

The exhibition of the Century

Modern Masterpieces from the Collection of the

Stedelijk Museum

Amsterdam

City Gallery
WELLINGTON
Te Whare Toi

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Art in the 20th Century

Modern Masterpieces from the Collection of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

City Gallery, Wellington, 1998

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Cover illustration: detail from Kazimir Malevich | Suprematism (Eight Red Rectangles) | 1915 | oil on canvas | 575 x 485mm | Collection of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam |

Contents

6
Preface | Paula Savage

7
Sponsors' Foreword | Roderick Deane, James Hall, and John Judge

8
Face to Face | Rudi Fuchs

12
Art in the 20th Century | Gregory O'Brien

16
Part 1| **From Van Gogh to German Expressionism** | Jonathan Mané-Wheoki

20
Part 2 | **From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian** | Damian Skinner

24
Part 3 | **Dutch Realism and its Circle** | T.L. Rodney Wilson

27
Part 4 | **Europe and America after World War II** | Wystan Curnow

31
Part 5 | **From Pop Art to Conceptual Art** | William McAloon

36
Part 6 | **Neo-Expressionism and After the 1980s** | John Hurrell

42
Plates

122
**The Stedelijk Museum:
A Hundred Years of Modern and Contemporary Art** | Geurt Imanse

128
Artists' Biographies

Preface

Paula Savage, Director, City Gallery Wellington

INCLUDED IN The Exhibition of the Century is Georg Baselitz's *Nude, Finger Painting*—one of the German artist's characteristic 'upside-down' paintings. A comparable notion of turning art on its head was implicit in the 1996 exhibition The World Over, jointly organised by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and the City Gallery, Wellington. That highly successful collaborative venture questioned the traditional demarcations of Old and New World, Northern and Southern Hemisphere, by drawing attention to the geographic and cultural boundaries that have separated Europe and the Antipodes and reflecting upon the way technology and art practice are now dismantling those divides and dissolving inherited hierarchies.

Importantly, The World Over was the first opportunity for the work of New Zealand's pre-eminent painter, Colin McCahon, to be shown in Europe. Concurrently, the project provided New Zealand audiences with a chance to see some cutting-edge European and American art—an opportunity which now extends to the present exhibition.

Many of the artists and artworks in this exhibition will be familiar to New Zealanders through television and book and magazine reproductions. Many of these works have already influenced the development of art in this country: reproductions of paintings by Paul Cézanne were crucial, in the 1930s and 40s, to Colin McCahon and Toss Woollaston; Kazimir Malevich has influenced contemporary New Zealand artists as different as Ralph Hotere and Dick Frizzell.

It is a great privilege to present such an unquestionably major exhibition from one of the foremost modern art galleries in the world. The Exhibition of the Century gives New Zealand audiences an opportunity to experience first-hand the scale and painterly qualities of some of the seminal productions of the last one hundred years: such works as Van Gogh's *Kitchen Gardens on Montmartre, Paris,* Marc Chagall's *Self-portrait with Seven Fingers* and Roy Lichtenstein's *As I Opened Fire* ... Many of these artworks will never travel again and it is only because of restoration work to the Stedelijk Museum that we are lucky enough to have the works in Wellington.

Just as Georg Baselitz believes that by standing a painting on its head, it is 'delivered of all ballast, it is delivered from tradition', The Exhibition of the Century demonstrates the challenging and unexpected directions modern art has taken and how it has changed accepted ways of seeing and thinking. Needless to say, it is by challenging and subverting the tradition that the tradition itself is kept alive. This spirit of inquiry and adventure permeates the entire exhibition.

We have the director of the Stedelijk Museum, Rudi Fuchs, to thank for selecting such an exciting and thought-provoking array of works from his institution. The exhibition project has also given Rudi Fuchs an opportunity to spend time in New Zealand and visit the studios of a number of our artists. This venture reflects the City Gallery's ongoing commitment to forging relationships with other galleries around the world and to encouraging dialogue between artists and audiences here and overseas.

The City Gallery Wellington has published this catalogue with the support of our three principal sponsors. We have commissioned seven New Zealand writers to discuss aspects of the narrative of twentieth-century art proposed by the exhibition. We are appreciative of the various insights of the writers, and of the New Zealand perspectives which their texts present.

The City Gallery acknowledges the generous contribution made by the sponsors of this exhibition. It has been their crucial financial support that has made this ambitious exhibition possible. We gratefully thank Telecom New Zealand. Their involvement represents an ongoing commitment to support projects which help bring the arts to New Zealanders. We are delighted to maintain our association with Saatchi & Saatchi, which continues to provide exciting opportunities for working together; and with Ernst & Young who are committed to supporting important exhibitions of visual art, both at the City Gallery and throughout New Zealand. We are also very pleased to acknowledge the role of the New Zealand Government, which has indemnified the exhibition through the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, thus making it possible for New Zealanders to enjoy these international masterpieces in their own country. |

Sponsors' Foreword

Roderick Deane, Telecom New Zealand | James Hall, Saatchi & Saatchi | John Judge, Ernst & Young

AS PRINCIPAL sponsors, Telecom New Zealand, Saatchi & Saatchi and Ernst & Young are proud to support the City Gallery's initiative to bring The Exhibition of the Century to Wellington. Our support has helped ensure that some of the most influential and original art works of the century can be seen by New Zealanders. Excellence and innovation are qualities that set apart the works in The Exhibition of the Century—the same qualities that we, in our different fields of expertise, aspire to.

Wellington has already established itself as the cultural centre of the country, the recent International Festival of the Arts and the opening of Te Papa underlining the city's singularity as a focus for a wide range of artistic and cultural events. In recent years the City Gallery has played a major role in defining and promoting culture in the city.

Around five million visits are made to New Zealand museums and art galleries annually. Nearly two thirds of these are made by New Zealanders. The Exhibition of the Century will bring visitors to the capital from throughout the country, as well as from overseas. The works, generously loaned by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, from its world-famous collection of modern masterpieces, are of such undeniable quality that they will attract people who do not usually visit galleries.

As principal sponsors of this significant exhibition we acknowledge our ongoing partnership with the City Gallery. By combining resources and imagination, together we can enhance the public appreciation of art and culture in this country. It is a pleasure to present these 65 exciting artworks to the people of New Zealand. |

Face to Face

Rudi Fuchs, Director, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

DUTCH MUSEUMS of modern art are quite proud of themselves—and not entirely without reason. At an early date, before the Second World War in the case of the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum, they had already begun building up international collections, in which they took the fact seriously that modern art was a development of international contacts and connections. These museums did this sooner than museums elsewhere, except those in America, where this was occurring at about the same time. (But things were different in America: there was no 'national' art to defend. Their culture needed building up, and they did this by putting all that was strange into new, sometimes very radical forms.) This international orientation, which became clear in the exhibitions as well as the collections, has led to active, dialectic collections, adventurous in composition, which moreover vary somewhat in character from museum to museum—different in focus, and in time, in specialisation, depending on the museum's specific tradition and purpose. But everywhere, motivated to action by the intense, often unexpected interplay between what was already there and what was arriving from the outside, the collection was set into motion.

This also did not fail to stimulate the normal view of art, encouraging the sense of artistic adventure, which was goaded and stimulated by contradiction and protest. This undermining and disruption of the accepted view of things, rooted in a national tradition (how people wished and conceived it), in its turn did not fail to have its effects on the making of art. The art itself has consequently become more complex and multi-faceted, less traditional, and in a more flexible and self-evident fashion than otherwise would have been the case, has found its connections with other developments in Europe and elsewhere.

The role that the museums have played in this development should not be underestimated. In many other European countries, museums of modern art (if in fact they existed soon after the war) behaved as guardians of national tradition and conventional taste. The Dutch museums, though one perhaps more than another, acted as allies of the artists. They saw it as their task to break the ice wherever possible. It was not, now and again, without the requisite scandal: they in fact contributed to a very lively climate in the arts from which the artists also benefited. There is no other country in the world where the tolerance for artistic experimentation—even among so-called average people—is as great as it is in the Netherlands. By participating in the artistic adventure of modern art, these museums have also been able to build very up-to-

date collections. We consider this of essential importance for the cultural health of the nation. We must keep up with modernity, however difficult and unfathomable it may be. This requires a broad view on what happens close at home, but also far from home. A dynamic international exchange thus takes place and the borders are crossed.

It is the task of the museum to make all of this visibly clear in its collection, providing an opportunity for comparison. That is not easy, but it is necessary. The museum is like a juggler who, with two hands, has to keep ten, fifteen or more beautifully coloured balls in the air at the same time. The most beautiful, like Bruce Nauman or Georg Baselitz, are allowed to fly a bit higher than the others for a while, but artists of whom we have perhaps recently heard little or nothing, like Pierre Soulage or Ernst Wilhelm Nay, cannot be allowed to fall to the ground, silenced. Why? Because it is the museum's task to assure that the different works of art can be compared one with another.

That commensurability, so that everything can be tested and held up against everything else, is the museum's defence against fashion. Naturally, from time to time, preferences arise for one artist or another. This occurs through normal circumstances of time and taste. At this moment, the general interest is greater for Bruce Nauman than for Carl Andre. Among the painters, Baselitz is more in vogue than Frank Stella. This was once not the case, and in a few years it will have changed again. Fifteen years ago, who would have predicted that 'grandfather' Cézanne would have his public fame eclipsed by Vincent van Gogh, who is probably a more limited but more endearing master. Meanwhile, art lovers who swear by Mondrian and abstract art will always honour Cézanne above Van Gogh. The evaluation of art swings back and forth. There is nothing wrong with this being apparent—until the moment when something is actually threatened with disappearance. Fashion narrows the view and pulls a veil over cultural diversity. The museum must be the guarantee that things are not forgotten. Their administrators must therefore allow the museums to stay out of the way of market forces, and hence popular fashion. This may seem self-evident. However, the more museums are judged by their numbers of visitors, the more inclined they will be to give precedence to what is fashionable and let the rest be neglected or forgotten. Being able to step back from trends is within the authority of the museum. The commercial gallery, the Kunsthalle for temporary exhibitions and presentations, which does not have a collection, private collectors are all able, if they wish, to follow fashion and the market. They have no responsibility to the general culture and its ability to endure—though some among them profess to have. Of course their active role is important as well, but museums are the counterweight.

To enlarge the field of comparison in their collections, museums also buy new work—particularly works of contemporary art. Such work is purchased because it has qualities that add energy to the collection. The more contemporary the acquisitions, the more likely that the decision to buy will be intuitive. Because the artist concerned is still in the midst of the development process, sometimes just at the beginning, a survey or overview is difficult. This policy, typical of most Dutch museums, has brought the museum very close to contemporary artists, in a very remarkable and delicate liaison, whereby the museum is commonly found to almost participate in the making, the evolution, of works of art. The solo exhibitions of living artists have had a particularly decisive role.

At the beginning of this century, when the Stedelijk Museum was still very young, museums primarily organised group exhibitions. Exhibitions of an individual living artist took place through art dealers or in small halls usually run by artists' associations such as Arti et Amicitae in Amsterdam and Pulchri Studio in the Hague. As far as I know, Picasso's first museum retrospective exhibition, with a catalogue of all of 25 pages, took place in the Kunsthaus in Zurich in 1932. Picasso was then 51 years old. The next one was in 1939 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. By then the catalogue had 207 pages with 214 illustrations, one in colour. A prominent artist today would be most unhappy if that was all he had to show at age 57. Georg Baselitz has just turned 57. In my bookcase is a row of Baselitz's exhibition catalogues almost a metre long.

Of course the comparison is not perfect. The times were different. But that is precisely what the museum's relationship with the artist is all about. Karel Appel had his first one-man exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in 1955, when he was 34 years old. He had already taken part in the demonstrative CoBrA exhibition in 1949. With such legendary exhibitions, Willem Sandberg, director from 1946 to 1962, on behalf of the museum, sealed a unique engagement with living art, with art-in-the-making, which became an example for many other, smaller museums in Europe. It was a different kind of engagement than that of Alfred Barr in New York, with Picasso in 1939. That exhibition was scrupulously and scientifically put together, and as the introduction to the catalogue states, without the direct involvement of the artist himself. It was a classic exhibition, such as those organised for an artist who is no longer alive. In contrast, Sandberg recognised that the young painters of CoBrA stood turbulent and impatient at the heart of life. He put museum galleries at their disposal, where under their own direction they installed their work. Several paintings were painted on the spot. It could not have been more up-to-date. As far as the museum is concerned, the CoBrA exhibition set a new example. What Sandberg did was surrender traditional detachment for the sake of immediate creative input of living artists. He recognised that (contemporary) art has to be able to have no limits, and be limitlessly individual.

With this concept, upheld with such verve, it was also said that the museum in its traditional form, was consequently a restriction for the expansive turbulence of art. From that moment forward, the ambition of Sandberg's Stedelijk Museum had changed, as did that of the other, smaller museums who took their example from the Stedelijk. In 1949, New York's Museum of Modern Art organised a second large exhibition of the work of Picasso, exactly as they had done ten years previously—as though nothing in art had changed at all. The CoBrA exhibition in that same year in fact brought the studio itself into the museum, and with it, the euphoria of creativity itself. Now, as a location for collecting, for bringing things together, it not only concerned itself with completed works of art, but also—at least sometimes—with work that still had yet to be made, work that comes into being within the context of an exhibition in the galleries of the museum.

Initially, this did not happen very often, and even today, most exhibitions are made up of traditional presentations and compilations. Nonetheless, it was then, in 1949, that the fanciful, headstrong art-in-the-making began mixing in with the removed order which had characterised the museum to date. The consequences were and still are enormous, even for the architecture of museums. If an architect has to make designs for something that is yet to come, he is greatly tempted to bid classical typology farewell and begin experimenting with new forms. Another consequence is the way artists began involving themselves with the museums. I do not think that Picasso or Mondrian thought much about the museum and the place their work had there. There were too few museums, virtually none for modern art. Those which did exist were not about to put their own authority at risk by subjecting it to an uncertain liaison with living artists.

Nonetheless, for the CoBrA generation, the museum became a platform for creative action. The museum gladly incorporated this idea and later, artists such as Joseph Beuys, Donald Judd and Daniel Buren began criticising museums for being too slow, too formal or too bureaucratic, which was logical. Museums that wanted to keep up and tried to stay abreast of living movements in art, increasingly saw themselves as places where artistic energy, the heartbeat of their times, took shape. Artists naturally began making demands about the conditions under which they had to work. Many museums were—and are—as accommodating to artists as they could be. An adventurous liaison with the avant-garde was indeed the true and sole proof that a museum was modern and not old-fashioned.

The new works of art with which the museum now concerned itself were in confrontation with the works already there. They created doubts about the position and the meaning of the existing artworks. Traditional, broadly orientated museums offer a wide spectrum for this dialectic movement, which is a determining factor in cultural history, simply because more works are involved in the dialectic in a large collection. The comparisons open up more surprising points of view and the image that therefore presents itself of the modern tradition is generally far more complex than in the case of museums concerned with a small, more narrowly defined segment of art. The museum's task is to bring these comparisons into organised, comprehensible relationships, make them visible and supply the public with information about them. It is here that we have taken on the responsibility to fulfil our *Bildungsauftrag*, our duty to the visual arts. I believe we may make use of all possible means of publicity in order to attract the public, but once they are inside, they must be confronted with the vigorous demands which art makes of us. We owe this to art. We cannot permit art to fall prey to popular manipulations. I know that it is a difficult task, one that is not without its dangers. But I also know that in the end, only the value of art as a priceless, invaluable experience of human civilisation can give us our legitimacy in the face of such other qualities in a society as social justice or the right to health. 'Poetry,' said Wallace Stevens, 'is a violence from within that protects us from a violence without. It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality.' It is no different for the visual arts. It is a great value that history has passed on to our civilisation, and it is worth our while to defend it. |

Art in the 20th Century

Gregory O'Brien

AT THE END of the nineteenth century, we encounter the bearded, elderly figure of Paul Cézanne, laden with easel, brushes and a canvas which will eventually be titled *Mount Sainte-Victoire*, ambling down a country lane near his beloved mountain. (It is on the last of these excursions, nearly two decades after the 1888 canvas included in The Exhibition of the Century, that the artist will be caught in a downpour, contract pneumonia and die soon after.)

While Cézanne was communing with Mount Sainte-Victoire, some distance to the north Vincent van Gogh was also seeking a spiritual engagement with the landscape. Van Gogh's *Kitchen Gardens on Montmartre, Paris* (1887) is, similarly, an attempt to internalise the outside world, to transform land, air, water and light into a deeply personal, expressive vocabulary. For both artists, the painted surface, rather than being ornamental, descriptive or narrative-based, has become a sounding board for the painter's innermost thoughts, beliefs and fears.

The work of both painters has been massively influential in the evolution of modern art, with Cézanne leading directly to the Cubists and remaining an abiding influence throughout the century. Van Gogh—the embodiment of the lone, struggling visionary—was a role model for the later Fauve, Blaue Reiter and Expressionist painters. (As this century proceeded, his work influenced painters as far afield as the Australian Brett Whiteley and New Zealander Philip Clairmont.) It could be said that Van Gogh's work anticipated the heightened visionary element in modern art's project, whereas Cézanne's provided the obsession with form and the possibilities of a new pictorial structure. Anselm Kiefer's 1974 canvas *March Heath* can be seen as a post-apocalyptic revision of the country road Cézanne walked down, its central path also echoing the track which bisected the wheatfields in Van Gogh's famous last paintings.

Imagine looking out from the depths of any one of the paintings in this exhibition as it was being painted and observing, framed within the edges of the panel or canvas stretcher, the figure of the artist at work. Film-maker Hans Namuth gave us a version of this experience in his 1950 film of 'Action Painter' Jackson Pollock painting on glass, the movie camera mounted beneath the pane as he moved and swayed in a flickering, graceful yet inherently macho choreography: the artist as both shaman and Action Hero.

How, then, do we see the artist and his or her role in the modern world? As well as redrawing the boundaries of art, the modern artist has had to redefine his or her own job description, questioning the purpose and capabilities of visual expression in a changing world. A number of self-portraits in the exhibition hint at the changing self-definition of the artist.

Marc Chagall's 1913 masterpiece *Self-portrait with Seven Fingers* blends Cubism with folk art, and the artist's experience of the pre-First World War Parisian milieu with his background as a Russian Jew. The work is an amalgam of fine art strategies, the cuboid planes of the artist's face and body (along with the pre-Surrealist distortion of the artist's hand) contrasting with amorphous, dreamy vignettes of Russian peasant life. Besides being a portrait of the artist *sui generis*, it is also a broader depiction of the artist in the twentieth century: a creature cast adrift between ethnic groupings, belief systems and modes of expression. In an epoch dominated by refugee movements and immigration, here the artist presents himself as a series of fragments unified only by his capacity to imagine and reinvent himself. The painting is a tender, vulnerable and at the same time disquieting act of self-scrutiny.

In Max Beckmann's *Portrait of the Artist with His Wife Quappi*, painted in the Netherlands in 1940-41 during German occupation, the face of the artist reflects both the ravages of the age and the resistance the creative artist might be capable of. Beckmann's primitivism was very much in keeping with the Fauvist and Expressionist painters of the first two decades of the century. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's 1913 canvas *Group of Artists* is also an attempt at artistic self-definition, in this case embracing the Utopian notion of a creative community which was upheld by many of the Expressionist artists of the time. Both artists and model in this frenetically painted composition are subsumed into a staccato rhythm akin to African tribal sculpture—a non-Western tradition also invoked in Kirchner's 1911 sculpture, *Dancing Woman*.

As well as dealing with such difficult human emotions as fear and awe, the expressionistic 'inner' landscapes of Jan Wiegers, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Maurice de Vlaminck are dynamic conjurings of form and atmosphere, impulsive in their brush-strokes and incendiary colour schemes. They assert the modern painter's right to control the elements of the world and to rejuvenate such supposedly clapped-out genre as landscape, still life and the human figure. Their works hark back to Van Gogh but also foreshadow the volatile Neo-Expressionist paintings of the 1970s and 1980s by such artists as Enzo Cucchi, Sandro Chia, Julian Schnabel, Georg Baselitz (whose self-portrait *Nude, Finger Painting* (1972) functions as both exorcism and confessional) and Francesco Clemente (whose *Self-portrait with a Hole in the Head* (1981) is a mixture of quizzical self-scrutiny and violence).

The most conventional self-portrait in the exhibition, Dick Ket's 1931 *Self-portrait*, depicts the artist's head and shoulders in 'real' illusory space, although surrounded by the motifs and methodology of an art more attuned to the disjunctions of the age. A self-portrait of radically different intent is Gilbert and George's 1977 *Transported*, in which the two blue-suited gents have photographed themselves on a mock-Star Trek transporter pad, waiting to be beamed down to an almost certainly hostile planet—a nicely ironic statement about the position of the artist towards the end of the century.

Indeed, all artwork, no matter how oblique or circumspect, is a statement of the artist's position, whether you are considering the emotional clutter of a Guston or De Kooning, the pristine geometries of Brice Marden and Robert Mangold, or the heroic self-mythologising of Picasso and many of the other modernist masters. Wassily Kandinsky neatly summed up the heroic impulse in his prose poem 'In the woods', in which a man—the artist—struggles relentlessly forward into a dense, mysterious forest:

> *It was harder and harder for the man to walk, to force his way through without slipping. But on he went anyway, repeating faster and faster and over and over the same sentence:—*
> *The scars that mend.*
> *Colors that blend.*[1]

Perhaps as an ironic comment on the male-dominated tradition of Western fine art, of which he considered himself

a part (and which this exhibition inadvertently reflects), Kandinsky's prose-poem continues:

> *To his left and slightly behind him walked a woman. Every time the man finished his sentence, she said with great assurance and rolling her r's vigorously: verrry cleverrr.*

The events of the last hundred years were bound to make this a difficult, challenging epoch for the artist. But could modernism have taken hold during an era that was static? The challenge for the modern artist was to come to terms with this aesthetic—as well as social and political—turbulence then find a way forward from there. Given that realism was never going to be a compelling way of dealing with modern 'reality' in all its complexity, rawness, absurdity and occasional grandeur, new formal languages had to be devised, involving a plethora of new formats, techniques and materials. In The Exhibition of the Century we see fine traditional oil painting (notably in the Dutch Realist section) alongside paint being used like fabric dye (Morris Louis, Rothko), paint being dripped (Pollock), canvas being cut and collaged (Dubuffet) and the use of modelling paste, cow-hide and velvet in the work of Julian Schnabel, to name but a few of the less conventional approaches.

While notable for its movements and 'isms', the twentieth century is also paradoxically a period when artists have consciously broken down the notion of the stylistically homogenous artwork. Even more blatantly in the post-modern era, painters have merged different styles to arrive at such multivalent conclusions as Willem de Kooning's 1966 *Singing Woman* and David Salle's 1994 canvas, *Carnation*. In keeping with an age of immense complication and code-switching—whether Freud or Duchamp or Marx or Lacan is to blame—these artists have blurred distinctions and behaved, in terms of straightforward, linear art history, badly.

Perhaps, when the dust has settled, collage, bricolage and multifarious construction will be seen as the quintessential art forms for the twentieth century, with works as diverse as Henri Laurens's Cubist sculpture, *Bottle, Glass and Newspaper* (1915) and Jean Dubuffet's canvas assemblage, *Clown's Point* (1956) encapsulating the artist's struggle to reassemble reality, to literally find new combinations, juxtapositions and relationships.

> *Our eyes knit colour into sense,*
> *the bow is drawn: let history slip away*
> *like a platform of sobbing cousins...*[2]

So wrote the Italian Futurist painter-poet Ardengo Soffici, hinting at the creative dynamism of the twentieth century while also recognising its darker side: the fracturing of individual and social realities. The speeding train was to become a poignant metaphor for the early twentieth century—witness Gino Severini's 1915 *Train of the Wounded* (alongside its companion-piece *Armoured Train In Action*, in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York). Two years earlier the modernist poet Blaise Cendrars gave voice to the spirit of the age in his great poem 'Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jehanne of France': 'I have deciphered all the confused texts of the wheels and I have / assembled the scattered elements of a most violent beauty ...'[3]

Throughout the exhibition we witness attempts to harness and harmonise the movement, energy and trauma of the century. After the Second World War, European painters of the CoBrA movement, including Karel Appel and Asger Jorn, sought to retrieve meaning from the shell-shocked, decimated reality of post-war Europe. Constant's *Scorched Earth* (1951) captures the horror of mass destruction using the pictorial means and logic of children's art—a strategy also used by the foremost exponent of the 'Art Brut' movement in post-war France, Jean Dubuffet.

One of the great code-switchers of twentieth century art, the Russian Suprematist Kazimir Malevich worked between extremes of representation and abstraction, his early Cubist-inspired figurations of Russian peasant life leading to purist abstraction which, in turn, led back to the stylised figures and relatively orthodox portraiture of his last years. Malevich's art stemmed from both the Suprematist belief in a non-objective art where geometric shapes could be elevated onto a spiritual plane and from his humanist attachment to the Russian peasants—the latter sentiment nobly stated in his Cubo-Futurist canvas, *The Woodcutter* (1912).

Piet Mondrian's development was more linear, moving from early realist depictions of rural Dutch scenes to the signature geometrical abstractions which have influenced architecture, design, fashion and advertising since the mid-century.

While in Western art paintings traditionally functioned as windows on scenes, two important paintings—Philip Guston's *The Door* (1978) and Barnett Newman's *The Gate* (1954)— suggest other *modus operandi* for painting. Besides functioning as painted 'objects', the works are also entranceways through which both viewer and artist can enter (or, in the case of Guston's flooded interior, attempt to enter). Like the works of Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, these paintings embody processes of transformation and 'the grievous and joyous voyages' (to use Apollinaire's phrase) away from the familiar to that which is forever withheld and mysterious. With virtually all recognisable co-ordinates gone, these works throw the task of finding and constructing meaning back onto the viewer.

If the Abstract Expressionists and Colourfield painters of the post-war period emptied the canvas of recognisable imagery, the Pop Art movement in the early 1960s marked the return of the painted image with a noisy, irreverent vengeance. After the mystical aspirations of Rothko and others, the advent of Pop Art saw the heroic project of the modern artist fall to earth with an almighty clunk. Rather than transcending reality, the works seemed intent on basking in it or else undermining it—witness James Rosenquist's *Frosting* (1964) and Claes Oldenburg's *Saw (Hard Version II)*, from 1971.

In the last three decades the purist abstract concerns of such artists as Donald Judd, Brice Marden, Robert Ryman and Robert Mangold have co-existed alongside a re-emerging interest in representation embodied by such works as Guston's *The Door,* Chia's *Rabbit for Dinner* (1981) and Cucchi's *Silly Music* (1980).

There's a telling moment in Robert Hughes's recent television series, *American Visions*, when Hughes visits the New York workshop of Jeff Koons. The palatial studio is full of assistants constructing Koons's work for him. A few minutes into the segment, the artist himself appears, sidling nervously into the room, immaculately besuited, hair slicked back—a cross between a Mormon missionary and a car salesman. Contemplating his latest work, a monumental pussycat, Koons, who has described the work as deeply 'religious', assiduously avoids answering Hughes's questions as to what on earth he meant by that.

From his vantage point at the end of the twentieth century, Koons seems to be suggesting that the heroic struggle of Cézanne and Van Gogh is no longer viable, except perhaps as parody. The lone, reclusive genius struggling with brush, paint and the problems of pictorial representation has been superseded by the packager and marketeer of ideas, the self-publicist extraordinaire with his team of helpers.

On the other hand, looking at the seemingly opposed creative projects of Cézanne and Koons, there are areas in which, importantly, the role of the artist hasn't changed all that much. Just as it was at the beginning of the twentieth century, the task of the artist at the end of the century is still to effect new ways of seeing, feeling and thinking, to challenge all that has gone before, to broaden the territory, to strike out. Like all the artists in The Exhibition of the Century, Paul Cézanne—the 'grandfather' of modern painting — and Jeff Koons—the brattish son—are part of a grand narrative of scepticism, faith, detachment, involvement, joy, horror and the endless breaking up and reassemblage of what an artwork is and what it means to be an artist in such a dramatic, unfathomable epoch. |

1 Wassily Kandinsky, *Sounds*, transl. Elizabeth R. Napier, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1981, pp.80-81.

2 From Soffici's poem 'Rainbow', transl. Laurie Duggan, in Duggan's *New and Selected Poems 1971-1993*, University of Queensland Press, 1996, p.142.

3 Cendrars's poem, transl. Walter Albert, quoted in *Fine Print*, San Francisco, vol 13, no.3, July 1987, p.150.

From Van Gogh to German Expressionism | Part 1

Jonathan Mané-Wheoki

'In the beginning,' Archibald Nicoll declared, 'were Van der Velden and Nairn and the greater of these was Van der Velden.'[1] The arrival of a Scottish Impressionist, James Nairn, and a Dutch Romantic Realist, Petrus van der Velden, in 1890—the year in which Vincent van Gogh died—provided New Zealand's first direct links with the modern movement in European art.

Eight years earlier Van der Velden (1837-1913) had impressed Van Gogh (1853-90), as the younger painter informed his brother Theo in Paris. In 1882 Van Gogh was taking lessons from a relative, Anton Mauve (1838-1888), a 'Master' of the Hague School, with which Van der Velden was also associated. While Rembrandt loomed as the great founder of the Dutch art tradition, Hague School paintings also showed affinities with those of the naturalist Barbizon School as featured in an exhibition of French nineteenth-century artists held in the Hague in 1882. Of these artists Van Gogh especially admired Jean-François Millet (1814-75) whose pictures he had begun to copy in 1879. Millet's influence became apparent in the empathetic portrayal of humble, peasant subject matter, the sombre, pious mood and dour, earth colours of Van Gogh's early realist works. During the latter years of his brief career he was to return to interpreting Millet.

In 1886 Van Gogh joined his brother in Paris; there Theo introduced him to the Impressionist Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) and his son Lucien (1863-1944). He befriended Émile Bernard (1868-1941) and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). He also met Paul Signac (1863-1935), Georges Seurat's disciple, and was inspired by Seurat (1859-91) to try pointillist execution. *Kitchen Gardens on Montmartre, Paris* (1887) reveals Van Gogh's cautious response to their more advanced styles and techniques. His organisation of the composition into zones of streaming brushwork and broken, though still largely subdued, colour anticipates a lighter, transparent, more rhythmic and exuberant mode of expression in the *japoniste* phase of his art.

In February 1888 Van Gogh abandoned the winter gloom of Paris for Arles. The landscapes, sudden brilliant light and intense colours in the south of France accorded with his image of Japan (as depicted in the Japanese woodcut prints he had begun to collect in 1885). Gauguin joined him in October. They quarrelled on Christmas Eve, however; Gauguin returned to Paris, and Van Gogh hacked off his left ear. From this point the increasingly tumultuous brushwork, heaving forms, swirling rhythms, powerful colours, heightened emotion and air of desolation in Van Gogh's work document the rapid deterioration of his mental state. He died from self-inflicted gunshot wounds.

Gauguin, meanwhile, had been captivated by Javanese and Cambodian art at the Exposition Universelle held in Paris in 1889. He considered going to French Indo-China but went to French Polynesia instead, arriving in Tahiti in June 1891. Two years later he was repatriated. In August 1895, en route to French Polynesia a second time, a stopover in Auckland enabled Gauguin to sketch taonga in the Museum from which he was to quote and adapt in subsequent works. He died in the Marquesas Islands in 1903.[2]

A large retrospective exhibition of Gauguin's work at the 1906 Salon d'Automne in Paris positioned him as a forerunner of Fauvism which had come to prominence in the previous year's Salon. However, Maurice de Vlaminck (1876-1958), one of the leading Fauves, found Van Gogh's later tempestuous manner more inspiring, as *Village*, painted in 1906, clearly demonstrates. Such had been the impact on Vlaminck, five years earlier, of the Bernheim Jeune Gallery Van Gogh exhibition—where André Derain (1880-1954) introduced him to Henri Matisse (1869-1954)—that he declared Van Gogh meant more to him than his own father. The art of Kees van Dongen (1877-1968), the Dutch-born Fauve, was also influenced by Van Gogh, whose example may have prompted him to settle in Paris in 1897.

The first in a remarkable lineage of Dutch modernists of international stature, and one of the most influential Post-Impressionist artists on subsequent generations of modern artists, Van Gogh came to be revered for the technical directness of his painting and graphic work and his unprecedented use of high-key colour at maximum intensity; for the immediacy and aching sincerity of his art, and the emotional impact of his painterly expressivity. Although it has recently been argued that he lacked many of the basic skills of a painter, and 'that his paintings have become so treasured because of a sentimentalised notion of his life as one of sacrifice to art',[3] there is no doubting the potency of his myth throughout the history of modern art, and in artworlds as distant from Europe as New Zealand.

In 1956, for example, Rudolf Gopas (1913-82), a stateless person resettled in New Zealand after the Second World War, painted *My Chair.* Upon a chair is depicted a copy of the Phaidon Press edition of *Vincent van Gogh,* published in 1945.[4] On the book's cover is illustrated a self-portrait of Van Gogh (with his ear bandaged, and smoking a pipe[5]). The chair is a direct reference to Van Gogh's *La Chaise et la Pipe* (1888-89), itself a symbol of Gauguin's departure from Arles in 1888, and adapted from an engraving of Sir Luke Fildes's *The Empty Chair*, an allusion to Charles Dickens's death, illustrated in *The Graphic*. Gopas's study of Van Gogh preceded his deep immersion in the art and writings of the German Expressionists which formed the core of his teaching at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts in the 1960s.[6]

In 1957 Colin McCahon (1919-87) produced *Van Gogh Poems by John Caselberg,* a series of lithographic sheets on poems published three years earlier. ['This is about the black crows over the cornfield. The crows here are words from a series of Caselberg poems on Van Gogh.'] McCahon's painting *John in Canterbury* (1959) reinterprets Van Gogh's *The Ravens Flying over Cornfields* (July 1890)[7] to convey a sense of deprivation and desolation at his friend John Caselberg's 'exile' in the cultural 'wilderness' of Christchurch.

If these were among the last and most distant echoes of Van Gogh's influence, the Expressionists in Germany have long been positioned by art historians as the most immediate 'spiritual' heirs of Van Gogh and Gauguin, together with the Norwegian, Edvard Munch (1863-1944). The term 'Expressionism' was initially applied, however, to those French painters who were deemed to be working in a more subjective manner in opposition to naturalism and Impressionism. Under the label 'Expressionism' the Fauves and Cubists, and even Cézanne, were exhibited in Germany.

In 1911 French 'Expressionists' were shown at the Berlin Secession and, in the following year, alongside artists of Der Blaue Reiter, (the second group of German Expressionists), at Herwarth Walden's Sturm-Gallery, also in Berlin. Only in 1914 did Paul Fechter identify Expressionism as a German avant-garde movement originating in Dresden and Munich.

Van Gogh's importance to the development of the movement is reiterated throughout Bernard S. Myers's *Expressionism: A Generation in Revolt*, 'the first definitive study in any language of Expressionism',[8] published in 1957. Between 1901 and 1905 Van Gogh's paintings were shown at the counter-academic Secession exhibitions in Berlin, Munich, and Vienna, as well as by dealers. In 1905 there was an exhibition of his work at the Galerie Arnold in Dresden, thus furnishing a direct link with the as yet unidentified movement. In that year Die Brücke, the first group of Expressionist artists, was formed in Dresden. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), Erich Heckel (1883-1970) and Fritz Bleyl were joined in 1906 by Emil Nolde (1867-1956) (who had held a solo exhibition in the Galerie Arnold in 1905), in 1907 by the Fauve Van Dongen, and later by Max Pechstein (1881-1955) and Otto Müller (1874-1930). Under Van Gogh's influence they rejected the grinding academicism of conventional art, shed the accretions of urban aesthetic sophistication, sought inspiration in the *Urzeit* (the primeval, antiquity), in order to realise imagery whose heightened emotionalism was often so immediate and direct as to strike contemporary observers as crude, raw and 'primitive'.

Like Van Gogh and Gauguin, several of the artists withdrew to rural and coastal areas. Pechstein, for example, regularly went to Nidden on the Baltic Coast, then in the German province of East Prussia, but now part of Lithuania.[9] Pechstein marvelled at the ability of the local fishing community to contend with the violent forces of nature to which he subsequently gave expression in his landscape paintings and painted 'primitive' nudes *en plein air*. Schmidt-Rottluff painted *Landscape in Dangast* (1910) in an area of the North Sea coast he frequented, often in Heckel's company, between 1907 and 1912. Female figures *en plein air*, one nude and the other *déshabillé*, are depicted being sketched by a fully clothed male artist in Kirchner's *Group of Artists*, painted in 1913, the year in which Die Brücke was formally disbanded.

Like Gauguin, the 'father of primitivism', Die Brücke sought inspiration in the arts of non-European cultures, as Kirchner's *Dancing Woman* (1911), with its vigorously hatched modelling of forms, reminiscent of tribal carving, demonstrates. Kirchner's introduction to African and Oceanic art occurred in the Dresden Ethnological Museum in 1904. Some members of Die Brücke travelled to German colonies in the Pacific: Nolde to New Guinea in 1913, and Pechstein to Palau in 1914.

The art of Die Brücke, re-centred in Berlin in the Protestant North by 1911, often gave vent to the darker, more morose, neurotic, angst and crisis-ridden end of the emotional spectrum. By contrast, Der Blaue Reiter, co-founded in 1911 by Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) and Franz Marc (1880-1916) in the more cosmopolitan Bavarian capital of the Catholic South was more soaringly ecstatic, cosmic and apocalyptic in intention.

Alfred Barr observes that 'Kandinsky's art between 1906 and 1910 was Fauve in character and under the strong influence of Gauguin and Van Gogh ...'[10] In Munich the Phalanx group held a Post-Impressionist show in 1904, and the Secession exhibited Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh, 'the latter two especially important in the development of Blue Rider colour symbolism and linear expressiveness.'[11] Kandinsky and fellow Russian Alexej von Jawlensky (1864-1941) (who had been profoundly affected by Van Gogh's paintings in 1903), sent paintings to the Salon d'Automne in Paris: Kandinsky from 1904 and Jawlensky from 1905, the year of the Fauve Salon when he met Matisse. In Paris in 1907 Marc calmed 'his anguished and vacillating soul in Van Gogh's wonderful pictures'.[12] He was to describe his circle of artists in Munich as 'Wilde', a German word synonymous with the French word Fauve,[13] in the almanac *Blaue Reiter*, published in Munich in 1912, which he co-edited with Kandinsky.

While there was considerable interaction between the artists of Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter, it was the latter who discovered 'that abstract compositions could serve at least as effectively as subject pictures.'[14] Kandinsky's celebrated *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, published in December 1911, develops, by analogy with music, an anti-materialistic, mystical aesthetic in which artists, as visionaries, channel images from the depths of their innermost beings, their spiritual selves, their souls, by means of a controlled, purposeful surrender to heightened subjective states. His *Improvisation 33 (Orient 1)* (1913) typifies the lyrical transcendentalism that Alfred Barr identified as 'Abstract Expressionism in Germany'[15] in the catalogue of the exhibition Cubism and Abstract Art, held in New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1936. Kandinsky's 'orchestration of colours' in evocation of the cosmic sublime shows clear affinities with the work of the French Orphist Robert Delaunay who also exhibited with Der Blaue Reiter.

The German avant-garde's first wave of frenetic artistic activity ended with the outbreak of the First World War. The Russians left Germany. Key German modernists including August Macke and Marc were killed in battle. After the war new groupings occurred, new connections were made and new directions sought.

Jan Wiegers (1893-1959), a founder member in 1918 of De Ploeg (The Plough) in Groningen, Holland, met Kirchner in 1920-21, and was greatly influenced by him as the vigorously graphic style and flaming, eruptive colour of *Landscape with Red Trees* (1924) attest.

Kandinsky returned to Germany to teach at the Bauhaus (the famous school of design founded in Weimar in 1919). The impulsive, spontaneous nature of his pre-war abstraction he now subjected to the discipline of an architectural, geometric approach to composition. He survived the institution's shifts to Dessau, then Berlin until the Nazis closed it down when they came to power in 1933.

Max Beckmann (1884-1950), one of the independent Expressionists, was also a casualty of the Nazi purge, losing his teaching job at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. Shortly before the Nazis' notorious exhibition of Degenerate Art opened in Munich in 1937 he went into exile in Amsterdam, Wiegers's place of residence since 1934. Beckmann's *Portrait of the Artist with His Wife Quappi* (1940-41) was painted when Holland was under German occupation during the Second World War.

For much of its history modern art had been an outsider art. Themes of exile, anxiety and crisis remained a powerful generative force in an underground nexus binding Holland and Germany (and also France). The Expressionist tradition to which this force had given rise continued to give utterance to the yearnings of the tormented and oppressed for individual freedom, untrammelled freedom of expression, spiritual enlightment. Van Gogh stands at the beginning of this tradition. |

1 Interview with A. F. Nicoll, *Art in New Zealand*, 12:1, June 1932, p. 237.
2 Matisse, the leading Fauve and one of Gauguin's successors as a radiant colourist, went to Tahiti in 1930.
3 From the publisher's blurb on Griselda Pollock's 1990 video *Van Gogh–His Paintings Under Pressure.*
4 L. Goldscheider and W. Uhde, *Vincent van Gogh*, Oxford and London, Phaidon Press Ltd, 1945.
5 Gopas was to represent himself in self-portraits with a pipe hanging from his mouth.
6 Among those whose artistic development was shaped by this teaching are Philip Trusttum, Philippa Blair, Philip Clairmont, Kura Te Waru-Rewiri and, indirectly, Emare Karaka.
7 As it is titled in the Phaidon *Van Gogh*.
8 Bernard S. Myers's *Expressionism: A Generation in Revolt*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1963. Quoted from the publisher's blurb on the fly-leaf.
9 Nidden was only a short distance from Siluté, also in East Prussia at the time, where Rudolf Gopas was born in 1913.
10 Alfred H. Barr *Cubism and Abstract Art* New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1936, p.64.
11 Myers, p.152.
12 Myers, p.179.
13 In the 1980s in the term Neue Wilde was applied to the Neo-Expressionists in Germany.
14 Norbert Lynton, 'Expressionism', in *Concepts of Modern Art*, ed. Nikos Stangos, London, 1981, rev., p.30.
15 Barr, pp.64-72.



From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | Part 2

Damian Skinner

POSTMODERNISM, the name commonly given to the contemporary moment, is characterised by a rampant pilfering of the past. Nowadays artists find their styles and subjects in the museum; yet the museum of Postmodernism pays no attention to history, for everything exists only as style, free of the historical contexts that shaped the art of the past. An artist's style exists as a kind of 'brand', a unique visual signature that is easily appropriated for new purposes, both artistic and commercial. Take Piet Mondrian's art, for example, which has been the inspiration for a number of corporate advertising campaigns. For the companies that have referenced Mondrian's style (primary colours and black and white, horizontal and vertical lines), the emphasis is on the appearance of his painting, its status as high art, its sheer aesthetic brilliance, and its connotations, even now, seventy years later, of the modern or new.

These appropriations do not adhere to the way Mondrian intended his paintings to be viewed and understood. Not only are the carefully balanced relations of Mondrian's art thrown out of sync, but the presence of the commodity or service being advertised pulls the viewer away from the universal towards the particular, exactly what Mondrian strove to avoid. Much abstract art of the early twentieth century was a protest against the emphasis on materiality, and the lack of spirituality that characterised society in the eyes of its critics. Mondrian, it is safe to say, did not have advertising on his mind.

Because we experience artworks 'as discarnate iridescences, floating in an ahistorical and immaterial space, in which all centuries and styles might [be] simultaneously and equally sound',[1] we must acknowledge alternative ways of viewing images if we are to attempt the rediscovery of what it meant to make art in the early twentieth century.

The selection of art works offered in this exhibition under the title 'From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian' is one of the classic narratives of art history: the move from figuration to abstraction; the moment when art based on perspective, primarily concerned with the reproduction of nature, transforms into art that does not gain meaning via its representation of the world.

Our narrative begins with Paul Cézanne, whose most famous dictum was the advice to 'treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere, the cone ...'[2] When this statement is placed in context with another of Cézanne's artistic beliefs—that 'All things, particularly in art, are theory developed and applied in contact with nature'[3]—we begin to see the importance of paintings like *Mount Sainte-Victoire* (c.1888). While Cézanne's process was firmly grounded in the act of representing nature, his emphasis on the role of 'theory' did begin to establish an autonomous pictorial structure that existed parallel to the natural subject. It is the first step towards abstraction—pictorial elements that adhere to their own internal laws, with no reference to the outside world.

The next development of note is Cubism, which proceeded to demolish the traditional European rules of perspective, in force since the Renaissance. Like Cézanne, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963) began to fracture their subjects into facets and planes, forcing them up close to the picture plane in order to abolish the illusion of depth. Using the technique of simultaneity, where objects are represented from various points of view at the same time, the Cubists searched for a representation that would not be governed by what the artist sees (perceptual data) but what he or she knows (conceptual data). The beginnings of this approach are visible in Braque's *Still Life with Jar and Bottles* (1909), while Henri Laurens (1883-1954) translates Cubist principles into three dimensions with his *Bottle, Glass and Newspaper* (1915).

As the Cubist quest to overthrow the traditions of representation continued, their paintings became increasingly ambiguous, the facets arranged across the canvas's surface in an 'abstract' manner bearing no relation to the subject's appearance. However, no matter how divorced Cubism became from traditional methods of representation, it still maintained a relationship to the outside world. Not surprisingly, Cubism's next innovation was collage, the introduction of mass-produced fragments of modern life into the realm of painting. Collage facilitated the emergence of a new kind of pictorial logic which governed Cubist compositions: Picasso's *Still Life with Guitar* (1924), while actually an oil painting, reveals the manner in which collaged materials could be combined across the surface of the painting without adhering to the demands of perspective and the illusion of depth.

For the purposes of our narrative, Cubism inspires two major directions of artistic activity. The first, arising in Italy, was named Futurism. A celebration of technology and violence, Futurism revelled in the changes modernity brought to society. 'We declare,' wrote the poet F. T. Marinetti in 1909, 'that the splendour of the world has been enriched with a new form of beauty, the beauty of speed.'[4]

The theme of Futurist art was 'universal dynamism'. Light and movement destroy material consistency, so the Futurists attempted to represent this destruction pictorially—a fusion of object and environment, achieved through the techniques of Cubist art, which would more correctly represent the condition of modern life. The intention, however, was entirely different, since Futurism was dedicated to movement. If Cubism had a principle of simultaneity, it was not intended to represent dynamism as it did for the Futurists. Gino Severini's *Train of the Wounded* (1915) shares many of the characteristics of Cubism, yet its effect is substantially different to the static compositions of Picasso and Braque.

The second direction Cubism inspired is represented in the art of Robert Delaunay (1885-1941), and in the movement that he and his wife Sonia Terk Delaunay (1885-1979) pioneered, Orphism. The Delaunays' most important discovery—arising from a fusion of Fauvism, Matisse's emphasis on colour, and the principles of Cubism and Futurism—was that colour created rhythm and movement as successfully as form. Eventually, their paintings focused on the relationship between colours, and at this point they conceived of a 'pure' or abstract painting that did not depend on the representation of nature to be meaningful. *Circular Forms, Sun and Moon* (1912-13) was created at the moment when abstract art became *necessary* for Robert Delaunay. As the title reveals, the connection to nature is not left behind, yet the naturalistic trace is secondary to the internal pictorial workings of the painting, and definitely not its subject.

The final point of this narrative is achieved with the abstract art of Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935) and Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). In both these artists we find the

trace of Cubism: the use of faceting and fragmentation, the rejection of perspective and the illusion of depth. For Malevich, it is Cubism and Futurism that open the door to his abstract compositions, as *The Woodcutter* (1912) and *An Englishman in Moscow* (1913-14) illustrate; for Mondrian, the pictorial lessons of Cubism, as seen in *Composition XV* (1913), lead eventually to the 'post-Cubist' abstract compositions of his Neo-Plastic paintings. The embryonic idea embodied in Cézanne's paintings, and then made more explicit in Cubism's fractured compositions—that pictorial elements can exist according to independent, internal laws that are not related to the depiction of nature—achieves full expression in the art of Malevich and Mondrian.

While this linear narrative from Cézanne to Mondrian is a traditional account within art history, we need to be suspicious of such a smooth narrative flow. The problem centres around the use of the preposition 'From' in the title of this section of the exhibition. Since the abstraction of Malevich and Mondrian is designated as the goal of our narrative, the entire grouping of works in this section begins to reflect the internal structure and chronology of Malevich's and Mondrian's own development as artists—an inexorable path towards abstraction that begins with the disruption of perspective made unavoidable by Cubism. The linear narrative of development I have just outlined leaves us vulnerable to ignoring the tensions and misreadings that inform specific moments in the history of art. Cubism, for example, needed to be creatively misread by Malevich and Mondrian—its return to figuration via collage ignored—in order to lead to the 'post-Cubist' abstraction they developed.

In my survey of early twentieth century art Marc Chagall (1887-1985) has no place, for his painting illustrates a recurring tendency to figurative modernism, a history that runs alongside the move to abstraction. (That Chagall does *not* fit is perhaps a good argument for seeing the curation of this exhibition as more open to multiple interpretations than my text implies.) Chagall's *Self-portrait with Seven Fingers* (1912-13) belongs to a narrative that starts with Cubism and its rupture of the pictorial space, but ends with Dada and Surrealism, all the time maintaining figurative representation as a central concern—even as it grapples with the existence of abstraction, and the questions abstract art raises for the issue of figurative representation. When we consider how various readings encourage a subtle (or not so subtle) exclusion of art works and artists, we begin to understand how arbitrary and constructed any history like this must be—including my own.

Putting aside concerns about how we get to Malevich and Mondrian, we might ask: how do we account for what they have made? Figurative representations—Cézanne's paintings, for example—become meaningful by identifying the image's original source (the point of contact with nature), and then analysing how the artist's intentionality (creative choices) transform it pictorially. Abstraction, though, demands a new approach: to stand before Mondrian's abstract paintings armed with the knowledge that he began by studying trees, churches and the sea, offers little to the comprehension of a Neo-Plastic composition.

As a result, many twentieth-century artists believed that meaning was not a product of cause and effect (nature meets the artist), but a result of the formal system of pictorial relations set up within the work. The answer was to 'seek meaning in the internal relations of the painting itself, attending to the differences between shapes and colours,'[5] in the belief that these relations formed a kind of pictorial grammar. The Symbolist artists working in the 1880s and 1890s had already proposed that elements within a composition could act as signs, presenting meanings that were not tied to their function as representations but which arose from their position within the internal system of the image. Abstraction developed this idea, and made it inescapable by eradicating the reproduction of nature entirely.

Yet fears that abstraction might be meaningless persisted, and in this sense Malevich's example is instructive. The end goal of Suprematism, Malevich's mature style, is the creation of a work of art in which feeling is given the greatest possible expression. To materialise feeling in a medium involving depiction of nature is merely to realise the reflection of feeling—a timid version of feeling itself. So Suprematism addresses itself to the abstract, ignoring the distraction of appearances.

In *The Non-Objective World*, written in 1927, Malevich revisits the genesis of the black square, one of the first Suprematist images, and his most radical artistic statement. Malevich revises its date of exhibition to 1913, two years before it was actually first shown in 'The Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings: 0.10' (held in December 1915). If Malevich had indeed painted the black square and other Suprematist works before 1915 as he claims, why did he exhibit the Cubo-Futurist paintings at an exhibition held earlier that year in March—works that, because figurative, are not acceptable to Suprematist theory? The obvious explanation is that 'Malevich himself was not yet sure enough of what he had done to put it forward for exhibition … not yet sure, perhaps, that it was indeed 'painting' or 'art' at all.'[6]

Both Malevich and Mondrian are concerned with what might be termed the universal or the absolute. Mondrian's Neo-Plasticism was a system of balanced oppositions that attempted to achieve what he called 'dynamic equilibrium'.[7] Neo-Plasticism as represented by Mondrian's painting from 1920 to 1932 consists of a dialectic, an attempt to integrate opposing terms. It is about the entire spectrum of human activity, including all cultural production and social interaction, but is manifested through pictorial elements—line, plane, colour.

For many early twentieth-century artists, the belief was that, like geometry, laws existed for art that were universal. Art works created in harmony with these laws would therefore obey universal principles, and as a result, their truths should be relevant for all parts of society. Mondrian believed that the universal in art would transform society, eventually even eradicating art itself: 'when the universal dominates, it will permeate life, so that art—so unreal in comparison to that life—will decay, and a new life—which realises the universal in fact—will replace art.'[8] By appealing to absolute truth, abstract art set itself up as a relevant force in the betterment of society. The struggle towards 'dynamic equilibrium' was not just an artistic goal, but a social one too.

Today, these Utopian dreams seem untenable at the end of a century that belies the ability of social planning—let alone art—to transform humanity. Yet, strangely, it is a sense of the human that we are left with when we look at the paintings of the early twentieth century. Seeing art in reproduction, a condition of living in New Zealand, transforms the works into austere, hard-edged compositions. Brushstrokes are invisible, and subtle surfaces are lost—one misses any sense that these objects are hand-made. Experiencing a Malevich or a Mondrian in person changes everything. In the face of these delicate and amazing works, Utopian claims become irrelevant, and we are left, wonderfully, only with a sense of each artist's humanity. |

1 Francis Pound, 'From Here: Reading and Misreading European, Russian and American Modernism', *New Zealand Modernism–In Context: Paintings from the Gibbs Collection*. ed., James Ross, Auckland, The Gibbs Collection, 1995, p.12.
2 Paul Cézanne, Letter to Émile Bernard, 15 April 1904. *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, ed., Herschel B. Chipp, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1968, p.19.
3 Cézanne, Letter to Charles Camoin, 22 February 1903, *Theories of Modern Art*, p.18.
4 F. T. Marinetti, 'The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism', *Theories of Modern Art*, p.286.
5 Charles Harrison, 'Abstraction', *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early 20th Century*, London, Yale University Press & The Open University, 1993, p.196.
6 Harrison, p.236.
7 Piet Mondrian, 'Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art', *Theories of Modern Art*, p.353.
8 Mondrian, 'The New Plastic in Painting', *De Stijl, 1917-18*; cited in Harrison, p.206.

Dutch Realism and Its Circle | Part 3

T.L. Rodney Wilson

IN THE 1930s, a small group of Dutch painters, grouped together in this exhibition as exponents of 'Dutch Realism', developed a regional style which owed its sources to German Neue Sachlichkeit and Surrealism. In truth, each of the artists is quite different from the others, and no Dutch Realism movement, as such, took place.

A fidelity to the natural world, to the substance, surfaces and textures of things, and a love of the commonplace subject, even the mundane, has been a recurring theme in Dutch art. The Netherlandish masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were amongst the first to look past the biblical and historical themes of their paintings to the ordinary world beyond. The artists of the so-called 'Golden Century' of Dutch seventeenth-century painting delighted in the commonplace. And the Romantic painters of the nineteenth century—the Hague School artists in particular—sought to revive the great golden era of Dutch painting and its materialist concerns.

But, for all its apparent naturalism, the Dutch fondness for the natural world seldom produced an entirely naturalistic or literal art. Almost always the painter selected from the perceived world, reorganised it according to his own needs or ideals of beauty, or manipulated it to conform to his own particular subjective or emotional intent. The painters of 'Dutch Realism' are also not naturalistic painters.

For some, Willem Schumacher (1894-1986) and Raoul Hynckes (1893-1973) for example, a simplified but essentially traditional fidelity towards the representation of objects, materials and figures prevails. For others such as Pyke Koch (1901-91), Carel Willink (1900-83), and Dick Ket (1902-40), surreal, magical, or irrational elements and feelings are introduced or superimposed upon the fine detail and treatment of surfaces which is such an abiding tradition in Dutch art.

For others again, Charley Toorop (1891-1955), or Herman Kruyder (1881-1935), a bold, simplified and painterly realism, not unrelated to the Mexican muralists or America's Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986), prevails. The term 'Dutch Realism', therefore, embraces a number of artists whose work often has little in common and who, as artists, worked largely in isolation from each other. Adherence to a recognisable, figurative subject is the most significant single common quality.

The most persuasive source for Dutch Realism was German Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity). Neue Sachlichkeit was the title of an exhibition arranged for Mannheim's Kunsthalle by its director, Gustav F. Haltraub, in 1923. Haltraub intended the term Neue Sachlichkeit to indicate a new realism bearing a socialist flavour, a painting which rejected the destruction of form of German Expressionism, and which sought to return to a realism and an objectivity shed of ideal. It is also a movement in which Germany's cynicism and disillusionment, following a period of great hope and then the loss of the First World War, can be clearly read. The two most well known exponents of the Neue Sachlichkeit were Otto Dix (1891-1969) and George Grosz (1893-1959). Dix and Grosz each produced a savage, often ugly imagery severely critical of post-war German society. Although Dix and Grosz retained their connections with earlier German Expressionism and their work is more brutal than the Dutch painters, nonetheless Pyke Koch's and Dick Ket's connections with the Germans can be clearly recognised.

In 1929 and 1930 exhibitions in Amsterdam introduced Neue Sachlichkeit to the Netherlands. At the same time French and Belgian Surrealism was exhibited to a Dutch public, and in 1930 V.E. van Uytvanck published an article entitled 'Nieuwe zakelijkheid en surrealisme in de Hollandse schilderkunst' (New Objectivity and Surrealism in Dutch painting) in *De Vrije Bladen*. That same year, an exhibition of Carel Willink, Pyke Koch and Kornelis Postma (1903-1977) was held in Amsterdam, the artists being referred to as practitioners of 'Neo-Realism' or 'Magic-Realism'.

New Realism was described in 1933 as 'paintings depicted with cold precision and scrupulously finished with an aim at textural expression and psychological manifestation'. As such, New Realism is highly consistent with Neue Sachlichkeit's insistence on an objective realism, rejection of the ideal and acceptance of the ugliness of reality.

Magic Realism, by contrast, draws more heavily on the subconscious and the irrational, depicting non-existing and imaginary situations in the manner of Surrealism. Carel Willink disliked the term 'Magic Realism', preferring to describe his work as 'Fantastic Realism' or 'Imaginary Realism', but it is clear that the sources of his photographically real but irrational compositions and landscapes, with their classical architectural settings, animals and figures (for all his connections with Germany, Novembergruppe and Neue Sachlichkeit) lie in the Surrealism of Belgium and France. At first appearance, there is a close empathy between the works of Willinck and the Belgian Surrealist, Paul Delvaux (1897-1994).

Willink's *Arcadian Landscape* of 1935, like Nicholas Poussin's (1594-1665) masterpiece three centuries earlier, illustrates the proverb, 'Et in Arcadia Ego'. Not even here, in utopian Arcadia, can a refuge from death be found. A silent desolution and decay has settled on the landscape, the sculpture and its plinth are discoloured and crumbling, the paving is cracked and broken. Less literal than the images of despair produced by Dix and Grosz, more immediately like the sensuality and irrationality of Delvaux, this painting of Willink's nevertheless reflects the despair and cynicism of Europe in the dark years of the thirties when the forces of a new war had already begun to assemble.

Elsewhere in the Netherlands, and a few years earlier, another more well-known group of artists arose from the climate of the post-war period. Their response was very different. Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Bart van der Leck (1876-1958), Gerrit Rietveld (1888-1964), J.J.P. Oud (1890-1963), Georges Vantongerloo (1886-1965) and the painter, propagandist and ideologist Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931) had launched de Stijl, a movement which rejected all aspects of visual reality, concerning itself instead with a new objectivity based entirely upon the plastic and architectonic elements of art and architecture.

This 'new objectivity' could not have been more different from Neue Sachlichkeit and its 'Dutch Realism' offspring. With de Stijl's belief in a modern society and a new world order, it pursued a transcendent 'universal harmony', rejected subjectivity, and sought a universal consciousness and collective style. Although the non-figurative de Stijl and the New Realist painters occupied opposite stylistic and ideological poles, they both represented long traditions in Dutch art. The one was formal and precise, exhibiting the geometrician's love of ordered forms, surfaces and relationships, and a reduction of the painter's, sculptor's and architect's vocabulary

to the most elemental of forms and colours. The other called on the traditional Dutch love of the material world, the appearance, surfaces, textures and details of things, and the ability to manipulate the depiction of reality to imply meaning, or to create unease.

Dick Ket is one of the most interesting of the New Realists; a rare and somewhat eccentric provincial figure rather reminiscent of Stanley Spencer (1891-1959) in England. Never able to venture far from his home due to a heart condition, a product of provincial training at the Kunstoefening in Arnhem, and destined for a sadly short career, Ket was a painter of haunting images. His contact with the outside world was limited to little more than correspondence. His knowledge of art was primarily based on poor colour illustrations. His life was physically and emotionally internal as he suffered from his incurable illness, phobias and fears.

He restricted his subjects to still lifes (which have an ivory-like surface and an exacting realism reminiscent of early Netherlandish paintings), portraits, and many self-portraits, a splendid example of which is included in this exhibition. Compositionally it exhibits strong references to Cubism in the geometric organisation of the background and foreground objects, but staring directly at the viewer from the middle of the shallow space is the thin and fragile figure of Ket himself. In that engaging stare, the resigned eyes focusing simultaneously at short distance and out behind and beyond the viewer, and in the severe monochromatic palette, is a mood, a quality of decay, decline, vulnerability and death, that translates the simple self-portrait into a universal statement of European thirties, of uncertainty and pessimism.

Pyke Koch (1901-91), like Ket born in the east of the Netherlands away from the mainstream of art, was self taught. He settled in Utrecht, but travelled frequently to Italy, painting portraits, figures and the working folk of the fairs, markets and urban slums—often in a satirical manner. *Slum Rhapsody* of 1929 is an example of this. A similar silence to the Ket self-portrait fills this picture. A worker bends over his hand cart loaded with the dismembered portions of a draper's mannequins: heads, torso, an arm, a leg. A bearded man dressed in a great-coat and peaked hat shuffles along the narrow side-walk past a shuttered wall, a prodigious case strapped to his back. Another man approaches silently along the opposite footpath. The near-monochromatic composition is heavy with despair, hopelessness and a probing irony.

Charley Toorop, like Koch, was self taught despite being the daughter of the Symbolist Jan Toorop. She painted portraits, figure groups, still lifes and landscapes influenced initially by Cubism and Fauvism, and by Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944). Although her work continued to have an affinity with the work of the Fauves and Expressionists, she developed a robust personal form of contemporary realism from the early 1930s. She mixed widely with fellow artists and writers, but also with ordinary people, workers, labourers and street prostitutes, often using them as studio models in pursuit of her objective reality.

No painting by Toorop is better known than the *Cheese Market in Alkmaar*, painted in 1932-33. The two cheese carriers, dressed in the traditional garb of the Alkmaar market, are pressed forward in the picture plane and severely cut-off by the edges of the canvas. The figure to the right strides right out of the picture space and is unceremoniously severed across the head, down his left side, and above the knees. The figures are harshly and abruptly pushed towards the viewer, causing an abrupt separation of the figures from the picturesque market place and church square glimpsed beyond. The reality of work and the ruddy features of the workers displaces any pictorialism or 'attractiveness' of the traditional market scene.

The 'Dutch Realists' were a small and disparate group of painters whose styles had little in common, except for an adherence to an indigenous painterly concern for the world of visual reality, influences of Neue Sachlichkeit and Surrealism. They were regional painters, but even in their regionalism intriguing connections can still be found with painters working elsewhere. |

Wystan Curnow

Amsterdam where I was born is a typical Jewish city. My first language was Yiddish mixed with Amsterdam slang, a language very different from Dutch. The whole town spoke it … Throughout my childhood I wandered through the labyrinths of Amsterdam, along its canals, in its Oriental markets, up and down its alleyways. I remember those ships that used to come right up into the streets with their multicoloured flats—Arab, Greek, Chinese … I think it was maybe Amsterdam that made me fall in love with New York. I feel perfectly at home there, for what I find in it, on another scale certainly, is the mentality and the way of going about things that I know from my native city before the war.[1]

4

THE FOURTEEN paintings that make up this segment of the exhibition are the work of eleven artists, five of them European and six American, who came to the fore in the 1940s and 1950s. The more or less abstract expressiveness which distinguishes them speaks of a resurgent subjectivity prompted by post-war conditions. Just as these conditions varied from country to country so too did the art and names coined for it in the larger centres—in Paris, Art Informel, Art Brut, Tachisme; in New York, Abstract Expressionism, Action Painting, Colourfield. Names of this kind denoted not merely styles but movements; that is to say, styles that laid claim to pole positions in the Grand Prix of vanguard art. Artists' feelings about them were always mixed—'I don't care for "Abstract Expressionism",' Pollock declared—and it has to be said that with the passage of time the usefulness of such categorisations has declined and changed. Today contemporary art has seemingly no need of movements, and our history of the modern is no longer the story of movements supplanting one other in strict succession, of a 'tradition of the New'. They tell us too much, these categorisations—about their claims on art history—but also too little, about what might link the works assembled under their separate banners or distinguish the local histories of their making.

The competition in the post-war period was less between styles or movements than between cities, between Paris and New York; the tale of these two cities is also one of succession—the School of New York replacing the School of Paris. 'Schools', mind you, have gone the way of movements, as Larry Rivers and Frank O'Hara said in 1961: 'Piero della Francesca agrees with us when he says "Schools are for fools".' This succession was something of a freak, however, as it was largely brought about by the war that had left America enjoying the spoils of victory while her allies lay in ruins. Today no one city exerts the kind of hegemonic force New York did in the decades following the war and Paris in those that preceded it, nor seems likely to in the future. In the context of a resurgent European scene the post-war emergence of New York belongs less to a story of successions than to one of the expansion of the modern European art system to a wider world—chapter one in a history of the globalisation of contemporary art. From this segment on, the exhibition is a thoroughly transatlantic affair.

In 1940, as the threat of Nazi invasion grew daily, the Stedelijk Museum began secretly stowing much of its collection in a bunker in sand hills north of Amsterdam. At the same time, Peggy Guggenheim, one of those wayward daughters of Capital who helped bankroll modernism and who had been living it up among the European avant-garde for twenty years, was going around the studios of Paris on a spending spree; 'a painting a day' was her motto. With the fall of France, she returned to her native New York and opened Art of This Century, a wild gallery-cum-museum where she could display her collection and present new work. This, more than any other gallery, served as the test site for the critical encounter between emerging American artists and a refugee European avant-garde that in the war years all but overran New York's modest art scene.

Pollock, Rothko, Stil and Baziotes all had their first solo shows there.[2] Before she began showing the Americans in earnest, however, Guggenheim inaugurated in 1943 a Spring salon for emerging artists. During the judging she came upon one of the jurors Piet Mondrian, intently engaged with one of the submissions: 'Isn't it awful?' she said of her first Pollock—*Stenographic Figure* (1942). Mondrian begged to differ; it was one of the most exciting paintings he had seen in a very long time: 'You must watch this man.' 'You can't be serious,' she said, 'You can't compare this with the way you paint.' Mondrian's reply is instructive: 'So don't compare. The way I paint and the way I think are two different things.'

The two Pollocks, *The Waterbull* (1946), and *Reflections of the Big Dipper* (1947), in this show were the first to enter a European museum collection; indeed they were the first American abstractions to do so, and they were gifts from Peggy Guggenheim. That was in 1951. Mondrian's response had been echoed by others, and Guggenheim soon became Pollock's most enthusiastic promoter and collector, not only in the U.S. but also in Europe. In 1950 during the Venice Biennale she mounted a show of 23 of his works from her collection at the Correr Museum, Pollock's first solo European show. The following year 'Surrealism and Abstraction', based on her collection, was shown at the Stedelijk. Guggenheim wanted to move her collection to her new home in Venice and the director Willem Sandberg suggested she could avoid duties if she showed it in Europe first. He also persuaded the Holland-America-Line to ship the works across the Atlantic free-of-charge. In her gratitude she gave him a Duchamp *Boîte-en-Valise no.20/20 XX/XX* (1949), and two Pollocks of his choice. The Stedelijk was to be in the forefront of European recognition of, and the growing authority of, American art in the immediate post-war decades.

The impression of post-war art given by this segment of the exhibition is dominated by the conjunction of the more gestural Americans—Pollock, De Kooning—with the CoBrA artists Appel, Jorn and Constant. CoBrA *was* a movement, complete with manifesto—although only Constant, its author, signed the manifesto and the movement was disbanded after three years in 1951. The name is a map, an acronym for Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam, and is a totem/logo of the group—'We have to describe ourselves as animals' (Jorn). That use of 'have to' faced up to the 'zero' condition of the time and the place, by witnessing, as with Constant's *Scorched Earth* (1951), the inhuman, the bestial, violence of war,

while simultaneously calling upon the 'creative oppressive structures' that gave rise to it. Nineteen-forties Expressionism everywhere marked a comparable confrontation; in Australia Arthur Boyd's *Four Seasons* (1942), and in New Zealand Colin McCahon's *The Valley of Dry Bones* (1947) are examples.

CoBrA's defining moment was probably the Exposition Internationale d'Art Experimental at the Stedelijk in 1949 which included artists from ten countries. 'The oppression and isolation of art was most severe here [in the Netherlands] during the war,' claimed Jan Vrijman, 'so that it was here that the cork shot most violently out of the bottle … It was an explosion marking the beginning of the liberation of our culture. And Sandberg had offered the Stedelijk Museum as a stage on which the spark that had been left smouldering during the war could break out internationally after liberation.'[3] More a manifestation than an exhibition, the Exposition Internationale was designed by the architect Aldo van Eyck: paintings, some produced specifically for the installation, just leant against the walls, some were hung high, above viewers' head, or low at knee height, others lay on their backs on low platforms. Viewers had to pass through a wooden black painted cage hung with books of poetry—CoBrA included experimental poets like Bert Schierbeek, and poet painters such as Lucebert. The poetry reading which opened the show in fact ended in a street brawl—a 'Trotskyite riot', as it was later dubbed. The paintings looked to be the work of children: brightly coloured doodles of fantastic animals and scary monsters dashed off with insouciant panache. The papers were full of it. The avant-garde had come to town. And what was worse it had set up shop in the town museum, at the invitation of a director who had stated that he wanted to show art 'as both a mirror and a motor of social change'.

The CoBrA and American painters have common sources in Surrealism and Expressionism. In their imagery they tend to recapitulate their sources: animals, fishes, birds, storied, dreamt or conjured, and variously hybridised; teeth and eyes, hanks of hair, free floating, bared, wide, wild men and wild women. However, in their turning to the signifying potential of the processes and materials of painting—a turn which pushes them toward abstraction, they leave those sources behind. All fourteen paintings are identifiable by, and do draw attention to, their surface textures. In the years following Pollock's 1943 *Mural*, commissioned by Peggy Guggenheim, Americans enlarged the scale of their canvasses. Expressive handling of the paint acquires a life of its own. Most of the paintings here are more or less abstract and should be viewed as such. At the time it mattered greatly to critics when a De Kooning returned to abstraction or a Pollock regressed to figuration; even in the late 1970s some scandal attended Philip Guston's switch from abstraction to comic cuts realism. From a distance, however, figuration and abstraction seem two sides of the coin of the signifying 'action'—to use Harold Rosenberg's existentialist term—different instances of what De Kooning has described as 'slipping glimpses'.

Robert Creeley, poet, saw the painters as making 'the shift I was myself so anxious to accomplish … away from the insistently pictorial, whether figurative or non-figurative, to a manifest directly of the energy inherent in the materials, literally, and their physical manipulation in the act of painting itself.'[4] Or, as Charles Olson, another poet, put it: 'The distinction here is between language as the act of the instant and language as the act of thought about the instant.'[5] Moving in this selection from Appel, to Jorn, to Pollock, to De Kooning, the action just gets faster and more to the point of the painting. From the first to the second Pollock, the 'progress' is the same. Surprisingly enough, these distinctions also work for Newman, Rothko, and Louis; it's just that colour replaces line as that which is activated, is in action.

Surrealist 'doodling' or automatic writing is sometimes seen as a source for this new practice, as are Kandinsky's earliest abstractions, like *Improvisation 33 (Orient 1)* (1913) included in an earlier section of this exhibition. Jazz, which was as commonplace an interest among the European avant-garde as 'primitive' art and was not unrelated, played a part as well. When the refugee artists arrived in New York they wanted to hear the real thing. Mondrian painted *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1943). New Zealand artist Len Lye, who had named his daughter Yancey, after the boogie woogie

pianist Jimmy Yancey—also one of Pollock's favourites—headed to the Stuyvesant Casino to hear Bunk Johnson; Peggy Guggenheim and Nelly Van Doesberg slipped off to Minton's; Appel later in the 1950s, 'went to hear Charlie Mingus nearly every night'. As for the Americans, Lee Krasner reports that when Pollock was playing his records, 'The house would shake. Jazz? He thought it was the only other really creative thing happening in this country.' Similarly emerging writers—Beat novelists like Jack Kerouac, poets like Creeley—turned to jazz; not just because it was socially and racially 'other', nor even because it was an art of intense feeling, but crucially because it was an art of process (improvisation) and virtuosity that was quintessentially performative. Those who knew jazz as at once an extremely technical and spontaneous art would have immediately understood Pollock's provocative remark, 'When I am in my painting, I am not aware of what I am doing.' That is to say, he had no time for the 'act of thought about the instant.' |

1 Karel Appel, '1977 Conversation: Karel Appel–Frederic de Towarnicki' in Alfred Frankenstein, *Karel Appel*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1979, pp.171-172.)

2 During these same years, Lucio Fontana, an exact contemporary of Guggenheim's, sought refuge in his native Argentina, and like her returned to Europe after the defeat of Germany.

3 John Jansen van Galen & Huib Schreurs, *Site for the Future: A Short History of the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum, 1895-1995*, V&K Publishing/Inmerc, Naarden, 1995, p.99.

4 'On the Road: Notes on Artists and Poets, 1950-1965', in *Poets of the Cities, New York and San Francisco, 1950-1965*, New York, E.P. Dutton 1974, p.58.

5 'Human Universe', in *Selected Writings of Charles Olson*, New York, New Directions, 1965, p.54.



The first call came into the police station at 10:15p.m. Officer Earl Finch was dispatched to Fireplace Road. 'Two dead at scene of accident,' he reported. Edith Metzger was found crushed to death beneath the car. Ruth Kligman was thrown clear and taken to Southampton Hospital with major injuries; she survived. Pollock was killed instantly when his head hit a tree.[1]

Jackson Pollock lived and painted in the American popular imagination as a mythic figure. His death in the wreckage of an Oldsmobile convertible at the age of 44, while travelling with two female passengers neither of whom was his wife, cemented that mythology. Pollock (1912-56) had encapsulated the idea of the self-destructive Romantic artist and refigured it in uniquely American terms. Indeed his death could have been the stuff of Pop Art: it had the requisite components of glamour, violence and the automobile—subjects deeply embedded in the American popular consciousness of the time.

By the time of his death, Pollock was a spent force and his best works, the revolutionary 'drip' paintings, which had occupied him only for a brief period around 1950, were well behind him and the movement he had helped define was similarly spent. By then in its second and even third generation, Abstract Expressionism had lapsed into a stultified mannerism. In spite of this, Pollock's presence is richly apparent in American art of the late fifties and early sixties, in the emergence of what would come to be known as Pop Art and Minimalism.

Both styles responded to the heat of Abstract Expressionism's intensity with an emotional coolness. Both repudiated its apparent authenticity and directness, rejecting its claims to transcendence though intense subjective experience, opting instead for impersonality and objectivity. And both embraced the mass culture Abstract Expressionism had rejected, albeit in very different ways. But rather than rejecting Abstract Expressionism outright, the two movements can be seen as renegotiating its central tenets. In doing so Pop and Minimalism simply found truth in De Kooning's claim that 'Pollock busted our idea of a picture all to hell. Then there could be new paintings again.'[2]

Pop Art's origins are as diverse as the approaches of its protagonists. The term 'Pop' was first used in post-war Britain by artists of the Independent Group such as Richard Hamilton (1922-) and Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-), who, in images which yearned for the abundance and glamour of an increasingly dominant American popular culture, sought to democratise the production and reception of art. At the same time, the French Nouvelle Realistes—Arman, César and Klein—pursued related strategies, incorporating the stuff of ordinary life into artistic production. Contemporaneously, Jasper Johns (1930-) and Robert Rauschenberg (1925-) were, in adjacent New York studios undoing the conventions of Abstract Expressionism, Johns in his paintings of targets and the American flag, Rauschenberg in his combine paintings and assemblages.

Johns's works pursued modernist ideas of flatness and objectivity—his flags were not flags but paintings of flags, objects not illusions. In his choice of subject Johns distanced himself from the work, both psychologically, in that a readymade offered up no sense of his identity or emotional state, and formally, in that all the major decisions about the composition of the work were made by the subject itself. Similarly, Rauschenberg's paintings utilising the chanced-upon detritus of urban life—stuffed animals, printed images and other found objects—did not attempt to offer an index to the artist's inner reality, but presented it—and the work of art itself—as just another component of an arbitrary landscape of signs.

Searching that cultural landscape for images that were even more emotionally empty than Johns's, Roy Lichtenstein (1923-97) arrived at comic books as his source material. Lichtenstein had begun his career painting in the Abstract Expressionist style that had, by the late fifties, become reduced to a set of increasingly mannered conventions and predetermined codes. Lichtenstein responded to this in 1960 by painting Mickey Mouse in the style of a De Kooning 'Woman', and by the following year was replicating in paint the photomechanical process of comic strip printing. In a deepening quest for banality, Lichtenstein shifted in 1962 from the recognisable images of Disney in favour of anonymous and generic images from pulp romance and war comics. 'One of the things a cartoon does,' Lichtenstein said of his preferred subjects in 1963, 'is to express violent emotion and passion in a completely mechanical style.'[3] That mechanical style and its consequences—the conventionalised and debased currency of contemporary experience—rather than the emotional event itself, was Lichtenstein's subject.

Lichtenstein's work retained connections with high art, however, not the least of which were the subtle aesthetic decisions he made with his found images. Scale also linked the artist's work with that of his Abstract Expressionist forebears, as is apparent in the mural scale of *As I Opened Fire* ... (1964) And while Lichtenstein's replication of the Benday process was intended to remove himself from the painterly process, it ended up being an intense and laboriously hands-on technique.

Unlike Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist (1933-) did not have to invent a new painterly technique to emulate the mass media from which his work derived: his experience as a billboard painter gave him both the means of working and a repertoire of subjects upon which to draw. Despite their fragmented sign language, Rosenquist's works of the sixties retain a connection, albeit ironic and questioning, with Abstract Expressionism. His swirling images of tinned spaghetti can be seen as latter day Pollocks, their drips and splatters formalised as media images of consumption and desire, as can the sticky abundance of *Frosting* (1964) as it pours off the picture plane.

A similar, latent eroticism is apparent in Claes Oldenburg's work, as is an early debt to Abstract Expressionism. As Oldenburg put it in 1967, 'I feel as if Pollock is sitting on my shoulder, or rather, crouching in my pants.'[4] In Oldenburg's 1960 work *The Store*, an environment presented in a disused shop, everyday objects were re-fashioned in painted plaster and decorated with Pollock-like splatters and drips. Within two years, Oldenburg had settled into his recognisable style of taking objects from ordinary, everyday experience—appliances, tools, food—and mutating them in scale and materiality, making the small large, the hard soft and vice versa. The Surrealist effect of these works is unmistakable, bringing about a displacement of the object's meaning through its shifted context and form. Unlike the Abstract Expressionists, however, Oldenburg's exploration of the unconscious in such gestures is geared more towards articulating the social construction of desire than to personal revelation.

Mirroring the emotional blankness of Pop, what would come to be identified as Minimalism similarly emerged as a continuity of the broader impulses of Abstract Expressionism. The geometric, colour saturated non-compositions of Barnett Newman (1905-70) provided inspiration for artists like Frank Stella (1936-) and Donald Judd (1923-94), but it was the work of Ad Reinhardt (1913-67) that provided them with new possibilities. Peripheral to the main currents of Abstract Expressionism, Reinhardt advocated a painting that was defined negatively, purged of all emotion and radically rejecting content: an art-as-art-as-art.

If Reinhardt's black paintings provided philosophical direction for the young Stella, it was the flags of Jasper Johns, which he saw at Leo Castelli Gallery in 1958, which offered the formal means for this art of refusal. Stripped of their literal subject, the flags became for Stella a series of stripes, their repetition articulating the essential two dimensionality of the canvas. Lacking in gesture, painted first in house paints then in metallic pigments, Stella's stripe paintings were a statement of their own objecthood. Their compositions were dictated by the shape of the canvas, rather than by any attempt to compose within that shape, or reference the outside world. Introducing first notches then holes and ultimately, non-rectangular shapes, Stella's works, he said, were 'based on the fact that what can be seen there is there ... what you see is what you see.'[5]

The notion of painting-as-object that Reinhardt had opened up provided a rich territory for painters in the sixties, who were contiguous to, but not defined amongst, the Minimalists. Robert Ryman (1930-), Robert Mangold (1937-) and Brice Marden (1938-) developed from this apparently irrefutable modernist principle works that pursued the systems and structures of painting.

Ryman's works are an excellent example of this pursuit, if for the artist's consistency of approach over three decades. As Kate Linker has stated, Ryman's paintings 'catalogue pictorial factors—the nature of the support, the application of paint, the depth of the stretcher, the frame or the relationship to the wall. Ryman's preferred format is a neutral square; his colour, no colour—white—the minimum needed to register the difference of painting on a support.'[6] *Untitled* (1960) is a study in contrasts, its two panels ranging between texture and smoothness, gesture and restraint, nuanced colour and uneventful whiteness. More than this, suggests Linker, Ryman's works point up their own historicity, the place within modernism from which they obtain their meaning. Ryman's catalogue extends beyond the factuality of the work to address its conventionality.

The conventionality of painting is addressed in a different way in Robert Mangold's works. Identifying more with the sculptors of Minimalism—Carl Andre and Judd particularly—Mangold used shaped canvasses to emphasise the inherent and independent nature of painting, while articulating its relationship to the architectural space. His works activate the white wall around them 'like a positive negative puzzle, suggesting what [is] not there [is] equally important'.[7]

Such systematic approaches were by no means a route to the exclusion of sensuality, as Brice Marden's works of the sixties and seventies demonstrate. Like Stella, Marden found direction in the works of Jasper Johns, which he closely scrutinised whilst working as a security guard at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1964. It was not Johns's images, however, that drew Marden's attention, but his surfaces—subtle and restrained colours built up from of many layers of oil paint and wax. This encaustic technique gave Marden a means of activating the plane of the canvas whilst maintaining its integrity as an object. The result is a delicacy and tenuousness, in which the surface of the painting can be likened to human skin. This, and the generally anthropomorphic scale of Marden's works, gives them their 'subject'. Marden is thus close in sentiment to Abstract Expressionism—a fact confirmed by the calligraphic, gestural nature of his work since the mid-eighties—arguing that 'the rectangle, the plane, the structure, the picture, are but sounding boards for the spirit.'[8]

Such sentiments would have been roundly rejected by Donald Judd, who was central to Minimalism not just as one of its leading artists but as its most acute philosopher. Judd first as emerged a painter, working at the tail end of Abstract Expressionism and late reliefs such as *Untitled* (1989) show a painter's sensitivity to colour. At the same time, Judd was studying philosophy at Columbia University, and it was his interest in the Empiricists, particularly David Hume, that gave him a distrust of anything in art that was not experientially verifiable—a refined version of Stella's dictum that 'what you see is what you see'.

From this conviction, Judd slowly expunges figurative and illusionistic references from his work, rejecting the possibility that art could provide the viewer with a transcendent experience. By the early sixties, Judd had moved towards his mature style of highly reductive, simple forms. These works were neither painting nor sculpture, but 'specific objects'[9] which addressed themselves to a limited range of propositions—shape, volume, colour, surface, order and structure—in an intensely matter-of-fact way.

In redefining Abstract Expressionism, Pop and Minimalism had been driven towards profound inquiry into the nature of the work of art and its relationship to the world of life. Carried along by the momentum of social and political change of the sixties, such questions became more and more pronounced as the decade continued.

Valuing process over material, idea above object, the art that emerged in the wake of Pop and Minimalism had many names attached to it. Arte Povera—literally poor art—was one such term, coined by Italian critic Germano Celant. In his 1969 book of the same name, Celant grouped together diverse artists from Britain, America, Italy, Germany and Holland. This inclusiveness was a 'precarious and contingent'[10] strategy—which defined Arte Povera as 'a series of fragments—fragments of meaning, fragments of words and fragments of language'.[11] Such diversity and fragmentation is apparent in the remaining works in this section of the exhibition.

Photography, for example, is a medium common to work of Ger van Elk (1941-), Jan Dibbets (1941-) and Gilbert and George (1942-, 1943-), but other than resisting it as a tool of veracity, all engage it in different ways. Dibbets's sharply perspectival landscapes, according to Jean-Christophe Ammann, 'transpose the legacy of Cézanne upon the cool eye of the camera … [questioning] the reality of photography itself'.[12] Van Elk is similarly concerned with photographic representation and the historical codes of picture-making. In *Adieu II* (1974), he playfully tips what appears to be a seventeenth-century Dutch landscape out of a trapezoidal frame. A figure in the hand-painted picture waves goodbye as the larger photographic perspective overtakes him. For Gilbert and George, photography was a natural extension of their early performance works, in which they famously declared themselves to be 'living sculptures'. Their large photo-murals feature themselves as detached observers of an unreal urban landscape, fraught with tension and desire.

In the works of Luciano Fabro (1936-), Giuseppe Penone (1947-) and Jannis Kounellis (1936-), material is used in a manner closest to Celant's notion of the 'convergence' of 'an ordered past with the contingent jumble of the present'.[13] In Fabro's work, the shape of Italy, or its symbol, the boot, is a frequent subject, indicating the weight of his country's past upon his work. *The Piedi* series brings together material sensuousness, historical reference and contradictory notions of form.[14] A similarly poetic understanding motivates Penone. Drawing on his rural background, Penone makes works that are rooted in nature and strive towards a kind of agrarian utopia. In *Breath I* (1978) traditional clay potting techniques are employed to make what is both a container for the body and image imparting its presence.

Material allusiveness of a similarly poetical nature is a prominent concern for Kounellis. Using lead, Kounellis hints at many associations: insulation and toxicity, malleability and transformation. 'For Kounellis,' suggests Lynne Cooke, 'these works are social gestures which attempt to elucidate the relationship between man and the world, or man's place in the cosmos. Art's role … is a symbolic acting out of this relationship.'[14]

The acting out of that relationship is in some sense the purpose of all the work here, whether it be through the confrontational media imagery of Roy Lichtenstein, the emotional withdrawal of Donald Judd's sleek objects or Luciano Fabro's elusive metaphors and rich materials. All make claims about the nature of art and all assert a model of the world in which that art exists. In doing so, they offer possibilities far beyond those that De Kooning imagined in Pollock's work, not just to create a new painting, but a new art, ever shifting and constantly renewing itself. And it is out of this that our present is defined. |

1 Deborah Solomon, *Jackson Pollock: A Biography,* Simon and Schuster, New York, 1987.

2 Irving Sandler, 'Conversations with De Kooning,' *Art Journal* vol 48, no.3, 1989, quoted in Irving Sandler 'Abstract Expressionism: The Noise of the traffic on the way to Walden Pond', *American Art in the Twentieth century: Painting and Sculpture 1913-1993,* ed. Christos M. Joachmides and Norman Rosenthal, Munich, Prestal-Verlag, 1993, p.78.

3 Quoted in Jonathan Fineberg, *Art since 1940: Strategies of being,* London, Laurence King, 1995, p.261.

4 Claes Oldenburg, 'Egomassages about Pollock', in 'Jackson Pollock: An Artists' Symposium, part 2', *Art News,* New York, vol 66 no.3, May 1967; quoted in Germano Celant 'Claes Oldenburg and the feeling of things', in *Claes Oldenburg: An Anthology,* New York, Guggenheim Museum, 1995, p.14.

5 Bruce Glasier ,'Questions to Stella and Judd', in Geoffrey Battcock *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology,* New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1968, p.158.

6 Kate Linker, 'Abstraction: Form as Meaning', in *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art, 1945-1986*, Abbeville, New York, 1986, p.54.

7 Michael Auping, 'Fields, Planes, Systems: Abstract Painting in America since 1945', in *Abstraction, Geometry, Painting: Selected Geometric Abstract Painting in America since 1945*, Abrahms, New York, 1989, p.7.

8 Stephen Bann, 'From the Material to the Immaterial' in *Brice Marden: Painting, Drawings, Prints, 1975-80,* London, Whitechapel; quoted in Auping, ibid, p.81.

9 Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects', in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1975-1986,* Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 1987, n.p.

10 Germano Celant, *Arte Povera: Conceptual, Actual or Impossible Art,* London, Studio Vista, 1969, p.5.

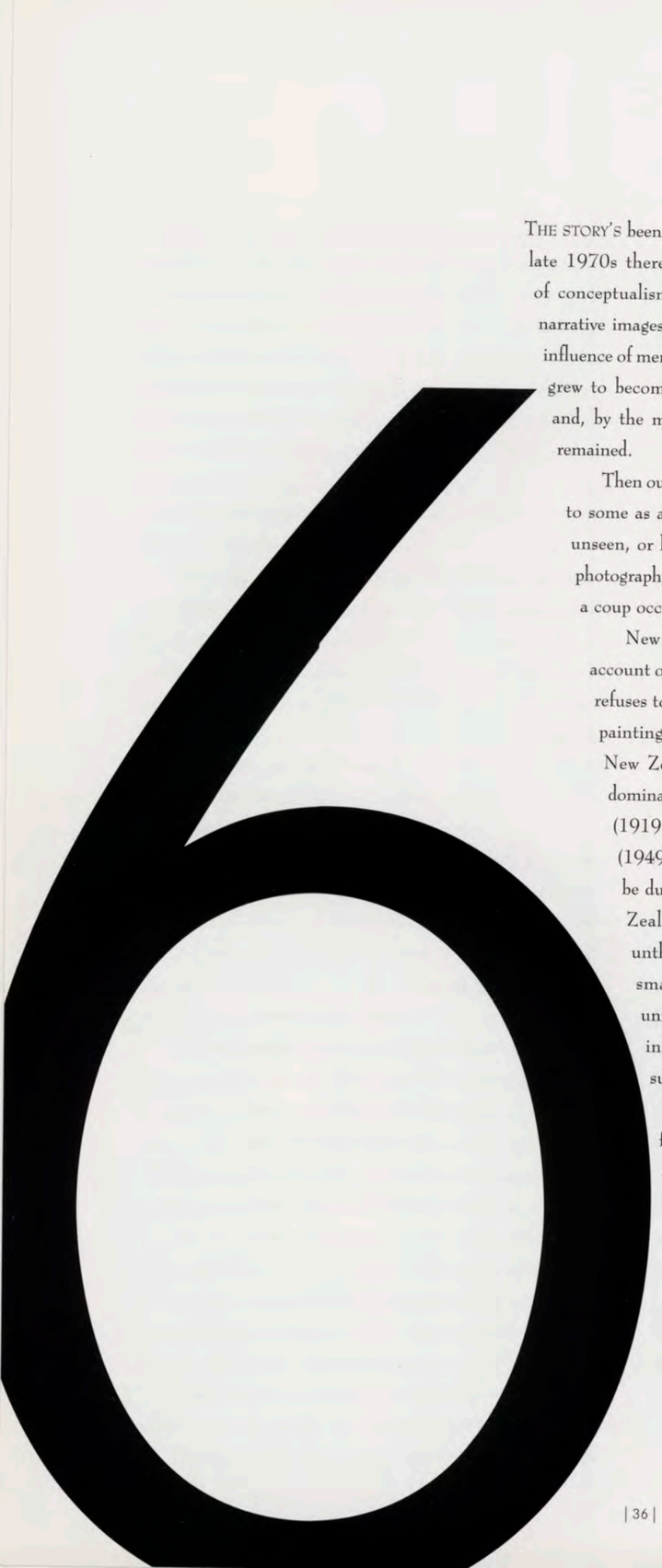
11 Caroline Tisdall, '"Materia": The Context of Arte Povera' in *Italian Art in the Twentieth Century: Painting and Sculpture 1900-1988,* ed. Emily Braun, Munich, Prestel-Verlag, 1989, p.363.

12 Jean-Christophe Ammann, 'Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art', in *Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art,* Art Institute of Chicago, 1977, p.12.

13 Michael Archer, *Art since 1960,* London, Thames and Hudson, 1996, p.86.

14 Margit Roswell, 'Experimental Fabro', in *Luciano Fabro,* San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1992, p.17.

15 Lynne Cooke, 'Luminous Penumbra', in *Jannis Kounellis,* London, Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 1986, n.p.



THE STORY'S been told so many times that one could almost believe it: that in the late 1970s there occurred a reaction against the supposedly arcane rigours of conceptualism, resulting in many artists using painting to reinvestigate narrative images, history, myth, the figure and landscape. That because of the influence of mentor figures like Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, conceptualism grew to become so dominant that painting lost all intellectual credibility, and, by the mid-seventies, was dying out. Only a few persistent stragglers remained.

Then out of the blue, painting suddenly seemed to re-emerge—according to some as a reaction against the austerity found in galleries, the absent, unseen, or language-based artworks documented by verbal description or photography. Through promotion by a group of energetic dealers and critics, a coup occurred. Painterly sensuality was reasserted.

New Zealand's art history tells a different story from the above account of the Northern Hemisphere's 'internationalism', a version that refuses to acknowledge the existence of pluralism. At the time that the painting boom began, conceptualism had little impact in mainstream New Zealand art, its influence being negligible compared to the dominance of painting and the popularity of artists like Colin McCahon (1919-1987), Tony Fomison (1939-1990) and Philip Clairmont (1949-1984). Painting was never in jeopardy here, and while it might be dubious to insist that it ever was in jeopardy anywhere, in New Zealand the notion that painting might be dead was always unthinkable. Conceptualism was a fringe activity carried out by a small group of students and teachers linked to a couple of universities, and who occasionally performed projects in municipal institutions. The wider art community never understood or supported it.

So, already dominant, painting in New Zealand got a further boost. The promotion of the new painting from America and Italy in magazines and books helped spread the news. And as it was abstract painting which had always baffled most New Zealanders, so the national climate was receptive to images.

Even within 'avant-garde' strongholds like the universities, images became popular again. Performance artists began to make saleable objects. Many New Zealand artists attended the Sydney Biennales in the late seventies and early eighties, listening to speakers like Achile Bonito Oliva champion new paintings by the three Italian *transavantgardia* artists in this exhibition.

John Hurrell

The first signs in New Zealand of a new interest in painting was the 1980 New Image exhibition at Auckland City Art Gallery. It referred to the 1978 exhibition of contemporary American art at the Whitney Museum of Art; art which although image-based, was not necessarily gestural or painterly. Wild, Visionary Spectral at the National Art Gallery six years later, with its collection of big German names, seemed to substantiate an international swing towards so-called subjective paint handling.

'Subjectivity', globally embraced in contrast to a misperception of 'conceptualism' as cold blooded and logical, became a marketable product, launched by dealers to reach a larger public. This new art was no longer inward looking, though much of it did quote earlier styles. In fact, while refuting the idea of art history progressing in a linear direction, some of the newly-exposed painters were influenced by conceptualism. The best of them did considerably more than replicate the painterly semiotics of emotional immediacy. The Germans, and some Americans, invented new strategies to resist traditional ways of using paint, while the Italians rekindled an interest in myth and narrative. They also combined decorative formats with repugnant subject matter like bodily orifices, introducing a gleeful infantilism to a hitherto staid medium.

The title of Georg Baselitz's *Nude, Finger Painting* (1972) may refer to either paint being applied with the finger, or the German artist shoving his digit up the fundament of the traditional conventions of painting. He painted these works so that the subject matter is upside down. He didn't paint them 'the right way up,' and then invert them. The inversion is part of the activity of painting, a gesture made to defy the viewer's assumptions about the painting act. It points to the fact that though there is a figure being depicted, that it is the painting that is paramount.

Baselitz (1938-) usually hung these works above head height to taunt his audience. His ambivalence towards painting became apparent in earlier works, where he fractured his subject matter by dividing the canvas into horizontal slices, reshuffling the pieces of fragmented image so they did not align. By such breaching of convention, Baselitz defied not only painting history, but also the values of the world of which it is a part. These objects mocked themselves, so when his paintings were taken up by the art market, he began to lose interest and concentrate on his rough-hewn wooden sculpture.

Whereas Baselitz used the conventions of figure painting to disorientate the art lover, Anselm Kiefer (1945-) uses landscape painting to disturb in a different sense—to needle a specifically German audience. *March Heath* (1974) shows a view of the Brandenburg area, in what used to be East Germany. The area is famous for its beautiful forests and scenic walking tours, so the painting's poignant lack of trees becomes a metaphor for the 'moral barrenness' of the last war. The road can be seen to be the path of history, a thoroughfare by which armies advance or retreat, or a border symbolising a divided Germany. Kiefer's sarcastic tone becomes apparent when one considers that the title alludes to 'Markischer Heide, Markischer Sand', a patriotic tune from this district that became a Nazi marching song.

Kiefer is famous for making massive paintings that feature unusual materials such as sheet lead, shellac, woodcuts and straw. Likewise, Enzo Cucchi (1950-) often incorporated unusual materials such as large tree branches into his paintings. Rather than referencing scenes from a saga or grim period of history, Cucchi's paintings are more like riddles or carefully planned cartoons. In *Silly Music* (1980), the music comes from an abandoned violin, recently played by the faceless figure's chapped red feet. Or perhaps from a superior-looking cat, meowing while perched on a rock in the cave.

Cucchi mischievously plays on spatial ambiguities in this painting. The cave can be a deep grotto in the side of a cliff, or it might be a huge inverted priest's hat hovering in space. The unctuous feline could be on a rock, or it might be clinging to a niche in the cave roof, a roof which is both vexingly convex and concave.

Julian Schnabel (1951-) is like Kiefer in his use of ambitious subject matter and unorthodox materials. He first achieved renown through his raw images painted on beds of encrusted broken crockery. *Golgotha (Jaqueline at 104 Degrees)* (1980) features modelling paste, velvet and cow-hide in a version of the crucifixion theme. The title dwells on

Schnabel's anxiety at the time about his wife's health, perhaps paralleling his own mental pain with Christ's physical anguish. His picture is not a traditional Christian account, for there are four upright crosses in this Calvary, and another inverted. In this illusionistic space, different sized t-shapes, pasty blobs and gestural smears create a theatrical depth, with the cowhide offcut providing a metaphor for Christ's body. The viewer is drawn into a sinister field which seems to be turning into a turbulent maelstrom.

Schnabel's painted line often has a coarseness about it, a grating quality he deliberately combines with his disruptive use of materials. Francesco Clemente's (1952-) line on the other hand is elegantly refined, deftly articulating his quirky, complex images. They are often deeply introspective self portraits. His *Self-portrait with a Hole in the Head* (1981) contemplates death as the final wall to be breached, an infatuation symbolised by a rose. Positioned on a wall used for executions, the rose is a presentiment of his own smeared blood and death. Yet for all the revelling in decadence, the bruised eyes and unshaven cheeks of the artist do not make a good looking corpse. The artist portrays himself coolly glancing to one side—having received one shot in the head, and with bored indifference, awaiting another. The painting perversely links a hole in the head with the rose as a symbol for romantic love.

Jean Genet wrote his novel *The Miracle of the Rose* as a paean to romantic love and the arsehole. David Salle's (1952-) recent *Carnation* (1994) is also a likely reference to that cavity, through Arthur Rimbaud's description of the anus as a 'violet carnation' in his famous French sonnet. Salle's painting ostensibly refers to the depicted label of a powdered orange juice extract, but the three circular lifesaver lollies seem to allude to the famous Robert Rauschenberg sculpture *Monogram* (1959), a paint-smeared goat with a tyre encircling its waist, an image commonly regarded as a celebration of homosexual carnality. The inverted image of a woman's arm, that looks like a leg, is very similar to wax legs placed by Jasper Johns in several of his works of the mid-sixties. Salle's painting can be seen as a homage to Rauschenberg and Johns. Like their work, Salle's painting contains rebus-like structures —even though he was initially promoted as a maker of paintings that deliberately avoided meaning.

Unlike Salle, Jeff Koons (1955-) wanted the meanings in his work to be very clear. As a sculptor who was greatly concerned that no unpleasant imperfections be present in the surfaces of his carved or cast objects, he did not want to alienate his audience. With Koons, anality and banality are closely connected. *Ushering in Banality* (1988) is not intended to be ironical, for according to the artist 'irony causes too much critical contemplation'.[1]

Koons has said that his work desires the viewer's confidence, and to that end, it 'strives for a dialogue with the viewer to help fight off [any] alienation'.[2] Banality he sees as capable of 'bring[ing] salvation right now ... Banality is one of the greatest tools we have. It is a great seducer, because one automatically feels above it ... because one isn't threatened by it'.[3] This artist feels that banality is the best way for conceptual artists to communicate their ideas, but a cynic might demur that he just wants to 'bring home the bacon.'

To make his banal sculptures, Koons selected images and objects from a variety of sources. Similarly, Sandro Chia (1946-), as he celebrated the sensual delights of the painted surface, bombarding the senses with flicks, specks and squiggles of colour, also raked through art history to intuitively select various figures and settings. These he presented in a 'folk arty' decorative futurism, featuring luxuriant layers of finely detailed brush marks.

Rabbit for Dinner (1981) shows an exercise in futility, a rabbit running through a rippling flowerbed being pursued by a pudgy gentleman hoping to kill it with a carving knife. Chia's dreamlike image tells us something about our relation to these eight artworks from the Stedelijk Museum, most of which date from 1980. Like Chia's running man, we find it difficult to get close to the substance of what those Northern Hemisphere painters reacted against—even though worldwide, installation and video art are now more popular than ever.

Down here at the bottom of the world, Chia's piece of 'underground mutton' jumps into the pot of New Zealand's art history, creating a revitalised New Zealand painting. This new energy succeeded in establishing a stronger economic base through attracting more dealers and collectors. Painting itself, by the nineties, even included a few artists who were indifferent to the geographic location of sources, and to good taste or political decorum. For this to have occurred without the impetus and vivacity of the Neo-Expressionists is hard to imagine. |

1 Giancarlo Politi, 'Luxury and Desire: An Interview with Jeff Koons', *Flash Art*, no.132, February–March 1987, p.73.

2 Mary Anne Staniszewski, 'Jeff Koons: Conceptual Art of the '60s and '70s Alienated the Viewer', *Flash Art*, no.143, November–December 1988, p.114.

3 Jeff Koons, Catalogue entry in 'The Binational. Amerikanische Kunst der Spaten 80er Jahre' (1988), quoted in *Territorium Artis*, ed. Hulten, Bonn, Kunst-und Austellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1922, p.170.



Part 1 | From Van Gogh to German Expressionism | **Vincent van Gogh** | Kitchen Gardens on Montmartre, Paris | 1887 | oil on canvas | 960 x 1200 mm



Part 1 | From Van Gogh to German Expressionism | **Wassily Kandinsky** | Improvisation 33 (Orient 1) | 1913 | oil on canvas | 880 x 1000 mm



Part 1 | From Van Cogh to German Expressionism | **Karl Schmidt-Rottluff** | Landscape in Dangast | 1910 | oil on canvas | 770 x 850 mm

© Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, 1910 / Bild-Kunst. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



Part 1 | From Van Gogh to German Expressionism | **Jan Wiegers** | Landscape with Red Trees | 1924 | oil on canvas | 700 x 700 mm



Part 1 | From Van Gogh to German Expressionism | **Ernst Ludwig Kirchner** | Group of Artists | 1913 | oil on canvas | 700 x 800 mm



Part 1 | From Van Gogh to German Expressionism | **Ernst Ludwig Kirchner** | Dancing Women | 1911 | alder wood | 870 x 355 x 270 mm



Part 1 | From Van Gogh to Geman Expressionism | **Max Beckmann** | Portrait of the Artist with His Wife Quappi | 1940–41 | oil on canvas | 1940 x 890 mm

© Max Beckmann, 1941 / Bild-Kunst, Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



Part 1 | From Van Gogh to German Expressionism | **Maurice de Vlaminck** | Village | 1906 | oil on canvas | 605 x 735 mm

© Maurice de Vlaminck, 1906/ ADAGP. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.

From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | Part 2



Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Paul Cézanne** | Mount Saint-Victoire | c.1888 | oil on canvas | 540 x 650 mm



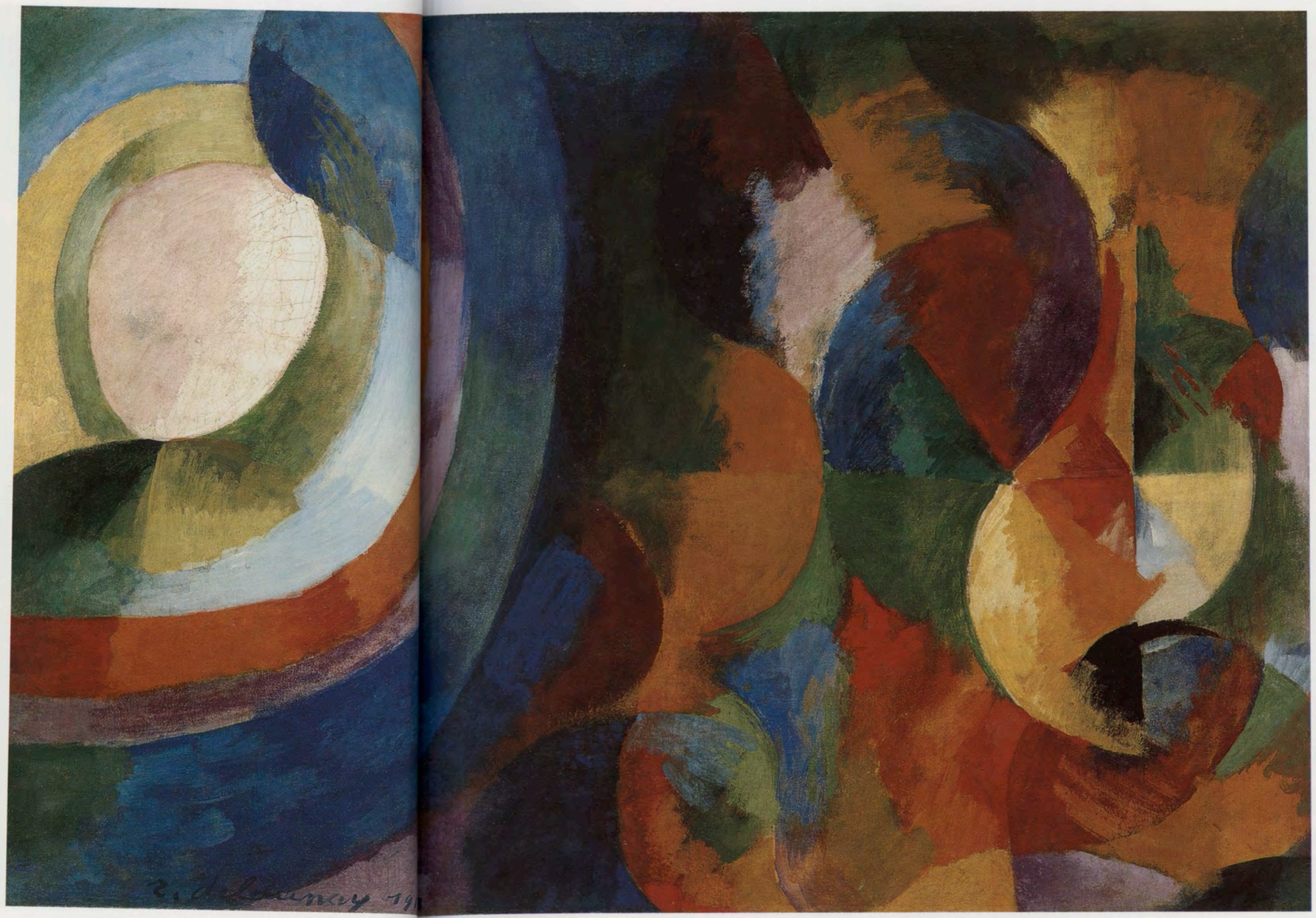
Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Georges Braque** | Still Life with Jar and Bottles | 1909 | oil on canvas | 460 x 380 mm

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Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Marc Chagall** | Self-portrait with Seven Fingers | 1912–13 | oil on canvas | 1260 x 1070 mm

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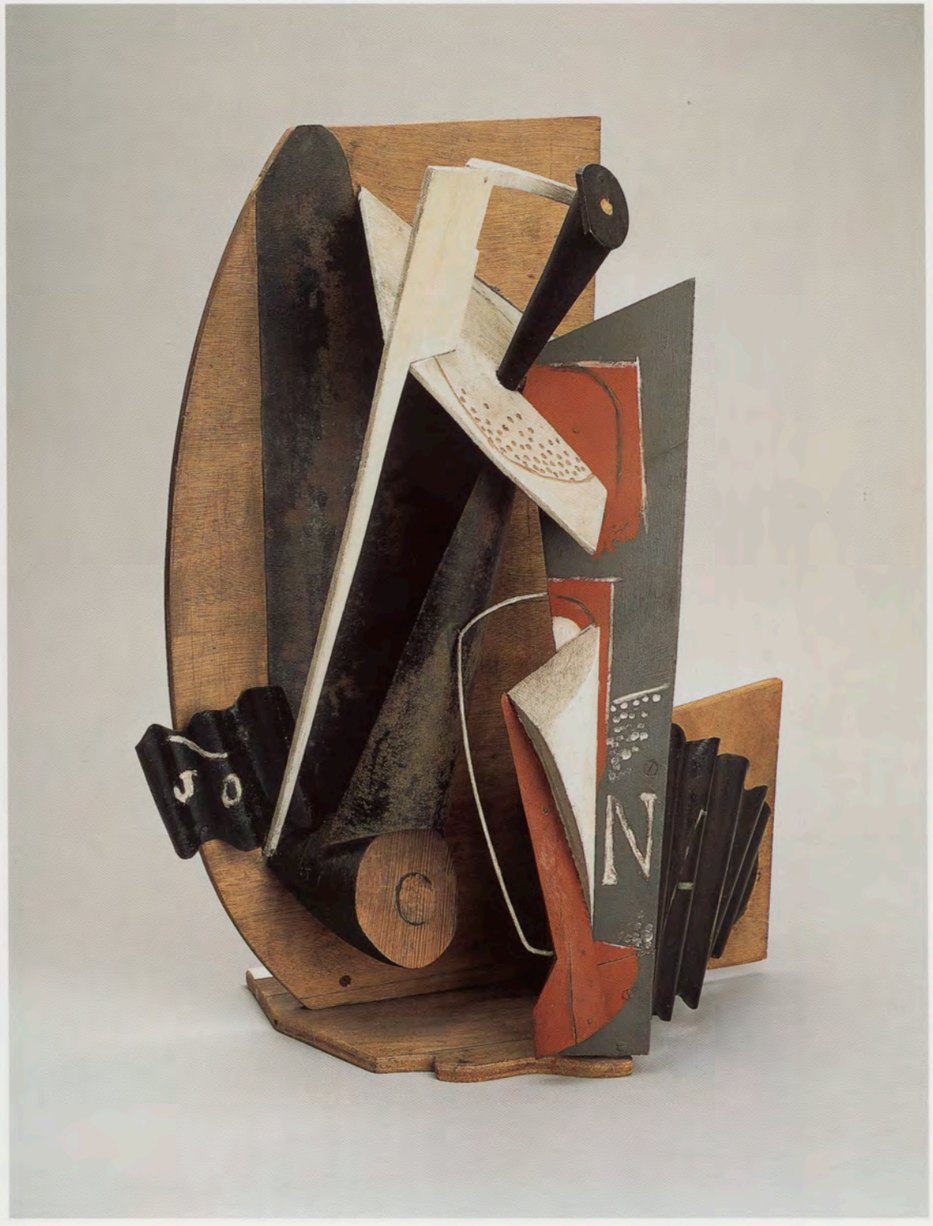


Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Robert Delaunay** | Circular Forms, Sun and Moon | 1912–13 | oil on canvas | 650 x 1000 mm



Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Gino Severini** | Train of the Wounded | 1915 | oil on canvas | 1170 x 900 mm

© Gino Severini, 1915 / ADAGP. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Henri Laurens** | Bottles, Glass and Newspaper | 1915 | oil on wood and iron shet | 510 x 400 x 220 mm

© Henri Laurens, 1915 / ADAGP. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Pablo Picasso** | Still Life with Guitar | 1924 | oil on canvas | 975 x 1300 mm

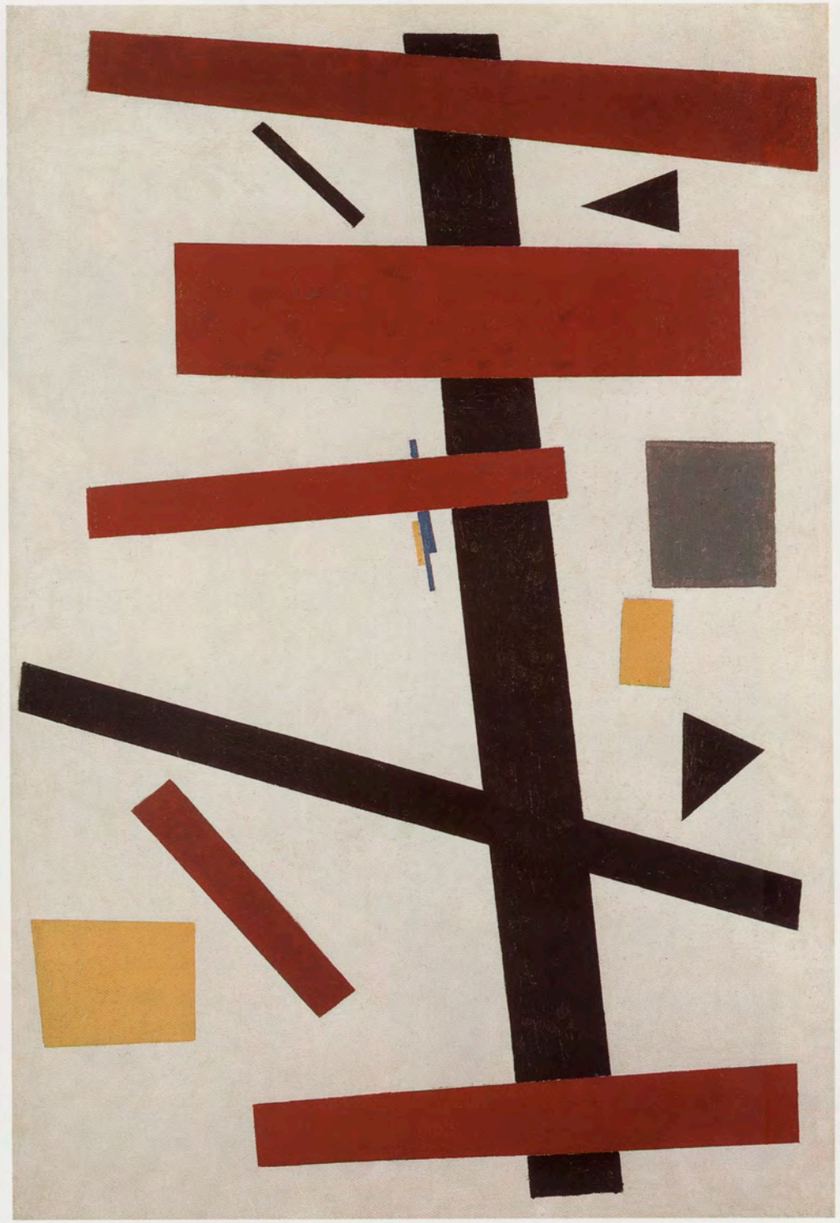
© Pablo Picasso, 1924 / Succession Pablo Picasso. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



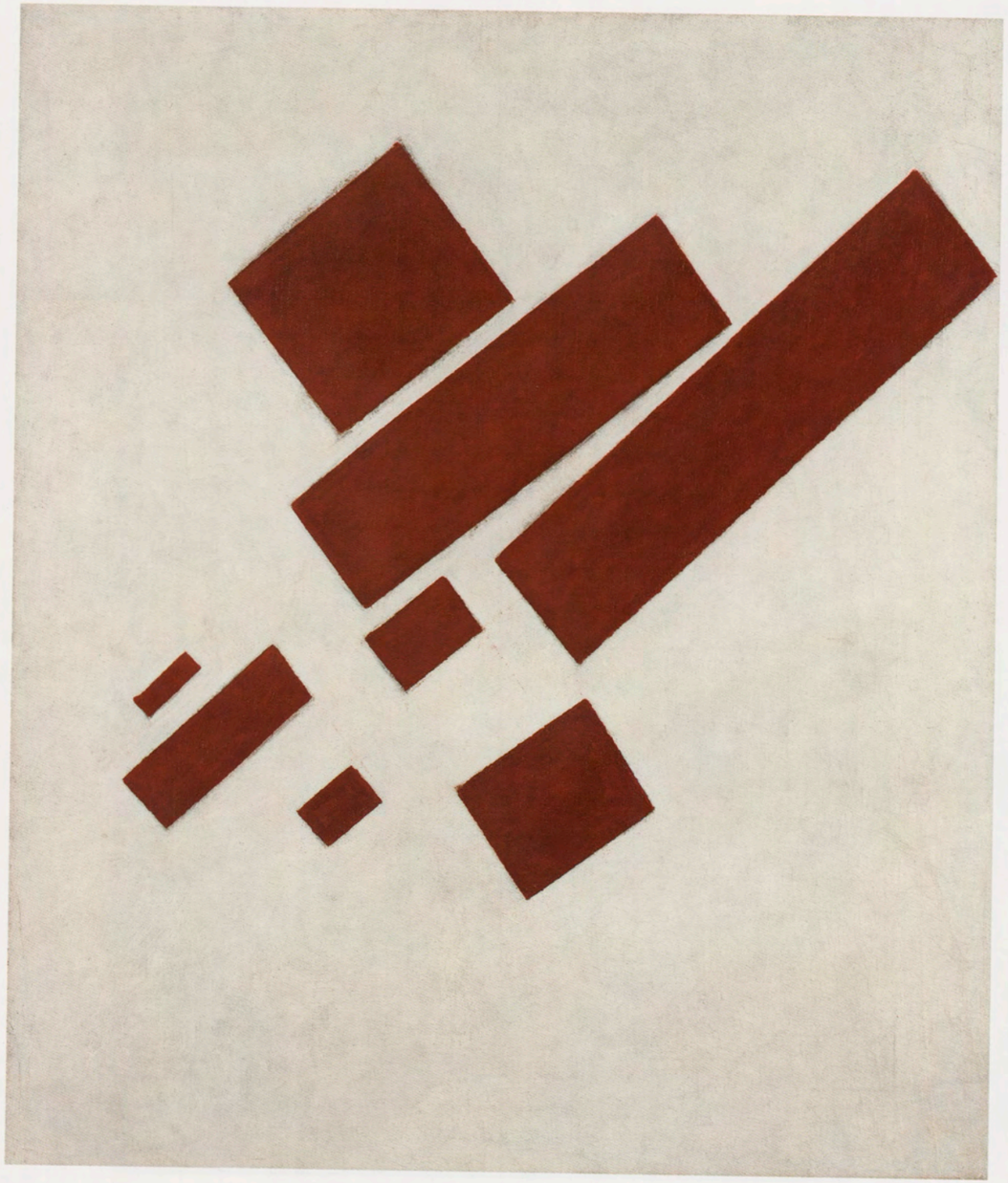
Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Kazimir Malevich** | The Woodcutter | 1912 | oil on canvas | 940 x 715 mm



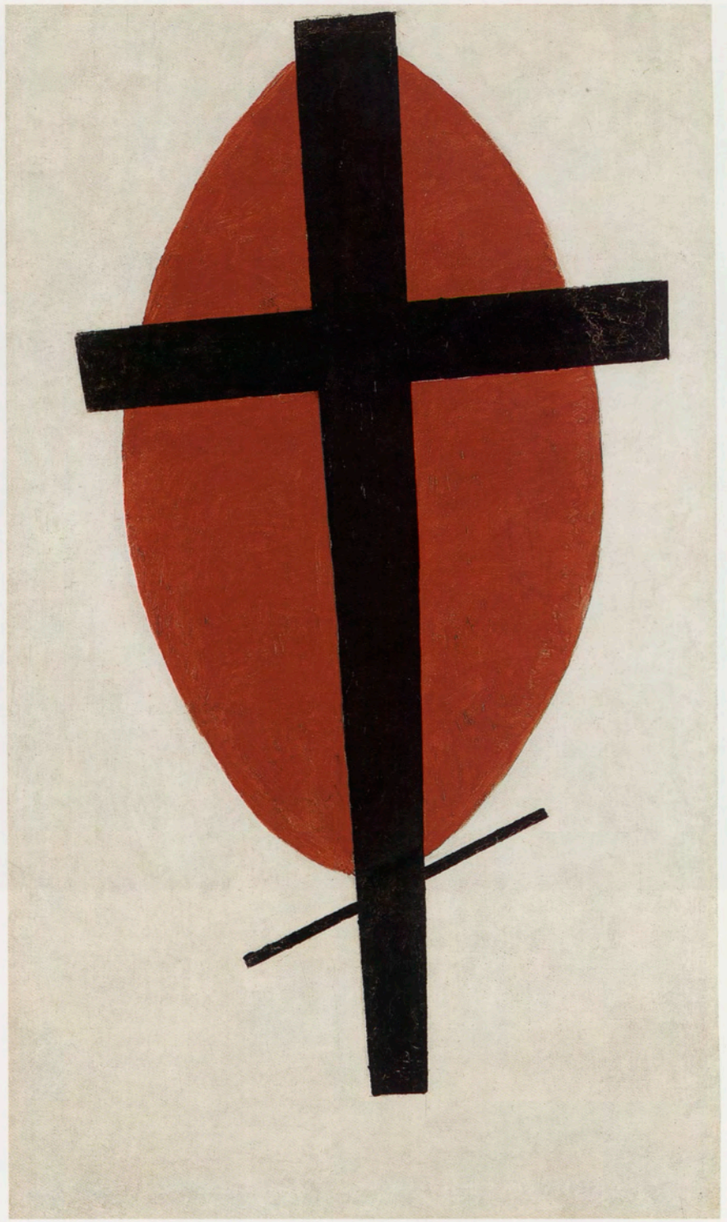
Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Kazimir Malevich** | An Englishman in Moscow | 1913–14 | oil on canvas | 880 x 570 mm



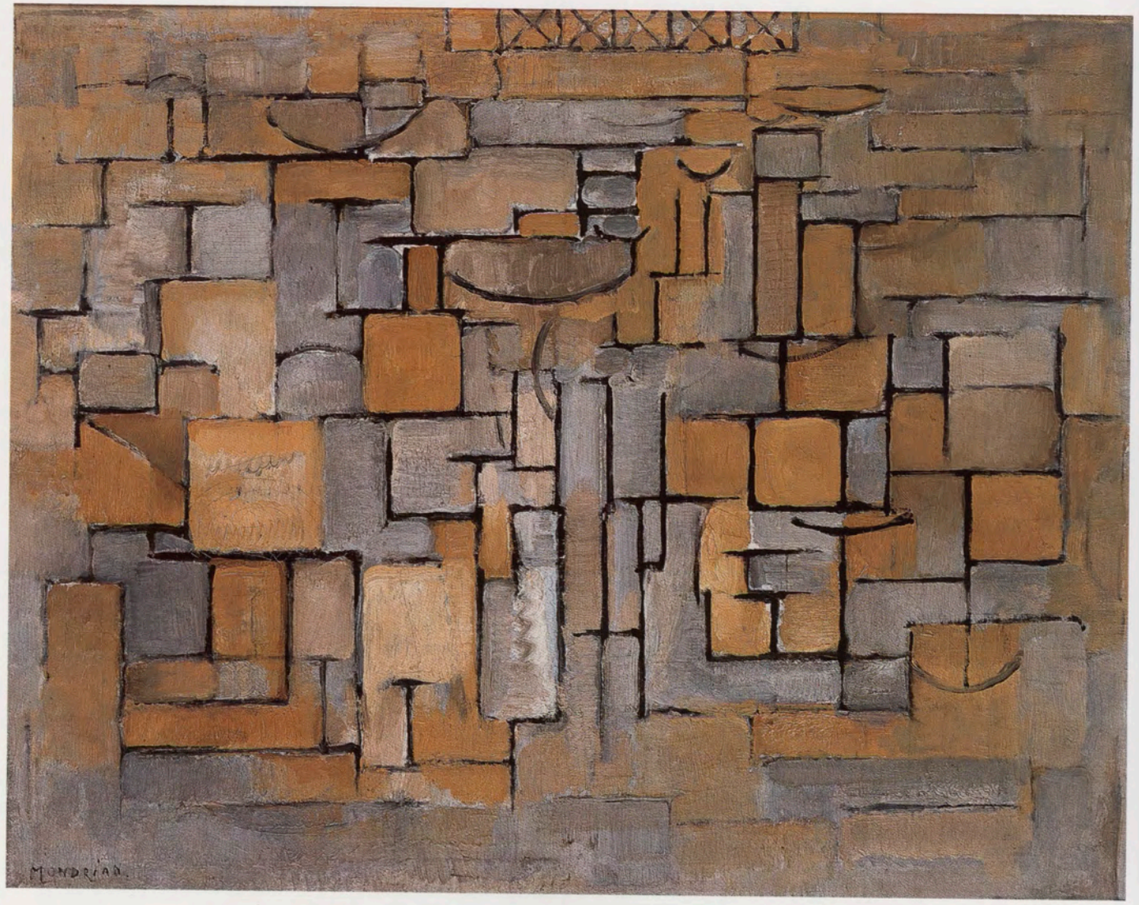
Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Kazimir Malevich** | Suprematism (Supremus No. 50) | 1915 | oil on canvas | 970 x 660 mm



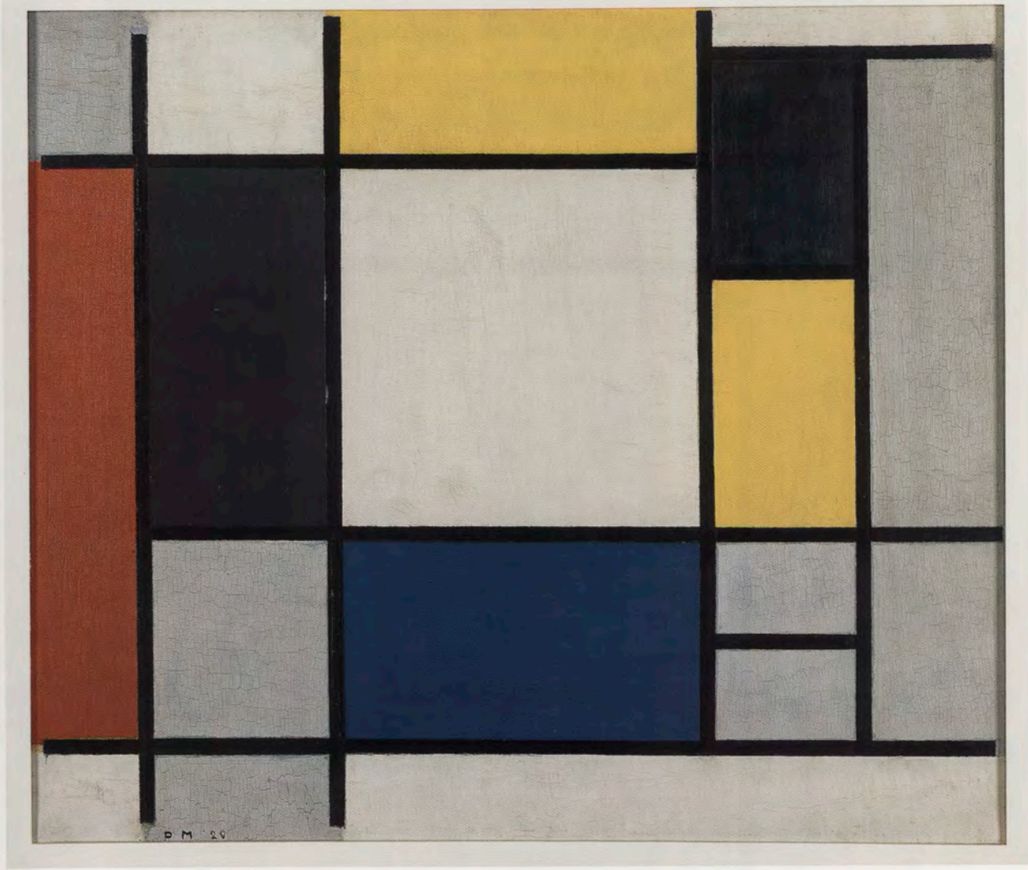
Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Kazimir Malevich** | Suprematism (Eight Red Rectangles) | 1915 | oil on canvas | 575 x 485 mm



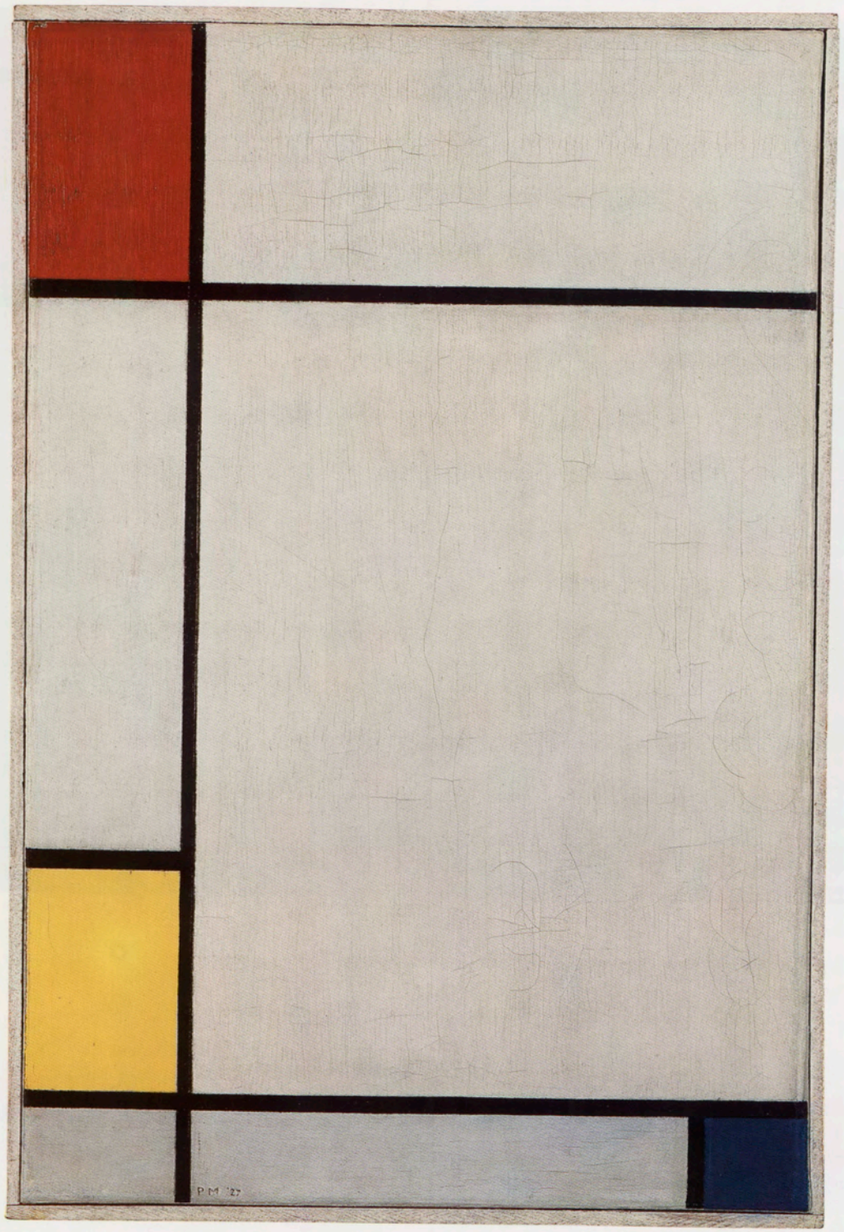
Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Kazimir Malevich** | Suprematism (Black Cross on Red Oval) | 1921-27 | oil on cnvas | 1005 x 600 mm



Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Piet Mondrian** | Composition XV | 1913 | oil on canvas | 615 x 765 mm



Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Piet Mondrian** | Composition with Red, Black, Blue, Yellow and Grey | 1920 | oil on canvas | 515 x 600 mm



Part 2 | From Cézanne to Malevich and Mondrian | **Piet Mondrian** | Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue | 1927 | oil on canvas | 610 x 400 mm

Dutch Realism and Its Circle | Part 3



Part 3 | Dutch Realism and its Circle | **Pyke Koch** | Slum Rhapsody | 1929 | oil on canvas | 810 x 955 mm



Part 3 | Dutch Realism and its Circle | **Carel Willink** | Arcadian Landscape | 1935 | oil on canvas | 1000 x 1400 mm

© Estate of Carel Willink, c/- De Tulp Pers, the Netherlands



Part 3 | Dutch Realism and its Circle | **Dick Ket** | Self-portrait | 1931 | oil on canvas | 715 x 510 mm



Part 3 | Dutch Realism and its Circle | **Jean Brusselmans** | Lady on Couch | 1937 | oil on canvas | 1500 x 1500 mm

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Part 3 | Dutch Realism and its Circle | **Charley Toorop** | Cheese Market in Alkmaar | 1932-33 | oil on canvas | 1500 x 1800 mm

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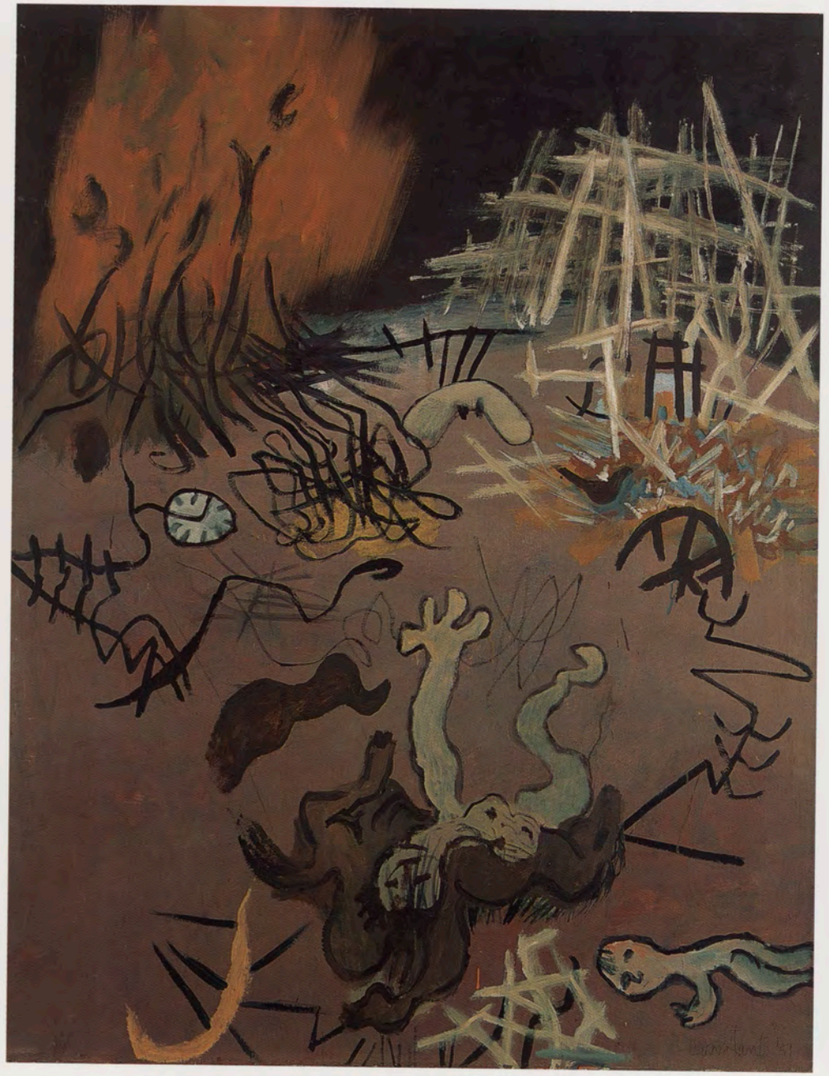
Part 3 | Dutch Realism and its Circle | **Herman Kruyder** | The Cock | 1933-34 | oil on canvas | 1080 x 1230 mm

Europe and America after World War II | Part 4



Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Jean Dubuffet** | Clown's Point | 1956 | assemblage, canvas cut-outs painted in oil on canvas | 1440 x 1160 mm

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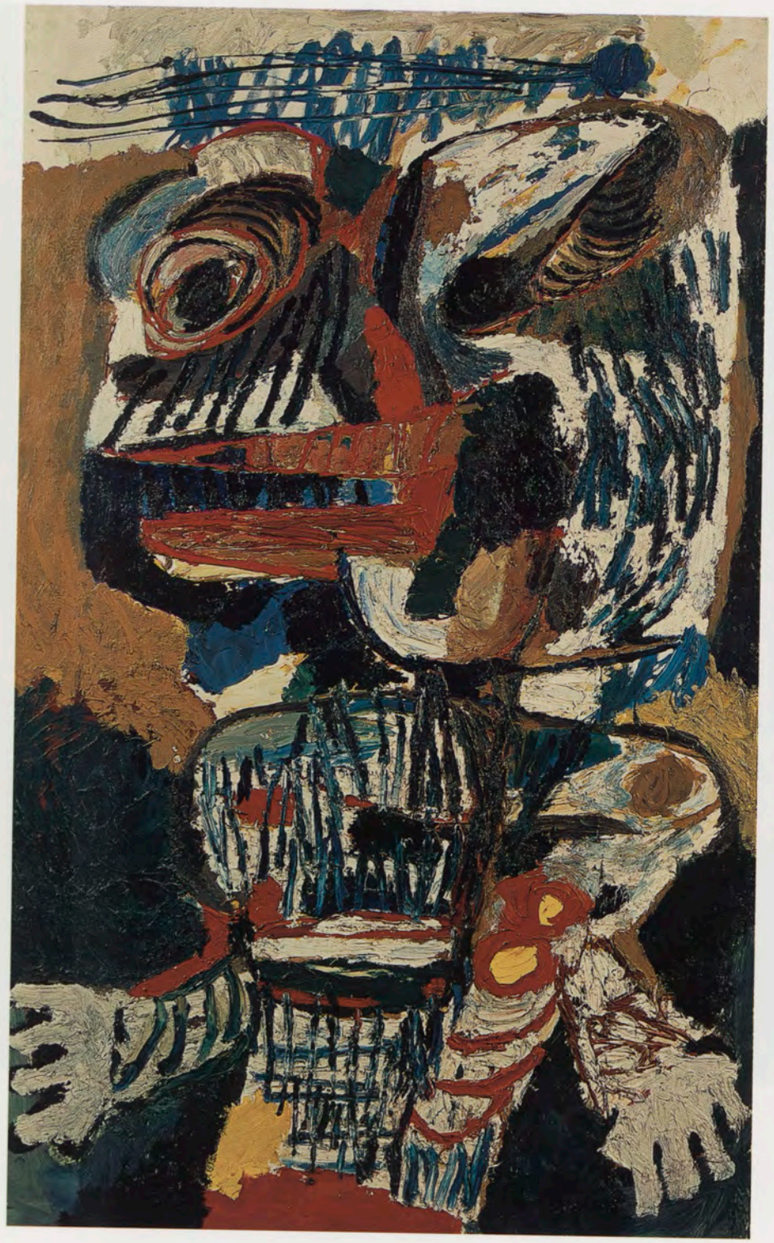
Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Constant** | Scorched Earth 1 | 1951 | oil on canvas | 1450 x 1110 mm

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Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Constant** | The Meeting of Ubu and Justine | 1975 | oil on canvas | 1900 x 2000 mm

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Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Karel Appel** | Man | 1953 | oil on canvas | 2100 x 1300 mm

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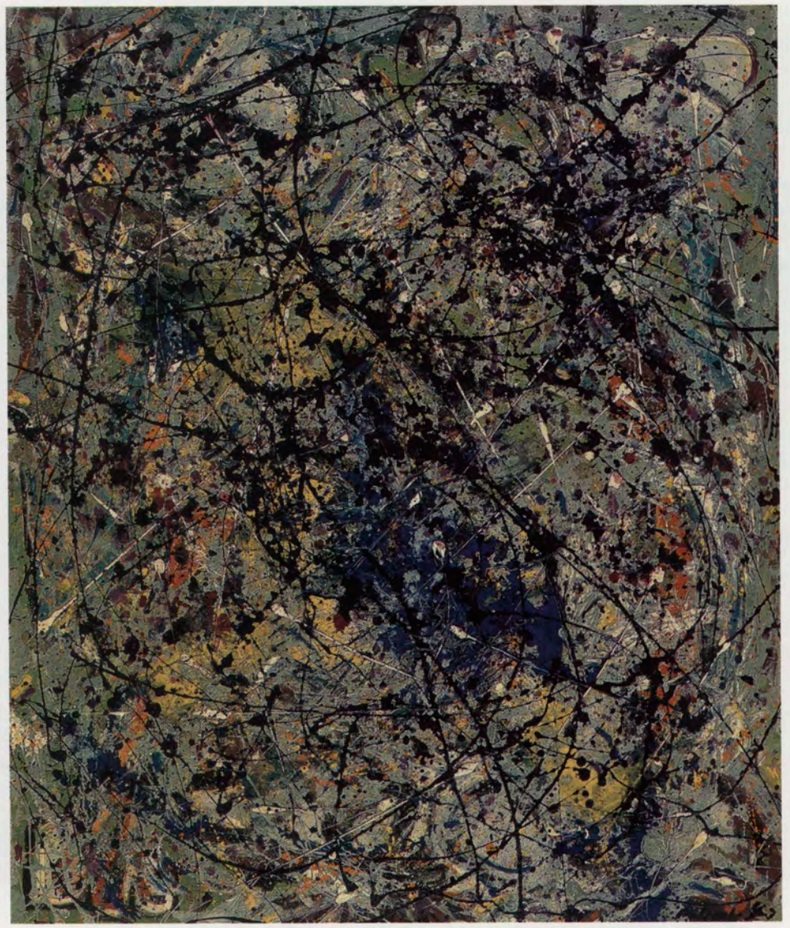


Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Asger Jorn** | Disturbed Mourning | 1975 | oil on canvas | 1620 x 1300 mm

© Asger Jorn, 1975, 1998.



Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Lucio Fontana** | Spatial Concept II | 1951 | coloured glass | oil on canvas | 695 x 850 mm



Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Jackson Pollock** | Reflection of the Big Dipper | 1947 | oil on canvas | 1110 x 920 mm

© Jackson Pollock, 1947 / ARS. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Jackson Pollock** | The Waterbull | 1945 | oil on canvas | 765 x 2130 mm

© Jackson Pollock, 1945 / ARS. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



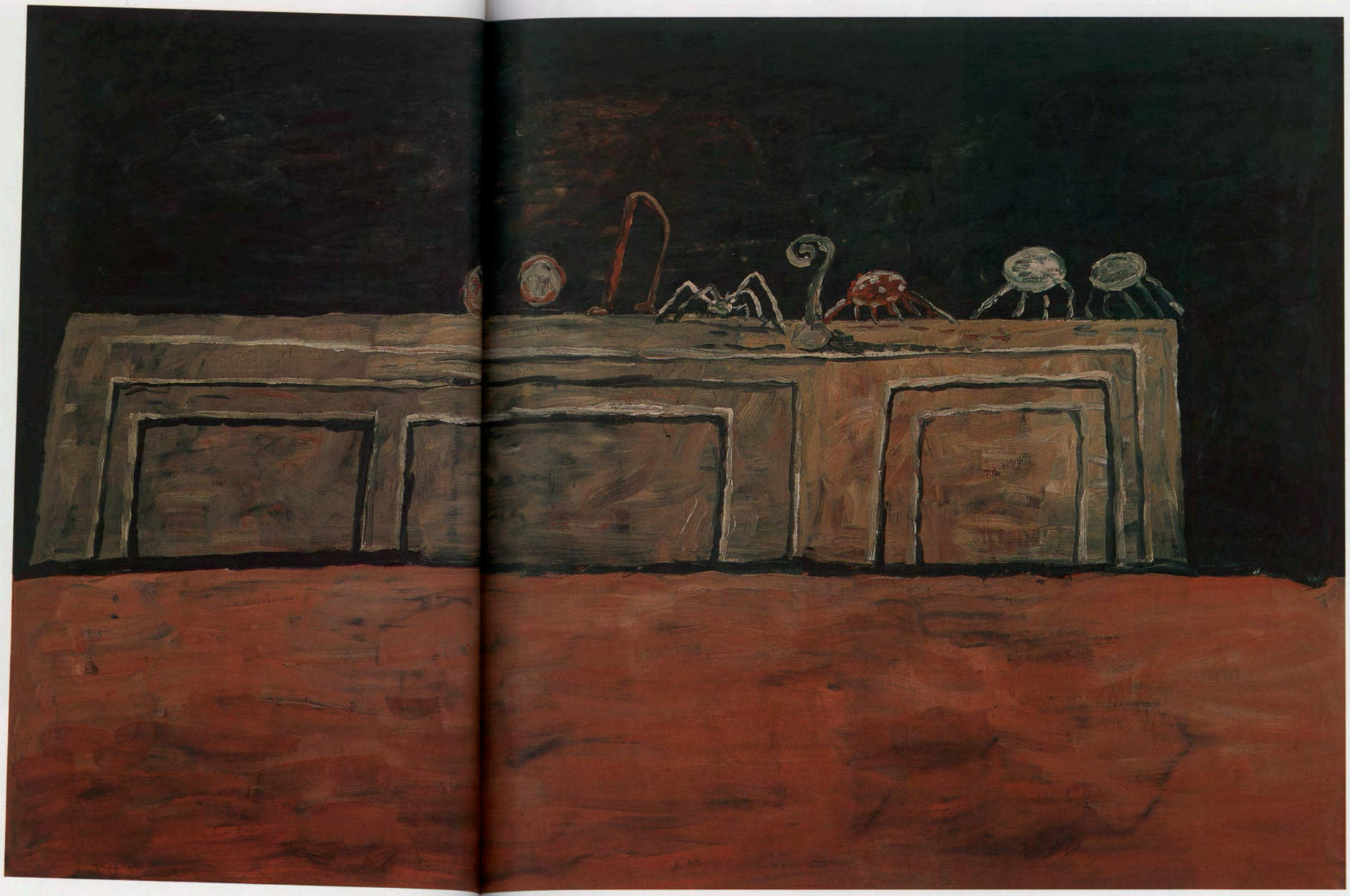
Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Willem de Kooning** | Singing Women | 1966 | oil on paper mounted on canvas | 910 x 610 mm

© Willem de Kooning, 1966 / ARS. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Willem de Kooning** | Untitled IX | 1975 | oil on canvas | 1770 x 2030 mm

© Willem de Kooning, 1975 / ARS. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



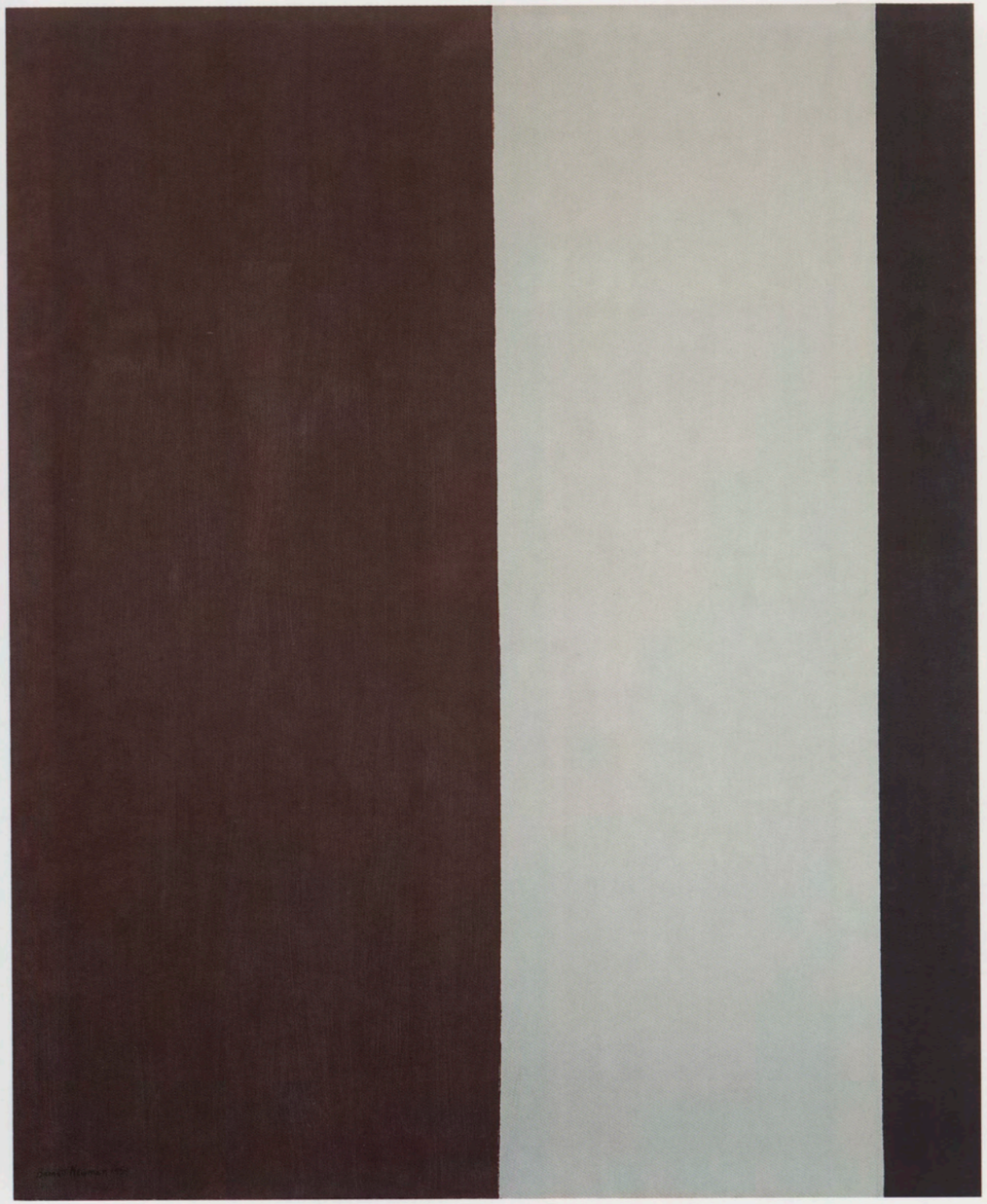
Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Philip Guston** | The Door | 1978 | oil on canvas | 1730 x 2270 mm

© Estate of Philip Guston



Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Mark Rothko** | Untitled | 1962 | oil on canvas | 1500 x 1370 mm

© Mark Rothko, 1962 / ARS. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.

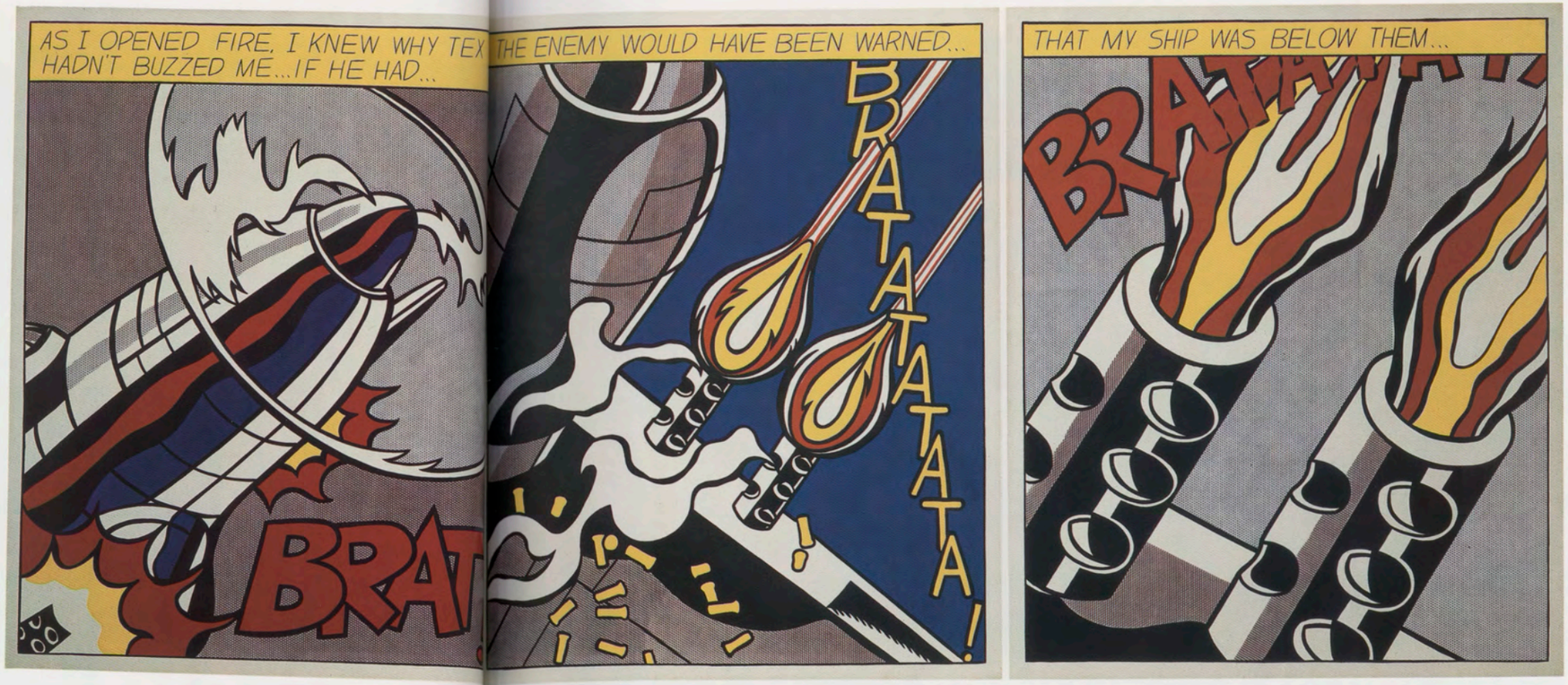


Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Barnett Newman** | The Gate | 1954 | oil on canvas | 2360 x 1920 x 50 mm

© Barnett Newman, 1954 / ARS. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



Part 4 | Europe and America after World War II | **Morris Louis** | Unfolding Light | 1961 | acrylic on canvas | 2120 x 1580 mm



Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Roy Lichtenstein** | As I Opened Fire... | 1964 | magna on canvas | 1730 x 4275 mm

© Roy Lichtenstein, 1964 / Estate of Roy Lichtenstein. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



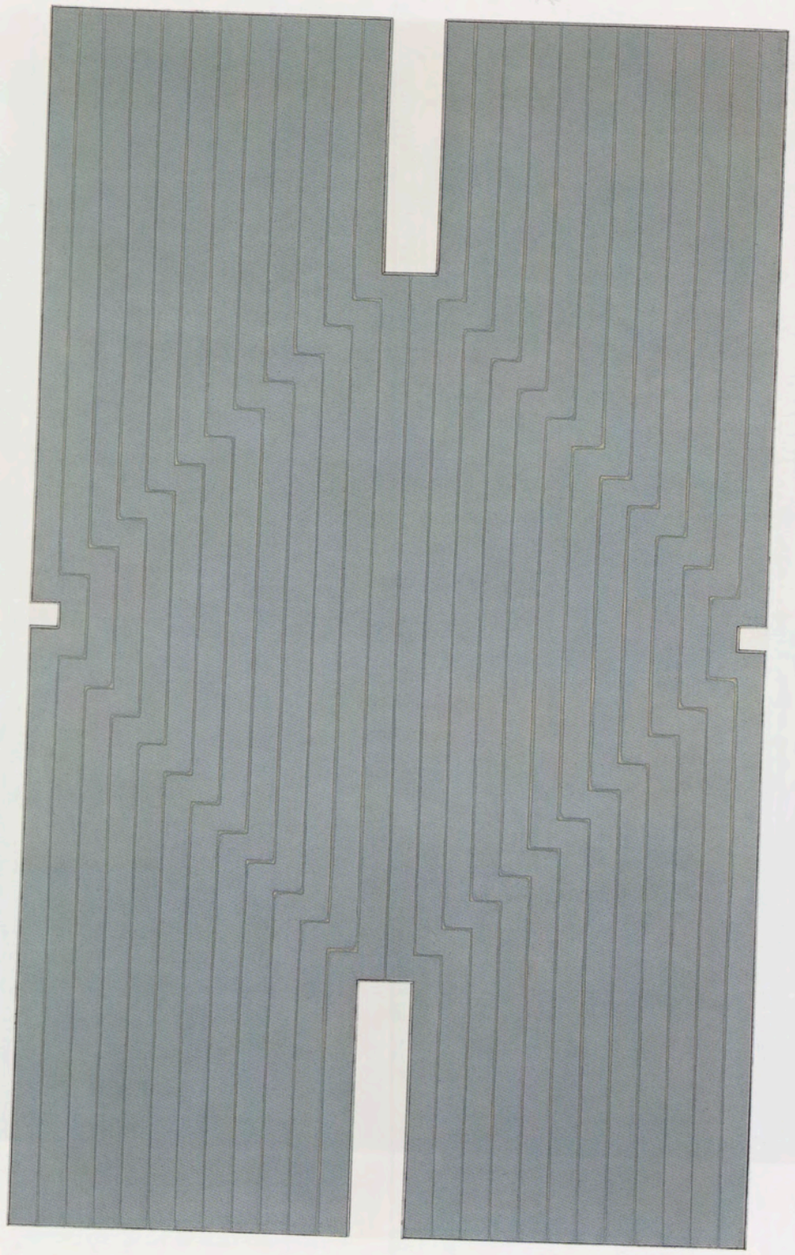
Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Claes Oldenburg** | Saw (Hard Version II) | 1971 | wood, aluminium | 2400 x 1360 x 2670 mm

© Claes Oldenburg, 1971, 1998.



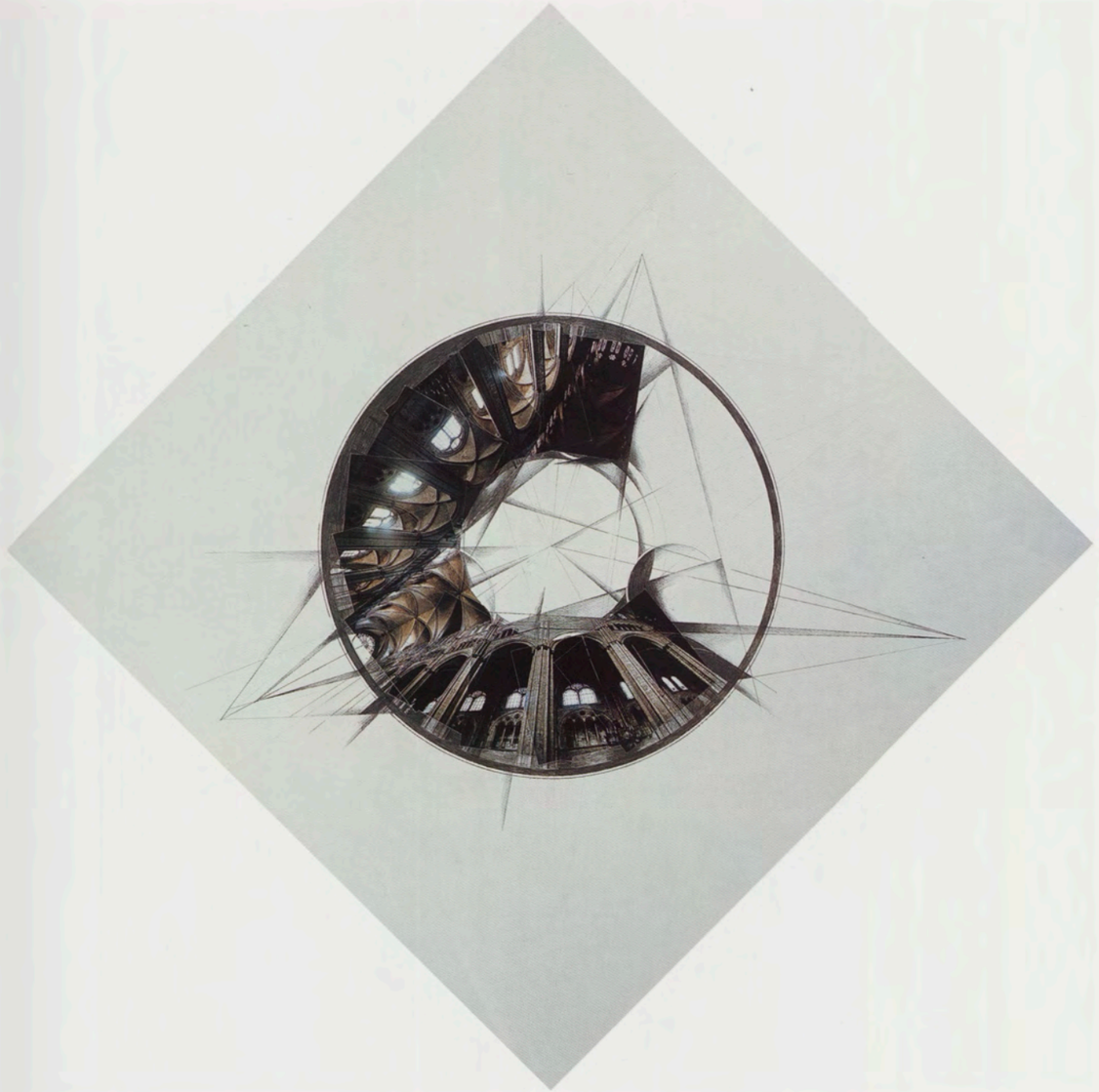
Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **James Rosenquist** | Frosting | 1964 | oil on canvas | 1680 x 1680 mm

© James Rosenquist, 1964 / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Frank Stella** | Newstead Abbey | 1960 | aluminium paint on canvas | 3000 x 1825 x 75 mm

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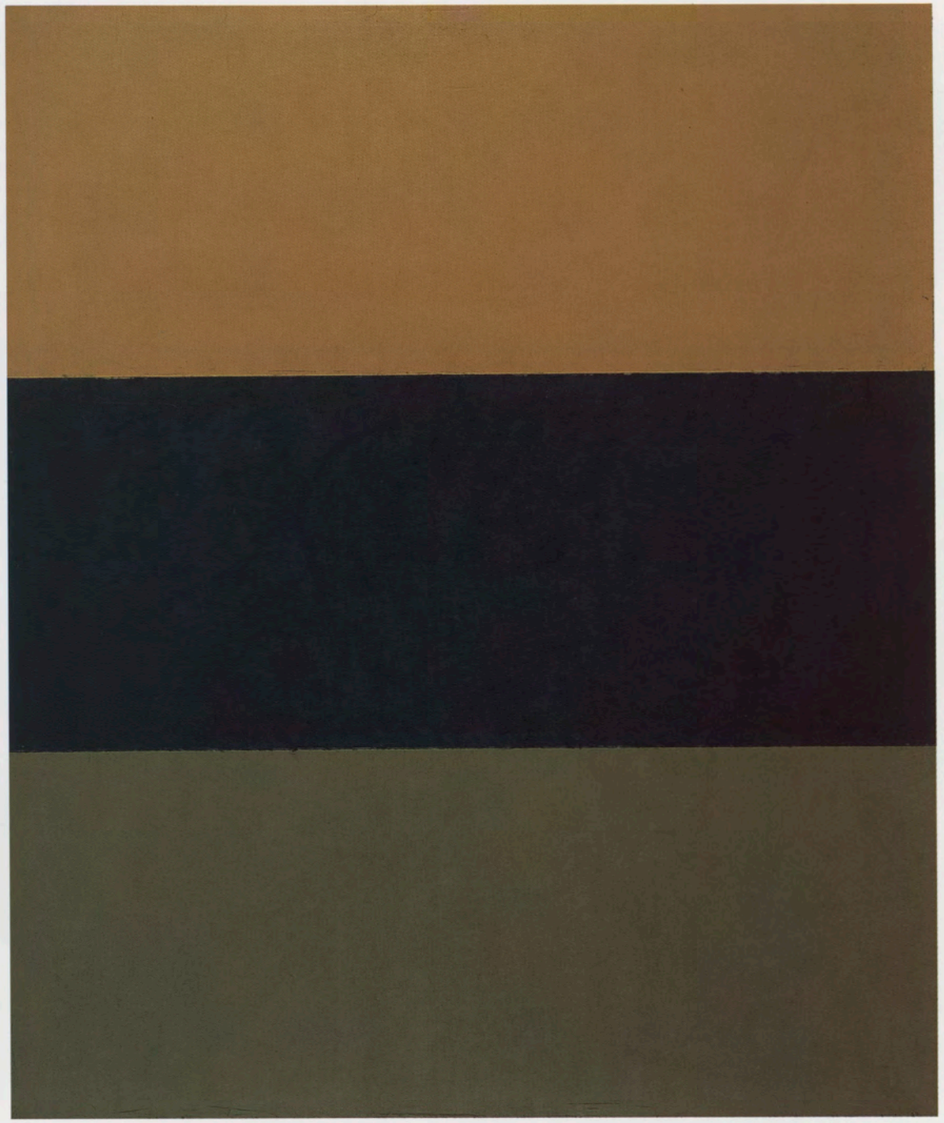


Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Jan Dibbets** | Bourges I | 1981 | colour photograph, pencil on paper | 2610 x 2610 mm

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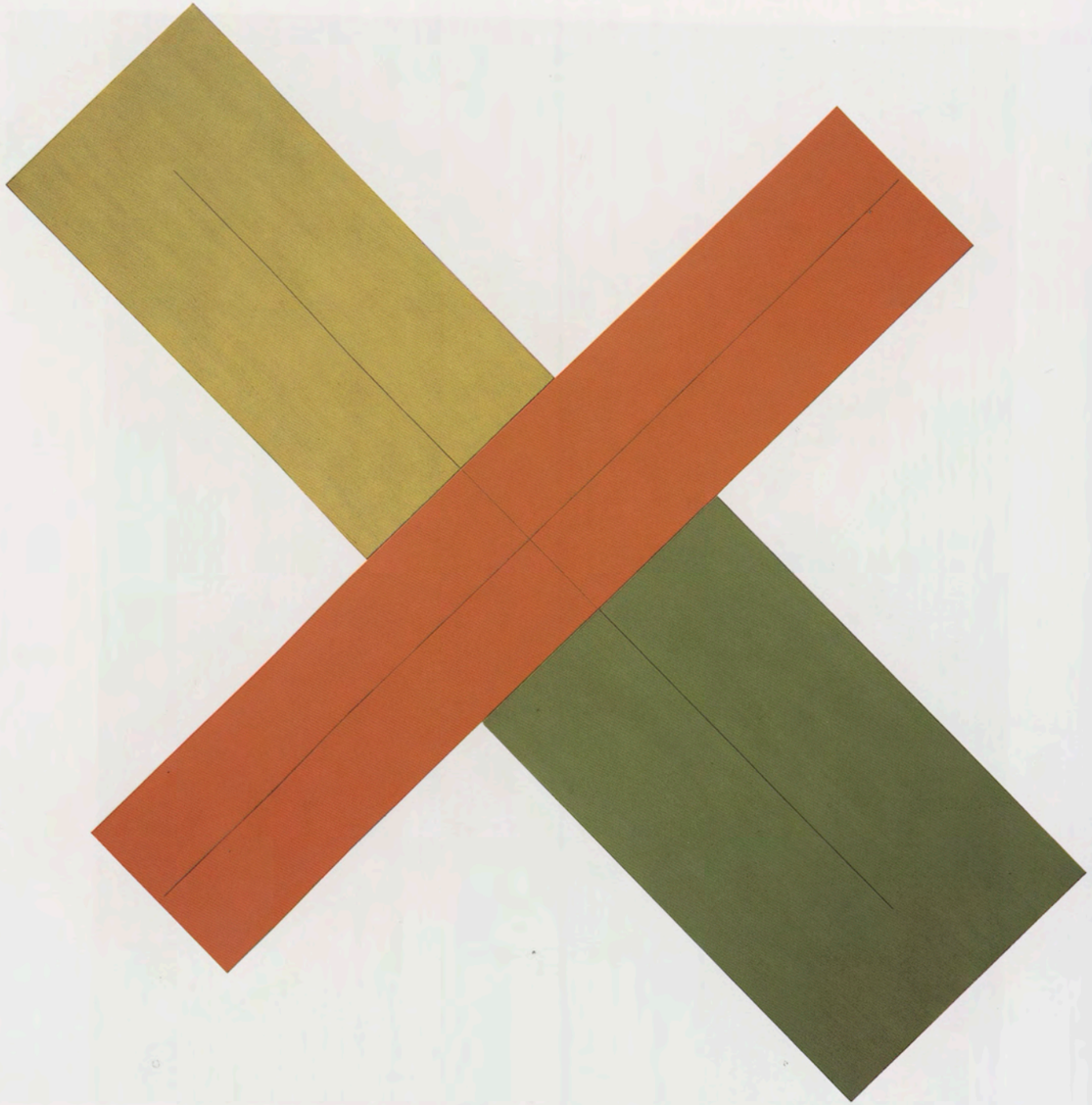


Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Robert Ryman** | Untitled | 1960 | oil on canvas | 1660 x 1645 mm



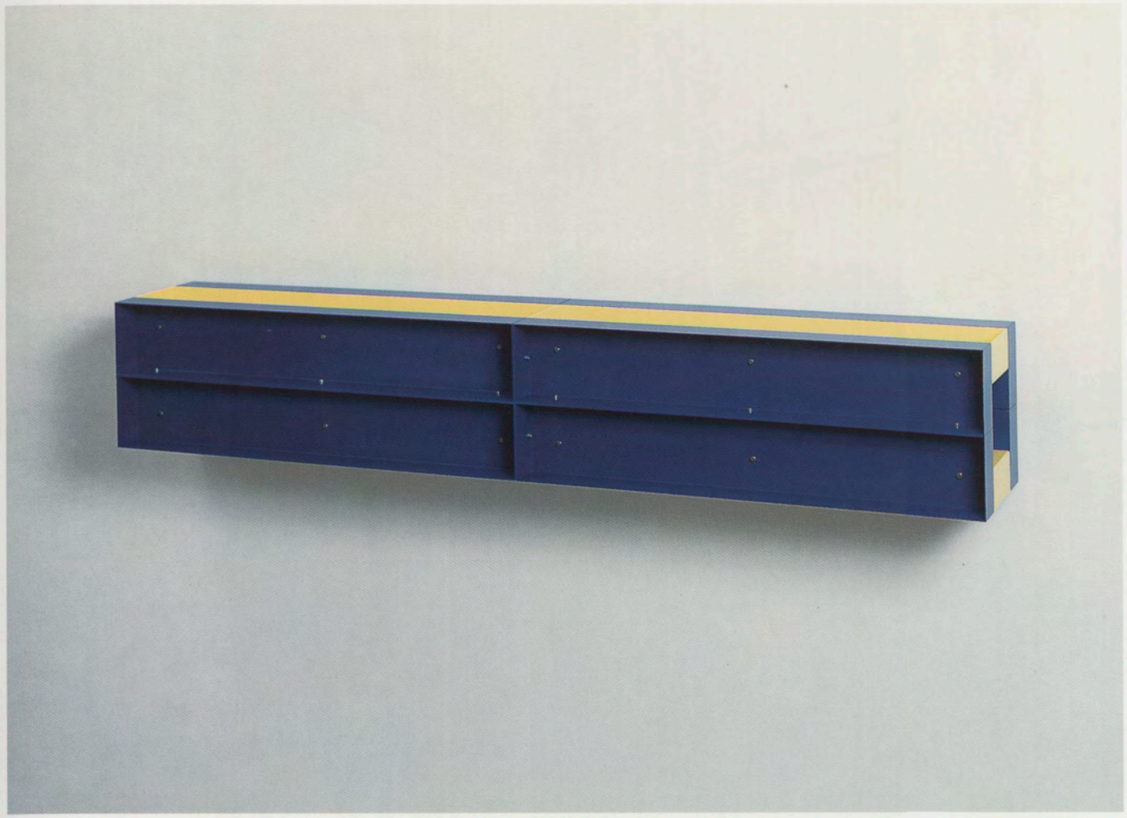
Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Brice Marden** | Vertical Horizontal | 1973 | oil and beeswax on canvas | 1825 x 1525 mm

© Brice Marden, 1973 / ARS. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



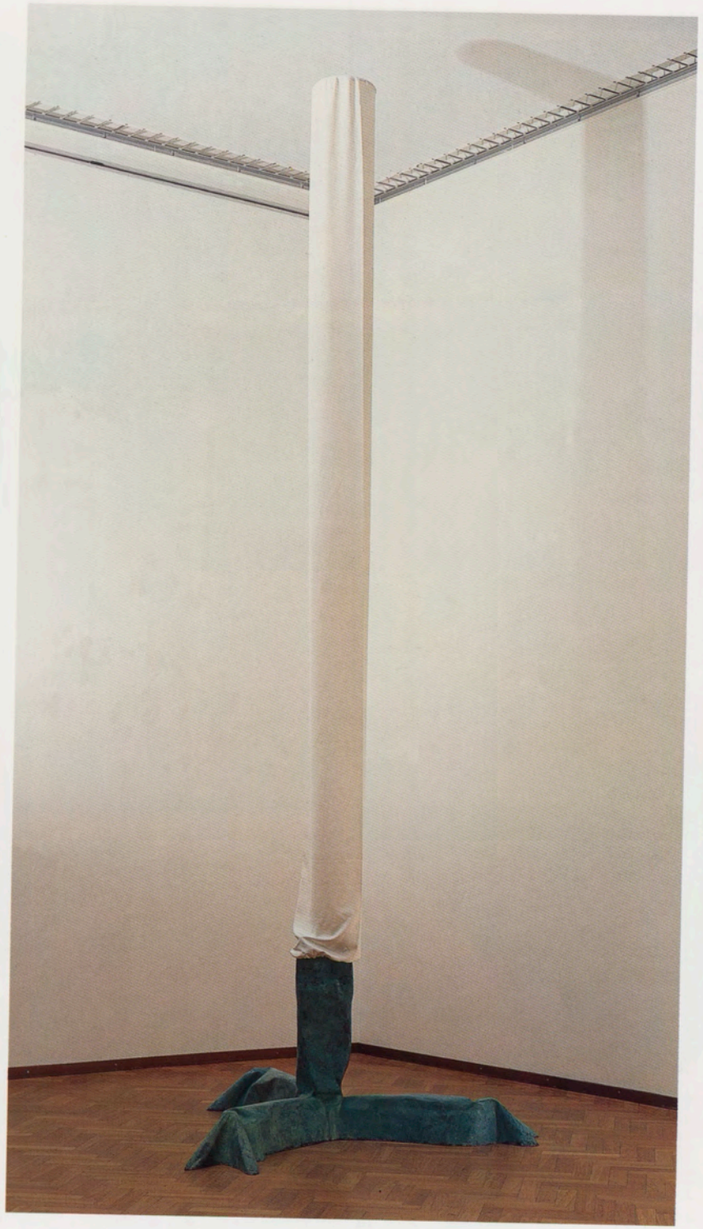
Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Robert Mangold** | X within X (Red–Green) | 1981 | acrylic and pencil on canvas | 3260 x 3860 mm

© Robert Mangold, 1981 / ARS. Reproduced by permission of VI$COPY Ltd, Sydney 1997.



Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Donald Judd** | Untitled | 1989 | enamel, aluminium | 300 x 1800 x 305 mm

© Estate of Donald Judd / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY



Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Luciano Fabro** | Foot | 1968–71 | bronze, silk | 4090 x 1500 x 1600 mm



Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Guiseppe Penone** | Breath I | 1978 | terracotta | 1470 x 720 x 650 mm

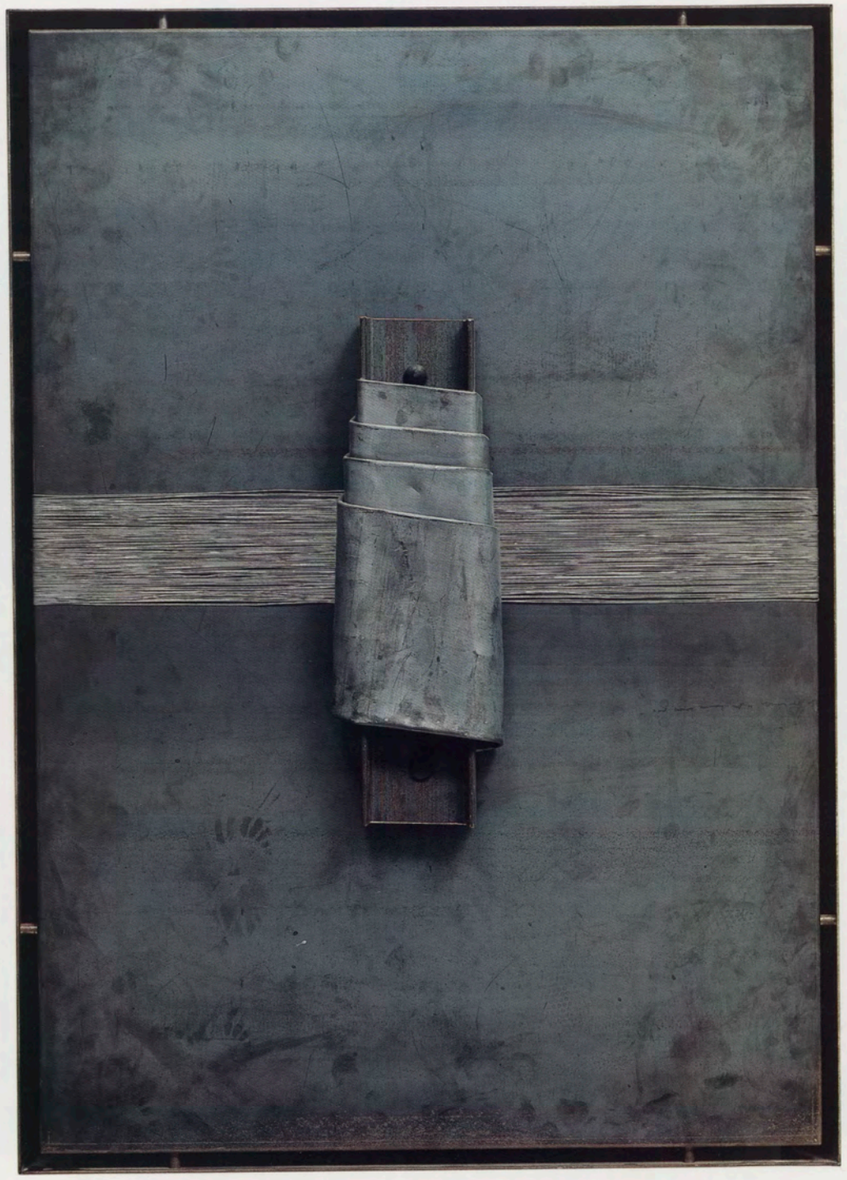
Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Gilbert & George** | Transported | 1977 | colour photograph | 2540 x 6410 mm

© Gilbert & George



Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Ger van Elk** | The Adieu I | 1974 | retouched, shaped colour photograph | 1320 x 840 mm

© Ger van Elk



Part 5 | From Pop Art to Conceptual Art | **Jannis Kounellis** | Untitled | 1989 | iron | 1035 x 735 x 185 mm

Neo-Expressionism and After the 1980s | Part 6



Part 6 | Neo-Expressionism and After the 1980s | **Enzo Cucchi** | Silly Music | 1980 | oil on canvas | 2100 x 2070 mm



Part 6 | Neo-Expressionism and After the 1980s | **Francesco Clemente** | Self-portrait with a Hole in the Head | 1981 | oil on canvas | 510 x 760 mm



Part 6 | Neo-Expressionism and After the 1980s | **Sandro Chia** | Rabbit for Dinner | 1981 | oil on canvas | 2055 x 3390 mm

© Sandro Chia, 1981 / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY



Part 6 | Neo-Expressionism and After the 1980s | **Anselm Kiefer** | March Heath | 1974 | oil on canvas | 1180 x 2540 mm

Loan from the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, the Netherlands



Part 6 | Neo-Expressionism and After the 1980s | **Georg Baselitz** | Nude, Finger Painting | 1972 | oil on canvas | 2040 x 1665 mm

© Georg Baselitz, 1998



Part 6 | Neo-Expressionism and After the 1980s | **David Salle** | Carnation | 1994 | oil on canvas | 1905 x 2159 mm

© David Salle, 1994 / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY





Part 6 | Neo-Expressionism and After the 1980s | **Julian Schnabel** | Golgotha (Jaqueline at 104 Degrees) | 1980 | oil, modelling paste, cow-hide and velvet | 2140 x 4900 mm



Part 6 | Neo-Expressionism and After the 1980s | **Jeff Koons** | Ushering in Banality | 1988 | painted wood | 990 x 1700 x 890 mm



The Stedelijk Museum in 895 with the Rijksmuseum in the background.

Photo by Jaob Olie, Courtesy Gemeentearchief Amsterdam

On September 14th, 1895, Amsterdam opened a museum of its own. The Stedelijk has since become an important city institution and one of the most influential contemporary art galleries in the world. The initiatives of a few citizens and the Stedelijk's directors made it possible for this museum, with no acquisitions budget whatever in its first fifty years, to become so influential. The following account reviews a century of exhibitions and collecting.

When the Stedelijk Museum opened in 1895, it seemed a hybrid between a museum and a 'Kunsthalle', a building housing various collections and exhibitions organised by third parties. Its first curator, Jan Eduard van Someren Brand, had no budget for acquisitions and potential policies on contemporary art were unexplored. The initial collections were diverse due to events before the museum opened. In 1874, the Association for the Founding of a Public Collection of Contemporary Art, or 'Association with the Long Name' (VVHK) was formed, led by C.P. van Eeghen. They collected works of living Dutch artists, but only accepted genres: the Hague School (Mesdag, Mauve, Israels) and Amsterdam Impressionists (Breitner, Israels, Witsen). The collection grew to include contemporary foreign artists (Corot, Courbet and Daubigny) and was then exhibited in a room of the new state Rijksmuseum, where it quickly outgrew its space.

In 1890, Sophia, widow of baron Lopez-Suasso, bequeathed her collection to the city, stipulating that it be housed in a museum. Mrs Lopez-Suasso had an enormous collection of antiques, dolls and curios, including those of the Broeker House museum, purchased for a huge sum. A new building was needed for both the VVHK and the Suasso collections. A proper museum would also mean a solution for the 'Exhibition of Art Works of Living Masters' held every three years.

The enormous sum of NLG 150,000 was generously donated by the Van Eeghen family, making the construction of a museum possible. The site selected lay at the edge of the city between the new Rijksmuseum and the Concertgebouw concert hall. The city architect, A.W. Weismann, visited German museums, which influenced the design. From the Neue Galerie in Kassel, Weismann borrowed the idea for

The Stedelijk Museum

A Hundred Years of Modern and Contemporary Art[1] | Geurt Imanse

print rooms, while the concept of galleries with skylights came from the Alte Museum in Berlin. But the construction was not without problems. Weismann had a meagre budget of NLG 500,000, and purchased inexpensive materials outside Amsterdam. Local tradespeople protested, and though Weismann was eventually fired, he was permitted to complete the museum. The Stedelijk opened with work by 'Living Masters' from the VVHK and Van Eeghen collections. Opinions of the building were divided, with the play of light and the interior praised and the exterior widely criticised.

The Suasso collection was opened to the public in 1900, but very diverse collections were brought into the Stedelijk soon after it opened. They included the collections of the Medical & Pharmaceutical Museum, the Bilderdijk and Clock Museums and the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art, widely diverse works and objects which belied the important museum the Stedelijk would become. Most were later moved elsewhere. The historical works became the cornerstone of Amsterdam's Historical Museum. Last to leave the Stedelijk was the Suasso collection, stored in care of the Historical Museum. The collection of the VVHK remained and was gradually donated to the Stedelijk.

Several exciting exhibitions took place during the early years, indirectly leading to a small budget for acquisitions and a gallery to exhibit them. There was a spectacular exhibition of work by Vincent van Gogh, but although his painting had already been exhibited in Amsterdam in 1892, most critics remained hostile. The St. Lucas Association of mainly young artists influenced by Jan Toorop, Sluyters and Gestel, exhibited modernist trends (Neo-Impressionism and Fauvism), cautiously introducing new directions in Dutch art. When in 1909, the VVHK rejected Toorop's portrait of Dr Muller, supposedly for lack of space, they found it too modern. The following year, Cornelis Baard, who had replaced Van Someren Brand as the Stedelijk's curator in 1905, approved the purchase of the painting. This began the Stedelijk collection, but acquisitions were limited until the 1920s and the VVHK still made the majority of purchases.

Baard had more feeling for new directions in art than his predecessor, showing younger, more modern artists along with the historical exhibitions. In 1911, the youngest society of Dutch artists, Moderne Kunstkring, first presented a panorama of the latest Paris trends: Picasso's and Braque's Cubism and Le Fauconnier were introduced to the Netherlands. This inspired Piet Mondrian to run off to Paris, but the outbreak of war stopped him. Together with Gestel and Sluyters, Mondrian himself exhibited important new work, almost abstract, in the Stedelijk. Theo van Doesburg, then writing for the *Eenheid*, enthusiastically contacted Mondrian, which resulted in the appearance of *De Stijl* magazine in 1917.

New German art developments were shown in 1921 when the Novembergruppe exhibited with the Onafhankelijken, or Independents, another Dutch association. Two years later, the Russian avant-garde were presented, with Malevich and Tatlin, as was German Neue Sachlichkeit (New Realism) in 1929. A wide range of European art and design was shown, from Italian Posters in 1927, Finnish Art, Design and Architecture (1931), to French and Belgian Surrealists (1930) and Polish Medallions in 1943. There were exhibitions of Frank Lloyd Wright (1931), as well as Modern Chinese Paintings (1934).

In 1923, opportunities to purchase works by Dutch artists improved through a new municipal scheme meant to help struggling artists through purchases and commissions. In the ensuing years, numerous works of Dutch-based artists have been acquired, some the most impressive in the Stedelijk collection.

Cornelis Baard was appointed director of the museum and given a larger acquisitions budget, mainly for retrospective works. In 1927, the Stedelijk purchased Van Gogh's *Diggers* for NLG 6,000, and a nude by Breitner. A rather early (1929) foreign acquisition was Grosz's *Agitator*, a painting from the exhibition of the German Neue Sachlichkeit and the Onafhankelijken. This policy of purchasing works from the temporary exhibitions is still practised by the Stedelijk today.

Nineteen-thirty was a top year for director Baard. Not only was NLG 6,250 made available to buy Rodin's monumental figure from the *Burghers of Calais*, but the city alderman unwittingly approved the purchase of modern

applied art by Zwollo, Copier, Lanooij, Lion Cachet and Bogtman, all Dutch designers. Baard wrote that he wanted 'a Museum of Applied Arts', probably in response to the 1929 exhibition of Dutch Design. This became fact in 1934 in the form of a permanent gallery in the museum devoted to applied arts. The Stedelijk still has a Department of Modern Applied Arts. Shortly before leaving the museum in 1936, Baard organised a retrospective exhibition of Van Doesburg, assisted by the young graphic designer Willem Sandberg. Sandberg convinced Baard to purchase Van Doesburg's *Contre-Composition V* (1924).

Apart from his attempts to collect modern art, Baard successfully brought in works on loan from private collections. These included the Boendermaker collection of the Dutch Bergen school, a tamer form of Expressionism largely based on Le Fauconnier, plus the entire V.W. van Gogh collection, including the work of Vincent van Gogh and Theo van Gogh's collection of French contemporaries, as well as the Regnault collection, with important work by Picasso, Braque, Soutine, Chagall, Rouault, Zadkine and Kandinsky.[2]

Baard was replaced by Baron D.C. Röell in 1936, who later hired Sandberg as curator. In the brief interlude before World War II, Röell expanded the collection with works by Chagall, Van Dongen, Lehmbruck, Maillol, Bourdelle and modern international designers. His important exhibitions included 'Foto '37', a survey of new international photography, and the 1938 'Abstract Art' exhibition organized by Sandberg and Van Doesburg's widow.

Röell and Sandberg's changes to the museum interior were revolutionary. The darkish stone staircase was painted completely white and the yellow glass in the roof replaced with clear glass. Soon thereafter, light wall coverings appeared instead of the panels and hessian was put under the skylights. Sandberg commissioned artist Johannes Itten to design a vellum to subdue the intense light over the stairwell.

In the Second World War the permanent collection was first stored in four boats and later in a bunker in the sand dunes outside the city. Sandberg thought of it on a trip to Spain in 1938 where he saw how the Prado treasures had been spared from plunder in the Spanish Civil War. The war



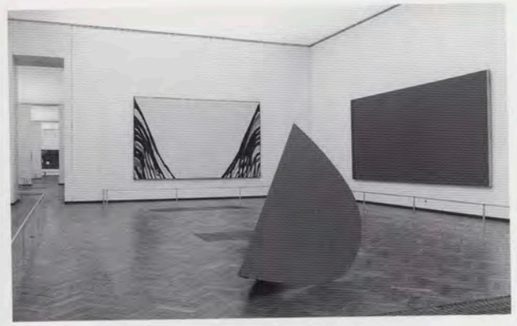
Overview of the collection during summer 1984. Paintings by Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg and Burt van der Leck. Chair and marquette by Gerrit Rietveld. In the background is a painting by Kazimir Malevich.

demanded diplomacy from Röell and Sandberg. They kept peace with the invader with the exhibitions, 'A House in Holland', and 'Town and Country', although Sandberg was able to include less acceptable artists by not listing their names. Other shows were restricted to groups aligned with the occupation government, and there were few acquisitions.

Willem Sandberg's part in an attack on the city registry in early 1943 forced him into hiding, and in 1944 the Stedelijk closed for lack of heating fuel. After the war, Röell moved to the Rijksmuseum and Sandberg became director of the Stedelijk. Despite his limited budget, twenty shows in 1946 equalled those of 1938. Five years later the number had risen to 30 and with the new wing in 1954, 50 shows a year was no exception.

The new wing resolved the shortage of space Baard had already complained of in 1920, and was made possible by a donation. In these years, numerous renovations made room for offices, galleries, storage and service rooms, a reproduction department, an auditorium with a projection booth, archives, photography and restoration studios, plus a library with a reading room and display cabinet. An office extension was built. Visitors increased from 90,000 in 1946 to more than 200,000 in 1953.[3]

The collection grew in keeping with the visitors. The VVHK donated 217 works to the Stedelijk in 1949, completing the collection of late nineteenth century and early twentieth



Overview of the collection during Summer 1984. Colourfield painting by Morris Louis, Elsworth Kelly and Barnett Newman.

century art. Work purchased by Sandberg included Cézanne, Gonzalez, Vuillard, Charley Toorop, Kirchner, Jawlensky, Kokoschka, Severini, Klee, Delaunay, Renoir and Mondrian. Works by Van Gogh, Pollock and Zadkine were donated.

Sandberg was the inspiration behind the Stedelijk, but he was supported practically and idealistically by art historian Hans Jaff, curator and later assistant director, who had worked for the museum since 1935. Under Sandberg and Jaff the Stedelijk acquired its fame as an influential museum for contemporary art. Sandberg was inspired by the concept of the 'living museum', a breeding ground for activity in every possible artistic area. Not only painting and sculpture were encouraged, but film and music as well, an idea of Alfred Barr of New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Sandberg's policy concentrated on the most recent directions in art and on the great pioneers of modern art, such as Mondrian, to whom he dedicated a memorial exhibition in 1946. Applied arts and photography were purchased and exhibited with great regularity, and naive and primitive art were not forgotten. The Dutch Experimental Group was established in 1948, with Constant, Appel, Corneille and Lucebert its driving forces. In 1949, Sandberg provided them space for their international exhibition of experimental artists, now known as CoBrA (for Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam). CoBrA rapidly created an international furore.

Sandberg's acquisitions largely focused on the historical avant-garde of the first half of the twentieth century. He was able to acquire some spectacular examples but did not ignore their new work. For years he tried to purchase Picasso's *Femme Assise au Chapeau Poisson* (1942), which had caught his eye in the 1946 'Matisse Picasso' exhibition. Ten years later he finally succeeded. Two important acquisitions are the famous collection by Kazimir Malevich, which came to the Stedelijk in 1957, thirty years after Malevich left the work behind in Berlin, and part of the Regnault collection. Other works in this collection, bequeathed to the Dutch state in 1953, remained on long-term loan to the museum. Sandberg said good-bye to the Stedelijk in 1962 with 'The Sandberg Collection', an exhibition of works given to him by numerous artists, which he subsequently donated to the museum.

Edy de Wilde replaced Sandberg as director of the Stedelijk, continuing most of his predecessor's policies. De Wilde limited his acquisitions to the period after 1960, with exceptions including a 1952 Matisse purchased in 1967, a 1956 Picasso bought in 1981 and two Barnett Newmans from the 1950s. A good, if not quite perfect, overview of modern art after Impressionism had been established, though Belgian and French Surrealism was a missing link, despite its importance for the young CoBrA artists after the war.

De Wilde's last exhibition in 1984, 'La Grande Parade', attested to his preference for paintings. He had shown all facets of the new directions and acquired works from several. Examples of Nouveau Réalisme, Nul, Pop Art, Conceptual Art, fundamental painting and Arte Povera had joined the collection, even if De Wilde's acquisition policy was 'not based on directions and developments of art. We have only represented the personalities which we found important due to the quality of their work.' Thus important ensembles of works by Dubuffet, De Kooning, Tinguely and Ryman were also added, to name a few. Paris had relinquished her hold as the centre of international art to New York in the 1950s and 1960s, and the American artists are well represented in De Wilde's collection.

Video, the new medium, also had its place, and the photography collection grew. The various areas of acquisitions

by the Department of Applied Arts were continually expanded with posters, textiles, jewelry, ceramics and furniture, and a cautious beginning was made in industrial design. During the twenty years of De Wilde's leadership, the Stedelijk grew to what it is today, one of the world's most influential museums of modern and contemporary art.

Wim Beeren, director from 1985 to 1993, shifted the accent to sculpture. Works by Judd, Kounellis and Polke were added to the collection, with spectacular sculptures by Lawrence Weiner and Walter de Maria, previously represented by their video art. Other new acquisitions included Stella, Warhol, Oldenburg, Andre and Kiefer. Like De Wilde, Beeren collected art from after 1960, though there were exceptions, the most important being *Composition with Two Lines* (1931), by Mondrian, purchased with exceptional funding.[4]

Young artists were represented both in temporary exhibitions and the permanent collection, which also expanded with acquisitions of work by eastern European and later, the Latin American artists presented in the 1989 'U-ABC' exhibition.

Eased relations between eastern and western Europe allowed a large retrospective exhibition of Malevich, also in 1989, with works included from the Russian State Museum in Leningrad and the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow together with those of the Stedelijk.

By the 1980s, lack of space was again a serious problem in the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum. The Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza has designed a new addition for the Stedelijk which has yet to be completed. Meanwhile, restoration of the original building has begun. Exhibition rooms sacrificed to working space in the 1970s are once again serving their intended purpose. In the future, the old building will be used to exhibit the permanent collection while the new extension will house the temporary exhibitions. Even then it will not be possible to show all of the 55,000 works of art, ranging from postage stamps to Judd's large untitled sculpture, but a wider selection will be available for public viewing than is now the case.



Rudi Fuchs with the painter Markus Lüpertz during installation of his exhibition in the museum, 1997.

Photo by Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen.

1 This article is an edited version of 'Lo Stedelijk Museum di Amsterdam, oggi quasi centenario', ('The Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum, nearly 100 Years Old') published in Italian for the exhibition catalogue, *L'Orizzonte; Capolavori dello Stedelijk Museum di Amsterdam, (Major Works from The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam)* Rivoli, Italy, Castello di Rivoli, 1994.
The Stedelijk celebrated its centennial with the publication *Site for the Future, A Short History of the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum,* by J. Jansen van Galen and H. Schreurs, Naarden, (NL) V+K Publishing, 1995. It lists the relevant literature.

2 Boendermaker began lending works in 1914. Over 150 works followed. Forty-six works by Van Gogh and contemporaries were loaned to the Stedelijk by V.W. van Gogh in 1930; the majority of the collection followed in 1931, where they remained until the Van Gogh Museum opened in 1973. Regnault also began lending works to the Stedelijk in 1914, with more in 1918, 1929, 1930 and 1935. He donated part of his collection to the government in 1953. The rest was auctioned in 1958, after Sandberg had made purchases for the Stedelijk.

3 The interest in 1953 was particularly due to the Van Gogh retrospective, but also generally applied to other municipal museums: the Amsterdam Historical Museum, the Willet-Holthuysen Museum for traditional art and Museum Fodor for Amsterdam artists.

4 The purchase of the Mondrian took the entire 1988 budget. Additional funds were provided by the Prince Bernhard Foundation, the Dutch Lottery and the Rembrandt Society, who have made more purchases possible, particularly after the De Wilde period.

Artists' Biographies

Karel Appel | Amsterdam, 1921 – |

The work of Karel Appel, son of an Amsterdam barber, was controversial in art circles of the forties and fifties. His notorious credo 'I just mess about' was eagerly pounced upon by the scandalized Dutch critics of the day and brandished as a weapon against modern art.

As a member of the CoBrA group, Appel, a born individualist, paid scant attention to the theoretical writings and pamphlets of Constant and Dotremont. Expressing himself directly in paint was more important to him than the Marxist analysis of Western culture advocated by Constant, the group's ideologist. Of all the group, it was Appel who reacted most expressively to the CoBrA avowal of 1948: 'A painting is no longer a construction of colours and lines, but an animal, a night, a scream, a human being, or all of them at once.' Even after CoBrA disbanded, Appel, in Paris in the fifties and New York from 1972 on, continued to address his subject-matter in an emotional vein. As he put it: 'This is how it works. I stand in front of the canvas. In my uplifted hands I hold my paint. My hand approaches the canvas, my eyes begin to transform the waiting canvas; when I touch the canvas it starts to vibrate, to come alive. The fight begins: to unite canvas, eye, hand and form.' A survey of his recent work, staged in 1990 by Rudi Fuchs in the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, showed how Appel, after nigh on half a century of painting and sculpting, had succeeded in developing his original principles even further. In 1951 Appel painted a mural in the 'Appel bar' of the Stedelijk Museum, and another in the cafeteria in 1996. His *Tuscan landscapes* of the 1990s were recently exhibited in the same museum (1996).

Georg Baselitz | Deutschbaselitz [Saxony] Germany, 1938 – |

Baselitz attended art school in East Berlin and in 1957 continued training in West Berlin. He began combining figurative influences in images whose composition and colour related to action painting. In 1961 and 1962, he published manifestos objecting to the hegemony of the Paris School and American (Abstract Expressionist) painting. His first exhibition in 1963 brought strong critical reactions, as his violently expressive realism was particularly unusual. In 1969, Baselitz moved on to painting representations or motifs—nude or animal, a portrait or still life—upside down. By reversing the subject, he is less concerned with the cognitive aspects of perspective or anatomy and more with the sense of painting, its physical qualities of texture and colour. He has since worked on paintings, drawings and prints which combine virtuoso figurative and formal elements, liberating the painting from a one-sided approach that could reduce it to either one. Baselitz is one of the first painters to combine the abstract tradition of the early twentieth century with figurative work. Baselitz's wooden sculptures since 1978 also share the directness and expressive power of the paintings.

Max Beckmann | Leipzig, 1884 – New York, 1950 |

Beckmann entered the Weimar art academy when he was only sixteen. He discovered Manet, Cézanne and the Impressionists in Paris and Rembrandt and Hals in Amsterdam. In 1906 he won a scholarship in Florence for his painting *Junge Männer am Meer* (*Young Men at the Sea*). Beckmann settled in Berlin in 1908, contributing to the 'Berliner Sezession' exhibitions and joining their committee in 1910. He felt no alliance with Cubism or Expressionism: 'I want space, depth, nature. And bold colours... and wild, terrible, beautiful life.' His first major exhibition in Berlin was when he was nineteen. The First World War, in which he served as a medical orderly, marks a change in Beckmann's work. Following a breakdown, he was discharged in 1916 and moved to Frankfurt. The shock he suffered is expressed in the hard, angular outlines, expressive distortions in his paintings and brittle, pale colouring, for instance in *Die Nacht* (*That Night,* 1919), or the *Jahrmarkt* (*Annual Market*) and *Berliner Reise* (*Berlin Journey*) prints from 1922. Beckmann accepted a professorship in Frankfurt in 1925. Berlin's National Gallery purchased *Selbstbildnis Im Smoking* (*Self-portrait in Tuxedo*) in 1928. The Nazis ended Beckmann's German career. He lost his teaching post and his paintings were removed from German museums. He planned to emigrate to America, where he had exhibited regularly since 1926, but moved to Amsterdam in 1937, painting five of his mythologically-coded triptychs with figures, including *Versuchung* (*Temptation*) and *Doppelbildnis Max Beckmann und Quappi* (*Double Portrait of Max Beckmann and Quappi* [his wife]), completed in 1941 under German occupation. His diaries describe the difficult exile. In 1947 Beckmann was invited to teach at Washington University in St Louis, making the move to America a reality. He died while walking in New York's Central Park.

Georges Braque | Argenteuil-sur-Seine, 1882 – Paris, 1963 |

Braque moved to Paris in 1900, took a painting course and began in an Impressionist style, but was inspired by Fauvism at the 1905 Salon d'Automne. He signed on with the art dealer Kahnweiler in 1907, meeting Apollinaire and Picasso, who was then completing *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. The Cézanne retrospective was also at

the 1907 Salon and Braque's style moved towards that of Picasso and Cézanne. His first landscapes and still lifes in a limited palette appeared, abandoning strong Fauvist colours and curves for stricter forms in ochres, greens and greys. He had regular contact with Picasso. Braque exhibited at Kahnweiler's in 1908 his first poetically arranged paintings of austere forms, which led to the Analytical Cubism of both Braque and Picasso. Compositions run off the canvas. Forms are stereoscopically examined in simple planes, rigid angles and lines. Planes intersect. By 1911 his reality was looser, more abstract. He added paper (papier collé) and imitated structures and materials: 'Synthetic Cubism'.

Braque and Picasso were inseparable until 1914 but, wounded in the war, Braque was unable to paint until 1917, when Picasso's work astonished him. He went his own way, though they remained friends, Braque developing a freer, less abstract art. Light and colour returned. He painted still lifes, salons, rooms and monumental figures (from 1922), coastlines (after 1929), studios (1938) and billiard tables (1948). His birds of 1953 are strongly decorative. In his last 15 years he completed murals and church windows, and illustrated books.

Jean Brusselmans | Brussels, 1884 - Dilbeek, Belgium, 1953 |

Brusselmans began his career as an engraver and lithographer and followed courses at the Brussels art academy. He then devoted himself exclusively to painting until his death in Dilbeek, the town near Brussels where he spent most of his life. The landscape of the province of Brabant and the Belgian North Sea coast were his favourite subjects.

After a Post-Impressionist period, he quickly developed a form of Expressionism which in fact looks cool and austere. His still lifes, works with figures and landscapes are painted in a clear, linear style, and bear witness to a personal vision and disciplined technique. The colours are never explosive, but have great power, giving the composition a tightly knit foundation. In later works, the object assumes an important place and Brusselmans further developed the style which one could call an 'expressive realism'. He was never associated with the Flemish Expressionists of his own generation.

Paul Cézanne | Aix-en-Provence, 1839 – Aix-en-Provence, 1906 |

After a romantic, expressive start and by way of Impressionism, Paul Cézanne arrived at a more fundamental approach to painting. In his many portraits and landscapes, but especially in his still lifes, he summarizes painting as a construction of forms and lines on the flat surface, with their own formal laws. Cézanne transformed the natural form, the natural space and light into a composition in which forms are simplified, the light falling evenly across the whole picture and the colour, in particular in the series of landscapes of Mount Sainte-Victoire near Aix-en-Provence, is limited to ochres and greens or purplish blue and pink. This restriction is necessary to achieve greater unity and given the painting a structure of its own. Cézanne saw painting as an interpretation of optical perceptions in a composition in which the space of the image is deprived of depth. This concept of a painting as a flat surface on which visual processes and laws are made transparent, separate from the presentation of the actual subject, was immediately picked up after Cézanne by artists such as Matisse and the Cubists.

Marc Chagall | Vitebsk, Russia 1887 – St. Paul-de-Vence, France 1985 |

Early in his career, Chagall, born in a Jewish family in Vitebsk, Russia, settled alternately in Paris and Russia. In Paris in 1910, he discovered 'free light' and met Robert Delaunay, Max Jacob and Apollinaire. He returned to Russia during the revolution, returning later to Paris once again, until forced by the occupation to emigrate to the United States.

Chagall illustrated books and designed for the theatre in addition to painting. Although he was in touch with different movements and showed influences of Delaunay and the Cubists, he never identified with any of the trends and always resisted all forms of labels. Chagall was not only influenced by the Cubists, but also the Fauves, for whom the expressive strength of colour was very important. Thanks to these influences, Chagall developed a use of colour and form completely his own. He put objects or figures on the canvas with no strictly logical relationship to spatial reality and used colourful transparent planes that overlap one another within the painting.

There is a highly individual poetry to Chagall's work, and his Jewish and Russian background gave him a rich realm of myths and popular tales to draw on. This led to an inventive fusion of images from these myths, his memories of the Jewish community in Vitebsk and his own personal life.

Sandro Chia | Florence, Italy, 1946 – |

Together with the other Italians, Clemente, Cucchi and Paladino, painter/draughtsman Sandro Chia belongs to a group of artists referred to as the 'trans-avantgarde' (*transavantgardia*) by critic Achile Bonito Oliva. The name comes from the fact that they are

seen in contrast, for example, with the more conceptual and revolutionary artists of Arte Povera. Their themes are derived from both personal and mythical events and individual symbols borrowed from existing art sources.

Chia initially had a classical, traditional training in art. He has shown figurative paintings since 1975. His paintings of the 1980s have a distinct and immediately recognisable style. Chia not only derives his themes from personal fantasies, but also borrows from the work of earlier painters, such as Chagall, the German Expressionists, Italian Futurists and the metaphysical painters De Chirico and Carra. A cartoon-like figure recurs in his work, which when placed against a surrealistic background, participates in new mythological scenes. Chia not infrequently relativises a heavily laden subject through grotesque and humorous means.

Francesco Clemente | Naples, Italy, 1952 - |

Clemente settled in Rome in 1972, where he studied architecture, met artists and came to know Boetti and Cy Twombly. Boetti's hermetic symbolism and Twombly's sparse use of paint or calligraphic symbols were particularly influential for Clemente's early development. He then began regular trips to India, where he stayed several months each year, fascinated by a world where religion, sensuality and decoration are poignantly present. He developed a drawing and watercolour technique close to Indian traditions. Clemente uses these influences in his work, combining them with religious, alchemical or historical elements of Western culture. Clemente's autobiographical fantasies are also a persistent thread, resulting in hallucinatory paintings and drawings of myths and allegories with particularly sensual substance. Clemente has an obsessive interest in the human face and body, with human skin and body orifices continually reappearing in his work. The body functions as a 'conductor of what we show on the outside and what we feel within'. Clemente uses the widest range of the techniques of figurative art: paintings in oils and watercolours (illustrating poetry texts), mosaics and frescos, drawings and etchings, varied printing techniques and sculpture.

Constant | Constant A. Nieuwenhuis, Amsterdam, 1920 - |

Along with Christian Dotremont, Constant was CoBrA's chief ideologist. He wrote numerous manifestos and articles for the group, defining the social role of the artist and calling for the liberation of creativity so as to serve a constantly self-renewing culture. His encounter with the Danish artist Asger Jorn in 1946 had a marked effect on his work: fantastic creatures and aggressive, frightening animal and human figures began to populate his canvasses. In Paris (1951-52) he painted 'war pictures' filled with the ruins of a destroyed world where helpless people lifted their hands to the skies. During the late fifties Constant developed his conception of New Babylon, the ideal city where man would be freed of the necessity to work and as 'homo ludens' could bring his creative powers to fruition. The constructions and models for New Babylon have frequently been exhibited. In the seventies Constant returned to paintings, watercolours and drawings for which the work of Old Masters such as Velasquez yielded a rich source of inspiration. In late 1995 the Stedelijk Museum staged a major Constant retrospective (Paintings 1948-1995).

Enzo Cucchi | Morro d'Alba, Italy, 1950 - |

References to the landscape of Ascona, Cucchi's birthplace, are often found in his paintings, drawings, reliefs and sculptures: the hills, the sunlight, beaches and legends associated with the region. For Cucchi, symbolic images of these legends and myths assume the value of real entities that live on—be it local folk colour in cultural traditions, pre-Renaissance tradition or modern culture.

Typically figures of animals or saints, heroes and spirits with remarkable oval faces or skulls, populate Cucchi's landscapes. Along with these landscapes with solitary trees and figures are also works of visionary images around the city of Rome. Cucchi originally used clear, strong colours, but since 1983 he has used progressively more ochres, brownish tints and greys. He accentuates earthy materials by adding straw, wood and earth. Painting is a poetic medium for Cucchi to present the inexplicable, again and again, and with new means and new inventions, maintain the public's susceptibility to such living traditions.

Willem de Kooning | Rotterdam, 1904 - New York, 1997 |

Willem de Kooning emigrated to the United States in 1926. There he became one of the leading figures amongst the group of Abstract Expressionists referred to as the New York School. For De Kooning, the physical aspect of the painting process is paramount. He applies the paint rapidly onto the canvas, in broad strokes and in different layers and this results in paintings full of movement.

De Kooning was initially inspired by the dynamism of metropolitan New York. After he moved to Long Island in 1963, the new rural environment with its sand dunes, beaches, the ocean and clear light greatly affected his work. With their expressive strokes and brilliant colours, many paintings from the 1960s and 1970s elicit strong associations with the climate and the light along the coast of Long Island. Sometimes a figurative element, a fish or a small boat is even recognisable, as in the 1977 *North Atlantic Light (Untitled VIII)*. The title, *Rosy-Fingered Dawn at Louse Point* (1963) is a reference to the poet Homer, who described the break of day as 'the sun who strokes her long pink fingers across the earth'. Louse Point is a peninsula on Long Island.

Maurice de Vlaminck | Paris, 1876 - Rueil-la-Galadiére, France, 1958 |

Vlaminck was a champion racing cyclist whom Dérain encouraged to paint full-time, earning his living by playing the violin. Vlaminck was self-taught, and mocked classical, Renaissance and the 'Beaux-Arts' traditions. By 1900, his work already showed violent colours and turbulent brushwork, even before he saw the—for him decisive—Van Gogh exhibition in 1901, where he also met Matisse. Vlaminck exhibited at the Salon d'Automne in 1905 with Matisse and the other Fauve painters. Kandinsky invited him to show in Munich and he also took part in the Post-Impressionist exhibition in London in 1912.

In his Fauve years, Vlaminck used colour straight from the tube, unlike Dérain and Matisse, and it is more intense, his brush more heavily loaded, his strokes more informal, less structured, and his spaces emphatically evoked. He wanted to translate his feelings into paint, disregarding all that had ever been painted before. He became interested in Cézanne's work around 1906, as did others, and soon thereafter in Cubism, claiming to have introduced primitive art to Paris. Later, he rejected his early bright colours for sombre tones and became more traditional, moving out of Paris to Auvers, where Van Gogh lived, later to Verneuil. In addition to painting, Vlaminck wrote poetry, articles and prose, painted theatre scenery, designed tapestry cartoons and made illustrations.

Robert Delaunay | Paris, 1885 - Montpelier, France 1941 |

First influenced by Monet and Seurat, Delaunay then studied Chevreul's colour theories and Cézanne's space and form. At the birth of Cubism, Delaunay was interested in the dynamic vitality of modern Paris. In 1909, he painted interiors of the Gothic Saint Severin, light splitting into prism colours and vaults and pillars seeming to revolve. His 1910 *Eiffel Tower* series honours this beacon of technical ingenuity. Colour planes permeate disintegrating forms. Though Cubist tendencies are stronger here than in the Saint Severin paintings, colour dominates, developing Delaunay's concept of its rhythmical effect as—in (Neo) Impressionist tradition—the vehicle of light. This led to *Fenêtres simultanes prismatiques* where beams of light break up in the windowpane as if in a prism. Delaunay paints the round prismatic colour surfaces. The harmony of the seven colours gives optimal light intensity, manifest in its purest form when colour separates from object. Representation gives way to colour-and-light contrasts that determine the existence of the universe, 'the only reality'.

These pure colour compositions open the way to abstract art, but from 1925 to 1930, Delaunay returned to a figurative style until, with his wife Sonia, he was able to integrate architecture in abstract painting, the most important commission being murals for France at the Paris International Exhibition. Delaunay directly influenced the Blaue Reiter painters, notably Macke, Marc and Klee. Apollinaire called Delaunay's and Léger's work 'Cubisme Orphique', hence the name 'Orphism' for this 'Cubist abstraction'.

Jan Dibbets | Weert, Netherlands, 1941 - |

Dibbets's work is rooted in Concept Art, Land Art and Arte Povera, movements of the sixties. He gained recognition with the series of 'perspective corrections' he started to make in 1967, photographing a trapezium placed in a landscape or his studio from a viewpoint that made it look square. In 1971 he made his first polaroids of arc-shaped panoramas of the flat Dutch countryside which he classifies as 'hilly landscapes' and which alienate the viewer from everyday reality. In the eighties, after a period spent examining the colour and structure of water and grass (*Monet's Dream Study*, 1975, Stedelijk Museum collection), he turned to photographing interiors and ceilings, arranging them in circular panoramas on a watercolour ground. His fascination with the seventeenth-century painter Pieter Saenredam then prompted him to photograph church interiors. In this exercise, more so than in his earlier work, the emphasis is on the aesthetic value of space and form. In 1993 Dibbets was commissioned by the French Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, to design 31 stained-glass windows for the Cathedral of St Louis in Blois. In 1995, he designed a memorial in Paris to the physicist François Arago (1786-1853) in the form of 135 circular bronze plaques placed on the corresponding number of spots in the paved street. The recipient of many international awards, Dibbets exhibited four 'windows' at the Stedelijk in the autumn of 1996.

Jean Dubuffet | Le Havre, France, 1901 – Paris, 1985 |

Dubuffet began as a businessman and artist, but in 1942 decided to concentrate exclusively on painting. He is one of the most original and controversial painters of the post-war period. His early interest in the artistic expressions of the mentally disturbed and amateurs brought him to what he later called Art Brut. He collected this work and, from 1949, organised exhibitions and an association to promote this art (Compagnie de l'art brut). Dubuffet used the term Art Brut to indicate the spontaneous, subconscious, 'anti-artistic' character of these works which had many qualities he would employ in his own painting. The direct influence of children's drawings—and of Paul Klee—is seen in his early figurative paintings, based partly on wall scratchings or doodles in the street, as in the Parisian murals (1942-1943), his grotesque female *Bodies* (1951) and the *Beardman* series (1959). All of these paintings have a kind of 'prefiguration', or spontaneous beginnings of representation. The evocative effect of material plays an important role.

Luciano Fabro | Turin, Italy, 1936 – |

Fabro was part of the Turin-based Arte Povera group, together with Merz and Penone. In the early 1960s he made sculptures from glass, metal, bronze and marble, as well as paper, lead and cloth. His early works are mostly iron constructions with geometric forms, whose centre of gravity, balance and movement are as important as their form. His series in glass leaves the form transparent and the reflection of the surrounding space visible. After 1968 he produced a series of poetic sculptures of great diversity in form and materials. Form is always first for Fabro, with associative meaning in second place. Form in art relates to older models and traditions, but all understanding of a work of art changes according to its cultural context. The importance of collective symbolic meaning and the potential to alter this are fundamental to a series produced between 1968 and 1975, based on the map of Italy. The 'boot' shape is in fabric, leather, gilded bronze or iron and presented in different ways, hanging, folded up, reclining, etc.

The shape and symbolism of the egg has recurred, as in *Ovaries*, in 1988, and innumerable installations refer to both the present and antiquity. Incongruous, innovative materials question the linguistic specificity of sculpture. *Prometheus*, from 1986-87, remembers the Chernobyl disaster and the Greek god punished for giving fire to man. Fabro's *Habitat* installations reinterpret classical perspective, and in *Paolo Uccello, 1450-1989*, the spatial violation of the laws of perspective and nature is further extrapolated in terms of time, implying the impermanence of both. Fabro accompanies his sculptures and installations with publications and teaches at the art school he founded in Milan.

Lucio Fontana | Rosario de Santa Fe, Argentina, 1899 – Varese, Italy, 1968 |

Fontana was trained in Italy as a sculptor and was part of a 1930s group of abstract, avant-garde artists in Milan. He returned to his native Argentina from 1939 to 1946 and after the war created a completely new and pioneering body of work. His visual and written work were a great influence on the younger generation of Italian artists, including Manzoni, Castellani and the Milanese spatialist movement, as well as in the rest of Europe, with the NUL and Zero movements. In various manifestos (1946, 1951 and others), he states that the individual, traditional arts no longer fit in contemporary society, that artists must look for art that creates a unity in which 'the human being functions as and is made manifest as a total entity'. He felt artists in the age of space travel can no longer allow themselves to make recognisable images, now having other means of expressing time and space and eliciting spatial experiences. Fontana strove for unity of colour, sound, movement and space and, through art, saw how to do it poetically. He considered this unity a synthesis that had to be found through these elements and felt that contemporary technology makes it possible to achieve.

Fontana first made sculptures, ceramic reliefs and drawings that later led to monochrome paintings. After 1949 he called all his work—whatever its materials or category— 'Concetto Spaciale' or spatial concept. His perforations (after 1949) and cuts (1962) created 'new spaces' in the painting. They broke through the two-dimensional surface, laying open the (unrestricted) space and creating new dimension for the painting. The last works, begun in 1965, have perforation lines in the canvas and decorative wooden frames. Fontana's ideas on creating new spatial constellations are most explicitly expressed in his environments (1949, 1951, 1961) and dark spaces with ultra-violet neon lights (1950, 1951, 1961).

Gilbert & George | Devon, Great Britain, 1942 – the Dolomites, Italy, 1943 – |

They met at St Martins School of Art in London, and since 1969 have presented themselves as living sculptures: singing sculpture, dancing sculpture, meal sculpture, philosophy sculpture. They do a little tap dance on tabletops, stand endlessly still on a step, faces made up in metallic colours to accentuate the sculptural impression. They express the living sculpture in the form of large, charcoal murals

of them walking in the park or at home. With the motto 'Art for All', they look for ways to penetrate existing ideas about sculpture, involve the public in their art and question art's function. A variety of works result, executed in different media: postal sculptures and magazines (reports by postcard or messages with or without illustrations), videos, books or films.

The photo-sculptures began in the early 1970s, photographic works built up of connected panels, originally in black-and-white, later in colour, usually with symmetrical structure. Figures and objects have black contours and the reduced colours are bright and contrasting. The figures are in static poses, photographed frontally or *en face*, the images reminiscent of Egyptian hieroglyphs. Gilbert & George also use traditional compositions, poses and art historical themes (the Fall of Man, the Last Judgement), but modern photographic and reproduction techniques bring the work into the present. Their subjects originally concerned their own existence, but since the 1970s also pinpoint their relationship with the modern, urban environment. Recurring subjects include (homo)sexuality, religion, social situations (the worker, the homeless), nature, cities and urban design. These emblematic presentations are not moralising or explicatory images, but intend to shatter clichés and taboos, most of all showing their involvement with the world and the role of the artist in society.

Philip Guston | Montreal, Canada, 1913 – Woodstock, CN, USA, 1980 |

Philip Guston went to the Los Angeles Art Institute in the late 1920s, as did Jackson Pollock. He settled in New York in 1935, where he developed a semi-surrealistic painting style with references to De Chirico, but also the murals of the Mexican painters Siqueros and Orozco. His themes were racism and violence, often personified in cartoon-like Ku Klux Klan figures. When by the late 1940s he had developed a more personal, lyrical abstract style, he was considered part of the New York School, which contributed to primarily Abstract Expressionist innovation in American painting, and included De Kooning, Gorky, Pollock, Kline, Rothko, Newman and Still.

Guston's style is refined, even calligraphic, and his expressiveness more controlled than explosive. His favoured colours are pinks, reds and greys. Between 1966 and 1970 he made drawings and paintings that once again took on a strongly figurative, narrative character. He left New York City in 1967 for the quieter Woodstock, where his drawings and paintings included objects from his immediate environment: chairs, lamps, hands, heads and especially shoes with empathically nailed-on soles. The paintings are of the artist's inner world, permeated with doubt, filled with hallucinating images. Guston makes full use of painting both as a material and as a means of creating allegorical images that arouse unpredictable associations. Partly because of this, he became an important figure for the younger artists referred to as Neo-Expressionists in the late 1980s.

Asger Jorn | Vejrum, 1914 – Aarhus, Denmark, 1973 |

Known as a painter, draughtsman and printmaker, Jorn also made ceramics, bronze sculptures, monumental ceramic walls and tapestries. He also published articles on art theory. Jorn was influenced by Picasso, Kandinsky, Miro and Surrealism. The Danish 'Abstract Surrealists' of the 1930s were very interested in dreamworlds and mythology. Jorn, part of this movement, had before the war already made paintings with strange creatures and figures seemingly inspired by Norse folk art and prehistoric art. In 1948, in Paris for a conference of 'Revolutionary Surrealists', Jorn met the Belgian painter Alechinsky and poet Dotremont, and members of the Dutch Experimental Group, including Appel, Constant, Corneille, Rooskens and Wolvecamp. This meeting led to the formation of the CoBrA group (for Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam). Jorn, one of their theorists, formulated a concept of art characteristic of its day: art must come into the known world from the unknown, like a lightning bolt.

In 1954, Jorn began a period of great creativity. The powerful streaks of paint in his earlier paintings were now alternated with touches set closer together, creating a paint mass with dramatic movement. The animal or human figures in his paintings were by now hardly recognisable. Jorn travelled through Europe a great deal and met many artists. He stimulated or set up numerous artists' initiatives, including the 'Situationistic International' (1957-1975), to support collective participation in art by artists and lay people aimed at making society itself a work of art.

Donald Judd | Excelsior Springs, MO, USA, 1928 – New York, 1994 |

Judd began his career in the 1950s, when Abstract Expressionism was the leading trend in New York. He studied philosophy and art history, made his first three-dimensional works in the early 1960s and wrote about the work of other artists of his generation, such as Oldenburg, Morris, Chamberlain, Stella and Flavin. He wrote his famous article, 'Specific Objects', in 1964, in which he summarised the ideas and the work of artists who would later come to be known as the Minimalists. For Judd, a work of art must not be a painting or a sculpture, but an 'object', with its own structure

and its own internal logic. The modern work of art must be stripped of all symbolism, personal emotion or metaphysical speculation. Illusionism in painting had to disappear, as did the accidental quality of work done by hand. To give his own three-dimensional constructions their objective character, in 1963 Judd began making his box or crate-like forms. His 'sculptures' pair beauty with lack of function and by so doing can only be perceived as art. Along with such polished industrial materials as steel, aluminium or plexiglas, after 1972 Judd also used plywood, which is warmer and softer. He built his 'sculptures' of perfectly constructed geometric forms of aluminium or wood, shown either on their own or in successively connected series. The same simplicity and clarity Judd strove to achieve in his use of form and material is evident in his use of colour. The works Judd completed in the last fifteen years of his life are composed of metal elements which he joined together in such a way that a kind of patchwork of colour planes is created.

Judd has had a tremendous influence on the development of modern art. As a sceptical empiricist, Judd believed exclusively in concrete experience: 'There is a breakdown in universal and general values. Grand philosophical systems are not creditable anymore' (1983).

Wassily Kandinsky | Moscow, 1866 - Neuilly sur Seine, France, 1944 |

Kandinsky, a certified lawyer at 30, arrived in Munich in 1896 to concentrate on art. For several years he took lessons at the Munich academy. In 1902 he met Gabrielle Munter, his companion until 1916, making several voyages with her through Europe and Tunisia. His 1909 landscapes are still recognisable as such, but the 1910 and 1911 *Improvisations*, *Impressions* and *Compositions* are totally abstract. Kandinsky co-founded 'Der Blaue Reiter' with Franz Marc in 1911. *Uber das Geistige in der Kunst*, his first theoretical contribution to 'pure abstraction', was published the same year. Forced to spend World War I in Russia, in 1921 Kandinsky taught in Germany at the Bauhaus, first in Weimar, later in Dessau. In 1926 the Bauhaus published his *Point, Line and Plane*. The Nazis closed the Bauhaus in 1933 and Kandinsky was again forced to leave Germany. Taking Marcel Duchamp's advice, he fled to France, where he remained working until his death.

Dick Ket | Den Helder, 1902 - Bennekom, Netherlands 1940 |

Ket was a student at the Kunstoefening Academy of Art in Arnhem from 1922 to 1925. Unable to venture far from home due to a heart condition, he concentrated on self-portraits and still lifes. Like the Magic Realists, Koch, Willink and Hynckes, Ket was very much preoccupied with textural qualities and fine detail, reminiscent of the Flemish Masters of the sixteenth century. The compositions of his still lifes are meticulously constructed in a manner related to Cubism and especially to A. M. Cassandre's poster designs in the awkward angle at which he depicts and places the objects. In his self-portraits he shows the results of his illness by painting both the skin deformations on his hands, and the medicine bottles around him.

Anselm Kiefer | Donaueschingen, Germany, 1945 - |

Kiefer is part of a post-war generation trying to fathom Germany's recent past. Since the first time, around 1970, he exhibited works with subjects referring to the Nazi period, there have been powerful reactions from the public. It had been rare for a German painter to bring the weight of recent history into the perspective of German culture, with the great German writers and philosophers. Kiefer questions how people deal with this past and how history can be manipulated. His subjects are usually associated with moments of human tragedy, tales from the Bible or the Edda, or periods of historical upheaval such as the French Revolution and World War II. He also draws on the literature of the Romantics.

Kiefer's works are thickly painted. He mixes the paint with sand and uses branches, straw, lead and tar. As a ground for his paintings, he not only uses canvas, but woodcuts, printed or photographic paper, or lead. These materials also have their own bond with the past. Kiefer sees painting as an alchemistic process that can literally take place in the painting itself. In *Innenraum*, it is not only clear how imposing the Reichstag building was in Berlin, but he has also visualised the trail of destruction that clings to it. Similarly, landscape can bear the apocalyptic scars of the past, as in *Urd Werdani Skuld* and *Markischer Sand*.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner | Aschaffenburg, Germany, 1880 - Davos, Switzerland, 1938 |

While studying architecture in Dresden, Kirchner was already painting and drawing, co-founding Die Brücke with Fritz Bleyl, Erich Heckel and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff in 1905. The group worked both indoors and in nature. Embracing reform and intense commitment to art while rejecting materialism and academic rules, they developed a communal living and working lifestyle. Painting landscapes and figures, they relied on intuition to reach a

fundamental essence. Van Gogh, the Fauves and Gauguin were early influences. Kirchner, following Gauguin's interest in the exotic, made wooden carvings inspired by African sculptures in 1910. His directness lends the work optimal expressiveness, also evident in his woodcuts. In 1911 the group moved to Berlin, where Kirchner's focus shifted to nudes, studio work and frivolous street scenes. Despite some contact with Der Blaue Reiter in Munich, Die Brücke fell apart in 1913. Kirchner, in poor heath, suffered mental problems and alcoholism, and spent years in sanatoriums, beginning in 1917 in Davos, Switzerland, where nature inspired him to make landscapes. In 1921 he became acquainted with 'movement and character dance', instigating his return to this subject. The Dutch painter Jan Wiegers met Kirchner in Davos and was strongly influenced by his work. Wiegers in turn transmitted Kirchner's expressionism to the Dutch group De Ploeg. In the thirties the National Socialists labelled Kirchner's work an example of *entarte Kunst* (degenerate art). Much of his work was confiscated and destroyed. Kirchner committed suicide in 1938.

Pyke Koch | Beek, 1901 - Wassenaar, Netherlands, 1991|

Koch was a self-taught painter who abandoned his law studies in 1927 in favour of art. His first paintings were influenced by Surrealism and German 'Neue Sachlichkeit' (New Objectivity), movements which gained currency in the Netherlands in the late twenties. It was some years before Koch opted for the precise, pristine technique that came to typify his work. His female portraits of the 1930s (*Shooting Gallery*, 1931; *Bertha of Antwerp*, 1931) and a series of self-portraits cast in a heroic role (*Self-portrait with Black Headband*, 1937) classified him as an exponent of 'Magic Realism', a term he defined thus: 'Magic realism shows ordinary things which at the same time contain an element of improbability.' His contemporaries Carel Willink and Raoul Hynckes worked in a similar vein. Apart from a stay in Florence (1938-39), where he studied the painters of the Renaissance, Koch spent his whole life in Utrecht. In 1995 the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam staged a major retrospective of his work.

Jeff Koons | York, PA, USA 1955 - |

In 1980, Jeff Koons exhibited *The New*, a series of display cases containing vacuum cleaners, and in 1985, *Equilibrium*, fish tanks with floating basketballs. In such clean, rather high-tech work, modern display techniques are combined with subtle seduction tactics to appeal to viewers. In 1986, Koons had little stainless steel sculptures made, copies of 'kitsch' portraits (busts of Bob Hope, Christ, Louis XIV), of gifts businessmen give clients (a miniature train filled with liqueur) or toys (an inflatable rabbit). These are both 'high' and 'low' culture objects cleverly playing with people's greed, clichéd images long since firmly ensconced in the collective consciousness. Koons's work questions how we deal with art and how art functions in the banality of daily life. In the figurative sense, the colourful wooden sculpture, *Ushering in Banality*, shows how the pig—unclean and ignoble—is led into the banal world.

In 1992, Koons put advertisements in *Art Forum* and *Art News*, depicting himself as a young rock-and-roll teacher instructing a group of children. *Exploit the Masses* and *Banality as Saviour* are written on the blackboard. These texts can be seen as Koons's credo. As an artist, he is the manipulator who uses publicity and the media to appeal to the desires and urges of the masses. Since 1989, in efforts to win over as large a public as possible, he has worked on the *Made in Heaven* project together with—possibly even more photogenic—Cicciolina (Illona Staller), a porn star who managed to become a member of the Italian parliament. Koons makes photographic paintings, sculptures in glass, porcelain and wood, in which the lovers are united in paradise.

Jannis Kounellis | Piraeus, Greece, 1936 - |

Originally from Greece, Jannis Kounellis settled in Rome in 1956. After initially painting monochrome works with numbers, letters or words, he went on to make installations. Kounellis feels that the modern artist must not be concerned with the imitation of reality, as is the case with painting. In his eyes, the language of art has become too complex and fragmented for that and Kounellis furthermore no longer sees a potential for the painting as a vehicle for personal motivations. He looks for connections in nature or in history, where the individual's relationship to the environment forms a certain harmony, a synthesis. To give expression to that idea of synthesis in his installations, he makes use of a means also employed by Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé. Known as 'synaesthesia', this concept unties the different senses of hearing, sight and smell. For Kounellis, adoption of this idea means that he makes use of used objects and 'poor' materials such as wool, straw, charcoal, jute, gin or rotting meat.

He aims to re-examine the past in a creative way and show the possibilities for transformation of meanings in his installations, led by his own poetic intuition. Kounellis uses the debris of the past. The debris is in fragments, and the fragments let us see that

we only experience that past in piecemeal, in tatters of memory. The sculptures recall associations of chaos and destruction. Kounellis uses fire, as a metaphor for the medium most perfectly suited to transforming matter into new compositions, from durability to transience.

Herman Kruyder | Lage Vuursche, 1881- Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1935 |

It was in about 1910 that the former house-painter Herman Kruyder decided to devote himself entirely to art, a decision which brought the artist little joy during his lifetime. Not until after World War II did his visionary work gain wider recognition. At first he worked in a poetically Impressionist style, but during a stay in the village of Bennebroek in the province of Noord-Holland (1923-27) he switched to garish colours in clashing contrasts. Well-known examples are *The Letter* (1923-25) and *The Pig Killer* (1923-25), paintings whose ominous atmosphere might have been symptomatic of the artist's state of mind. Towards the end of 1926 Kruyder suffered a mental crisis which ultimately led to a suicide attempt. In *Blaricum* (1927-34) he painted more tranquil rural motifs. The triptych *Pan* (1931) echoed the colours of his Bennebroek period. With vigorous brushstrokes he now layered his paint thickly in a violently Expressionistic style, as in *The Cock* of 1931-32 (Stedelijk Museum collection), which is regarded as one of his finest paintings.

Henri Laurens | Paris, 1885 – Paris, 1954 |

Laurens was trained as a stonecutter, and began his career in designing. After meeting Georges Braque in 1911, he made contact with other Cubists. In their company he soon developed into a respected Cubist sculptor. In this period he made constructions of wood, plaster and iron wire, also experimenting with polychrome sculptures. The still lifes created by Picasso and Braque between 1915 and 1918 strongly influenced his work. In 1920 Laurens began making reliefs, a translation of their still lifes into three dimensions. Contours of objects overlap, jut into space and wood or other material is sawn out, sometimes painted. Space between objects is equally important to volume. Laurens's reliefs were made more or less simultaneously with those of Picasso and the Russian Constructivists. Laurens also fulfilled commissions for ballet sets and monumental work. Slowly abandoning his Cubist principles after 1925, he replaced his still lifes with nudes and mythic personifications. These highly vital figurative works brought Laurens much success.

Roy Lichtenstein | New York, 1923 - New York, 1997 |

Lichtenstein was one of the most important American Pop Artists. He began enlarging images from comic books onto large canvasses in 1961. He selected sentimental or (melo)dramatic scenes that he reproduced in the same cool, mechanical technique, complete with black contours, dialogue balloons and rastering. The cartoon figures are removed from their story context and reproduced with the identical typographic 'Ben-Ray' dot raster in the painting, making them a parody of the original. In their detail, the enlarged rasters and flat colour planes take on an abstract character.

In addition to comic strip subjects, Lichtenstein has painted landscapes in the same style, as well as imitations of Picasso, Mondrian and Abstract Expressionist artists and styles. The Abstract Expressionist brushstrokes he translated in 1965 into his comic book code demonstrate the paradox of this mechanical technique when applied to such individualistic, personal artistic expression. By 1986, the paintings had virtually a purely abstract character, and after 1989, used reflected figures and collages with deformed images.

Morris Louis | Baltimore, 1912 - Washington, DC, USA 1962 |

Morris Louis began letting very diluted paint flow across the canvas in 1954, initially in fan formations of colours that blended into one another, later in unbroken parallel bands. The paint is sometimes absorbed into the unprimed canvas and there is no 'personal' touch or signature. The paintings are in series and tend towards a symmetrical structure. In the *Unfurled* paintings, various colours of paint drift diagonally downward in thin ribbons to both sides.

Although Louis, together with Kenneth Noland and Elsworth Kelly, is regarded as one of the Colourfield painters, their work lacks the more painterly quality of Newman, Rothko and Still, which led critic Clement Greenberg to call them 'Post-painterly abstractionists'. Painting can here be seen as a vehicle for purely formal elements, whereby personal signature should remain in the background. In Morris Louis's case, the personal touch of using the brush has indeed been removed altogether.

Kazimir Malevich | Kiev, 1978 – St. Petersburg, 1935 |

Malevich moved to Moscow to study art in 1904. From 1910 to 1913 he responded to trends in modern art, trying them all. Fauvism led to Cubism and as he put it, 'Cubo-Futurism', with influences from Russian folk art. The first abstract paintings evolved from this Cubo-Futurist phase between 1913 and 1915. He designed sets for *The Conquest of the Sun*, and the poets Mayakowsky and Chlebnokoff encouraged his idea of an 'a-logical' art, combining irrational and meaningless elements, figurative or abstract. This freedom led to independent abstract planes in his paintings, also used for opera sets and costumes. He showed his first 'suprematist' paintings, including the *Black Square*, at the 'Last Futuristic Exhibition, 0.10' in 1915. His brochure, *From Cubism to Futurism to Suprematism* (1915) defined suprematism as 'the supremacy of pure experience in art', an art removed from all recognisable form. Malevich felt he paved the way for ideally presenting pure colour, form and texture in painting. Coloured geometric forms float in a white background, giving the sense of falling and standing up again. Later, they nearly disappear in an endless void.

He was an important figure in the Russian revolution, teaching art and from 1922 as head of the Petrograd Sytaats Institute for Art and Culture. He developed his theories in the 1920s, making his 'architectons' and ceramic designs. He travelled to Warsaw to exhibit in 1927, and to Berlin, where the Bauhaus rejected his application to teach. Forced back to Russia, he left his paintings in Germany. The revolutionary years were over. He secluded himself in Moscow, painting archetypal, faceless figures, mixing his abstract Suprematist forms and the early figures. Finally, bitter and alone, he returned to Renaissance methods and themes.

Robert Mangold | North Tonawanda, NY, USA, 1937 – |

As a reaction to the Abstract Expressionists' concentrated emphasis on the subjective, Robert Mangold sought a more objective approach to painting. Subject matter and presentation have given way in Mangold's work to purely formal considerations: 'There are four elements in my work,' according to Mangold, 'the edges as contour, the actual division of the whole as internal structure, the colour surface, and the line drawn on it in relation to the other elements.' He is able to create tension with extremely minimal means. The power of his paintings is due to the way in which opposing elements are very subtly related to one another in an uncertain sort of balance, a warm colour next to a cool one or planes alongside or crossing each other.

The paintings in the 'X' series are made up of different, mostly uneven right angles, combined in such a way that they form an 'X'. In *Red/Green X Within X*, a minimalist echo of Malevich's suprematist crosses, the black pencil line holds the three canvasses together like a spine.

Brice Marden | Bronxville, NY, USA, 1938 – |

Since 1960, Marden has painted abstract paintings comprising right-angled colour planes which he builds up in either a vertical or a horizontal direction. Between 1964 and 1968 they were limited to primarily monochrome planes. Marden's colours have a hushed clarity which he achieves by mixing his pigments with beeswax and turpentine. The simple outward appearance of these sober paintings and the formal approach to colour suggest that Marden is closely related to the Minimalist painters, such as Mangold and Stella. But for Marden, these paintings also have another purpose as an image for the concentration of the soul. The paintings inspired by Japanese calligraphy and those made since 1980 in fact further expand on his paintings of the 1950s. These primarily black and grey line patterns are set against a grey background. Despite the movement in them, they are paintings that invite contemplative observation on the part of the viewer.

Piet Mondrian | Amersfoort, Netherlands, 1872 – New York, 1944 |

Mondrian initially painted in an Impressionistic style, but during his years in Amsterdam (1892-1911) and Paris (1912-14) he worked through the influences of Symbolism, Fauvism and Cubism. His forms became more schematic and his colours brighter. He remained in the Netherlands during World War I, where he painted his first nearly abstract work in 1915 (*Sea an Pier Composition nr. 10*), a painting in white and black, built up of geometric line segments.

The artists' group, 'De Stijl' was set up in 1917. Their periodical of the same name published the artists Mondrian, Van Doesburg and Van der Leck and architects Wils, Oud and Van't Hoff. Influenced by the ideas of the Theosophical Association, Mondrian wrote theoretical studies of the spiritual and universal power of the 'pure imagery' of Neo-Plasticism, a completely abstract art based on geometric forms, straight lines and primary colours. Truth, purity and simplicity—according to Mondrian, the harmony of contrasts—are visualised in abstract construction. From 1918, he employed a strict pattern of horizontal and vertical black bands to divide the canvas and coloured the planes thus produced in the primary colours, red, yellow and blue and the non-colours, black, white and grey.

After 1940, Mondrian lived in New York, where he exchanged the carefully measured harmony of his Paris work (1919-38) for paintings with lively lattice patterns and small colour planes. In his last works, *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1943) and *Victory Boogie Woogie* (1944), he delved further into the theme of breaking up the

surface inside the composition and, with abstract means, succeeded in creating an image of the rhythm of the modern metropolis.

Barnett Newman | New York, 1905 - New York, 1970 |

Newman began attracting critical attention in the early 1940s, with paintings in which colour planes have the upper hand, framed by a repeating geometric pattern of vertical bands, interspersed with spherical forms. He had simplified this further by the end of the decade by reducing the number of colours in the background until only one remained, broken by a single vertical line that, like a hinge, splits the painting down the middle, as he described it. Newman's paintings visualise the repeatedly recurring tension between the colour surface and the severe vertical division of that surface. The two components that result function as cornerstones of the painting and represent being spatially open or closed.

The title of *Right Here* (1954) was a statement that after World War II the new developments in the visual arts were happening in America, not in western Europe. As a Colourfield painter and theorist for the New York School, Newman was primarily concerned with the emotional power of colour. Inspired by his Jewish heritage, he sought a form to express the mystery of the world in Abstract Expressionist terms, writing a great deal about his theories over the years. In the 1970s, Newman's work was a reference point for the new generation of abstract and Minimalist artists.

Claes Oldenburg | Stockholm, Sweden, 1929 - |

Oldenburg settled in New York in 1956, and met Alan Kaprov, Jim Dine and Samaras, artists involved with 'happenings' and environments. Between 1959 and 1962, Oldenburg worked on collages and assemblages of materials he found in the street, such as newspapers, rags and wood. He made his first environment, *The Store*, in 1961, in which he transformed his studio into a shop and supplied it with clothing and food cast in plaster of Paris. The objects are painted in seductive gloss colours. By 1962 he had made his first life-sized 'soft' sculptures in cloth of hamburgers, and such utilitarian items as a ladder, a set of drums or a typewriter. The transformation of the original material into a material alien to the original object leads to a sense of estrangement and to another way of looking at that object. The purpose, the size and the form all change. It is from this period that Oldenburg's work is associated with Pop Art.

Oldenburg also made the *Bedroom* in 1963, an environment or installation ensemble showing a life-sized bedroom in 'kitsch' materials and colours. This spatial environment has a very realistic character, later also employed by Edward Kienholz, but most of the work Oldenburg has done since the 1960s has been sculptures of utilitarian objects enlarged or otherwise made unfamiliar through either format or material: a monumental lipstick case, a ventilator replacing the Statue of Liberty, or a trowel. In the 1980s these monumental sculptures were made together with his wife, Coosje van Bruggen, sometimes remaining as design proposals but also often completed full scale.

Guiseppe Penone | Garessio, Italy, 1947 - |

Penone's work, considered Arte Povera (along with that of Kounellis, Merz, Fabro), centres on natural processes coupled with humankind's intervention, and the delicate balance between life and death. At first Penone literally intervened in the growth of plants or trees, inserting a bronze cast of his hand in bark or braiding branches together. The *Alberi* series (1969) revealed the growth of a tree by cutting back a beam of wood to the youngest ring and leaving lateral branches, or knots, intact. Given that the normal progression is from nature to culture, Penone reverses direction to get closer to the origin of this process. Penone is more interested in making his findings visible than to 'polish' material into forms. *Soffio I* (*Breath I*), a print of his body and mouth against a life-size clay block, refers to the creation myth, as he had to breathe when making the print, giving 'life' to it. In the 1980s Penone combined wood with traditional bronze, pouring it over branches and tree-stumps so that the human figure could usually be recognised in the solidified form. After the late 1970s he produced works with terracotta vases, farming equipment and farm products.

Pablo Picasso | Malaga, Spain, 1881 - Mougins, France, 1973 |

Picasso had his first studio in Barcelona at fifteen. He first visited Paris in 1900 and later returned, meeting Max Jacob, Berthe Weill and Vollard, finally settling there in 1904, in the decrepit building Jacob called the 'Bateau-Lavoir', or Washing Boat. His Blue Period began in 1901, when he was barely 20, with submerged, lonely expressionistic figures in a dark, bluish atmosphere, and with which he immediately won thunderous success hitherto unknown to Montmartre's intellectuals and artists. His palette lightened, his (circus) figures became more voluminous in brighter light, a full pink that lent its name to the new period. The new avant-garde gathered in his studio.

Picasso returned to Spain, looking anew at Spain's archaic sculpture, and painted *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* in 1906, leading to the Cubism that also resulted from his daily contact with Georges Braque. 'Analytical Cubism' made way for 'Synthetic Cubism' in 1911, with the 'papier collé' and collages which were a cornerstone of his later work. He joined Cocteau in Rome in 1917, making sets for Diaghilev's *Parade*, and where he became acquainted with ancient art, the Renaissance and Commedia dell'Arte masks, sources from which works steeped in tradition evolved in the 1920s. He meanwhile continued the investigations resulting in the *Three Dancers*, an unabashed declaration of a renewed Cubist look at reality, by now heavily laden with emotion. This culminated in *Guernica*, his searing 1937 protest against the horrors of war. After World War II, he moved to Antibes and Vallauris, later to Cannes, Vauvenargues and Mougins, his paintings including idyllic scenes and protests, and in the 1950s entirely new, anything-but-copies of Old Masters, including Poussin, El Greco, and Delacroix. Picasso's phenomenal production as a painter was paralleled by his sculpture and prints, as well as illustrations and theatre designs.

Jackson Pollock | Cody, WY, 1912 - Springs, NY, USA , 1956 |

Pollock first studied in Los Angeles, and from 1929 to 1931 in New York with Thomas Hart Benton, one of America's important pre-war painters. Pollock was initially also motivated by the Mexican muralists and traditional American Indian folk art. Thereafter, Picasso's later work and that of artists of the surrealist-automatist genre, such as Masson, Matta and Miro were an important inspiration for Pollock. In the 1940s, from these Expressionist and Surrealist influences, he developed his own style. At that time, Pollock tried to separate painting from representation and by 1946, he was developing his 'Drippings'. He lays the canvas flat on the floor and 'attacks' it, by dripping paint in rhythmical movements around, on and over the canvas. The evenly distributed lines create a network covering the painting surface and the 'handwriting' is a direct result of Pollock's expressive method. In 1951 he was painting primarily in black and white and from 1953 to 1956 he used a variety of colours. Despite the 'all-over' technique with virtually no pronounced accentuations, the different overlappings of layers of paint reveal an apparently infinite spaciousness. Pollock was the first artist to work in large format, abandoning easel painting altogether. He saw painting as a direct extension of the artist's own personal expression.

James Rosenquist | Grand Forks, ND, USA, 1933 - |

After finishing art school in the 1950s, Rosenquist worked as an advertising painter. In 1960, he began making paintings reproducing sections of billboard advertisements in nearly photographic fashion. He was impressed by Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg and others in their shared interest in the everyday and the way images can be mechanically reproduced, laid out and used for paintings or sculptures. Rosenquist's method entails beginning by making collages from advertising material whose images are then enlarged, reduced and arranged over one another in a rather coincidental fashion, and finally painting them. His images are scenes from post-war American consumer society: strands of tinned spaghetti, rubber tyres, atomic mushroom clouds, car parts, faces and clothing.

After 1962, Rosenquist painted single images on panels, enlarged so that the colour planes took on an abstract effect. The images reflect banal advertising stereotypes and Rosenquist demonstrates the visual highlights of shining reflections and hard colour contrasts. He adds to traditional painting techniques with modern industrial neon lights, plexiglass and metals. Because of his use of publicity materials and his clean, nearly mechanical imagery methods, Rosenquist is one of American Pop Art's most easily recognised artists.

Mark Rothko | Dvinsk, Russia 1903 - New York, 1970 |

Rothko began making large format paintings in 1947, built up in one or two colours in rectangular planes parallel to those of the canvas. The vagueness of the right-angled edges of the colour surfaces on the background makes them seem to float. This is reinforced in some cases when the colours show little contrast. When the differences in colour and clarity are reduced, the sense of depth is lost. The effects of colour are central to Rothko's work and in this, together with Barnett Newman and Clyfford Still, he represents Colourfield painting. In Rothko's case, the viewer almost becomes absorbed into the painting, with the potential for concentrated, meditative attention to the way the colour works. Rothko wanted to evoke 'fundamental emotions' in his paintings. He lent his colour planes a mysterious weight which is difficult to define, but which produces 'drama'. Rothko himself referred to his rectangular colour planes as 'actors'.

Robert Ryman | Nashville, TN, USA, 1930 - |

Ryman began his career as a saxophonist and moved to New York in 1952, where he developed an interest in the visual arts and began experimenting with the effects of paints, brushes and primers. Self-taught, he was fascinated by Rothko's work. Since first exhibiting his work in 1960, his paintings have had a square format and he uses only white paint, consistent characteristics of his work. The white paint (oils, casein or gouache) provides Ryman with every potential for variations in tone, transparency or opaqueness, pasty or smooth. In contrast to many of his Abstract Expressionist predecessors, in these early works he avoids any impression of emphatic expressiveness and the work seems very analytical for its day. His motto is 'paint the paint' and he rejects any spiritual or other meaning outside the realm of the formal. In later work, after 1968, the texture of the background surface—cardboard or paper for example—plays a more important role and Ryman minimalises individual character by giving several works of the same format identical treatment and showing them as a group. In the decade to follow, he made various works on many backgrounds, including aluminium, plastic, copper or vinyl, and with many kinds of paint and brushstrokes.

David Salle | Norman, OK, USA, 1952 - |

Since the end of the 1970s, Salle has represented the new figurative direction in American art. His paintings use archetypes from scenes in films or photography together with quotations from literature or the visual arts, with superimposed decorative or graphic patterns. The substance of the images stems from everyday life and the banal as well as 'high' culture, creating ironic and multiple meanings in their transparent layers or in the adjacency of images. Their meaning is never explicit, but suggests an atmosphere in which the viewer is invited to make personal associations. Salle avoids direct expression, which has been made difficult in our overly aware culture and art, and instead makes regular use of the cliché. These clichés are very strong in his paintings with images of nude, conversing, daydreaming women, and women smoking cigarettes, and Salle thereby creates a situation in which the viewer is cast in the role of voyeur. Theoretically, his avoidance of style and the way in which he keeps his meanings open to question connects him with Postmodernism. Since 1985, Salle has also worked on set and costume designs, most notably for several ballet productions together with dancer and choreographer Karole Armitage. Building theatre sets has further led to sculptures of stacked objects in bronze, aluminium or glass, which he began making in the early 1990s.

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff | Rottluff, 1884 - Berlin, 1976 |

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff studied architecture and, with Heckel, Kirchner and Bleyl, founded the German Expressionist group, 'Die Brücke', in 1905, as 'a bridge from one bank to the other': 'We understood what we needed to leave behind—where we were headed was less clear', as Heckel recalled, rejecting authoritarian Imperial Germany, its narrow morality and bourgeois conception of art. Die Brücke saw their task not in imitating nature but in the free, subjective impressions of the spirit and soul: 'The rhythm, rapture of colours always captures and fascinates me.' They identified with Van Gogh, Munch and Nolde, whom Schmidt-Rottluff visited in 1906 and persuaded to join the group. He met art historian Rosa Schapire and collector Karl Schlefler in Hamburg, both enthusiastic advocates of his work, and moved to Berlin in 1911, associating with Walden's Sturm gallery, and exhibiting in 1912 at the Sonderbund show in Cologne. Schmidt-Rottluff painted, including numerous landscapes done on the coast that summer, and also sculpted and made prints. He later also designed furniture, jewellery and textiles.

After spending the First World War in the army, Schmidt-Rottluff joined the 'Arbeitsrat' arts council, publishing on art in a socialist society. A trip to Italy in 1923 led to his graphic style with sharp, jagged forms becoming softer. In 1931 he was admitted to the Prussian Academy of Arts, to be expelled in 1933: the Nazi regime considered Schmidt-Rottluff a degenerate artist. Despite being prohibited from exhibiting and painting, he continued working in seclusion. In 1947 he accepted a professorship in Berlin, and in 1967, Schmidt-Rottluff's funding and donated works led to the opening of the Brücke Museum.

Julian Schnabel | New York, USA, 1951 - |

Schnabel appeared in the late 1970s with figurative, expressive paintings, and thanks to rekindled interest in young, new developments in painting, rapidly became one of the most prominent figures in American art. Having studied in Houston and New York, Schnabel settled in Manhattan, and briefly in Europe where he saw Gaudi's work in Barcelona and that of Beuys, Kiefer and Polke in Germany. Partly with reference to the unorthodox way these artists used materials, Schnabel produced paintings on such surfaces as linoleum, fabrics including velvet and coconut mats, and he mounted various objects and materials on to them, such as ceramic shards or plates, as in the so-called plate paintings. The combination of painterly elements with everyday objects goes further than the Dada artists Schwitters and Ernst, but also steps beyond Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg. Schnabel shares these

artists' interest in the language of painting meshed with the products of 'low' culture, but he paints more than his predecessors' semi-narrative impressions, using quotations both from art history and mass culture. His themes regularly refer to the rise and fall of western civilisation and he regards the artistic creative process as a cycle which continually creates or needs new forms, but in which old forms can keep returning.

Gino Severini | Cortona, Italy, 1883 - Paris, 1966 |

In 1899 Severini left Tuscany for Rome, where he met Boccioni in Balla's studio. Devoting himself to painting, from 1903 to 1905 he studied and copied Old Masters and the Florentine Renaissance. In Paris in 1906 he met Modigliani, Max Jacob, Suzanne Valadon, Utrillo, Dufy and the artists associated with Braque and Picasso. In 1910 with Balla, Boccioni and Carrà he signed the Futurist manifestos which he introduced to Paris that same year. He wrote for *Lacerba* magazine and in 1930 became friends with Juan Gris, who introduced him to Leonce Rosenburg. In 1921 he published *Du Cubisme au Classicisme*. In his early period Severini was influenced by Divisionism, Seurat's original theory. In his most famous Futurist works he tries to suggest and create movement by a rhythm of geometrical forms that split the original objects and figures in parts. At the outbreak of World War I he painted a number of military subjects, including *Train of the Wounded*, completed in 1915, but that was one of his last Futurist works. In 1915 Severini turned from Futurism to the Synthetic Cubism of Braque, Picasso and Gris with a series of still lifes. After an abstract phase, he returned to a classicist figuration with metaphysical overtones. Through different phases and different technical and formal experiments, Severini developed his own abstract-geometric language, enriched by a traditional, classical foundation.

Frank Stella | Malden, MA, USA, 1936 - |

Frank Stella's 1958-60 *Black and Grey* paintings influenced minimal art. Every form of illusionism is eradicated and the canvas is a surface covered with a pattern of regular, evenly spaced lines. In the *Grey Paintings*, Stella worked with bands of aluminium paint that, in the end, left literally 'open' patches at the canvas edge. Intentionally omitted, they leave a rectangular frame with grooves or notches. These 'shaped' canvasses adopt a form that evolves from the pattern structure of the lines. The painting's thickness is usually equal to the breadth of the colour bands and is a fundamental part of the whole.

Stella first embraced painting as a flat surface where everything must be concrete and identifiable and not fall prey to personal, coincidental expression or illusionism: 'What you see is what you see.' Series made through 1964 are repetitions of 'L', 'T', and 'U' forms, or combinations of 'V' shapes and irregular polygons, painted a certain colour in each painting. After 1966, circle or square segments were joined and painted in bright coloured bands. Stella's first works abandoning the flat surface, jutting into space, date from 1970 and give the painting a relief-like quality. These were on masonite and hardboard, but in aluminium and steel by 1974, in progressively freer, more baroque forms covered with various patterns and drippings. Some become sculptures removed from the walls, standing on their own, but Stella intentionally still calls them paintings. He arrived at this three-dimensionality to give abstract painting the same expressive, dramatic quality as Caravaggio achieved by figurative and illusionistic means.

Charley Toorop | Katwijk aan Zee, 1891 - Bergen, Netherlands, 1955 |

Charley Toorop was the daughter of the Symbolist painter Jan Toorop. She studied singing and violin before deciding to embark on a career as a painter in 1910. Her earliest work demonstrates the Expressionist influence of *Blaue Reiter* artist Kandinsky, whose work was first shown in the Netherlands in 1912, when she was painting landscapes, figures and self-portraits. In the early thirties she finally opted for a style of expressive realism and gradually acquired a reputation for her bold portraits of workers, peasants and ordinary people. Her house in Bergen was a meeting place for a circle of artists and writers (among them the poet A. Roland Holst and the painter Leo Gestel) who played a prominent part on the cultural scene of the thirties. Life during the war, a time of oppression and resistance, was expressed in a series of poignant paintings such as *Clown in Front of the Ruins of Rotterdam* (1941) and *Working-Class Woman Among the Ruins* (1943). After the war she completed the large family portrait *Three Generations* (1950), showing the death-mask of her father made by John Rüdecker, accompanied by herself and her son, the painter Edgar Fernhout. Charley Toorop retrospectives were held in the 1980s in Stuttgart, Utrecht and Arnhem.

Ger van Elk | Amsterdam, 1941 - |

He once clean-shaved a cactus with an electric razor (*Identifications, Part 6 (The Shaving of the Cactus)* (1970), Stedelijk Museum

collection) and video-taped the operation. In the middle of the Atlantic ('the most dust-free spot in the world') he painted a block of wood white (his contribution to the exhibition *Sonsbeek Off Limits*, Arnhem 1971). But even before these actions his collaboration with Wim T. Schippers in the 'Adynamic Group' had earned him his spurs. After the sixties and seventies, a period influenced by Fluxus and 'Nul' and in which the poetry of the small, conceptual gesture played an important part, Van Elk painted pictures based on photographs (*Russian Diplomacy*, 1974, Stedelijk Museum collection), fashioned sculptures and manipulated photographs, or combined all three techniques. In the 1980s he produced a series of works on the theme of the Dutch art of the 'Golden Age'; he splashed paint onto photographs of flower paintings, landscapes and still lifes, the spatters and stains contrasting with the realistic representation. Van Elk is fond of playing games with perspective distortions to which he adapts the shape of the frame. With the series of *Sandwiches*, sculptures made in the nineties and exhibited in the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam in 1993, the versatile Van Elk ('I am challenged by things I am not good at') presented a surprisingly aggressive series of objects incorporating framed photographs of various parts of the female body (*Bitch*, 1992) or small painted portraits, sandwiched firmly together with large nuts and bolts. Van Elk is well known on the international scene (Documenta 6, 1977, Venice Biennale 1978, Documenta 7, 1982). He lives alternately in America and the Netherlands, and was awarded the J.C. van Lanschot Prize for Sculpture in 1996.

Vincent van Gogh | Groot-Zundert, Netherlands, 1853 – Auvers-sur-Oise, France, 1890 |

Van Gogh was still working in the style of the Hague School when he went to Paris in 1886. Through his brother Theo, who worked for an art-dealer there, he encountered Impressionism and began using his colour in an entirely different way. In 1888 he left Paris for Arles in Provence, intending to set up an artists' co-operative. Theo persuaded Gauguin to join Vincent, but living and working together caused problems between the two artists. Things came to a head when the distraught Van Gogh threatened Gauguin, notoriously cut off his own ear and a year later entered the asylum at St Rémy. From an artistic point of view, however, his association with Gauguin was extremely fruitful: the latter's colourful flat forms and symbolism had a profound effect on Van Gogh's artistic development. In Provence he painted landscapes, flower still lifes and self-portraits (*Self-portrait with Bandaged Ear*, 1889) in glowing colours and jagged lines, and in total contrast to his earlier, sombre works (*The Potato Eaters*, 1885). Van Gogh's unique innovative talent (he was later dubbed the 'spiritual father' of French Fauvism and German Expressionism) went virtually unnoticed during his lifetime. After his discharge from the mental hospital in 1890, he moved to Auvers-sur-Oise where, after a last outburst of frenzied creativity (*Portrait of Doctor Gachet*, 1890), a self-inflicted revolver wound put an end to his life.

Jan Wiegers | Kommerzijl, 1893 – Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1959 |

After completing his art studies in Groningen, the Hague and Amsterdam, the Dutch artist Jan Wiegers became a founding member of the Ploeg Artists' Association in Groningen in 1918. In 1920-21 he lived in Davos, Switzerland, where he met Kirchner and was greatly influenced by him. From 1934 onwards he lived in Amsterdam, becoming a professor at the Amsterdam Academy. He painted portraits, landscapes and figurative compositions, in a style and colouring closely allied with German Expressionism.

Carel Willink | Amsterdam, 1900 – Amsterdam, 1983 |

After studying architecture at the Delft Polytechnic, Willink went to Berlin in 1920, where he became a member of the avant-garde 'Novembergruppe'. Through this group he was introduced to the newest art movements—Expressionism, Constructivism, Dada—and took part in exhibitions in Berlin and Belgrade. In 1924, back in Amsterdam, he had his first one-man show. Under the influence of De Chirico's 'Pittura Metafisica' and his writer friend Eddy du Perron, whose work he often illustrated, Willink returned to figuration. In 1930 he began to develop the realistic precision that was to become his trademark. He painted gardens (Bomarzo), landscapes, houses and people in a neo-classic style with an alienating and ominous effect (*The Last Visitors to Pompeii*, 1931). Willink, who with Raoul Hynckes and Pyke Koch is classified as an exponent of Magic Realism, always opposed theoretical interpretations of his oeuvre. Continuing to paint portraits of the beau-monde, Willink and his wife Mathilde lived opposite the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam until his death.

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