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The effect of explanation on the art preferences of liberals and conservatives

Joseph Fay

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THE EFFECT OF EXPLANATION
ON THE ART PREFERENCES
OF LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES

by

Joseph Fay
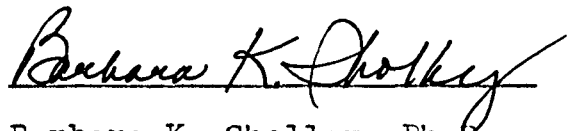
B.A.

Gettysburg College

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in the
Department of Psychology
of the
Graduate School
University of Richmond
October, 1977

THE EFFECT OF EXPLANATION
ON THE ART PREFERENCES
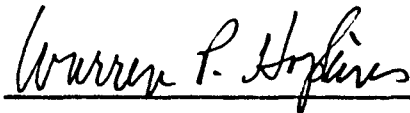## OF LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES

by

Joseph Fay

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Abstract

One hundred thirteen subjects at the University of
Richmond were shown twenty-four slides of paintings from
four categories of art: simple representational, simple
abstract, complex representational, complex abstract. Half
of the paintings in each category were accompanied by a one-
paragraph explanation. Based on their scores on the Conser-
vatism Scale (Wilson & Patterson, 1968), subjects were divided
into two groups: liberals and conservatives. Using Wilson's
(1973) theory of conservatism as the theoretical base, it was
hypothesized that, for the unexplained paintings, conservatives
would prefer simple art while liberals would prefer complex
art. It was also hypothesized that the explanation would
increase the conservatives' and decrease the liberals' liking
of complex paintings. An analysis of variance of the four-
factor (2 X 2 X 2 X 2) repeated measures design showed
significant interactions between 1) attitude and simple vs.
complex art ($p < .001$), 2) attitude and representational vs.
abstract art ($p < .001$), and 3) simple vs. complex and repre-
sentational vs. abstract art ($p < .05$). A significant main
effect for the variable of explanation was also found ($p < .05$).
Results indicated partial support for the first hypothesis,
as conservatives and liberals differed on their preference
for complex art but not for simple art. Results did not
confirm the second hypothesis. Wilson's proposal that con-
servatism represents a reaction against uncertainty was
discussed.

Acknowledgements

This project would have been considerably more difficult had it not been for the willing help of a few people. First, I would like to thank Dr. Barbara Sholley, who always had time for me, no matter how busy she was. I want to thank her not only for her help on this thesis, but for everything that she has done for me over the past two years. Her encouragement, advice, and sense of humor were always welcome and appreciated.

I also want to thank Dr. James Tromater and Dr. Warren Hopkins, whose comments and insights helped make this a stronger study. They were always approachable and willing to offer help.

Finally, I want to acknowledge Dr. Charles Johnson, who good-naturedly gave up many hours of his own time to help me choose appropriate paintings. He also allowed me to borrow the slides, as well as many of his books, for unspecified lengths of time. I want to especially thank him for showing an interest in this project and being patient with my total ignorance of art. He helped me to see things from an entirely different perspective.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the past several years, there have been a number of studies which have attempted to identify the structure of attitudes and beliefs that is characteristic of the conservative personality (cf. Wilson, 1973). As a result of these studies, Wilson has developed a theory concerning the nature of conservatism, based on the premise that conservatism is a broad syndrome that underlies the entire range of social attitudes. Wilson characterized the "ideal" conservative as conventional, conforming, antihedonistic, authoritarian, punitive, ethnocentric, militaristic, dogmatic, superstitious, and antiscientific. A substantial number of studies have accumulated which support Wilson's theory. For example, conservatism has been shown to be correlated with introversion (Wilson & Brazendale, 1973), stimulus aversion (Kish, 1973), age (Wilson & Patterson, 1970), harsh parental treatment (Boshier & Izard, 1972), low self-concept (Boshier, 1969), and fear of death (Wilson, 1973), as well as superstition, dogmatism, authoritarianism, and ethnocentrism (Ray, 1973).

Wilson (1973) sees the common basis for the various components of the conservative attitude syndrome as a "generalized susceptibility to experiencing threat or anxiety in the face of uncertainty (p. 259)." His theory proposes that certain genetic and developmental factors

give rise to feelings of insecurity and inferiority. These
feelings lead the conservative to desire order, simplicity,
and predictability as a means of gaining control over his
environment. Any change is perceived as threatening because
it upsets the order and security of his established world.
This generalized fear of uncertainty leads to a dislike of
such things as innovation, novelty, risk, complexity,
ambiguity, and deviant behavior, as well as an avoidance of
decision-making and self-reliance. The conservative
simplifies the external world by subjugating his inner
needs and feelings to the social order. In short, conservative
attitudes serve a defensive function, protecting the
conservative from the complexity and uncertainty of his
environment.

The fearfulness and anxiety with which the conservative
faces the modern world appear to make him a rather passive
creature, avoiding many of the more varied and unusual
activities of life in favor of the ordered and predictable.
This tendency to seek or avoid change and novelty as a
personality characteristic has been examined by various
experimenters over the years (e.g., Fiske & Maddi, 1961;
Leuba, 1955). Zuckerman (1971) constructed a Sensation
Seeking Scale in order to measure the extent to which people
differed on the amount of stimulation that they required for
optimal functioning. Using this scale, Kish (1973) found
that sensation seeking is inversely related to conservatism.
Kish suggested that whether a person is a sensation seeker

or a conservative may depend on the balance between two
opposing primitive responses to novel, changing stimulation,
namely fear and curiosity. When presented with the same
novel object or situation, the conservative would presumably
tend to experience threat or anxiety and consequently avoid
the stimulus, while a sensation seeker would be more likely
to approach the stimulus with curiosity.

One approach to the study of individual differences in
the tendency to seek varied experience was the work of
Barron (1952; 1953), which examined the personality correlates
of the preference for complexity. Like Zuckerman, Barron's
analysis began with the assumption that there are motivational
characteristics of the personality which predispose an
individual to prefer stimuli characterized by a greater lack
of structure, more ambiguity, and less balance or symmetry.
Barron (1952) administered the Barron-Welsh Art Scale
(Barron & Welsh, 1952) to divide subjects on the basis of
their preference for simple-symmetrical or complex-asymmetrical
figures. Among the many personality variables which he
found to be correlated with a preference for complexity,
two are relevant to the present study. First, a preference
for the simple-symmetrical drawings was correlated with
political-economic conservatism. Second, subjects who
preferred complexity indicated a liking of modern, abstract
paintings while subjects preferring simplicity favored
traditional paintings. Thus, Barron's study gives us
further evidence that conservatives dislike complexity.

The major problem with Barron's study is that in the Barron-Walsh Art Scale, the simple drawings are all symmetrical while the complex drawings are asymmetrical. Clearly, equating asymmetry with complexity is misleading. The subjects may have been responding solely to the symmetry of the figures, while the experimenters were interpreting the results on the entirely different dimension of simplicity-complexity.

A study by Wilson, Ausman, & Mathews (1973) eliminated this problem by having conservative and liberal subjects rate simple and complex paintings in terms of personal preference. Results indicated that conservatives (as measured by the Conservatism Scale of Wilson & Patterson, 1968) preferred simple paintings while liberals preferred complex paintings. However, the study found no differences between conservatives and liberals on their preferences for abstract vs. representational art.

The evidence presented here appears to offer support to Wilson's hypothesis that conservatism is based on feelings of threat or anxiety in the face of uncertainty (e.g., ambiguity, complexity, change, novelty, etc.). But past experiments have not directly manipulated the variable of uncertainty to see whether this will change the conservative's preference for a stimulus. The purpose of the present experiment was to provide stronger support for Wilson's hypothesis, by extending the study of Wilson et al. (1973) on conservatism and art preferences. Their study left open

to speculation the question of what would have happened if
the paintings had been accompanied by an explanation
providing the subjects with a brief description of the
meaning or purpose of the painting. According to Wilson's
theory, it would appear that if complex paintings are
accompanied by an explanation, their stimulus uncertainty
would be reduced. Hence, the conservatives would feel less
threatened and therefore feel more favorably toward the
paintings.

On the other hand, if an explanation of meaning accom-
panies the complex paintings, liberals may feel less favor-
ably about the paintings. Liberalism is positively correlated
with sensation seeking, which can be defined as an organism's
desire to explore and actively seek out novelty, change,
complexity, variety, etc. (Kish, 1973). Thus, an accompanying
explanation reduces the novelty and uncertainty of a complex
painting, thereby making it less attractive to the liberal.
In short, the liberal finds pleasure in seeking his own
interpretation for a painting. He is attracted to the complex
painging because of its uncertainty and ambiguity. When
this complexity is "explained away" by a "given" interpretation,
the liberal no longer has a reason to be attracted to the
painting.

In sum, the purpose of this study was to further explore
the way in which conservatives and liberals differ in their
reaction to stimulus complexity by examining their aesthetic
preferences. In addition, this study intended to reduce the

uncertainty of the complex paintings by providing the subjects
with an explanation of the meaning of the painting. The
experiment was similar to the study by Wilson et al. (1973)
except for the addition of another variable: half of the
paintings in each condition (simple vs. complex; abstract vs.
representational) contained a verbal description of the
painting. For the unexplained paintings, it was hypothesized
that conservatives would favor the simple paintings while
liberals would prefer the complex. However, for the explained
paintings, it was hypothesized that the explanation would
increase the conservatives' and decrease the liberals' liking
of the complex paintings. Also, based on previous research
(Wilson et al., 1973), no differences were predicted between
liberals and conservatives on their preferences for abstract
vs. representational paintings.

CHAPTER 2

Method

Subjects. One hundred thirteen students at the University of Richmond served as subjects.

Procedure. Twenty-four slide photographs of appropriate paintings were chosen by an art professor, as representing four categories: simple representational, simple abstract, complex representational, complex abstract. Each category was represented by six paintings. The division of paintings into these four categories was based upon the definitions set forth in the study by Wilson et al. (1973): "Simplicity-complexity referred to the number and concentration of different elements (lines, shapes, colors, objects, etc.) contained within the painting. The abstract-representational dimension concerned the extent to which elements were familiar and identifiable and the degree to which the whole picture showed isomorphism (correspondence) with visual reality (p. 286)."

Subjects were tested in small groups ranging in size from two to thirteen persons. Each of the twenty-four slides was presented on a screen for forty-five seconds, after which the subjects had fifteen seconds to record their rating of the painting. The subjects rated the paintings according to their personal preference on a seven point semantic differential rating scale using the verbs like-dislike. In order to test whether the manipulation of the independent variable (explanation) was effective, subjects also rated each painting

according to the extent to which the artist's intention or
purpose was clear (understandable) to them. A semantic
differential rating scale employing the adjectives clear-
unclear was used for this purpose.

At the beginning of the experiment, all subjects were
read the following instructions by the experimenter:

> "This experiment concerns people's aesthetic
> preferences. I am going to show you twenty-four
> slide photographs of paintings. First, I want
> you to rate each painting according to your
> personal preference by checking the appropriate
> blank on the piece of paper in front of you. That
> is, indicate the extent to which you like or
> dislike the painting. Second, I want you to rate
> each painting according to the extent to which
> the artist's purpose or intention is clear to you.
> That is, to what extent do you understand the meaning
> or purpose of the painting? After each painting is
> shown, you will have fifteen seconds to record your
> ratings. During this time, the projection screen
> will be blank. For some of the paintings, I will
> read a short paragraph while you view the slide,
> but for other paintings I will not have anything to
> say. Please remain quiet while viewing the slides
> so you do not influence another person's ratings."

A sample copy of the ratings sheets appears in Appendix 1.

Half of the paintings from each of the four categories
were accompanied by a one-paragraph explanation briefly
describing the purpose or meaning of the painting. These
explanations were reviewed and approved by an art professor.
(See Appendix 2 for a list of the twenty-four paintings and
their explanations.) Since previous studies have shown that
subjects rated paintings more favorably when the works were
attributed to a prestigious painter (Farnsworth & Misumi,
1931; Bernberg, 1953), subjects were not told the name of
the artist. Similarly, to control for the possibility that

the title of a painting may influence a subject's affective response to it, subjects were not told the titles of the works.

The explanations were read to the subjects during the forty-five second period in which the slide was presented. The unexplained paintings were simply presented silently for forty-five seconds. The twelve explained paintings varied randomly for each group of subjects. This was accomplished by assigning to each painting in each of the four categories a number from one to six. A single die was then rolled to select the explained paintings for that particular group. Since there were six paintings in each art category, each painting thus had an equal chance of being selected. Also, based on a study by Lindauer & Dintruff (1975), in which order of presentation was found to influence the rating of paintings, the order of presentation of slides in this study varied randomly for each group of subjects, according to a Table of Random Numbers (Kerlinger, 1973).

After the subjects rated each of the twenty-four paintings, they were administered the Conservatism Scale (Wilson & Patterson, 1968). Upon completion of the Conservatism Scale, subjects were debriefed and dismissed.

Of the 113 subjects, thirteen were dropped from the analysis because they had previously taken art courses. Of the remaining one hundred subjects, scores on the Conservatism Scale ranged from 20 to 75, with a mean of 45.07 and standard deviation of 10.65. (It is interesting to note

the similarity of this sample distribution with that obtained
by Kish (1973) at Roanoke (Va.) College. Kish obtained a
mean of 46.00 and a standard deviation of 8.8 from his
sample of 149 subjects.) The scores of fifty-six subjects
fell less than one standard deviation above and below the
mean and therefore were dropped from the analysis. Scores
of the subjects in this group ranged from 35 to 55. Seven-
teen subjects had scores which fell greater than one standard
deviation below the mean, ranging from 20 to 34. These
subjects were classified as liberals. Seventeen subjects
had scores which fell greater than one standard deviation
above the mean, ranging from 56 to 75. These subjects were
classified as conservatives.

CHAPTER 3

Results

This experiment was a four factor (2 X 2 X 2 X 2)
design, with repeated measures on three of the factors
(explanation, simple vs. complex art, representational vs.
abstract art). The dependent variable was the subjects'
ratings of the paintings on the like-dislike semantic
differential rating scale. Scale values ranged from one
to seven; the higher the value, the more the subject liked
the painting. Table 1 shows the mean rating scores for each
condition. Figure 1 illustrates these results graphically.

Insert Table 1 here

Insert Figure 1 here

An analysis of variance yielded the results which
appear in Table 2. Significant interactions ($p < .001$) were

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Insert Table 2 here

---

obtained between attitude and simple vs. complex art and
also between attitude and representational vs. abstract art.
The interaction between liberalism-conservatism and simple vs.
complex art replicates the findings of the Wilson et al. (1973)
experiment. Figure 2 illustrates this interaction, showing
the conservatives' preference for simple art and dislike of

complex art, while the liberals' liking of the two types of art was not statistically different. A Newman-Keuls test showed that the ratings of the conservatives and liberals differed significantly ($p < .01$) on the complex paintings, with the liberals showing a much greater preference for complex art than the conservatives.

Insert Figure 2 here

The interaction between attitude and representational vs. abstract art is shown in Figure 3. A Newman-Keuls test showed significant differences ($p < .01$) between liberals and conservatives on their preferences for abstract paintings, with the conservatives exhibiting a greater dislike than liberals of this type of art. This interaction between attitude and representational vs. abstract paintings is in opposition to the Wilson et al. experiment, as they found no differences between liberals and conservatives on this dimension.

Insert Figure 3 here

An interaction between the two art dimensions (simple vs. complex; representational vs. abstract) shows that the combined scores of both groups resulted in a significantly higher rating for simple representational than simple abstract art ($p < .01$), and significantly higher ratings for complex

representational than complex abstract art ($p < .05$) (See Figure 4). This means that, overall, the subjects preferred the abstract paintings less than any of the four art types.

Insert Figure 4 here

Table 2 shows a significant main effect for the variable of explanation. Figures 5 and 6 show how the effect of the explanation raised the subjects' preferences. However, a Newman-Keuls test showed that the explanation did not significantly increase the conservatives' liking of the complex paintings, nor was the liberals' preference for complex art affected by the explanation (See Figure 5).

Insert Figure 5 here

Figure 6 shows how the explanation affected the subjects' ratings of the representational and abstract paintings. Essentially, the explanation had a simple additive effect, making the paintings more favorable to both groups of subjects. Once again, however, none of these simple main effects reached significance, according to a Newman-Keuls test. This is most likely caused by the loss of power that occurred from breaking down the design.

Insert Figure 6 here

To test whether the explanation actually had its
intended effect, i.e., to reduce uncertainty by providing
the subject with information about the artist's intention or
purpose in each work, an analysis of variance was performed
on the subjects' ratings of how understandable each painting
was to them (using the clear-unclear semantic differential
ratings as the dependent variable). It was found that the
explanations did serve to make the paintings more "clear" to
both groups of subjects ($F(1,32) = 38.92$; $p < .001$). In
addition, all of the other main effects were significant.
The liberals rated the paintings as more "clear" than the
conservatives ($F(1,32) = 6.92$; $p < .05$). The simple
paintings were rated as more "clear" than the complex
paintings ($F(1,32) = 14.86$; $p < .01$). Finally, the repre-
sentational paintings were rated as more "clear" than the
abstract paintings ($F(1,32) = 160.86$; $p < .01$). It thus
appears that both liberals and conservatives prefer paintings
that are meaningful and understandable to them.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

In Wilson's (1973) original model of the psychology of
conservatism, it was postulated that the conservative's
dislike of "uncertainty" was the major factor that differ-
entiated him from the liberal. The previous experiment by
Wilson et al. (1973) found significant differences between
conservatives and liberals on the simplicity-complexity
dimension but not on the representational-abstract dimension.
Wilson et al. therefore revised Wilson's original model
slightly, concluding that the complexity factor (rather than
uncertainty) "may be the more fundamental psychological
antecedent of conservatism as a dimension of personality
(p. 288)." However, in the present experiment, differences
were not only found between conservatives and liberals on
the simplicity-complexity dimension, but also on the
representational-abstract dimension, with conservatives
showing a significantly greater dislike of abstract paintings
than the liberals.

Realizing that abstract paintings contain a priori
more stimulus uncertainty than representational paintings,
it is evident that the reaction to uncertainty is also a
factor that discriminates conservatives from liberals, as
Wilson originally proposed. Based on the results of the
present experiment, it cannot be concluded that the fun-
damental basis of conservatism is specifically a dislike of
complexity, since differences also appeared on the repre-

sentational-abstract dimension. Rather, it seems more appropriate to conclude that this experiment supports Wilson's original formulation that conservatism represents a reaction against "uncertainty," as well as complexity. Since the variable of stimulus uncertainty can encompass both complexity and abstractness, perhaps it is more useful to designate the affective response to uncertainty as the factor which is the primary discriminator between conservatives and liberals. That is, the conservative's reaction against the variables of complexity and abstractness can be seen as subsets to his more general dislike of any type of stimulus uncertainty.

Several reasons can be brought forth as possible explanations regarding why the present experiment obtained differences between liberals and conservatives on the representational-abstract dimension while the study of Wilson et al. did not. First, Wilson et al. used a median split of thirty subjects, while the present study used only those scores which fell one standard deviation above or below the mean from a sample of one hundred subjects. Thus, a greater spread of scores was obtained. Second, Wilson et al. used a correlation while the present study employed an analysis of variance, a more powerful statistical procedure. Finally, a different set of paintings was presumably used, since Wilson et al. did not specify which paintings they used.

The hypothesis that the liberals' liking of complex paintings would decrease if accompanied by an explanation

was not supported. For the complex paintings, the explanation
had no effect upon the liberals. Overall, however, the
explanation increased the subjects' preferences for the
works. Presumably the explanations provided the subjects
with information that facilitated the aesthetic experience.
This is not a surprising occurrence. The major purpose of
art appreciation classes is to provide the student with
knowledge and information so he can come to a better under-
standing of art. It is interesting that a mere forty-five
seconds of description could significantly raise the
subjects' liking of a painting, as well as make the painting
more meaningful and understandable.

Although we can conclude from this experiment that
conservatives tend to dislike uncertainty, we still do not
know the magnitude of the conservative's affective response.
That is, the question of whether the conservative actually
feels anxious or threatened by uncertainty, as Wilson claims,
is still open to speculation. It is difficult to believe
that the conservatives felt "threatened" by looking at
paintings and that the explanation functioned to reduce their
"anxiety," especially when one considers that the explanation
had virtually the same effect on the liberals' scores.
Therefore, it appears that an even better test of this
aspect of Wilson's theory would involve using complex stimuli
that can be shown by measurement to be anxiety-provoking
(perhaps loud computer music would suffice), along with a
test, such as the trait section of the State-Trait Anxiety

Inventory (Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970), to determine whether the stimuli actually make the conservative more anxious than the liberal.

One implication from this experiment concerns the political behavior of the conservative personality. It is a common practice among certain politicians to gain popularity by exploiting the fears and anxieties that people experience due to the fast-paced and extremely complex modern world. Many politicians have exhibited great success by proposing highly oversimplified solutions to these complex problems. It is generally assumed that this type of politician garners most of his support from conservative voters. In gaining his popularity, such a politician appears to be using a strategy similar to that used in this experiment. By providing the conservative with a simple explanation to a complex problem, he eases the conservative's uncertainty, and by promising order and security from fear, he reduces the conservative's anxiety. Similarly, the explanation which accompanied the paintings may have served to simplify, order, and give meaning to what was initially perceived as chaos.

The major question that is still to be answered concerns whether the conservative's reaction to complexity in this experiment is generalizable to other situations of stimulus complexity or uncertainty. Future research on the nature of conservatism should therefore use different types of complex stimuli and situations of uncertainty as well as different sense modalities.

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Table 1

Mean Preference Scores for Each Condition

(R = Representational; A = Abstract)

| | Explained | | | | Unexplained | | | |
| | Simple | | Complex | | Simple | | Complex | |
	R	A	R	A	R	A	R	A
Cons.	5.69	3.39	4.59	3.04	5.37	3.00	4.25	2.69
Lib.	5.08	4.35	4.63	4.31	4.90	3.80	4.41	4.45

Table 2

Summary Table:

Analysis of Variance
of the Preference Ratings of the Paintings

(A = Attitude; B = Explanation; C = Simple vs. Complex Art;
 D = Representational vs. Abstract Art)

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p
Total	5451.99	271	-	-	-
Between Subjects	1024.24	33	-	-	-
A	147.07	1	147.07	5.39*	<.05
SwG (error)	873.17	32	27.28	-	-
Within Subjects	4431.75	238	-	-	-
B	46.12	1	46.12	5.31*	<.05
A X B	3.30	1	3.30	.38	NS
B X SwG (error)	278.33	32	8.68	-	-
C	98.89	1	98.89	52.32*	<.001
A X C	62.12	1	62.12	32.86*	<.001
C X SwG (error)	60.75	32	1.89	-	-
D	933.89	1	933.89	32.21*	<.001
A X D	309.18	1	309.18	10.66*	<.01
D X SwG (error)	927.68	32	28.99	-	-
B X C	4.24	1	4.24	.21	NS
A X B X C	3.78	1	3.78	.18	NS
B X C X SwG (error)	643.22	32	20.10	-	-
B X D	.13	1	.13	.01	NS
A X B X D	.06	1	.06	.01	NS
B X D X SwG (error)	276.06	32	8.62	-	-
C X D	91.77	1	91.77	4.72*	<.05
A X C X D	.01	1	.01	.001	NS
C X D X SwG (error)	621.47	32	19.42	-	-
B X C X D	5.89	1	5.89	3.11	NS
A X B X C X D	4.25	1	4.25	2.24	NS
B X C X D X SwG (error)	60.61	32	1.89	-	-

F .95 (1,32) = 4.17
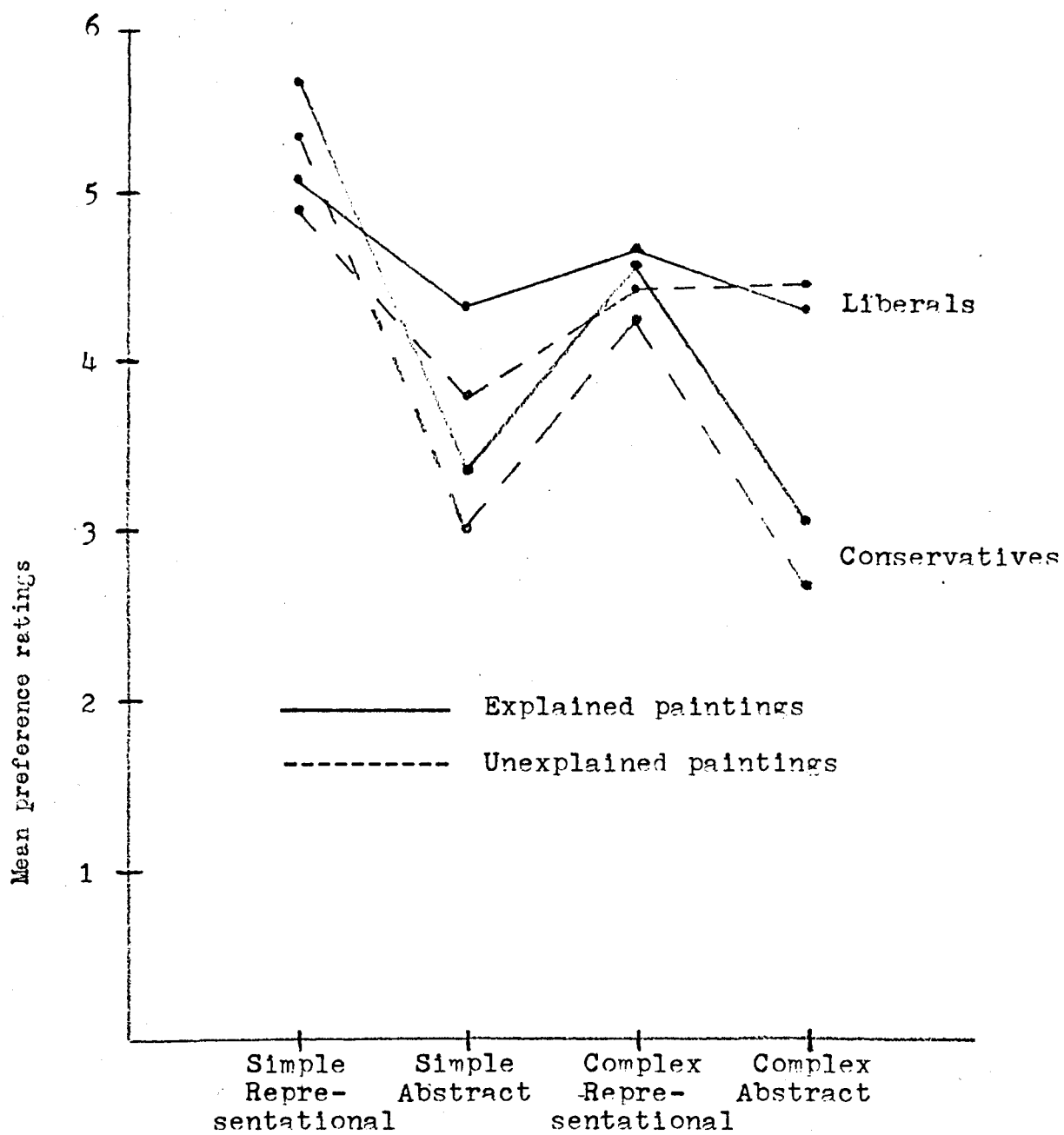
Figure 1.   Preference for art types as a function
of attitude and amount of explanation
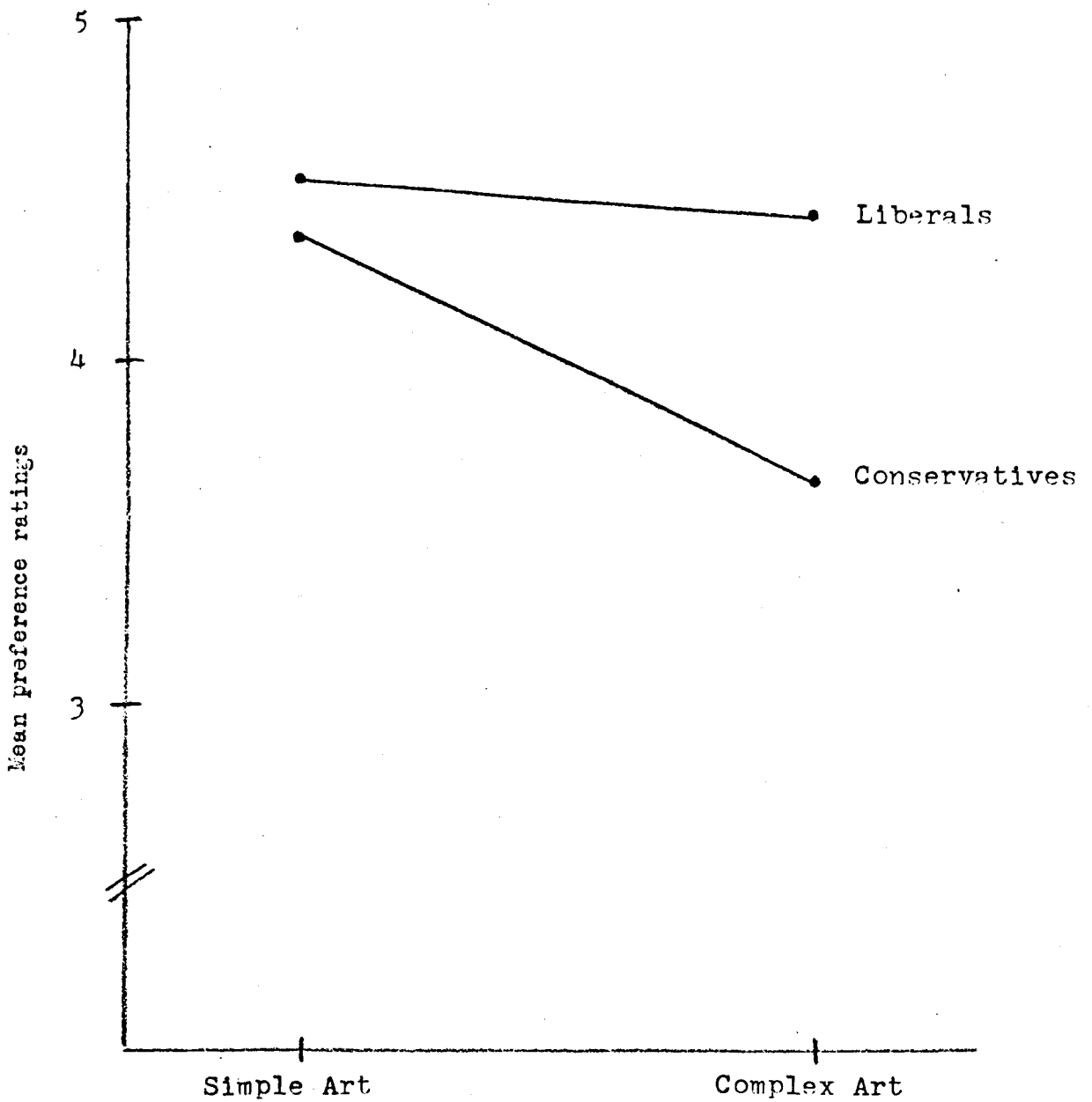
Figure 2. Preference for simple vs. complex paintings as a function of attitude
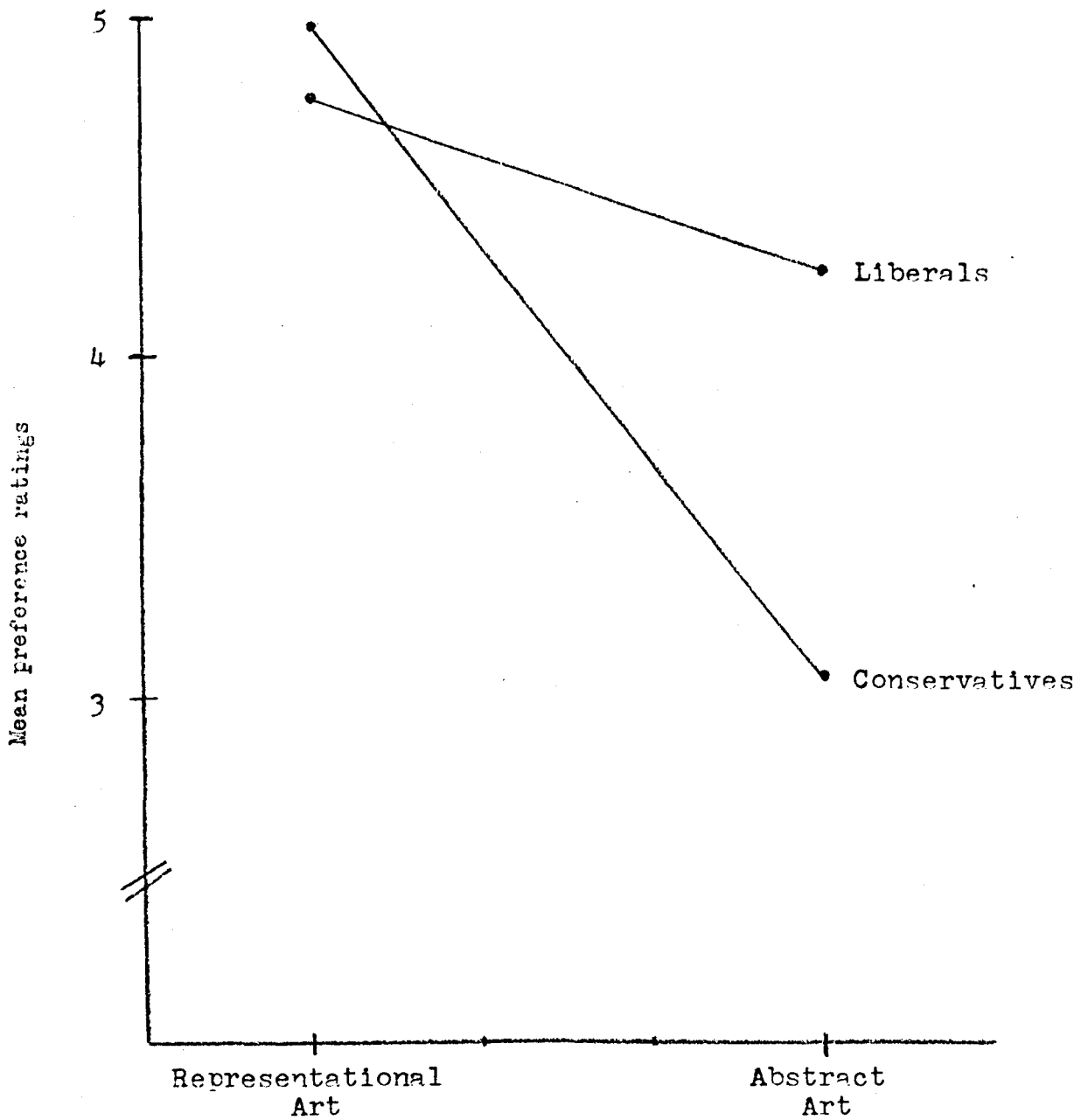
Figure 3. Preference for representational vs. abstract art as a function of attitude.
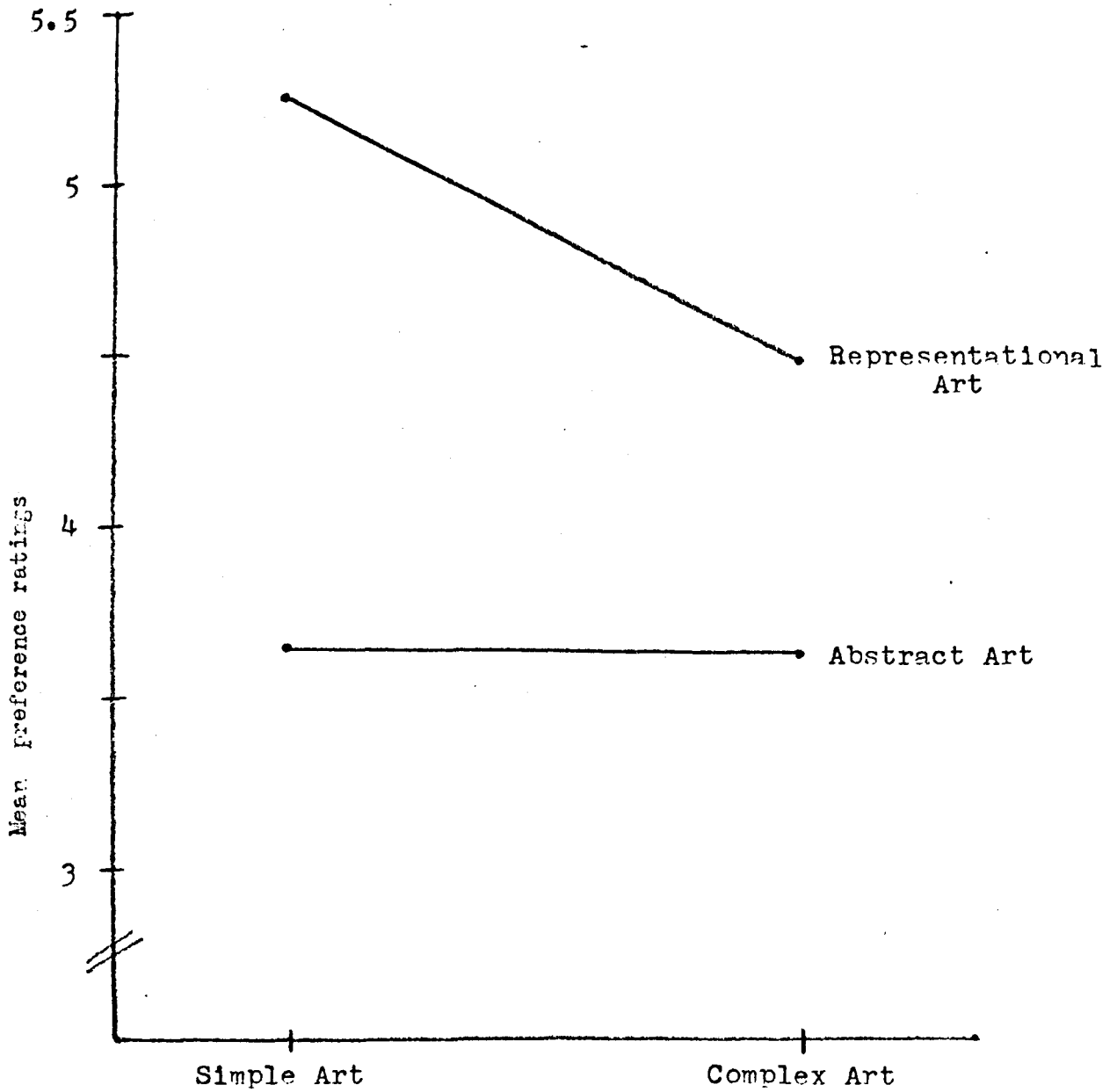
Figure 4. Preference for the four types of art
across both groups of subjects.
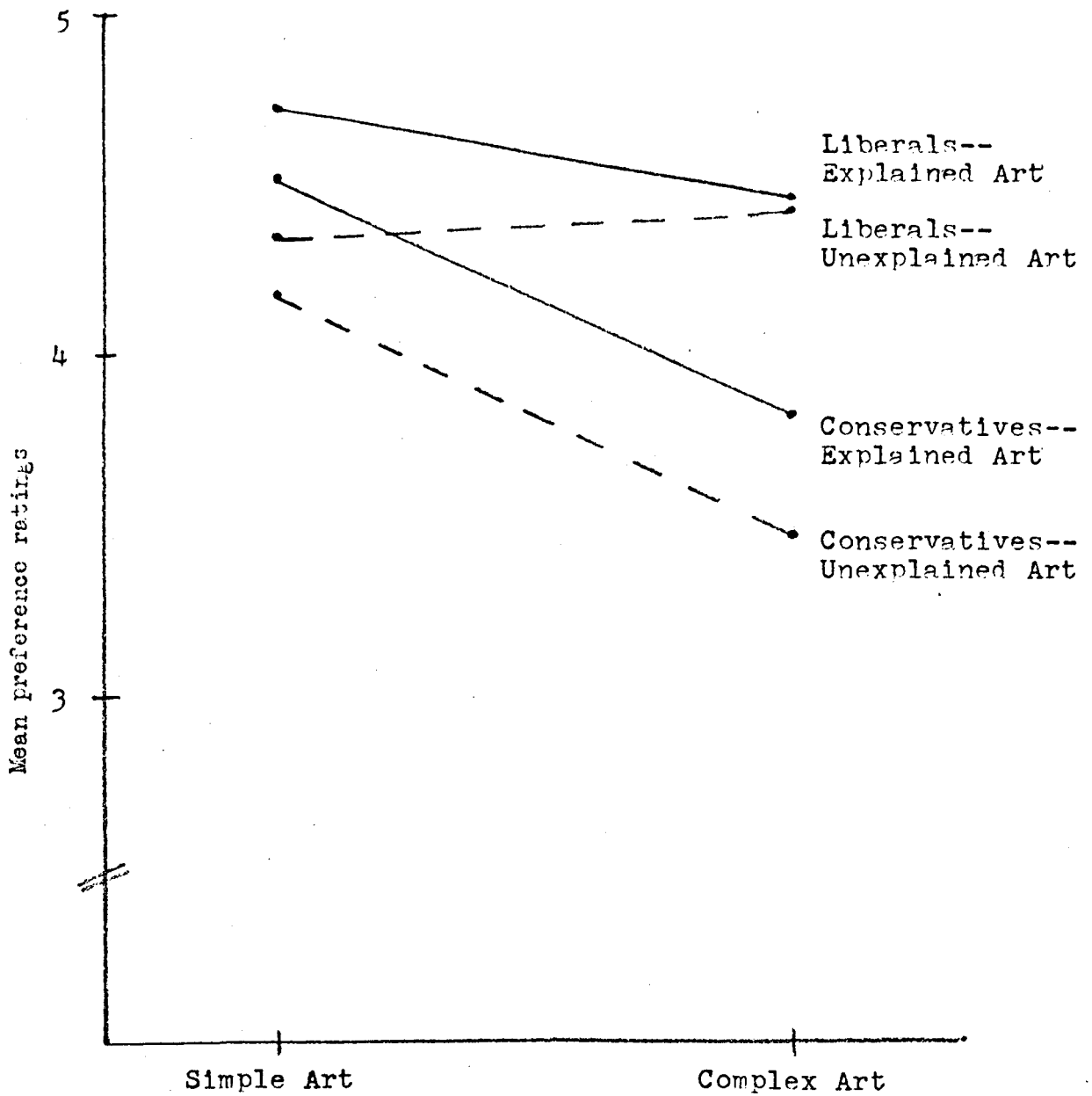
Figure 5. Preference for simple vs. complex paintings as a function of attitude and amount of explanation.
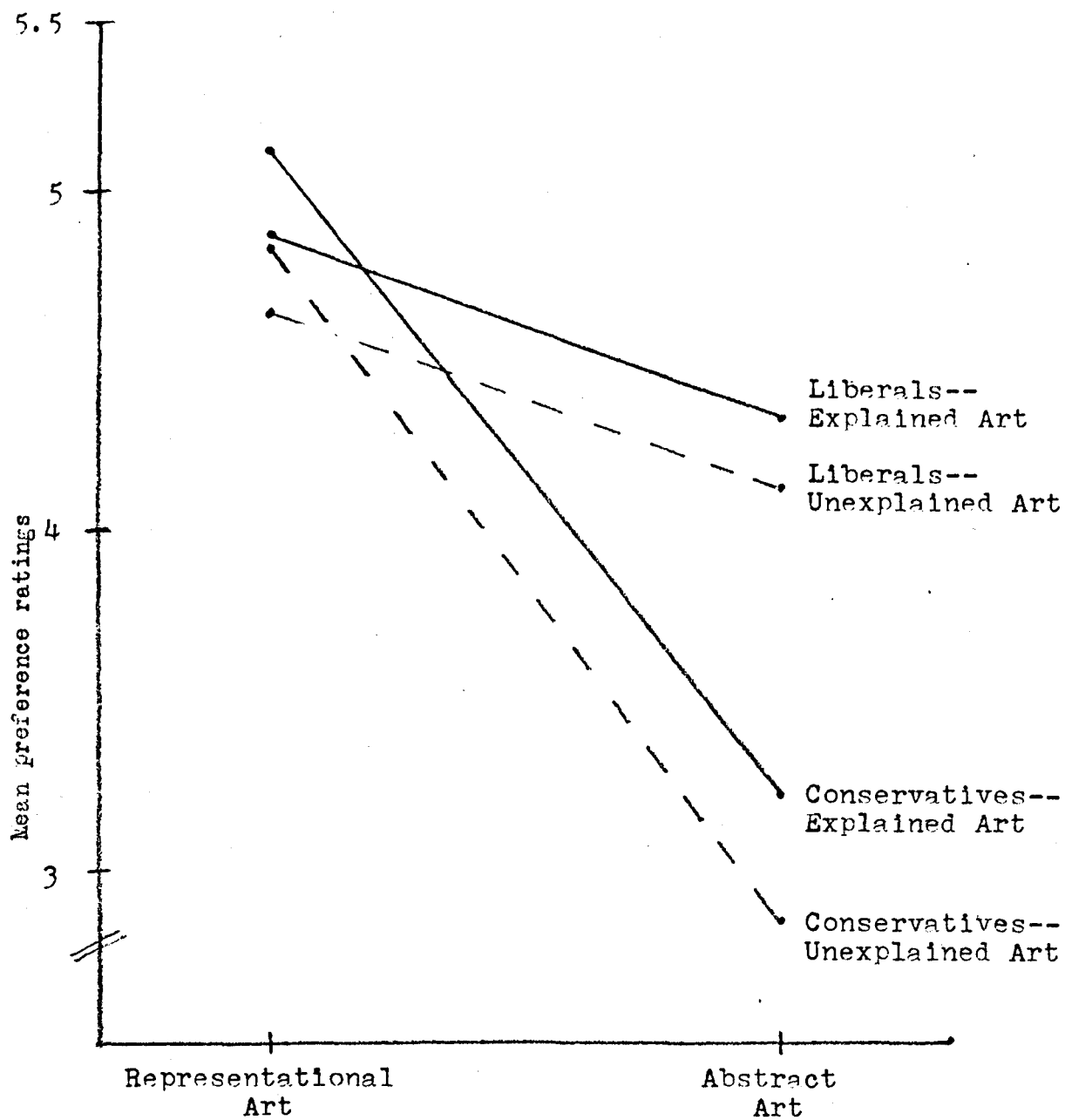
Figure 6. Preference for representational vs. abstract art as a function of attitude and amount of explanation.

Appendix 1

The Ratings Sheets

For each of the 24 paintings:

1) Rate each painting according to your personal preference.

2) How clear to you is the artist's purpose or intention.

1.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike
      unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

2.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike
      unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

3.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike
      unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

4.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike
      unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

5.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike
      unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

6.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike
      unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

7.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike
      unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

8.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike
      unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

9.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

10.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

11.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

12.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

13.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

14.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

15.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

16.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

17.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

18.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

19.   like   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   dislike

        unclear   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   clear

20.   like   __ __ __ __ __ __ __ dislike

      unclear __ __ __ __ __ __ __ clear

21.   like   __ __ __ __ __ __ __ dislike

      unclear __ __ __ __ __ __ __ clear

22.   like   __ __ __ __ __ __ __ dislike

      unclear __ __ __ __ __ __ __ clear

23.   like   __ __ __ __ __ __ __ dislike

      unclear __ __ __ __ __ __ __ clear

24.   like   __ __ __ __ __ __ __ dislike

      unclear __ __ __ __ __ __ __ clear

Have you ever taken any college-level art courses?

Yes _____   No _____

If so, list them below:

Appendix 2

The Paintings and Their Explanations

Simple Representational

1.   Raphael--Madonna in the Meadow

This painting shows the Virgin Mary with the infants
Jesus and St. John the Baptist. The Virgin's head is set a
little lower to the left of the center of the painting and
forms an apex of a triangle of which the lower angles are
established by the young St. John and by the Virgin's
bared right foot. But the subject of the dialogue is not
the setting of two children in space, but the relationship
between a divine and human child. The Christ child is
supported by his mother's hand, and the young baptist is
shown kneeling on the right. She has let go of the Child
from her lap, yet both her hands steady him; he is just making
his first step by himself beyond her reach, with uncertain
movement of his knees. The little St. John draws near in
an attitude of devotion.

2.   Poussin--Funeral of Phocion

The figures in this landscape painting illustrate the
episode at the end of Plutarch's Life of Phocion. Phocion
was a general and statesman who served as governor of Athens
forty times. But he was finally accused of treason by his
enemies and sentenced to die, like Socrates, by the poisonous
hemlock. As an additional disgrace, Phocion's burial within
Athens was forbidden. His wife had to gather his ashes
clandestinely and bring them back to her home. In telling

the story of Phocion, the artist did not choose the highly
emotional execution scene. He preferred to illustrate the
simpler and quieter episodes after Phocion's death. The two
men on the road carrying the corpse of Phocion are already
some distance from Athens, for the panoramic background
displays the full breadth of the town.

3. Vermeer--Woman Weighing Gold

     At first glance, this picture may seem to represent
little more than a woman weighing pearls and gold. But
nothing has been painted by chance. The key that unlocks
the allegory is the scene of the last judgement in the
background. Immediately an analogy becomes apparent between
God judging the just and the unjust and the woman weighing
gold. The gold and the pearls represent everything mortal
man values and tries vainly, in the face of his mortality,
to hold onto. And yet despite these allusions to death, the
painting is not depressing. On the contrary, it is filled
with hope, for the woman is pregnant. Standing there with
scale in hand, a focus of calm in a twilight glow, she
makes clear the artist's intention--the celebration of
life everlasting.

4. Seurat--Le Grande Jatte

     Under a blazing midafternoon summer sky, we see the
River Seine flooded with sunshine, and small steamboats and
sailboats moving up and down the river. Under the trees
closer to us many people are strolling, others are sitting
or stretched out lazily on the bluish grass. A few are

fishing. This painting gives us a look at the leisure-time behavior of the French middle class in the 1880's. But this work is more than just a realistic portrait of a transitional society. Through the artist's use of multiple perspective and the complex relationship of light and shadow areas, he grabs the viewer's attention, arousing the viewer to form his own hypotheses about the work.

5.   Cezanne--The Card Players

Card playing is usually seen as an occasion of sociability, distraction, and pure pastime; of greed, deception, and anxiety in gambling, and the drama of rival expectations. In this painting we find none of these familiar aspect of the card game. The artist has chosen instead to represent a moment of pure meditation--the players both concentrate on their cards without show of feeling. They are grouped in a symmetry natural to the game; and the shifting relation between rules, possibility, and chance, is intimated only in the silent thought of the two men. This painting shows the intellectual phase of the card game--a kind of collective solitaire.

6.   Cezanne--Still Life with Apples

Important in this still life seems to be the desire for variation: the right side of the dish with symmetrically placed apples is distinguished from the left, just as the symmetry of the cup is broken by the handle, and the two sides of the saucer are remarkably unalike. On the left, the dish emerges from under the apples; on the right, the apples

completely cover the dish. The contours of the apples are
opposed more sharply to the adjoining cup and saucer. One
should observe the different posture of each apple. Together
they are a symmetrical formal group in which each member is
tilted in its own way. Each is modeled distinctively, with
unique transitions of rich color and light and shade.

Simple Abstract

1. Mondrian--Composition with Yellow Lines

The square implied by the lines of this lozenge-shaped
canvas reaches out beyond the edges of the painting to form
a plane of which the actual surface of the picture is only a
fraction. Another noteworthy aspect is the difference in
thickness and weight of the four yellow lines. Symmetry is
excluded, yet the artist arrives at an equilibrium without
starting from identical elements. Reduced to the most elemen-
tary figures and colors, to the simplest geometrical forms,
he has condensed a seething mass of forces and compressed an
accumulation of energy.

2. Louis--Moving In

This painting shows vertical, perfectly straight bands
or stripes of color. The stripes possess a trajectory that
one feels could not be straighter. The stripes are the focus
of this painting. They do not open the picture-plane so much
as cauterize it. One experiences the stripes as in some
important sense intentional, as issuing from a distinctively
human and not just natural action. This is largely but not
entirely the work of color. For example, it is above all

because the stripes are stripes of color that one is forced
to speak of their apparent velocity, and therefore of them
as having trajectories.

3.   Stella--Sinjerli Variation I

Here we have the color wheel in a new guise--a set of
intersecting protractors. The intensity of each hue is
enhanced by carefully-worked juxtapositions of fluorescent
colors. The bands of color are composed, alternately, to
parallel the circular format, to oppose it, and to play
against horizontals and verticals. The bands of lush,
intense color overlap and enfold one another in an ambiguous
space play curiously at odds with the flat, outline masses
of color. There is no symbolic intent here. Still, the
image cannot escape its destiny: three rising suns whose
radiation is intermixed.

4.   Rothko--Orange and Yellow

The quality of light which appears to form some hidden
central source within the painting is achieved by the artist's
sensitive handling of edges, which are softly brushed into
the adjoining field, causing a slight vibration to be set up;
and by means of his choice of colors, which tend to augment
the gentle vibrations. As a result of the close-keyed
harmonies and painterly edges, the images appear to float,
the rectangles hovering buoyantly in the resonant space. This
artist sought, through the use of color, to change the viewer's
mode of consciousness, to affect human experience in a manner
which is now possible only through drugs or some mystical
discipline.

5. Poons--Night on Cold Mountain

The dots and ellipses of this painting, scattered across a brilliant field of contrasting color, induce perceptual effects, such as afterimages and vibrations, which cause the viewer to take a more active role. There is a shift in emphasis from the visible, material data of creative action to the perceptual experience itself. The typical dots move into and out of the field of vision like particles of energy transvesting space; some dots advance, some recede, establishing vibrations that animate the entire space continuum of the painting.

6. Newman--Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue I

This painting emphasizes the power of large areas of color to provide dramatic impact. Notice the nature of the vertical line whose deliberately fragmented edges create the impression of an opening in the picture plane rather than a line on the surface. It is as though the predominant color field has been torn apart and we are given a glimpse into some sort of subsurface. There is thus established a tangible tension between the color surface and the line which seems to be a structural or spatial opening and closing.

Complex Representational

1. El Greco--Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane

This painting tells the story of Christ's last prayer before the chalice of decision and destiny was brought to him by the angel. Christ is on watch; his disciples are in deep sleep. And the angel appearing to Christ seems also to involve

the sleepers in his bodily presence. The three sleeping
figures are enclosed, involved in their own rhythm, and this
rhythm is continued in the radiating ornamental rhythm of the
rocks. But behind this mystical scene, a dream of reality is
preparing its invasion: in the lunar distance, the terror of
soldiers approaches. All of the elements in the picture are
involved in this moment of climax. The scene not only tells
a story but imparts the emotional feeling of the moment as well.

2.   Tintoretto--Last Supper

This version presents the Last Supper as a night scene,
illuminated with supernatural light and reeling with motion--
disciples, servants, angels, and spectators all seem caught up
in a tempest. A sense of the otherwordly pervades the work,
with a host of angels floating at the top of the painting,
yet this is combined with the everyday reality of cats, dogs,
and servants. Mystery and magic are thus imparted to the facts
of visual experience. The disciples form an agitated group,
appalled by Christ's terrible announcement. Such a tempest
of emotion surges through the scene that there can be no
question of individualizing expressions. In the dim light,
the apostles form a somber mass, dramatically lit by a few
rare gleams.

3.   Parmigianino--Long Neck Madonna

In this work of elongated proportions, sloping shoulders,
and chill eroticism, the Christ Child lies asleep in the
Virgin's lap. His left arm is hanging as in Michelangelo's
Pieta. Four graceful and sexually ambiguous figures appear

at the left in various stages of undress, one holding a huge
urn and looking up at the Virgin, another gazing out past us
with hard polished eyes. The Virgin, her body and neck
impossibly attenuated, looks down at the Christ Child with
sharp-edged eyelids below a forehead around which cluster her
silky curls with their ropes of pearls and one enormous ruby.
Even more astonishing than her long neck, perhaps, is the
fantastic length of her fingers.

4. Van Gogh--Wheat Field with Cypresses

This is a landscape in which the painter's perception of
nature and his intensity of feeling are equally pronounced.
The glowing wheat field, the olive trees of subtle gray in
which all the colors of the picture seem to be mingled, the
shaggy wavering cypresses, and the turbulent mountains have a
vivid actuality for our eyes. The sky and the earth are
pervaded by wild energies, demanding release, but these do
not deform the objects so much as they intensify them. The
duality of sky and earth remains--the sky is light, soft,
rounded, filled with fantasy and suggestion of animal forms;
the earth firmer, harder, more intense in color, with stronger
contrast and more distinct parts.

5. Kokoschka--Knight Errant

Here the artist saw himself as a knight errant slung
between heaven and earth--between the ghastly smile of death
and the woman set in a storm-lashed landscape. The letters
of despair, E S, hang flaming in the sky. The painting is
gray on gray; land and sea painted in a sinister and austere
palette, with a touch of brown in the foreground where the

shells are lying, deep blue and green symbols of beauty.
The crouching female figure is tinged with pink, and the
masts of the boats are barely suggested. Death is a wasp,
menacing and burdensome, on the left of the two huge letters.
In composition and feeling, this painting is an expression
of man's resignation to his fate, an evocation of Death and
Eternity.

6.   Munch--The Scream

Nothing external gives a clue to the horror that impels
the outcry. The terror-stricken subject looks past us while
bending toward a railing that seems to extend endlessly
behind her. The two receding male figures, their backs
turned toward the girl, emphasize her total isolation which
only increases her fright. Totally alienated from reality,
the victim is thus overcome by the realization of an unspeak-
able terror from within. The gloomy colors and swirling
motions serve to further intensify the total emotional pitch.
The deep blood-red sky hangs ominously over the horizon and
clashes with the violet shades of the sea, which darkens in
the distance.

Complex Abstract

1.   Pollock--Number 1

In this work, there is no single part to which the eye is
drawn, no one area that is more important than another; the
entire canvas is the painting. Refusing to allow his hand
even to suggest a regular rhythm or pattern in the canvas, the
artist overcame the traditional painter's instinct to create

concrete illusions. Instead, he sought to contact his deepest

feelings and communicate them in the most vivid and direct way

possible. In bold abstractions, pulsing with swirls of dashes

from edge to edge, he attempted to convey what he called

"energy made visible."

2. Kandinsky--Composition VII

In this painting, associations lead to no more tangible

interpretation than a feeling of dramatic action, with energies

and tensions as protagonists. What we have here is one of many

possible worlds. It is the artist who introduces fate into

the painting, and who uses the various formal elements and

connections in order to state how he experiences the world.

The colors come closest to giving us information about the

"content." The overall character suggests a blazing fire, an

approaching disaster, and exaggerated tempo. The read above

the diagonal, the blue under it, the yellow, all are disquieting

and threatening. The black opens up like a dangerous precipice,

and there is little reassuring green.

3. Gorky--The Liver is the Cock's Comb

This painting pushes to extremes in color sensation,

creating arresting and poignant parallels to extremes of mood.

The primitive symbols of a man's body organs, the liver and

viscera, are used to communicate the quality of the emotional

experience. This artist is as concerned with the vast hidden

world seen by the mind alone as with the scarcely more

accessible world seen by the eyes. For him, the panorama of

nature is fundamentally an erotic spectacle. Any pleasure we

feel in nature's presence results from her prodigious display

of sexual energy.

4. De Kooning--Gotham News

This painting communicates the emotions of the forms of
the crowded cityscapes and belongs to the flow of events in
time, rather than to objects situated in space. What we see
are forms in passage: broken angles, loops, and open-ended
squares collide in the artist's Nowhere and explode in streaks
and flashes of paint. Or, if one prefers, the forms constitute
and environment in which no person or object can claim an
identity. The compressed composition, thick, ragged edges,
gritty surfaces, and uncertain nondescript colors are represen-
tative of the seedier side of life in a modern urban environment.

5. Pollock--Moon Woman Cuts the Circle

This painting shows a mythical matriarchal figure called
Moon Woman, perhaps derived from Mexican Art or American
Indian legend, slashing with her knife a black circle in the
night-blue background. Characteristic of the artist's interest
in dreamlike imagery, the painting also shows the violent
thrusts and counterthrusts of forms and colors. Also evident
is the painter's influence by the Jungian ideas of the impor-
tance of myths and symbols in understanding the primitive
nature of the unconscious mind.

6. Matta--Disasters of Mysticism

Here we have a very frank effort to come to terms visually
with the world revealed by modern physics. It is a lyrical
excursion into fantasy. In its ambiguous flow, from brilliant
flame-light into deepest shadow, it suggests the ever changing
universe of outer space. The artist gives visual expression

to speculation about the characters and events of modern science. While conveying the sense of release that accompanies the exploration of boundless space, the artist arouses our cosmic anxiety when he discloses the threat of conflagration in the new world of physics.