matter ... becomes something to be avoided like the plague."²⁶

Therefore, Greenberg would have painting confine itself to the disposition pure and simple of colour and line, and not intrigue us by associations with things we can experience more authentically elsewhere.²⁷ He would have the avant-garde artists serve modern art by thus confining their works.

Greenberg believed that the results of this specializing process (limiting art to colour and line) had estranged the viewing public. The traditionally cultured audience for fine art was rapidly shrinking.²⁸ Since culture, according to Greenberg, is threatened by the loss of its traditional financial support and its "elite" audience, the avant-garde forms the only living culture we have. He says that art values in contemporary times must be preserved by a specialized and inward-looking art which imitate its own creative processes.²⁹

Greenberg assumes that only the avant-garde have a culture worth preserving and pursuing. In his article "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", folk art is a minor consideration, equated with Kitsch.³⁰ Greenberg remarks that if the avant-garde represents the forefront of art, Kitsch represents the rearguard.

"Kitsch is a form of art pollution, or pseudo-art, created for mass consumption ... Since the vast majority of populations of Western societies are now 'middle-class,' Kitsch is an expression of their

taste in striving to possess the opulence previously enjoyed only by the aristocracies ... Most critics regard Kitsch as an inevitable consequence of the industrial revolution--a mass produced art catering for millions who wish to embellish their environment, but who are philistine in their tastes because they lack formal education and have lost contact with traditional folk culture."³¹

Greenberg's condemnation of folk art by equating it with Kitsch seems to me intolerant. Folk art is traditional yet not historical, intimately linked to the past yet not precisely datable. In traditional folk art there is a continuity between its past and its present. It cannot be viewed as a succession of new inventions or new objects. By the way of repetitions in the form of variations, the works of the folk artist becomes part of an enduring tradition. And in so doing, may long outlive the up-to-date object that is the "latest thing". Consequently, I cannot agree with Greenberg that the avant-garde have the only culture worth preserving.

The rules which Greenberg set forth for the avant-garde artists to follow in their defence of "advanced" art were as follows:

First to treat the whole surface as a single undifferentiated field of interest. The aim was to merge figure with ground, integrate shape and field, eliminate foreground--background discontinuities, to restrict pattern to those elements--horizontal and verticals--that suggest a symbiotic relationship to image and frame; second, to collapse painting and drawing in a single gesture; and third, to equate design and process (as Pollock's drip paintings do, or Morris Louis' veils); in short, to achieve the synthesis of all separable elements of painting, preferably (but

this is a secondary consideration) without the loss of incident or detail which diminishes visual interest.³²

The artist who observes these rules, conceives of space as limitless, unconfined and open. Greenberg's writings explain how an increasing emphasis on flatness and two-dimensionality played an essential part in developing self-identification of modernist painting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Greenberg contends that:

Flatness alone was unique and exclusive to that art. The enclosing shape was a limiting condition, or norm, that was shared with the art of the theatre; colour was a norm or means shared with sculpture as well as with the theatre. Flatness, two-dimensionality was the only condition painting shared with no other art, and so Modernist painting oriented itself to flatness as it did to nothing else.³³

Greenberg claims that Modernist paintings had to renounce all narrative and symbolic content because that kind of content was held to be common with literature. The depiction of illusionary solid forms was abandoned because three-dimensionality was the province of sculpture. Recognizable entities were dismissed because they exist in three-dimensional space and because the barest hint of a recognizable object is enough to conjure associations of observed three-dimensional space. In doing so, it alienates pictorial space from two-dimensionality, which is the guarantee of the painting's individuality. For Greenberg, the one thing which painting could call its own

was colour which is contiguous with the flat ground, because a painting's drive toward independence demands withdrawal from anything outside itself.³⁴ Greenberg said, "It was the stressing, however, of the ineluctable flatness of the support that remained most fundamental in the processes by which pictorial art criticized and defined art."³⁵

Greenberg's emphasis on the two-dimensionality of the picture plane as the prime concern for advanced art automatically forces an artist to concern himself with space.

Space has always been a consideration for the artist, and a brief resumé of significant changes in the artist's attitude toward space is perhaps worth mentioning since Greenberg uses them as important arguments.

Early in the fifteenth century, Brunelleschi and others systematized linear perspective.³⁶ In Renaissance painting, the spectator could imagine himself entering the painting, which was thought of as a window or a hole in the wall, and he could move through a familiar landscape with familiar objects. The flat two-dimensional surface gives the illusion of three-dimensional reality; we look into the painting. There was, however, a gradual departure from three-dimensionalism.

During the late eighteenth century, Jacques Louis David used classic themes for the interpretation of

modern French life. His stoic figures with their controlled modelling and clarity of form were situated in a shallow space, with the movement parallel to the picture plane.

Less than a hundred years later, the Impressionists were to push this denial of three-dimensional space much further. Their main concern was to render the instant impression experienced by their eyes. They were not interested in painting coloured objects, but in painting what coloured objects looked like in coloured light. Applying the paint to the canvas in a series of small dabs each in different colours placed next to each other, pure and unblended, they showed how varying intensities of light gave both momentary colour and form. Because the light of the different seasons, of the time of the day, and of weather conditions was their real concern, the Impressionists chose simple subjects: landscapes, cityscapes, railroad stations, riverbanks, reflections of boating parties in the water, haystacks and cathedrals. The natural outcome of painting in the Impressionist technique was the dissolution of form.

The Post-Impressionists, notably Cezanne, revolted against the haziness and dissolution of mass in Impressionist painting. Cezanne emphasized two further characteristics. First, he used similar shapes repeatedly, which tended to link visually on the same plane, although they were situated in different planes in depth. Secondly, he

emphasized the coincidence or running into of edges. As a result, the edges of distant forms coincided with near forms. This also tended to link forms on one plane which were situated in different planes in nature.

Cubism evolved out of Cezanne's late style, especially from his concentration on geometric forms and use of colour to reveal the basic forms of nature. Now Cezanne's geometric colour planes that had defined shape were made transparent in order to reveal the planes behind the object. Several aspects of the object are shown as if broken, and opened up on the canvas, as it would exist in itself and in our minds. The Cubists shattered the subject matter and reassembled the fragments, the multiple views, in new relationships. Their aim was not representation of what could be seen from one view point, but the realization of an autonomous image different from anything in the known world. We do not look into a Cubist painting as we do a Renaissance work. The prismatic arrangement of overlapping planes seems to project into the spectator's environment rather than drawing him in. We perceive these sculptural masses as being in front of an undefined but very shallow void. The Cubists' tendency to build up the composition's greatest density in the centre, returning to the surface of the canvas at the edges, emphasizes the illusion of three-dimensional bulk rather than depth. As a result, we are simultaneously aware of surface and of contained

limited space.³⁷

The most important contribution of the Cubists in this respect was the elimination of colour as a major element. This was especially true of the Analytic Cubists who stressed value rather than strong colour contrasts. For example, Pablo Picasso's Analytic Cubist canvases of 1911-12 contain brown or near brown areas with many value changes, but few colour changes. The almost colourless value changes do not suggest roundness or three-dimensionality. They are used instead to suggest ambiguous points in depth. Value changes in Analytic Cubist paintings function, therefore, in a completely opposite manner to those in Renaissance painting which showed roundness as well as spatial position.³⁸

The theoretical justification for this reductive tendency and elimination of "depth cues" was furnished by Clement Greenberg in his essay, "Modernist Painting" (1965). Here he summed up the art of the last hundred years in an elegant sweeping statement. The following are important excerpts:

The essence of Modernism lies in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline itself, not in order to subvert it, but to enrich it more firmly in its area of competence. Kant used logic to establish the limits of logic, and while he withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was left in all the more secure possession of what remained to it.

The self-criticism of Modernism grows out of but is not the same thing as the criticism of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment criticized from the outside, the way criticism in its more

accepted sense does; Modernism criticizes from the inside, through the procedures themselves of that which is being criticized. It seems natural that this new kind of criticism should have appeared first in philosophy, which is critical by definition; but as the nineteenth century wore on, it made itself felt in many other fields. A more rational justification had begun to be demanded of every formal social activity, and "Kantian" self-criticism was called on eventually to meet and interpret this demand in areas that lay far from philosophy.³⁹

Greenberg identifies Modernism with this self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant. Because Kant was the first to criticize the means of criticism itself, Greenberg considers Kant to be the first real Modernist.

Greenberg continues:

The task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thereby each art would be rendered "pure," and in its "purity" find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence. "Purity" means self-identification, and the enterprise of self-criticism in the arts became one of self-definition with a vengeance.⁴⁰

In painting, this purity would be attained by stressing the two-dimensionality of the picture plane. Flatness was the one feature that painting shared with no other art.

Greenberg and The Modernist Painters: Circa 1953

In my involvement with Greenberg's thoughts, I was led to investigate the compositions of painters who exemplified Greenberg's theories about advanced art in modern times.

The work of Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman results to a great degree from their personal interpretations of the particular situations in which advanced painting found itself at crucial moments in their respective developments.

The critic Michael Fried states that Pollock was credited by Greenberg with the initial step toward creation of a post-painterly abstraction accomplished by the compression of painting and drawing into a single "gesture". Figure is merged with ground within a pictorial structure, independent not only of Cubist shapes, but also of the background--foreground discontinuities they create. These discontinuities continued to tie Cubism to the illusion of receding planes of Old Master paintings. Pollock resolved this problem by never closing his painterly line to silhouette a readable shape against the ground. Not only did he transcend conventional figuration, but colours and line were allowed to appear autonomously so that the image was a purely visual field of reference, without tactile suggestion of three-dimensional form.

Newman's paintings of around 1950 demonstrate two things. First, an embracing illusion of optical space may be achieved by broad expanses of colour. Secondly, emphasis on the shape and size rather than on the flatness of the picture support yields a new kind of pictorial structure, "deductive" structure which is Michael Fried's term for the

relation of the image to the framing edge.

Michael Fried, a close follower of Greenberg, coined the term "deductive structure" and he elaborates on the subject as follows:

Newman's pioneering exploration of "deductive" pictorial structure represents an important new development in the evolution of one of the chief preoccupations of Modernist painting from Manet through synthetic Cubism and Matisse: namely, the increasingly explicit recognition of the physical characteristics of the picture support. However, since the main interest of Modernist painting has shifted from tactility to an increasing appeal to vision alone, the flatness of the picture support has tended to be dissolved in the illusion of optical space while the shape and size of the picture support have come to play a role of great importance in the determination of modernist pictorial structure.⁴⁰

Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland were the discoveries of Clement Greenberg and exemplified his idea of advanced art, proceeding to Post-Painterly Abstraction.⁴² The critic, Kenworth Moffett, talks about Noland's investigations in the following way " ... The horizontal band layout, which Noland has been exploiting with such inventiveness since 1965, represents the kind of solution to colour painting on which many artists ... have built an entire career ... Noland's development over the past 13 years has been the result of his search for different ways to lock the parallel bands to the inherent geometry and literalness of the support (the centre, the upper corners, the sides) and thereby to inform his hues with a vivid presence."⁴³ From the beginning, Noland has been concerned

with relating his stain-images deductively to the shape, if not to the specific dimension, of the picture support, by means of exact centering and then of lateral symmetry. Most recently, "an important departure in Noland's new pictures is the discarding of bilateral symmetry; instead of the riveting of attention by a symmetrical holistic design, the picture is thrown off center. And these are not, or at least not to the same extent as Noland's previous paintings, series pictures, works with a more or less fixed general layout. The design as well as the colour, changes fundamentally from picture to picture."⁴⁴

His paintings are an exploration of problems raised and possibilities suggested by his own previous work. Noland has not been content to work with any one format. He has worked with concentric circles, assymmetrical chevron formats, diamond-shaped paintings, the horizontal stripe pictures. His solutions have all resulted in a compelling holistic layout which further serves to force colour outward toward the viewer and to bring the adjacent hues dramatically together. Noland is above all a colourist and structure is always a consequence of his colour ambitions.

Michael Fried thinks that Noland is continually dissatisfied because in "... modernist painting, a particular format may amount to a wholly adequate lucid and reproducible solution to a particular formal problem...and

the greatest danger facing a modernist painter such as Noland is not that he may rest content with a partial or imperfect solution to a form problem but that his solution of it may be both so total and so perfect that he will not know how to go on."⁴⁵ Exactly at the point when Noland seems most comfortably encased in a style, he chooses to alter his art in a fundamental way. Noland has said that "a breakthrough also means a limitation, a reduction of possibilities."⁴⁶

Morris Louis, on the other hand, was influenced by Pollock's all-over canvases of 1947-50 and, in particular, by the way Pollock used line so as to defy being read in terms of figuration. What Louis was interested in was exploring new possibilities with sheer optical space.

He was able to do this after seeing Helen Frankenthaler's painting "Mountains and Sea" in 1952. Louis is quoted as having said, "She was a bridge between Pollock and what was possible"⁴⁷. As Greenberg has remarked, "One of the consequences of Louis' exposure to the work of Frankenthaler, and Pollock was the liberation of his gift for colour."⁴⁸ Michael Fried feels that in addition to this:

Louis ... found ... new ... possibilities for figuration ..., for combining figuration and opticality in a new synthesis of seemingly unlimited potential which the staining of different colours (rather than just black, as in Pollock) opened up; and that it was the realization of these possibilities that

liberated Louis's gift for colour. Merely staining thinned pigment of various hues into raw canvas, as in Trellis, was not enough to do this. It was only when Louis discovered in the staining of such pigments the means to a kind of figuration capable of sustaining a wide gamut of internal articulations all of which are experienced as accessible to eyesight alone that his breakthrough was at last under way.

Roughly, Louis discovered that if successive waves of thinned pigment, each a different colour, were stained into a length of canvas, what was produced was a single, visually contiguous configuration within which the individual configurations left by each wave in turn--or, perhaps more accurately, the limits of these configurations--were still visible. That is, by laying down wave on top of wave of liquid pigment Louis literally put colour into colour--more precisely--colour-configuration into colour-configuration--so that, within the stained portion of any veil painting, the perception of a change of colour, almost no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, indicates a transition between configurations. One might say, in fact, that the perception of such a change is the perception of a figuration. This is true even when, as often happens, one cannot make out the shape, or even the original colour, of the configurations involved ... However, the limits of individual colour configurations are not experienced as though they were the edge of some kind of tangible thing, rather, one's eye is gripped and moved by an extraordinarily compelling continuity across them which divests them of tactile significance.⁴⁹

Having studied these "Greenberg painters" it seemed curious to me that the first generation Colour Field painters (the Abstract Expressionist painters Clifford Still, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman) whom Greenberg promoted were not deeply involved with discussing formal or art historical matters. What they emphasized was the primacy

of content, and the shifts in their attitudes about content determined changes in their style.

During the early and middle 1940's, Rothko, Still, and Newman painted myth-inspired semi-abstractions. In the latter part of the decade, they conceived of making their symbols more universal and immediate, and so changed their pictorial means. Because the change in intention anticipated the change in form, an analysis of their ideas illuminates their stylistic developments.⁵⁰

Although Greenberg stressed that the essence of Modernism, as a process of self-criticism which emphasized the need to search for the qualities of painting which are unique only to itself, this does not appear to be the reason why these painters were purging their art. Instead, Still, Rothko and Newman believed that their art would have to be free from familiar imagery and unnecessary complication in order to reveal "transcendental experiences".⁵¹

The intentions of these artists were visionary; they aimed to create an abstract art suggestive of the sublime, of transcendence, of revelation. In the past, revelation has been the function of organized religion--including of course, religious art. In the modern era, religious dogmas, rituals, symbols, and the images have all lost their power to grip the imagination of artists. However, the yearning for a transcendental realm of being has not lessened, and some artists continue to seek means of expressing private visions of their infinite yearnings, in the hope of replacing the time-worn visions of organized religions, and this in a universe the existentially minded believed lacking in ultimate meaning. To achieve a new art of the sublime, the colour-field painters tried to suppress in their art all references to familiar images in nature or in past and present art, since such references would elicit

predictable responses. They were particularly antagonistic to Mondrian and repudiated his Neoplastic conception of the Absolute codified into a set of rules thought of as embedded in nature--that is, externally given--and as symbolic of its underlying fundamental relations. They refused to accept any system imposed from without, for they wanted, in Newman's words, to make "Cathedrals ... out of ourselves." The divergence in their styles is proof of the privacy of their points of view.⁵²

It is only the second generation Colour Field painters who were bred on Greenberg's criticism who were bona fida Greenberg Modernists. The sole concern for these artists was indeed with the formal qualities of art. "Means" of achieving "ends" in painting became for them "ends" in themselves.

I am not suggesting that either way of working is any better than the other. There will be success and failure within both approaches. Rather, the crux of the matter in this argument is the exclusiveness with which Greenberg approaches art experiences, for both the maker and the viewer. The lesson for me was that I must, like a Rothko or a Newman, develop and essentialize my paintings because I felt the expressive need to do so and not because Clement Greenberg "said so". For if I put the motivations for controlling my work outside myself, I would diminish my chances for making my work convincing. Likewise, if I experience only what Greenberg says is worthwhile, I shall limit my experience as a viewer.

In reviewing the criteria upon which Greenberg based

his views, I found it necessary to go my own way for the following reasons. As previously stated, Wölfflin's five sets of contrary concepts are not applicable to many contemporary art endeavors and adherence to this theory would limit my appreciation of many works. Other works do fall within Wölfflin's "linear and painterly" criteria, but are excluded from serious consideration because they do not meet with Greenberg's own set of rules for "advanced" art. Unless flatness was strictly observed and sculptural illusion avoided, painting styles, either painterly or linear, were considered of little consequence. Symbolism, Surrealism, Constructivism, Op Art and Mixed-Media are rejected; so are the Expressionist paintings of Vincent Van Gogh which emphasized the psychological rather than the physical;⁵³ the Biomorph Abstractions of Hans Arp and Wassily Kandinsky; and The Imaginative Paintings of Marc Chagall and Giorgio de Chirico.

To further emphasize how limiting my experience as a viewer would be if I heeded Greenberg's pronouncements, I shall discuss my views concerning Pop Art and Minimal Art, two styles which Greenberg considers superficial. In his essay Post-Painterly Abstraction, he says "... But as diverting as Pop art is, I happen not to find it really fresh. Nor does it really challenge taste on more than a superficial level. ... it amounts to a new episode in the history of taste, but not to an authentically new episode

in the evolution of contemporary art."⁵⁴

The Pop artists chose as their subject matter the everyday objects of their physical world, it was a world filled with highly sophisticated mass produced objects. These objects were reflective of an industrialized, urban, and highly commercialized society. Like most artists, they sought a personalized aesthetic vocabulary which could express their personal individualities. An example of one artist's ultimate resolution to this search is Roy Lichtenstein's well-known comic strip style.

In his huge blow-up of single frames of story telling incidents, complete with balloons of dialogue, quite often the scale itself and the rendition of the Ben Day dot shadings from the original, turn the banal imagery into a form of pure abstraction. It is not until we "read" the lines, shapes and colours that we begin to see the very explicit iconography. A duel takes place between what is abstract and formal, and what is literary content, and in his best works this battle remains unresolved ... In choosing prototypes which are usually read for content rather than form, Lichtenstein forces us to see them freshly and to take them more seriously as sophisticated design inventions which are part of our daily experiences.⁵⁵

In addition to this fresh outlook, many of Lichtenstein's paintings, like those of other pop artists, explore the work of other artists and various schools and styles. Although Pop art chooses its subjects from everyday life, it also relates to and speaks about art. Lichtenstein's painting, "Cezanne's portrait of his wife," makes such a comment.⁵⁶ In this painting Lichtenstein has not only created an

original composition, he has also made a comment about the way people look at art; the way they take it apart, analyze it, make diagrams and all too often, ignore its poetry. It seems to me that in this painting Lichtenstein is trying to get the viewer to re-evaluate his own ability to see and understand art, to question and seek new meanings, and to establish new or different standards and values for understanding both art and contemporary life.

Minimal Art is the second contemporary art style rejected by Greenberg that I enjoy. Minimal Art is the fruition of an attitude towards art-making which began around 1960 as a reaction to Abstract Expressionism. It is characterized by extreme simplicity. Minimal art attracts sculptors because the attitude it embodies reduces the enormous complexity of choice facing the artist working in a three-dimensional medium.

Two Minimal artists I enjoy are Robert Morris and Donald Judd. These artists are not interested in the internal formal relationships of sculpture but rather with drawing the attention of the spectator to certain perceptual experiences of form. Donald Judd's work is the "purest" of the two. His sculptures are large boxes, factory made according to his plans, of sheet steel which is sometimes painted. They are rigid, regular, exact, with few sensuous or relational features. The relationships that do exist are between the exact modules and the space between them.

During the mid-sixties Robert Morris made a transition between hard and soft forms. The geometric, solid hard forms were coated with plastics and synthetic paints. The soft objects which I particularly enjoy are simply strips of felt or else earth. The felt pieces only indicate the type of curves and folds which are characteristic of the material.

Greenberg criticizes Minimal Art, finding that " ... Minimal works are readable as art, as almost anything is today--including a door, a table, or a blank sheet of paper."⁵⁷ Greenberg is supported in a particularly garrulous attack made by Michael Fried in his essay "Art and Objecthood". Fried attacks the works of Minimal artists such as Robert Morris, Donald Judd and Tony Smith.⁵⁸

As far as Fried is concerned there is only one way of working, one kind of form, and one medium. Everything else is irrelevant and trivial. History is on Fried's side and he feels obliged to preserve the true art and preserve the true criticism.

The fact that Minimal Art is low-key, and often concerned with little more than nuances of differentiation, makes it out of step with the screeching and blaring carnival-like atmosphere of American life. If Pop Art is the reflection of our environment, perhaps Minimal Art is its antidote. Allan Leepe, a professor of painting at Michigan State University finds in Minimal Art " ... an effort to deal directly with the nature of experience and its perception

through visual reactions ... The Minimal artist attempts to state point blankly in visual form what philosophers and writers have been saying verbally--phenomenology is the basis of experience."⁵⁹ I appreciate the artists right to so state, and I believe that the minimal statements are valid ones, and should not be excluded from the category of significant contemporary art.

PART II MY PHILOSOPHY AND PAINTING METHODS

I have outlined the conflict, within myself and my work, which was prompted by my desire to respect and make use of the views of Clement Greenberg concerning contemporary painting. The conflict was resolved as I rejected the evolutionary theory as expounded by Greenberg as well as his rules for advanced art, and the duties of the avant-garde artists in modern times.

CHAPTER IV LIVING AND MAKING ART AS RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

I find it impossible to talk about art without talking about the spirit of man. The human being, a composite of nervous intelligence, is wont to meditate. I prefer to call this meditation "prayer."

I do not mean prayer as traditionally understood as an address to an outside deity who supposedly listens to one's spoken thoughts. I mean prayer as I understand Martin Buber means it, as a dialogue between each self and its reality of knowns and unknowns.

There is something akin to prayer in concentrated study or thorough involvement in any work, where the study or work is felt to be very personally meaningful, where the activity provides an experience of being actively involved (instead of passively) in living. In such activity our attentions may be seen as being oriented towards truth; this activity is prayer. It is the orientation of all the attention of which the "mind and heart" are capable towards

a realization of the fullness of being.

The entire universe of matter and energy speaks to us. Every microcosmic and macrocosmic event speaks to us. What is required of us is the response of listening, of thoughtful attention. By so listening there is the revelation of reality for each human being. This constitutes our discovery of our own truth.

I believe that if we learn to listen to ourselves as part of and apart from, the universe of phenomena and events, we may see more clearly and abundantly what it is that we are asking of art and of life. We will know what we must do with each other in order for each to be meaningful to us, and true for us.

Hence, to me, art and the spirit of man are both fundamentally religious:

For religion, according to Tillich, is the state of being ultimately concerned. Religious art, therefore, might be defined simply as a sign of ultimate concern. Whether the subject matter be religious or non-religious or, as in abstract art, non-existent, if the art work is a sign of that ultimate and most centered act of the human personality it can only be described as a religious work ... But an art work is defined as holy or religious not only by its intrinsic motivating source, but also by its context, its use, its function for the faithful who behold it ... The faith of the viewer is as important in constituting a religious work of art as the faith of the artist—perhaps more important, since religious vision can sanctify even natural objects such as trees and stones if it finds them adequate symbols of the ultimate. One might say that an object becomes religious or sacramental through the vision of faith by which the

beholder sees the ultimate in the immediate. What is perfectly secular to the secular eye can, at the same time, be profoundly sacred to the religious. Hence, the religious vision might be described as a matter of second sight, of seeing first exactly what is to be seen by prosaic everyday vision and then seeing something else.⁶⁰

So, the act of painting is, for me, a religious act, the activity of prayer. I respond to everyday life and find that it resounds with metaphors. As I begin a painting, infinite new meanings are revealed if I "listen" for them. The experience of something meaningful to me elevates me into the world of the spiritual; I become tuned into sensations of new energies, new possibilities.

As an artist, I must be aware of what can happen when I tune in to and release certain energies in the act of painting. I know that I am participating in the processes of synthesis and unification of the multiple elements of each work. I know I must respect the mysterious powers of my materials. I know I must of necessity put myself in a conducive relation to them. Kandinsky discusses this relation in his treatise, Concerning the Spiritual in Art: "His eye should be directed to his inner life and his ear should harken to the words of inner necessity. Then, he will resort with equal ease to every means and achieve his end. This is the only way to express the mystical necessity. All means are sinful which are not taken from inner necessity."⁶¹

The gap between my experience of being (and specifically, between my experience of the religious activity of painting) and embodiment is spanned by art. I believe we do not see paint alone when we look at a painting. Seeing is not the function of the eye alone. We see something which is not visibly there but which enters our perception through the eye. Like other elements of the mutable world, paintings are as transitory as life itself. A painting's value is not only in its pigments and gestures, but also in the suprasensory awareness it perpetuates in man. As an artist I know that hand, heart, and mind can work toward the embodiment of an understanding greater than my own. And it is with that attitude that I make art and can believe in its truth and validity.

CHAPTER V. PREDOMINANT FEATURES IN MY THESIS WORK

I should like now to describe the specific activity which has resulted in the works of my thesis exhibition and which are appended in photographic reproductions.

I do not like to limit myself to a preconceived plan. I use no preliminary sketches. It is primarily a method of trial and revision. Because I like to use a minimum of staining and reject most impasto layering, the casualty rate is rather high. However, the unsuccessful works have been useful in developing my sense of colour and form and my ability to "hear", to interact intellectually and sensitively with the evolving image. In the beginning, I discover what I accept as a basic composition of relationships. I study and live with this until I have some sense of its own reality. I try to let its own character guide me from there.

I often work on several paintings at the same time, not forcing myself to finish one before I understand its reality and what it is asking for. I do this by trying to dissolve the thick strata of the conscious. I try to extend my taste and overcome the obvious solutions that are the result of training. I bring my canvases along slowly, so that no particular one will grow too quickly. New possibilities occur to me as the pictures develop. Experience has taught me that these thoughts might be lost by painting too hurriedly. Therefore, one painting is put aside for a while and another is brought out in a constant

effort to keep an open and fluid attitude towards them. If I do not know what to do next, a lot of time is spent just looking. When I have the clue to the "presence" I try to sustain it by bringing to it the essential and relinquishing what is not.

The titles of my paintings are derived from the associations they evoke in me. To me, the role played by the imagery of the painting is not irrelevant to the aesthetics of its value as a work of art. I believe that it adds another dimension to the aesthetic value. I usually name a painting because a meaning is suggested by it.

In summary, my work method is one of the slow search and development. I use no pre-conceived lay outs or imagery. I try to develop slowly whatever structure and image are present after the first spills or brushings of paint. I search for the image and later, for its meaning.

The first spills or marks of paint are not laid on according to plan, they are laid on according to preference. I am strongly attracted to images which seem to expand beyond their boundaries. It is for this reason that I enjoy Baroque paintings. The astonishing vitality of Peter Paul Rubens never ceases to amaze me. He is able to neutralize the framing edge with rolling baroque compositions. I also admire the contemporary painter Helen Frankenthaler whose delicate and open stained compositions also seem to be unrestricted by the outer boundary of the canvas edge.

Therefore, my first pours and brush marks are loosely applied, with an eye towards an image that will look expansive and unrestricted, and I lay these first marks onto unstretched canvas laid on the floor. This enables me to crop the canvas after painting on it, without regard to an external frame. This procedure helps me to minimize the importance of such a boundary. I do not work towards an image which stresses horizontals and verticals, echoing and reinforcing the framing edge. This type of structure, typical of Cubist painting, irrevocably differentiates pictorial space from the viewer's space by calling attention to the boundary between the two. In my paintings I wish to avoid this differentiation. My paintings "Magical Mystery Tour", "Daybreak Primeval", and "Entomological Preview" are examples of my use of cropping and neutralizing the framing edge.

I chose to record my painting experiences on canvases sufficiently large to force the viewer into an immediate confrontation. It is my opinion that canvases with more height and several times more breadth than the average person tend to be seen and felt with more effectiveness than smaller works. A work larger than ourselves insists that we have an awareness of the work as a whole. A large painting literally affects perceptions. The eye must rapidly scan and/or attempt to envelope without focusing.

The large unstretched canvas is also highly suitable

to my intent of total involvement, of religious activity while painting, an unbounded expanse of canvas resting on the floor permits me easier bodily access to the literal space of my painting. I can literally be "in" it.

Working on unstretched canvas without a priori boundaries gives me a greater freedom to be involved in my paintings and to improvise expansive compositions; it also provides a highly suitable arrangement for staining with dilute paint. I prefer staining to impasto techniques for several reasons. Staining on an unbounded expanse of canvas identifies the figure with ground. This eliminates any duality or apposition between the two and overcomes sculptural illusionism. Secondly, staining achieves a unity of tactile surface. Third, the watercolour consistency of the paint in the canvas ground reflects light from behind.

Without a doubt, the greatest influence in my painting activity has been the technique of staining. All of my paintings with the exception of "Olympiad" are stain paintings. The paintings "Mind Over Matter" and "Utopian Checkerboard" were two earlier attempts using that technique. It was while working on these paintings that I became interested in combining two different types of stained surfaces (matte and glossy). I wanted to discover if I could incorporate both without destroying the single continuous

plane of all matte stains. Since only the reflective quality and not the texture of the surface would be altered I hoped the surface would remain a unified optical phenomenon.

To my knowledge Jackson Pollock was the first artist to use the stain technique when he sunk duco enamel into raw canvas in 1951. However, my influences came from Helen Frankenthaler's interpretation of this technique.

In her paintings of 1952, she thinned her old paints to wash consistency; consequently her colours are more uniform, and more matte and therefore less reflective. By using very thin paint solution, she extended Pollock's method so that the paint not only sank into but soaked right through the canvas; thus, Frankenthaler created a stained image that was not literally on top of (like Dubuffet's matter paintings) or illusionistically behind the picture plane, but literally in and of the ground. The obvious identity of image with ground freed Frankenthaler to create an illusion of depth that did not oppose or contradict flatness, because the eye perceived that the image imbedded in the support was contiguous with the surface. The identification of image with support achieved through staining allowed her to modulate a form from light to dark, and to vary intensity and saturation without creating any illusion of three-dimensional space behind the surface plane.

SUMMARY

The following is a synopsis of the factors that influenced my personal views while investigating Greenberg's theories.

I found the cyclical theory of evolution in art as propounded by Wölfflin to be inadequate because of its exclusive nature, both for the past and the present. To me, the discovery of Mannerism forced Greenberg to adapt Wölfflin's views in order to accommodate the recent developments in art history. The exclusive nature of Wölfflin's five sets of contrasting concepts was most obvious, prohibiting as it did art styles which deserved to be recognized as serious art. Wölfflin's theory established an arbitrary and irrelevant set of criteria for most of the art of our century.

I was faced with a dilemma which I had to resolve. I found myself enjoying styles which were rejected by criteria which were irrelevant to me. As a result, I was forced to reject the evolutionary theory. No longer being faced with this dilemma had a noticeable effect on my work. I no longer felt I had to work in the style Greenberg pointed to as the only direction for "advanced" art.

Following this line of questioning, I was led to consider Greenberg's rules for "advanced" art and his theory of the avant-garde. Greenberg claimed that the avant-garde are the sole guardians of our culture; in fact, he goes so far as to say that it is the only culture worth

defending. Every other manifestation of human activity is called Kitsch. Consequently, Greenberg feels our culture is threatened because of their precarious position. The traditional type of patron is gone. Greenberg announces that the duty of the avant-garde painters is to stress the integrity of the picture plane; colour concomitant with flatness is to them the one unique feature of painting. All other considerations, including representational subject matter, are taboo. This emphasis on the two-dimensionality of the picture plane necessitated a brief historical survey of space and the elimination of depth cues in painting.

Finally, after inquiring into the bases of Greenberg's art criticism, it was only appropriate to examine the works of painters who exemplified his views. Greenberg said Pollock took the first step towards Post-Painterly Abstraction when he compressed the space in a painting by merging figure with ground. Newman's importance rested on the explicit recognition he gave to the physical characteristics of the picture support; in other words, he emphasized flatness. Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland were Greenberg's protégés and the leaders of the Post-Painterly Abstraction style of painting; Colour Field Painting is another name given to the style and which is more commonly used today. Greenberg coined the term Post-Painterly to designate its break from the subjective,

painterly style of the gestural abstractionist branch of Abstract Expressionism. The style carries on the tradition of New-Impressionism, Fauvism and later Chromatic Abstractionism. Louis' and Noland's work is characterized by pure colour, even paint application, non-illusionistic space, optical space, and suppression of value contrasts to allow colours to interact.

When Greenberg wrote his art reviews, he commented only upon the formal aspects of an art work. He never incorporated any extraneous information into his criticism; he only mentioned whatever was verifiable by looking at the work of art. This approach was very well-suited to the second generation Colour Field painters who had been nurtured on Greenberg's rules. "Means" for achieving "ends" in painting became for them "ends" in themselves. However, this is not the case with the first generation Colour painters. In their case it was very important to consider what they said because the shift in attitude about content determined their style. They were against any set of rules and refused to accept any system imposed from without.

I also found I did not want to accept any rules from without. In its dogmatic form as the sine qua non of successful modernist painting, the rationale for flatness in painting is that it is a characteristic which only painting possesses. Rather, it seems to me, it is much more

the case that since painting is done on a surface it possesses the potential to transform flatness and consequently, transform ways of feeling.

To follow all of Greenberg's directions would restrict my enjoyment and wonderment over many artistic activities. So much was going on, so many artists were committed to their own areas of interest. This does not mean that I enjoyed the Colour Field Painters any less; on the contrary, it meant that I could enjoy and expand my aesthetic appreciation. The three styles of American art that I enjoy the most are Colour Field Painting, Pop Art and Minimal Art. I have come to the conclusion that a theory of absolute value is inconsistent with the exciting diversity of our society. The standard of values for one style of artistic endeavour need not necessarily be applied to another.

My personal testimony is drawn from meditations on the spirit of man, or what I prefer to call prayer. Prayer may be compared to total meaningful involvement, the orientation of energy towards a realization of the fullness of being. The universe speaks to us, if we listen; if we orientate our energy towards listening, we will hear the truth. Such listening or prayer will clear our heads about life and art. For me, both art and life are religious, and painting is a religious act. The result of this act, this embodiment, is the attaining of a greater understanding

of each artist's own truth.

I have no pre-conceived plans when I start painting. My work method is one of slow searching. I let the work guide me. Sometimes I have several paintings in different stages of completion at the same time. When one stops generating ideas and energy, I stop and go to another. Living with the painting at its various stages is important to me. It allows me to interact intellectually and sensitively to the evolving image.

The titles of my paintings are derived from the associations they evoke in me. They are usually metaphoric rather than descriptive.

I spread out my unstretched canvas on the floor. This allows me greater freedom to work on it, especially since I like to work on large canvases. I can literally be "in" the painting. This arrangement is also conducive to staining. Helen Frankenthaler was my main influence for this method of staining.

Just as I prefer expansive unbounded images which tend to neutralize the boundaries, so I prefer expansive attitudes regarding art and like.

Steering between the Scylla and Charybdis has helped me to evolve as a painter. From now on, the main source of my art will not rest on theory alone. Adherence only to formulae, and the denial of the total involvement of hand, heart, and mind during the art making process results in

sterile, academic works. To me, art has a higher mission, regardless of what its logical progression may seem to some critics. I find art to be a synapse between the visible and invisible worlds. The gap between my experience of the religious activity of painting, and the embodiment is spanned by art. It is with this attitude that I now make art and believe in its truth and validity.

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REPRODUCTIONS

	<u>TITLES</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>SIZE</u>
1.	Mind Over Matter	1972	48" x 48"
2.	Utopian Checkerboard	1972	48" x 48"
3.	Why?	1972	60" x 60"
4.	Olympiad	1972	60" x 60"
5.	Seance	1972	60" x 60"
6.	Safari I	1972	60" x 60"
7.	Safari II	1972	60" x 60"
8.	In the Beginning	1972	60" x 96"
9.	Peace with Honour	1972	96" x 60"
10.	Cerebral Jigsaw	1972	96" x 60"
11.	Synapse	1972	96" x 60"
12.	Psychic Dendrites	1972	96" x 60"
13.	Prairie Crocus	1973	56" x 76"
14.	Data Base VII	1973	68" x 90"
15.	Goody Two-Shoes	1973	65" x 98"
16.	Magical Mystery Tour	1973	68" x 99"
17.	Repetition of Zero	1973	66" x 120"
18.	Molting Laughter	1973	66" x 120"
19.	Nofretete's Legacy	1973	66" x 128"
20.	Ashes to Ashes	1973	66" x 129"
21.	Entomological Preview	1973	66" x 132"
22.	Impossible Syzygy	1973	66" x 132"
23.	Daybreak Primeval	1973	66" x 156"
24.	Mindshaft	1973	66" x 76"
25.	Here Today	1973	66" x 132"

** All Works Acrylic/Canvas



MIND OVER MATTER
1972
Acrylic on Canvas
48" x 48"

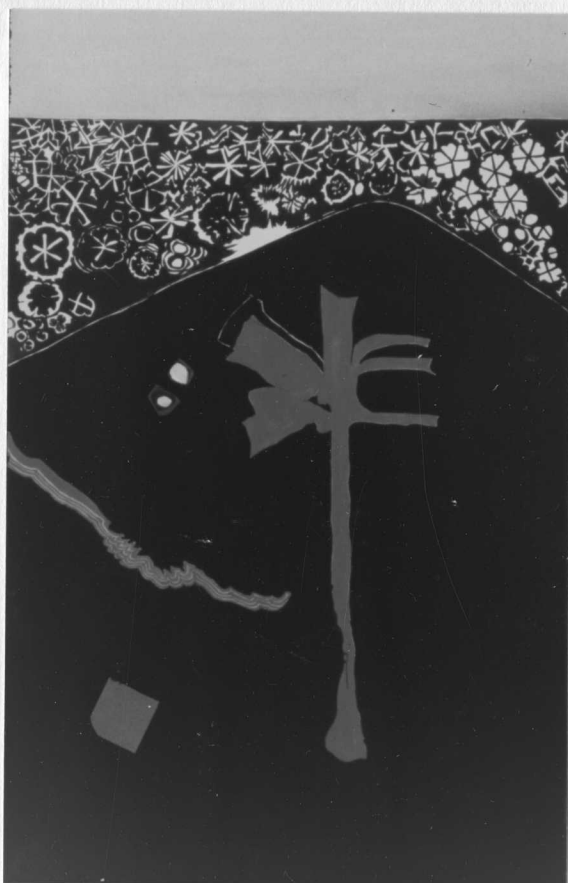


UTOPIAN CHECKERBOARD

1972

Acrylic on Canvas

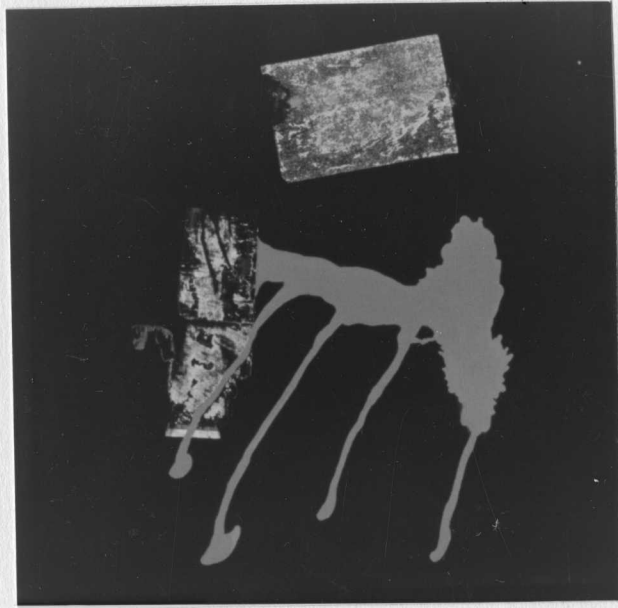
48" x 48"



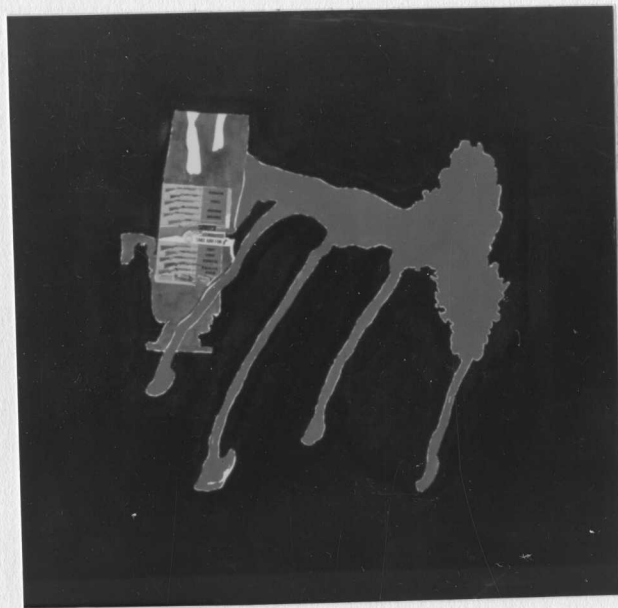
WHY
1972
Acrylic on Canvas
60" x 60"



OLYMPIAD
1972
Acrylic on Canvas
60" x 60"



SAFARI I
1972
Acrylic on Canvas
60" x 60"



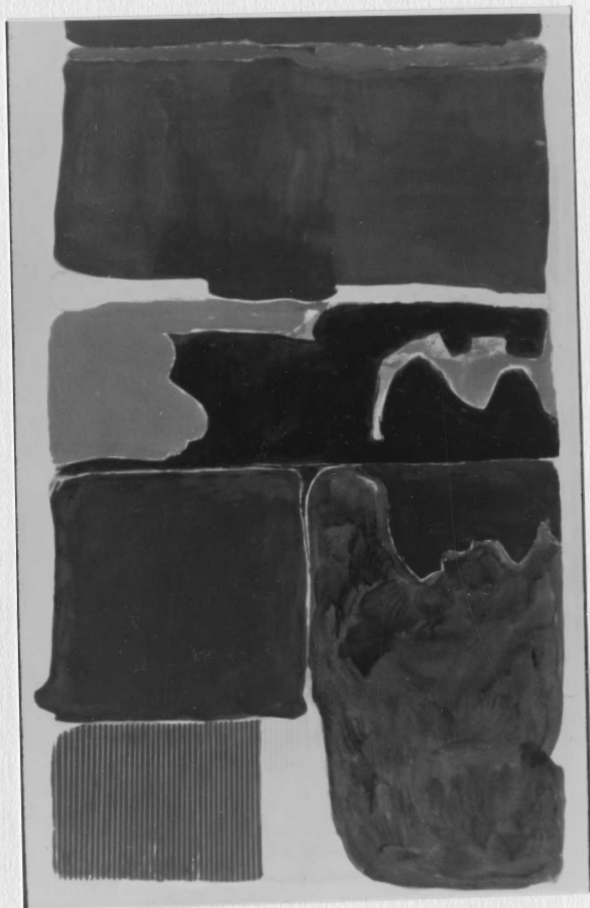
SAFARI II
1972
Acrylic on Canvas
60" x 60"



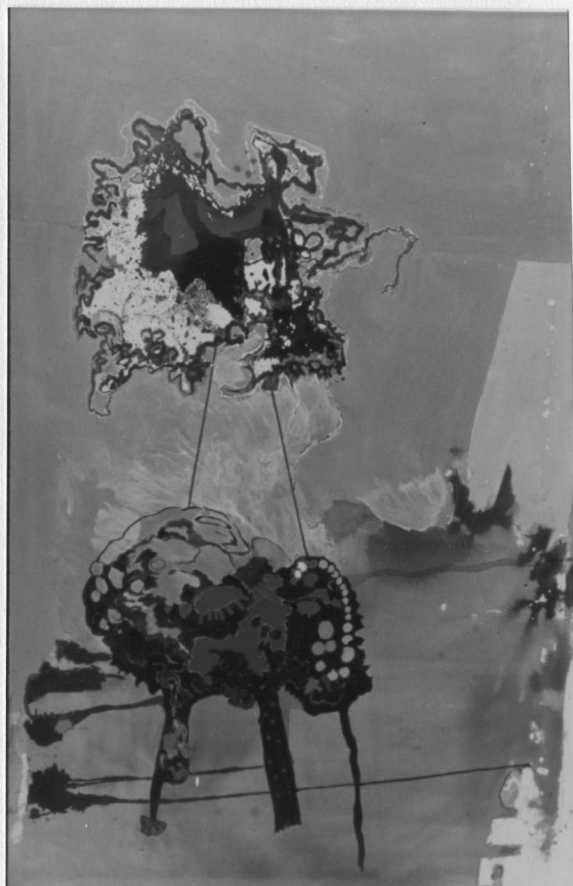
IN THE BEGINNING
1972
Acrylic on Canvas
60" x 96"



PEACE WITH HONOUR
1972
Acrylic on Canvas
96" x 60"



CEREBRAL JIGSAW
1972
Acrylic on Canvas
96" x 60"



SYNAPSE
1972
Acrylic on Canvas
96" x 60"



PSYCHIC DENDRITES
1972
Acrylic on Canvas
96" x 60"



PRAIRIE CROCUS
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
56" x 76"



DATA BASE II
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
68" x 90"



GOODY TWO-SHOES
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
65" x 98"

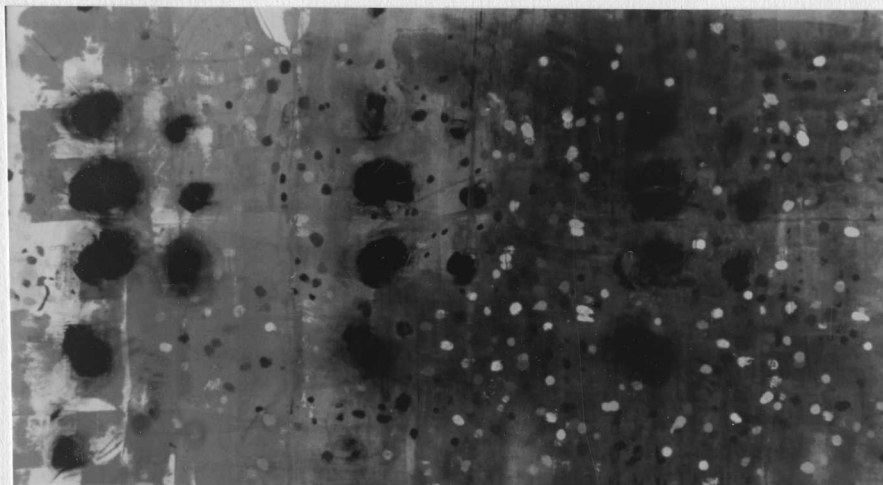


MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

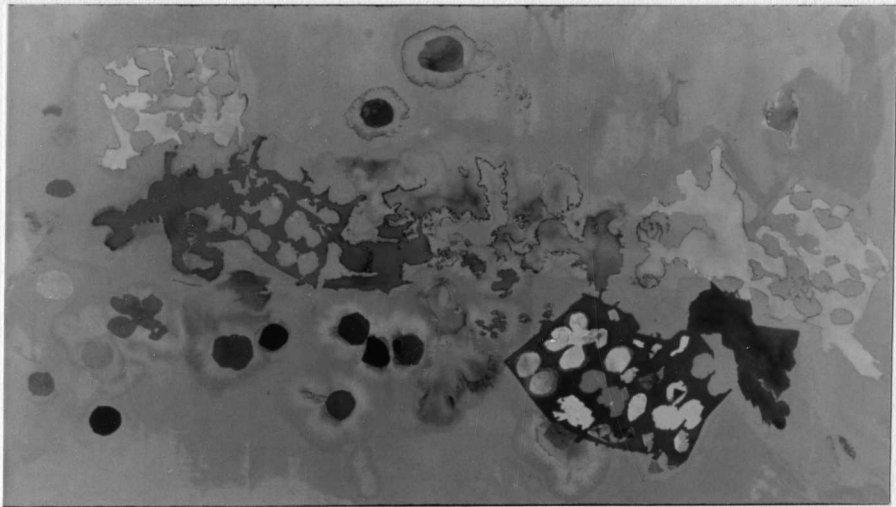
1973

Acrylic on Canvas

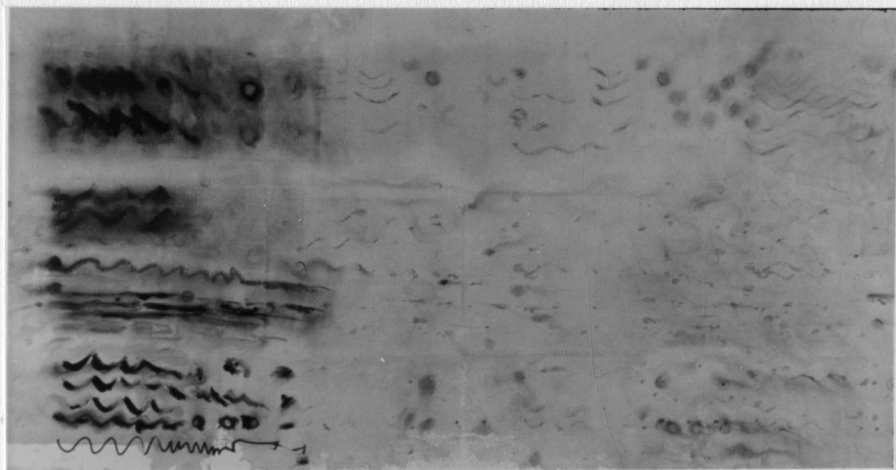
68" x 99"



REPETITION OF ZERO
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
66" x 120"



MOLTING LAUGHTER
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
66" x 120"



NOFRETETE'S LEGACY
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
66" x 128"



ASHES TO ASHES
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
66" x 129"



ENTOMOLOGICAL PREVIEW
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
66" x 132"



IMPOSSIBLE SYZYGY
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
66" x 132"



DAYBREAK PRIMEVAL
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
66" x 156"



MINDSHAFT
1973
Acrylic on Canvas
66" x 76"