

An abstract painting with a vibrant red background. On the left, there is a white, angular shape with a black, textured, V-shaped element extending downwards. To the right, a large black rectangular block is positioned at the top. Below it, a faint, reddish-orange figure, possibly a person, is visible. The overall composition is layered and textured.

**British Art Studies**

**May 2019**

*British Art Studies*

Issue 12, published 31 May 2019

Cover image: Margaret Mellis, *Red Flower* (detail), 1958, oil on board, 39.4 × 39.1 cm. Collection of Museums Sheffield (VIS.4951).. Digital image courtesy of the estate of Margaret Mellis. Photo courtesy of Museums Sheffield (All rights reserved).

PDF generated on 15 February 2024

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Published by:

Paul Mellon Centre  
16 Bedford Square  
London, WC1B 3JA  
<https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk>

In partnership with:

Yale Center for British Art  
1080 Chapel Street  
New Haven, Connecticut  
<https://britishart.yale.edu>

ISSN: 2058-5462

DOI: 10.17658/issn.2058-5462

URL: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk>

Editorial team: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/editorial-team>

Advisory board: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/advisory-board>

Produced in the United Kingdom.

*A joint publication by*



YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

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1964: A Year of Exhibitions, Stephen Bann

# 1964: A Year of Exhibitions

Stephen Bann

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## **Cite as**

Stephen Bann, "1964: A Year of Exhibitions", *British Art Studies*, Issue 12, <https://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-12/sbann>

## Introduction

Over the past few decades, the study of art criticism has come to the fore as one of the most promising new areas of art-historical research. This development owes much to the policy undertaken by recently established journals and related editorial initiatives. The journal *Word & Image*, launched by John Dixon Hunt in 1985, opened the door to wide-ranging discussions of the subject—from classical ekphrasis to the present day. In 1988, Norman Bryson initiated a series of studies by French- as well as English-speaking authors that was significantly named “Cambridge New Art History and Criticism”.<sup>1</sup> In the following decade, Cambridge University Press sponsored what was the first comprehensive attempt to make available to contemporary scholars the wealth of critical material that was lying largely unseen in the French periodical press of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1991, under the general editorship of Francis Haskell, Neil McWilliam and his colleagues produced two comprehensive bibliographies of French Salon Criticism that covered the entire period extending from 1699 to 1851.<sup>2</sup> A pioneering example of the dividend that could be obtained from such a thorough scrutiny of period criticism was Richard Wrigley’s *The Origins of French Art Criticism* dating from 1993.<sup>3</sup> By this point, Michael Fried was already arguing for a methodology that made use of critical material with a view to challenging traditional strategies for interpreting visual works of art. In his book *Manet’s Modernism* (1996), he claimed that the paintings of Manet and his fellow painters could be best understood within the terminology of a contemporary discourse of painting that had its own history, rather than by paying exhaustive attention to the reading of individual works.<sup>4</sup>

This trajectory demonstrates the way in which art criticism has been brought into the fold of art history, to some degree as a direct outcome of new publishing ventures. But it is no accident that the foregoing examples relate primarily to the study of French art history and criticism. A rather different argument needs to be followed with regard to the case of British art criticism, though it is equally clear that the task has been recognised as timely. At least from the outset of the nineteenth century, the most significant art criticism is coloured not so much by the influence of a critical discourse embedded in past theory as by a direct and acknowledged acquaintance with artistic practice. William Hazlitt is doubtless the first clear example of an English critic who embeds within his writing the recollection of his own, admittedly quite limited, experience as a painter. John Ruskin needs no defence as an artist of exceptional talent in his own right. Indeed, the current popularity of Ruskin, which is manifested in the many events of his bicentenary year, sends a strong signal that criticism and creativity need not be divorced. It is surely significant that Tate Archives have already developed

research projects on the papers of two critics who were also well recognised as artists: Adrian Stokes, whose critical output mainly took the form of book-length studies with a historical component; and Robert Melville, whose critical practice took the form of regular articles for *The New Statesman* and *The Architectural Review*. The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art has recently struck out in this direction by acquiring the archive of Brian Sewell. The combative critic of the *Evening Standard* surely had more column inches at his disposal than any of his colleagues, and however debatable his conclusions, his arguments were invariably well informed and challenging. Such an acquisition is a striking way of proving the Centre's commitment as "the only archive repository in the UK formally acknowledged by the National Archives as a collecting institution for the papers of art critics".<sup>5</sup>

This online presentation is an opening contribution to what will be an ongoing series published in *British Art Studies* called "Animating the Archive". It is designed as a contribution to the context that has already been briefly outlined here. It makes use of the distinctive possibilities available through online publication in the belief that new technical features can stimulate new directions of research. Rather than standing alone as a polished piece of research, it also asks the question: what new avenues of research in this particular area might we fruitfully take? It goes without saying that these writings by an embryonic critic are not especially significant in themselves. But the specific form in which they are presented, ranging from journal notes through typescripts to printed publication, opens up a material dimension that the online facility can present for scrutiny. What is more, the documentary value of the critical comments is surely enhanced by the fact that 1964 was indeed not just a "Year of Exhibitions", but a year in which several exhibitions of diverse but equivalent importance took place: America's current stars, Rauschenberg and Johns at the Whitechapel Gallery (interspersed with Britain's "New Generation") and the unprecedentedly broad Gulbenkian exhibition of recent international art at the Tate Gallery that was upstaged (at least in this critic's book) by the lucid and coherent display achieved by documenta III at Kassel.

This focus on exhibitions brings to the fore another respect in which recent art history has successfully incorporated a previously little studied, yet vital, aspect of historical reception. Some of this interest may be traced to the posthumous publication of Francis Haskell's book, *The Ephemeral Museum* (2000), subtitled "Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition".<sup>6</sup> Haskell had been assiduous in reviewing art exhibitions for various periodical publications from the mid-1950s onwards. The unprecedentedly broad display of French painting, *De David à Delacroix*, which opened at the Grand Palais, Paris, in November 1974 provoked what was perhaps his most vivid response. As he rightly noted, this was an art-historical milestone: it gave "the first opportunity for a large European public to see some of the results

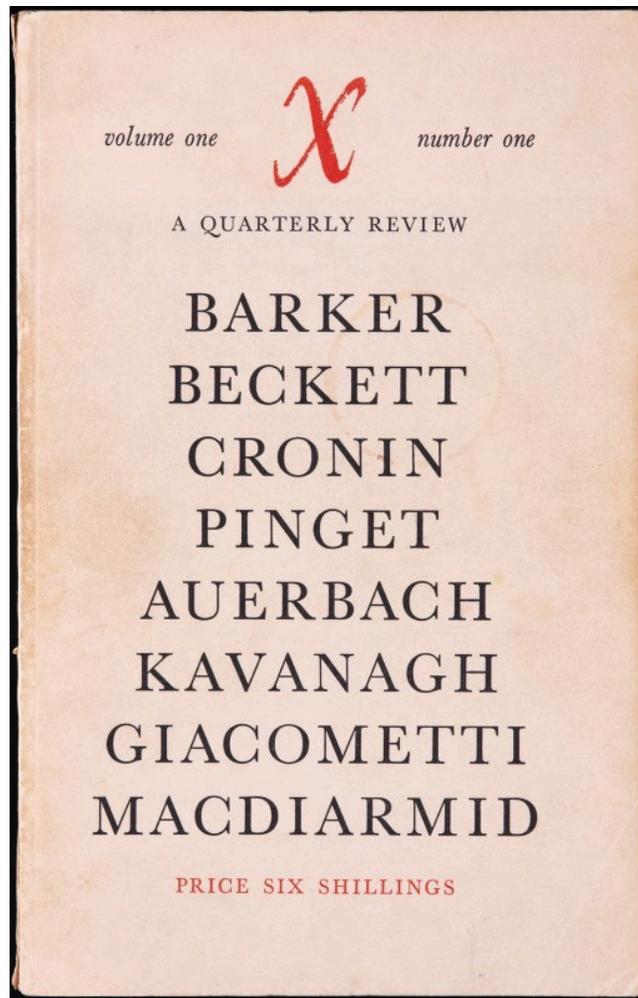
of this radical reappraisal of one crucial period of French art.” But the effect was more momentous than that. As Haskell suggested in a striking phrase, viewing such an exhibition was “an experience comparable with trying on a new pair of spectacles”.<sup>7</sup> It is surely significant that Haskell chose to define the change in perception in terms of a specifically technical modification. When putting on a new pair of spectacles, we not only see new things—we see everything differently.

The question then arises: how can such a vivid experience of art exhibitions be incorporated into the history of art? One method which has proved its worth is to recreate the ambiance of a past exhibition, ideally within the space where it would have been originally installed. This was the achievement of David Solkin’s 2001 exhibition *Art on the Line*, held in the Great Room at Somerset House that had served for many years to house the Annual Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts.<sup>8</sup> A judicious selection of works was achieved, not claiming to reproduce any one exhibition but carefully conserving the important distinctions of genre and scale in its installation. Yet this enlightening show was in its turn, by its very nature, ephemeral. The recent initiative of the Paul Mellon Centre, working in conjunction with the Royal Academy, has been to put online, and make permanently available, the catalogues of all the Annual Exhibitions that took place at the Academy between 1769 and 2018. Utilising the resources of digital display, this project makes it possible to view in considerable detail a large proportion of the works that were placed on exhibition, while at the same time facilitating many individual tracks of research into specific artists, genres, and themes.<sup>9</sup>

This present exercise in “animating the archive” is, of course, far more limited in its scope. It is by comparison a minimal project, dealing with the exhibitions of hardly more than one year and the writings of one critic. But it will hopefully prove a stimulus to other exercises and experiments which are suited to the possibilities of online commentary and display. The justification for making these writings available is that they were indeed “eye-opening” for me, and hopefully they still communicate something of the excitement of my experience. I was at the time a graduate student at King’s College, Cambridge, moving from Cambridge to Paris in autumn 1964, when I began my second year of postgraduate research in the history of historiography. The publications that offered me a platform as a critic were precisely those that had welcomed Francis Haskell’s early reviews in the first years of the 1950s: the undergraduate literary magazine *Granta*, and *The Cambridge Review*, published by Heffers (the university printer and bookshop), and edited by a succession of postgraduates and younger fellows. By comparison with professional critics writing for national newspapers and magazines, I was allotted a generous amount of space, and managed to work out some of the main parameters that would define the approach of my first book on

contemporary art, *Experimental Painting* (1970).<sup>10</sup> The unpolished character of the texts perhaps makes it easier to discern the variety of stimuli that I derived from my eclectic reading, as well as registering the impact produced by the sight of so much exciting new work. My movement from the figurative art of Bacon and Giacometti to the interpretation of Ian Hamilton Finlay's concrete poetry could be seen (quoting the words of one peer reviewer for this feature) as “the story of a transformation in thinking”.

No attempt will be made to reproduce the many works of art that are cited. What will be shown are reproductions of the catalogue illustrations. Since this is essentially an archival project, the focus is placed specifically on the role that these images played in accompanying and contextualising the critical writings. With this end in mind, the successive compositional stages of a review—involving a handwritten draft and a typescript—are also brought to the fore. Extracts from a contemporary journal are shown in their original form (and dramatised in a spoken recording) while samples of my own visual work at the time are included. The form and design of the respective exhibition catalogues will be a further feature that comes into prominence in a particular series of images. As a necessary concomitant to the study of exhibitions, the study of the extensive history of exhibition catalogues is now attracting an increasing amount of attention.<sup>11</sup> My own concern with the aesthetic and technical aspects of typography dates back to my school days. My interest in the varieties of lettering was rekindled in the period covered by this display. In their overall design and in their typography, the catalogues that greeted the spectators of the 1960s can be understood to enshrine a definite message of their own.



**Figure 1.**

X - A Quarterly Review, 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1959): jacket. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

**X**

X was my point of entry into the world of art by way of little magazines. With its generous format and list of contributors outlined in bold capitals, it caught my eye among the periodicals displayed in the Winchester branch of W.H. Smith. I was still at school in the autumn term of 1959, though my forthcoming entrance to Cambridge had been confirmed by Christmas. Having myself edited a school literary magazine, titled *Ariel*, I was intrigued by the promise of this new publication. I subscribed to it for all of the subsequent seven issues. *X* ceased publication in 1962.

What strikes me in retrospect is the point that *X* had adopted, from the start, two major directions in policy that might be considered to be somewhat disparate. On the one hand, it featured English figurative painting, with an

emphasis on the traditional genre of portraiture. On the other hand, it published experimental writing of various kinds by European authors. This approach testified to the adventurous and, in a certain sense, complementary interests of the three editors. They were the South African-born poet David Wright, the Irish painter Patrick Swift, and the British poet David Gascoyne, who maintained close connections with the French surrealist movement. I noted in particular the focus (beginning in the first issue), on the recent writings of Samuel Beckett and those of his less well-known Swiss-born friend, Robert Pinget, who was one of the pioneers of the French "nouveau roman". Among visual artists, the Swiss-born painter and sculptor, Alberto Giacometti, who had gained the attention of Parisian writers like Jean Genet, also featured in this first issue with reproductions of drawings and texts translated from French. In subsequent issues, several painters associated (as was Swift) with the Beaux Arts Gallery in London came into focus. Those who were given full-page black and white photographic reproductions on coated paper included Francis Bacon, Frank Auerbach, and Michael Andrews.

I would continue to keep up with the work of virtually all these figures. The novels of Robert Pinget were the subject of my first major essay outside of school and university publications (*London Magazine* 4, no. 7 [1964]). Before 1960, I had already had the opportunity of calculating the unexpected weight of Auerbach's paint-laden pictures when I helped to hang an Arts Council travelling show of current work in the school museum at Winchester. I later visited one of his exhibitions at the Beaux Arts in the early 1960s, and enquired timorously about the price of his drawings. But I was scared off by the piercing gaze of the gallery director, Helen Lessore, who enquired if this suspiciously youthful visitor was acting on behalf of someone else! Michael Andrews' large painting, *The Garden Party*, became very familiar to me when it was lent by the Gulbenkian Foundation to hang in the Dining Hall of Rutherford College, when I joined the University of Kent in 1967. Together with several other works by Auerbach, this splendid piece was discussed (and illustrated in colour) in my book, *Experimental Painting* (1970).

Giacometti and Bacon were, however, the two artists whom I found most challenging in the period leading up to 1964. This was unquestionably because of their intense preoccupation with the issue of figuration, and the radical approach they adopted to their respective media. In *Experimental Painting*, I classed the works of both under the rubric of "Destruction", together with the "Autodestructive" art of Gustav Metzger. The other directions that I chose to follow there were "Abstraction", "Construction", and "Reduction" (a category that contained Johns and Rauschenberg).



**Figure 2.**

Stefan Themerson, *Kurt Schwitters in England, 1940-1948*, (London: Gaborbocchus, 1958): jacket. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

## Early Readings

Two books that I acquired in 1960 and 1961 stand out as pointers to my future interests.

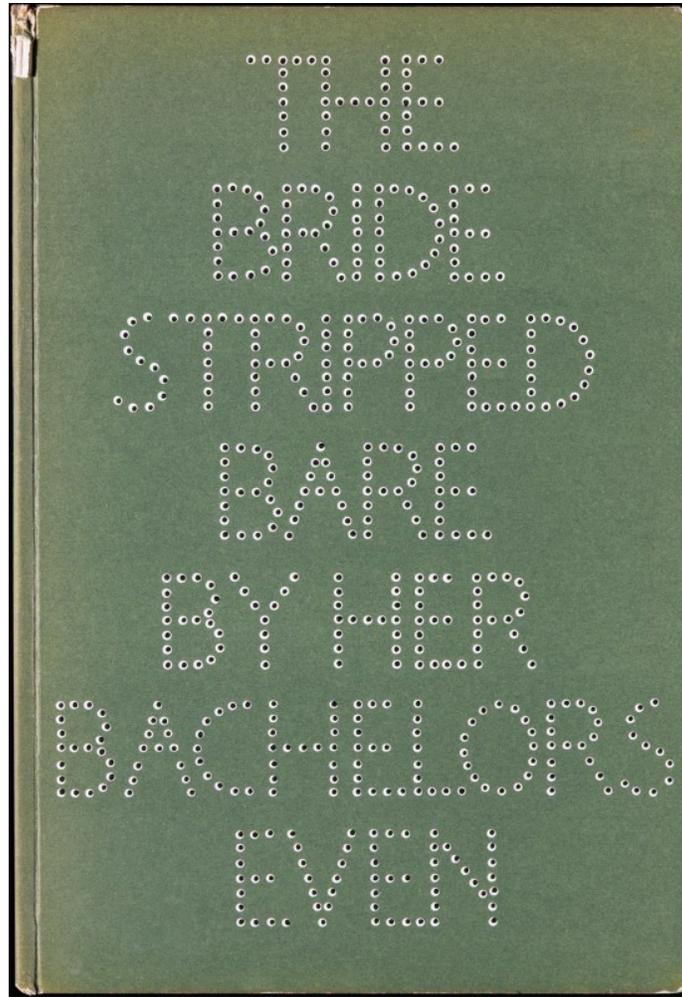
I bought Stefan Themerson's *Kurt Schwitters in England* in 1960 with prize money from my performance in the Hawkins English Literature competition at Winchester College. Published in 1958, this was an extraordinarily ambitious experiment in book design, which faithfully mirrored the anarchic versatility of the artist himself. Themerson himself later accepted our invitation to come and speak on Schwitters to the Cambridge Society of Arts, whose programme I organised jointly with Philip Steadman in 1962/1963. The talk was notable for the fact that Themerson handed round some of the collages and small, improvised sculptures that were illustrated in his book. I

reviewed some of the new publications by Themerson's Gaberbocchus Press in *Granta*, which was then still a student-run publication in Cambridge, picking up on the point that "Gaberbochus" was a translation of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" in order to exclaim: "Gaberbochus still burbles as it comes!". Themerson later became a friend, and would contribute to a thematic issue on "The Boundaries of the Humanities", which I published as Editor of *20th Century Studies* in 1974.

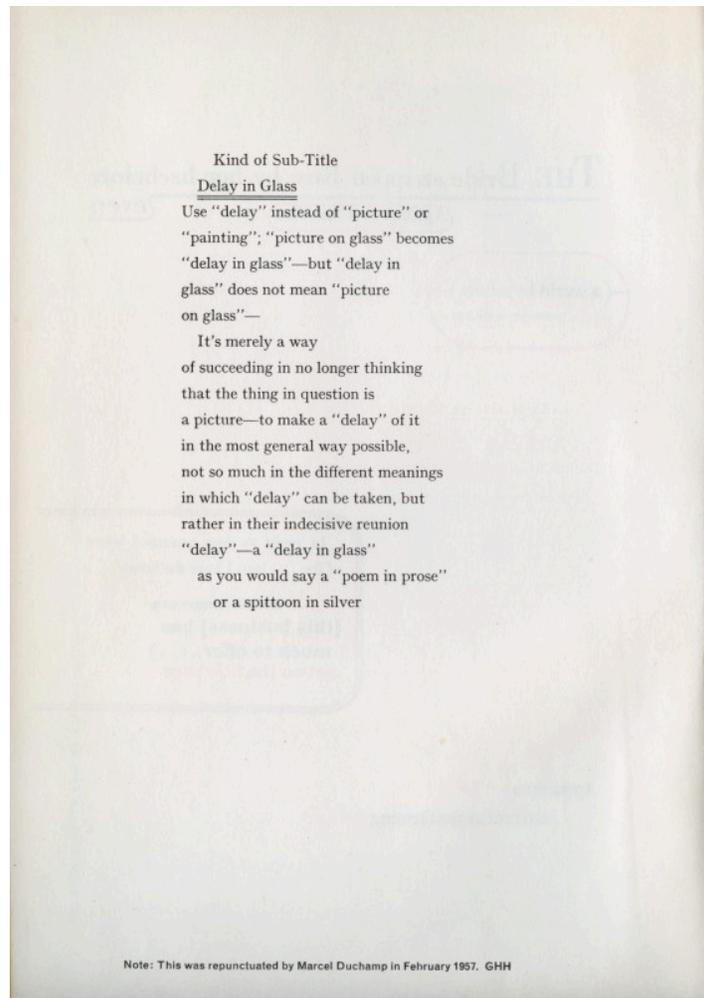
Richard Hamilton published his typographic version of "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even" in 1960. It was an expensive item. In a diary entry of 23 August 1961, I stated that "Duchamp's book of preparation for the Bride etc." was a purchase that I wanted to make: "because the creative process is so important in an age without much spontaneity—and to an artist without an art-form." Luckily, a young woman whom I had met in the Dordogne (while serving as English tutor to the children of Josephine Baker) was working in a London bookshop. She obtained it for me at the trade price late in 1961. Duchamp was then steadily acquiring a notoriety that he never lost in subsequent decades. My copy suffered in the 1970s by being loaned to students. One of them kindly supplemented the damaged article with a new copy of the third edition, published in 1976 by the German practitioner and theorist of typography, Hansjörg Mayer.

Besides allowing the reader to follow the intricate stages of the composition of Duchamp's "Bride" or *Large Glass*, the work could be considered as an exercise in virtuoso typography, which drew attention to the eccentric formation, as well as clarifying the conceptual message, of Duchamp's manuscript notes. The supporting essays by George Heard Hamilton and Richard Hamilton were reserved to the end, and set very small in a uniform sans-serif typeface.

I attached great importance to both Schwitters and Duchamp in interpreting the art of the early 1960s. Both of them came to the fore in the first paragraph of my review of the 1964 Rauschenberg exhibition. Both of these books also called my attention to the infinite diversity of letter forms, and the potentiality they held for expression, as well as communication. They helped to inform my developing interest in concrete poetry (as signalled by my essay of November 1964 in *Image*). Hansjörg Mayer was the first to publish one of my concrete poems, in a portfolio of work by English-speaking poets, which appeared in 1965.

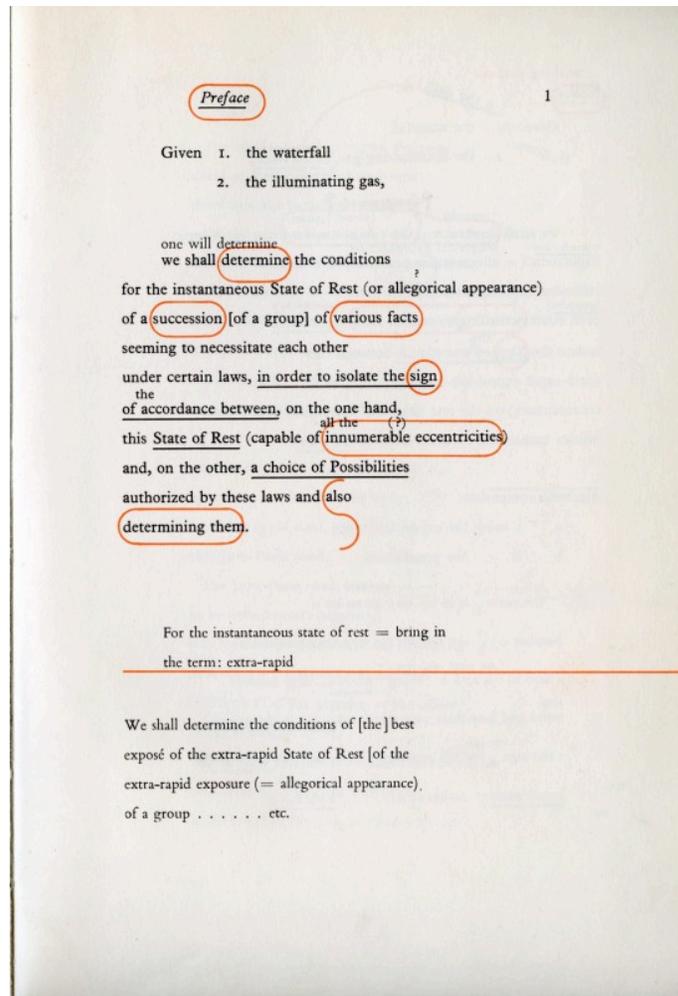


**Figure 3.** Richard Hamilton, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. A Typographic Version of Marcel Duchamp's *Green Box*, (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1960): jacket. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

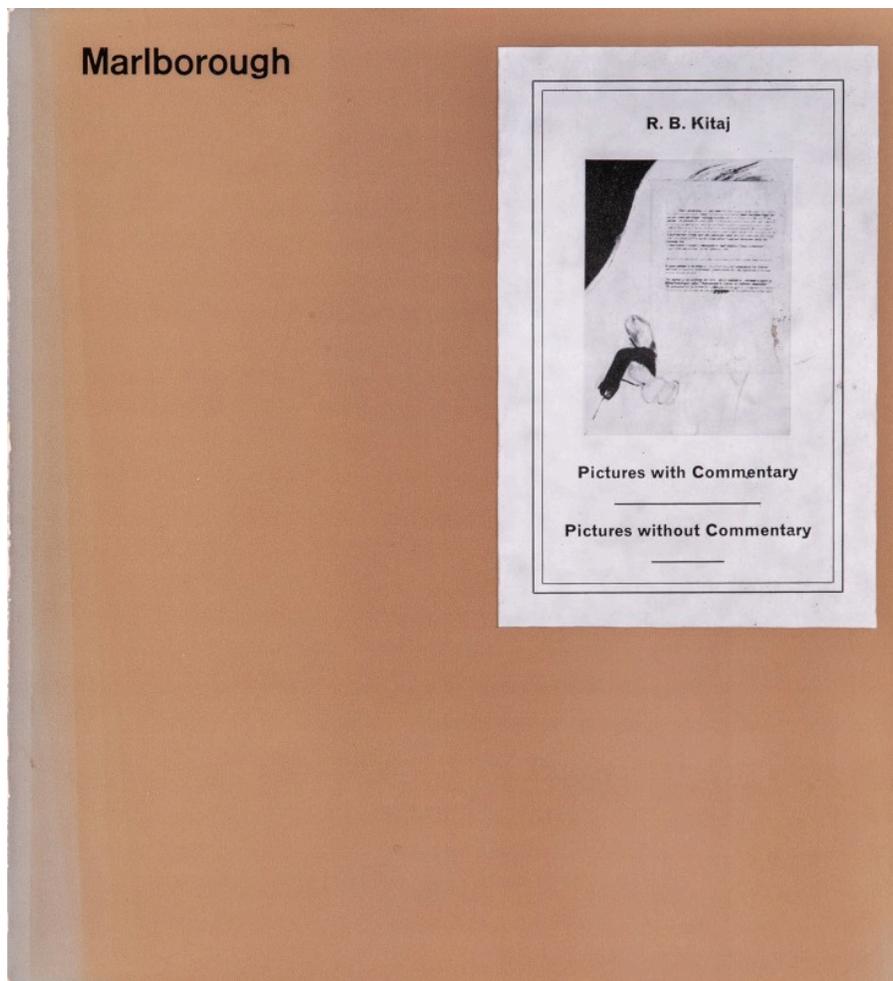


**Figure 4.**

Richard Hamilton, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. A Typographic Version of Marcel Duchamp's *Green Box*, (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1960): 1. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 5.** Richard Hamilton, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even. A Typographic Version of Marcel Duchamp's Green Box*, (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1960): 1. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 6.**

R.B. Kitaj: *Pictures with Commentary, Pictures Without Commentary*, (Marlborough Gallery, London, 1963): jacket. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

## **Hosting Larry Rivers and Discovering Gombrich**

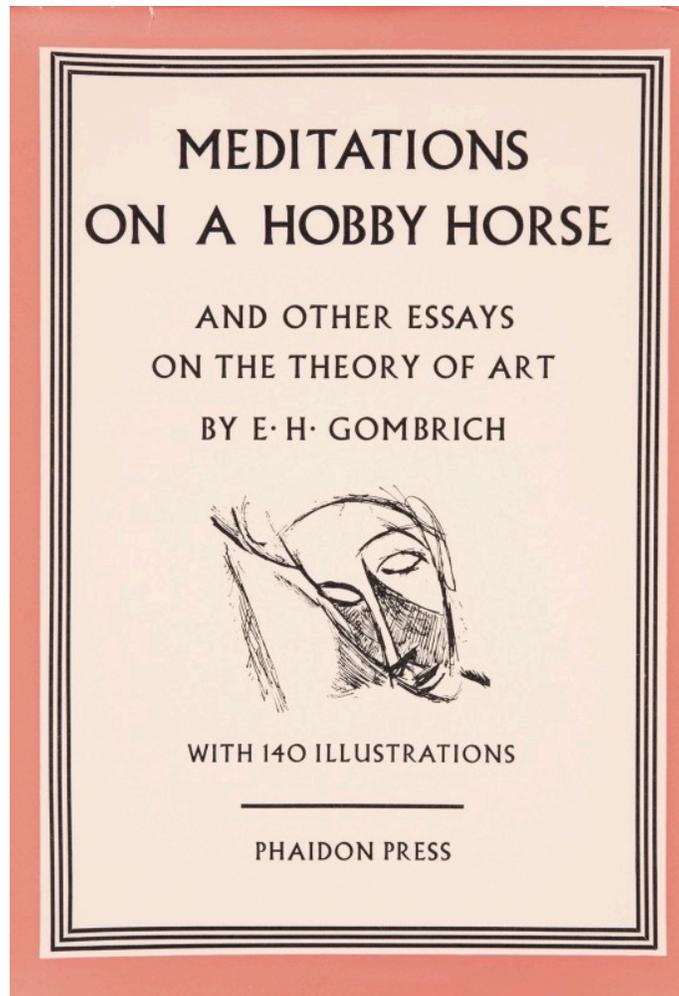
My reaction to the exhibition of R.B. Kitaj at the Marlborough Gallery in 1963 was one of complete bafflement. I was entirely unprepared for the iconographical complexity, bearing as it did on historical figures whom I barely knew like Rosa Luxemburg and Walter Benjamin. Although I was struck by the originality of his technique, I could not relate it to what I was beginning to appreciate about the contemporary development of American painting. Though I must also have noticed his presence in subsequent exhibitions like *documenta*, where he was represented by his figure drawings, I had little to say about them.

By contrast, I was responsive to the work of the American painter Larry Rivers. This was probably because his profile was particularly high in Britain at the time. He had given talks on the BBC under the title, "Larry Rivers: A Self-Portrait", which were published in *The Listener* (11 January and 18 January 1962). Of course, the talks themselves have been delivered without visual illustrations. But Rivers had employed a striking verbal image to convey the intended impact of his paintings. This clever vehicle of self-promotion was probably what led us to invite him to give a talk to the Cambridge University Society of Arts in autumn 1963. Rivers described the shock effect that he wished to instil in his paintings as comparable to that of taking hold of a deer by its antlers, and having the antlers break off unexpectedly, thus remaining fixed in one's hand. Rivers certainly did not disappoint us on his visit to Cambridge, having mysteriously picked up a woman companion on the train. In the middle of the modest meal which we had prepared for him in our garret in Green Street, he exclaimed: "Now I'm going to give myself away. Have you any Teachers?"

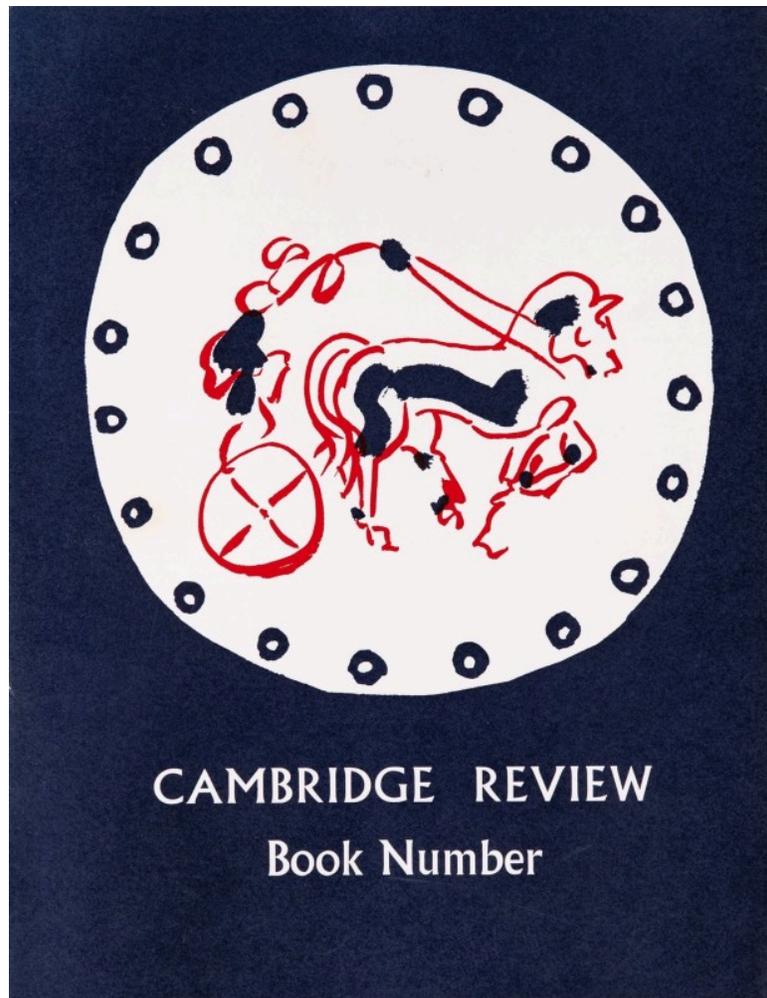
I had been bewildered at Kitaj's reference in his Marlborough catalogue to the obstructive attitude of the Warburg Institute. At the time, I had no knowledge of this institution's existence. Nonetheless, by far most important theoretical stimulus to my critical writing in 1964 was Ernst Gombrich's collection of essays, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*. Although this had been published in 1963, I doubt whether I had read any of the essays before the end of that year. My interest in Giacometti and Francis Bacon, much advertised in my Munich notes of September 1963, followed quite different lines. I was fascinated by Delacroix, both as a painter and as a writer. In fact, it was precisely because of the lucidity of his introspective commentary that I had begun to look closely at the quality of his paintings. I had also been captivated, with reference to Giacometti in particular, by the philosophical and humanistic interpretations of art elaborated by French authorities like Genet and Sartre. Though it was published in *Granta* as late as autumn 1964, my essay on Francis Bacon, which also involved Giacometti, clearly reflected this reading.

Gombrich's actual subject matter impinged hardly at all, at that time or subsequently, on any direct treatment of the varieties of contemporary art, let alone on the work of Rauschenberg and Johns, with which I was confronted in 1964. But he drew on references to domains such as experimental psychology in order to present a coherent and compelling theory of representation as such. This soon appeared to me to be an indispensable tool in coming to terms with the art of Rauschenberg in particular. The essay that provided Gombrich with his memorable title was uppermost in my mind when I wrote my essay on Rauschenberg for *The Cambridge Review*.

A second essay from the same collection by Gombrich, titled “Expression and Communication”, was no less important in stimulating the new ideas on the interpretation of concrete poetry. These were developed for the first time in my essay for *Image*, published in November 1964.



**Figure 7.** Ernst Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art*, (London: Phaidon, 1963): jacket. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 8.**  
Cambridge Review, Book Number, (University of Cambridge, 1964): jacket. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

## Englishness and Book Design

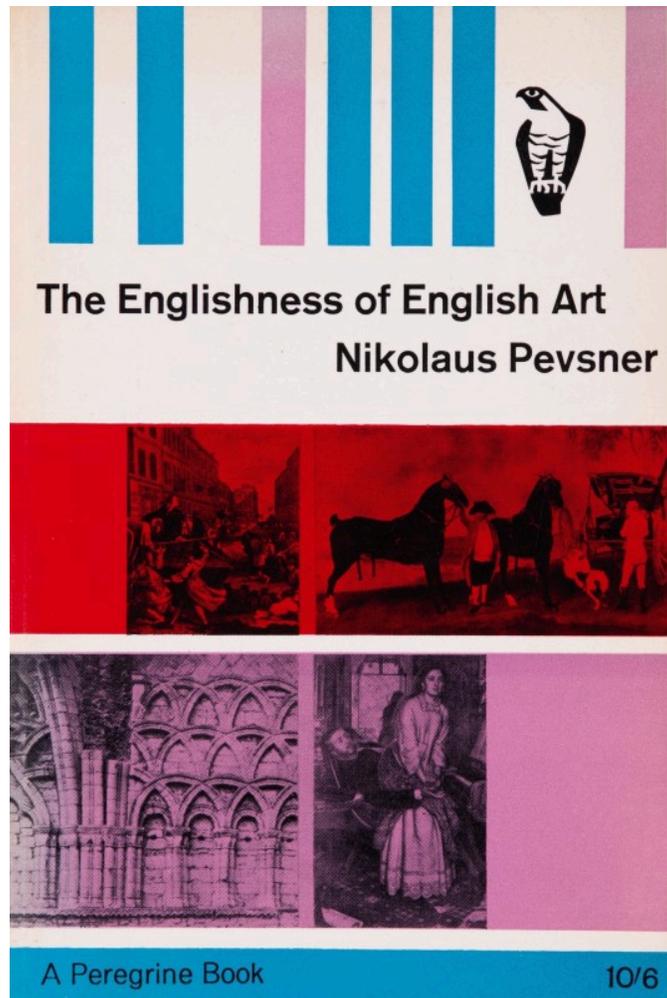
The paperback edition of Pevsner's *The Englishness of English Art* was sent to me for review early in 1964. My review appeared in *Granta* on 14 May 1964. While welcoming the chapters on "Perpendicular England" and "Picturesque England", I deplored the fact that no revisions had been made to the section on "modern British painting", which smacked too much of the original date of publication in 1955. Pevsner had limited himself to a brief mention of Christopher Wood, John Piper, and Eric Ravilious. I asked if he could have given us "some rather more contemporary Aunt Sallies"?

Anglia TV, situated in studios in Norwich, chose to invite me as an art critic to a couple of televised round tables on contemporary themes held in spring 1964. One topic on which I was asked to speak was the contemporary

exhibition of Rauschenberg at the Whitechapel Gallery in London. Also under discussion between the participants in these broadcasts was Ernest Hemingway's vivid memoir of his experience of Paris in the 1920s, which involved reminiscences of many of the outstanding artists living there at the time.

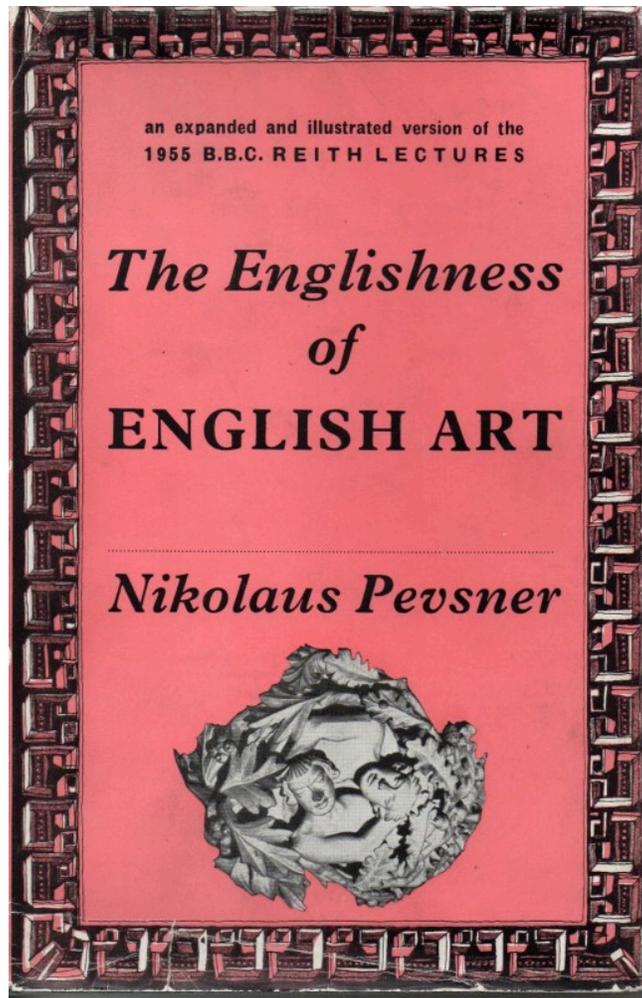
The designer selected by Peregrine books for the new edition of Pevsner was Herbert Spencer. Whatever Pevsner's reservations about the direction of post-war English art, this was a crisp, rectilinear design, forming a modernist collage out of the geometrically arranged sans-serif titles and photographic details of some of the historic buildings discussed. Spencer had founded the magazine *Typographica* in 1949, and, in 1963, he published Dom Sylvester Houédard's article on the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay—the first discussion on the subject of concrete poetry to appear in Britain.

The design of the book jacket of the Hemingway memoir commissioned by Jonathan Cape was by the German-born artist Hans Tisdall, who had begun working with them in the 1950s. Rather than adopting a specific typeface, Tisdall devises an overall composition out of his hand-drawn lettering. His distinctive letter forms were, however, ultimately converted into a typeface by the epigrapher and letterer, Michael Harvey, a pupil of Reynolds Stone and, as a stone-carver and letterer, one of the poet Ian Hamilton Finlay's most important long-term collaborators.

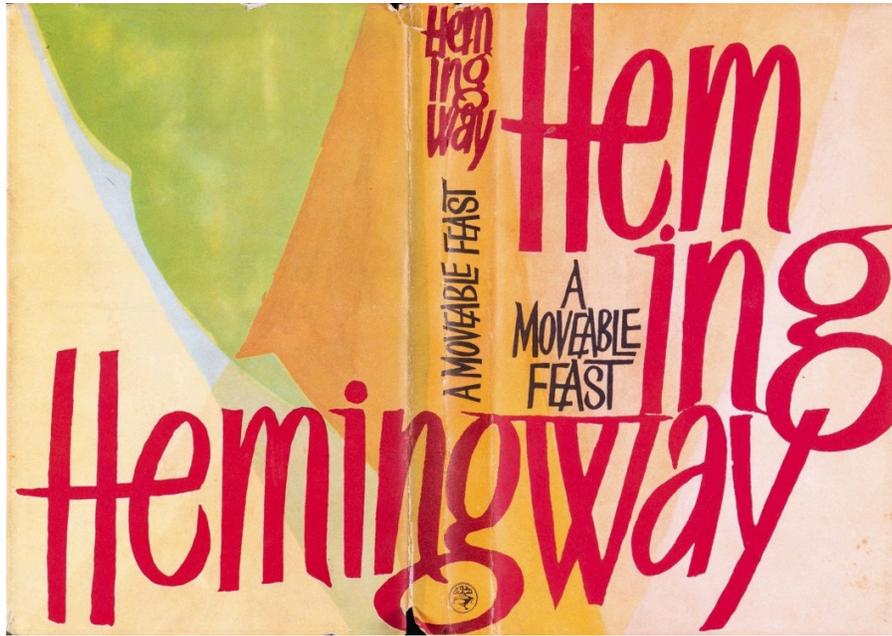


**Figure 9.**

Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art*, (London: Penguin, 1964): jacket design by Herbert Spencer. Reviewed in *Granta*, 14 April 1964. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 10.**  
Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness Of English Art*,  
(London: The Architectural Press, 1956): jacket.



**Figure 11.**

Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1964): jacket design by Hans Tisdall. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

## A Visit to Munich

For a fortnight in September 1963, I visited Munich, staying in a student house close to the artistic quarter of Schwabing which had been recommended to me by a Cambridge friend. The ostensible reason for this visit was to brush up my German, which had been neglected since a perfunctory study for a few terms at school. I was beginning my second year as a postgraduate student, having narrowed down my field of study to the French politician, historian, and man of letters, Prosper de Barante. It had been impressed upon me by my supervisor, Herbert Butterfield, that the ability to read German academic texts was a prerequisite for anyone wishing to investigate the issues of the history of historiography.

I did take this mission very seriously, to the extent of bringing a copy of the works of the early nineteenth-century German dramatist Georg Büchner with me, and reading through his play on the rivalries of the French Revolution, *Dantons Tod* (*Danton's Death*). I had probably become acquainted with the writing of Büchner because another of his plays supplied the plot for Anton Berg's opera, *Wozzeck*. But this was not the only text that I was studying in Munich. I also brought with me the Pléiade edition of the work of Benjamin Constant, the French liberal politician and author, who was at one stage a close ally of Barante. The third, and probably the most absorbing, of my sources for study was, however, my edition of the *Journal* of Delacroix.

Perhaps it was the repeated perusal of this extraordinary record of Delacroix's inner life that impelled me to write my own journal, which commented retrospectively on the first ten days of my visit to Munich.

This interest in Delacroix's intimate writings was undoubtedly touched off by visiting the centenary exhibition of his paintings in the Grande Galerie of the Louvre. The exhibition opened in May 1963, and I would have seen it in the early summer, when I was also following the critical reception of this major artistic event. My copy of the catalogue still contains a cutting from *The Times* of 6 August 1963, titled "The Debt that Modern Painting Owes to Delacroix", in which reference is also made to "the active intelligence so manifest in the Journal". But it was of course Delacroix's art, and not his writing, that galvanised me initially, and indeed it was one painting in particular: his *Femmes d'Algers dans leur appartement* (first displayed at the 1834 Salon in Paris).

I penned a rapid sketch of this painting on the reverse of a letter which bears the date 27 June 1963. It shares the little sheet of paper with a list of book references that include Büchner and the Delacroix *Journal*, as well as featuring a few other titles relevant to my impending visit to Munich: a German Dictionary and Erich Heller's well-known study of modern German philosophers, *Disinherited Mind*. But the selection of this particular painting for my own amateurish efforts at reproduction can surely be explained by the fact that I had seen one of Picasso's virtuoso variations on the same work, dated 1955, in the Picasso exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1960. In January 1964, I was still experimenting with this motif, this time in watercolour, though I decided to cut out only the two right-hand figures in the composition from what must have been an unsatisfactory whole. Two oil paintings, one small and the other large in scale, eventuated from this series of studies, though by that point any reminiscence of Delacroix's original painting was far from obvious.

The two sketches are illustrated here to underline a point which also becomes clear in my journal. At the same time as I was pursuing my German reading agenda, I was painting my own topographical watercolours of the city and its surroundings. I had been accumulating similar studies for several years, and so was able to make retrospective comparisons, for example, between the subject of the Frauenkirch seen from the "English Garden", and a previous view of the Edinburgh skyline seen from Inverleith House. I expressed the feeling that these Munich studies were the best that I had ever done. Not surprisingly, this enthusiasm over my own paintings spills across into my commentary on the art that I was discovering at the same time in the Munich galleries, from Dürer and Altdorfer to Erich Heckel. And it is evident in my empathetic description of some of the architectural monuments around the city, such as the Nymphenburg Palace and the rococo Theatine Church.

As regards my art criticism, the journal makes a prediction that was not fulfilled: "My articles on Delacroix and Giacometti are just about ready to write." My prior experience of the major Giacometti exhibition at the Beyeler Gallery in Basel was indeed, as can be seen in my entry, the first vivid recollection that was prompted by the writing of this journal. But the point remains that both Giacometti and Delacroix continued for a while to be central points of reference for my critical work. This is made very clear in my subsequent article on Francis Bacon for *Granta* (17 October 1964), which takes the work of both artists as points of reference for understanding the historical significance of his art. My short "Note from Paris" (*Granta*, 28 November 1964) also picks up on "recent remarks" by Giacometti in favour of "Pop art". Finally, in my *Experimental Painting* (1970), I once more approached the work of Bacon by way of Giacometti and Delacroix.



**Figure 12.**  
Stephen Bann, Schloss Nymphenburg, Munich, watercolour, 1963.

Thursday: September 12<sup>th</sup> 1968. Munich.  
I have decided to write down what I have done here  
in the past ten days, as a corrective to my perpetual  
habit of sacrificing the present to a still uncertain  
future. Yesterday letters from home & from Wichita  
reached me. I still don't know if I am to  
spend some days at Schwarz, but care less, try  
attempt to care less. so :-  
Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September. I left my family at Belfort  
& eventually managed to see the Giacometti  
exhibition at Basel, which had proved so elusive.  
Reading about & waiting for such a long time  
until it was possible to see it had made me  
afraid of an anti-climax. In effect the only  
trouble while I was at the gallery lay in my  
need to preserve the immediate & overwhelming  
effect of the sculptures & paintings as my mind  
strayed to time-tables & other distractions. If I  
stood at the far end of the room, I would see  
one of the sculptures ~~just~~ at the furthest point  
from me in another room. At this distance it  
engraved itself vividly on my mind. I am so  
wary of dragging metaphysical beads of  
wisdom into aesthetics. Giacometti does not do  
so, but how to talk about his work without  
using such clumsy words myself? He simply  
shows us a pure essential humanity, stripped  
of contingency, reduced to a sliver of bronze yet  
increased to an utter grandeur.  
Wednesday. Munich. The Frauenkirche, sparkling  
in its graceful white. Isambard.  
Thursday. In the morning I saw the Alte  
Pinakothek. The Vierer Four Apostles fascinates  
me. Altstuffer was not as massive as I had

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### Figure 13.

Stephen Bann, Journal recording the author's travel,  
in Munich, Belfort, and Basel during September  
1963.

Thought him small & tender character.  
In the evening, I arrived at the Gurrillie's -  
-Theater, feeling solitary because of my necessary  
nonconformity of dress. Monteverdi's 'L'incoronazione  
di Poppea', which Lange had tried to get tickets  
on my behalf at Glynndebonne, seemed in this  
perfect Italian theatre ~~to~~ to reach its  
highest perfection. The form is remarkable. I  
like to see it as a series of love-duets —  
unapproached by any in the history of opera —  
interspersed with the nobility of imperial  
action & stoic suicide. The end a consummation.  
Friday, I worked in the Staatsbibliothek, reading  
Maurice Mauguin's 'Le gouvernement de l'empire  
de Rome' & 'Le christianisme & l'empire romain'.  
Saturday, Lenbach gallery (?) Early Kimbrough.  
(Where are all the later ones?) Franz Marc is  
perhaps much more sensitive a painter than  
I thought.  
Sunday, Palastina's 'Ave Maria' Mass at the  
Theaterkirche, probably my favorite church  
in Munich because of the splendid stone  
facade & the delicate leaden white inside.  
Went Pinaforek. All pale before Manet's  
'Fischhuk im Atelier', Roden's 'Le Vitruv',  
Macke's 'Badende' & Bérauld's 'Aufgehende  
Artillerie'. Heterogeneous, enormous show of  
modern art next door was depressing, but  
raised my view of the quality of English work.  
Monday, I walked to the Wynnberg, &  
visited two water-towers, probably quite  
successful because the weather & the buildings  
suggested less crudely than I normally seem to  
do. The Amalienburg fascinating.

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**Figure 14.**

Stephen Bann, Journal recording the author's travel,  
September 1963.

Tuesday, Butler's most intelligent essay 'Balzac  
et la Réalité' saw 'La Strada' in the evening.  
Wednesday. This was a wonderfully soft &  
delicate day, all Munich appearing most  
beautiful in light pastel colours under a  
blue but never intense sky. I walked by  
the side of the Isar, visited an interminable  
but expertly planned museum of sculpture,  
furniture etc, then had lunch in the  
English garden, writing to the family, Michael  
& Mrs Ward.

So to Thursday, today. I saw an exhibition of  
lithographs etc by Erich Heckel in the morning.  
Is he the only delicate painter in Die  
Brücke or have I not looked at Schmidt-  
-Pfeiffer etc. closely enough? Miraculous  
peaches & pears - even more astonishing  
Regonia buds, since these last were in black  
& white - great mastery & very great depth of  
feeling. I had lunch in Schwabing & then  
spent the afternoon with Delacroix's journals.  
To quote: 'Le résultat de mes journées est toujours  
le même: un désir infini de ce qu'on n'obtient  
jamais; un vide qu'on ne peut combler, une  
extrême démanigéation de produire ~~rien~~ de toutes  
les manières, de lutter le plus possible contre  
le temps qui nous entraîne, et les distractions  
qui jettent un voile sur notre âme ...'

Here I am, free & with sufficient money, having  
Constant, Delacroix & Büchner at my fingertips,  
Pisnet & Giacometti to write about, a city of  
treasures to visit. Yet surely this is more than enough.  
I wish for an attitude of mind which the night by  
sight of shining cars waiting before the typistok, or  
the Herduti facade of the Theatiner would suffice entirely

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**Figure 15.**

Stephen Bann, Journal recording the author's travel,  
September 1963.

Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup>.

I continued to read Delacour's Journals in the morning & afternoon, reaching the end of 1847. There is a magnificent pessimism about the 1847 entries. Also two acts of René's Le Salon. A man who avowedly dislikes western theatre, (as he admits in the letter after Les Femmes) René enthralled me by his manipulation of the stage - his concern with actors who must play the part of men who are themselves driven to casting themselves in dramatic roles - general, judge & bishop.

I had lunch & tea at a small café opposite the gates of the English garden, where I walked for a short time in the late afternoon. It really has an English air, & recalled first Waterheads, which I hope to see on Sunday, then the garden at Thorpe brange, which always recurs to my memory in the same early evening glow & silence. Montenegro's office came into my mind. The Theatre just visible from the garden, with its small exquisite tower/domes.

Saturday September 14<sup>th</sup>.

I climbed to the top of the south tower of the Frauenkirche, but, as it was only midday, the mists had hardly cleared & I saw no mountains. K&S's drawings, watercolours etc. in a nearby gallery. Magnificent watercolours from c. 1910, with great wedges of colour. I spent the afternoon in the English garden, if possible even more perfect than yesterday. I had a watercolour of the city from

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### Figure 16.

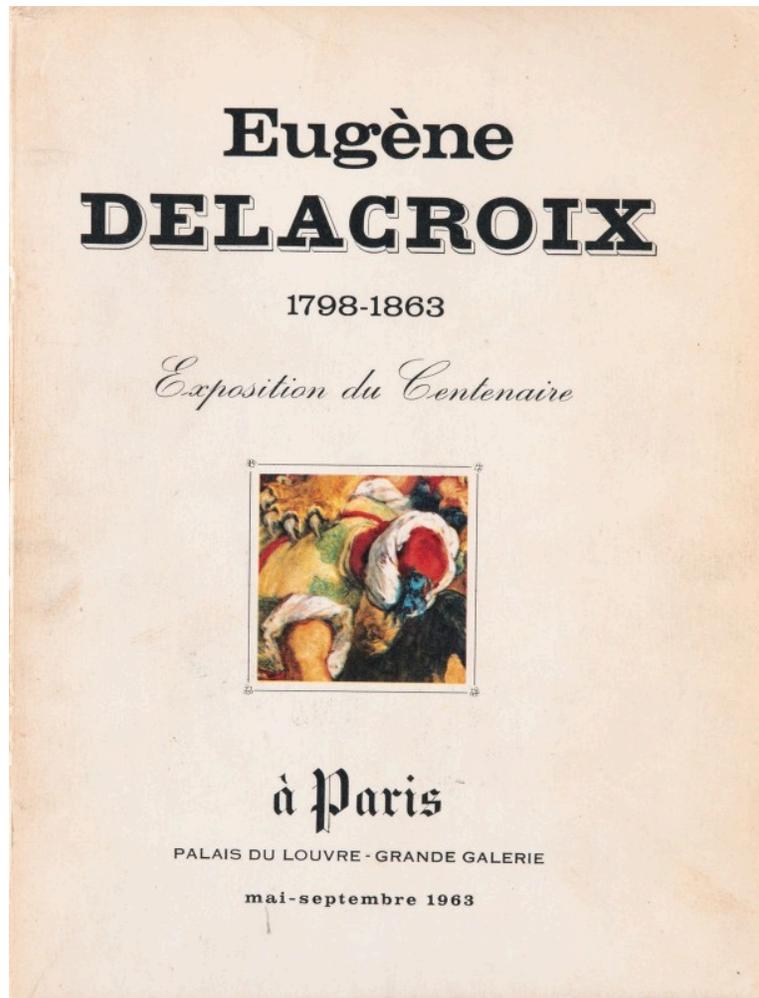
Stephen Bann, Journal recording the author's travel, September 1963.

Memorials, something like the picture of  
Edinburgh from Inverleith House that I did -  
is it three? - years ago. Some of it is an  
improvement, some maybe not. I also did a  
watercolour of Theahner from the Hofgarten,  
as good as anything I have done. My articles  
on Delavix & Bionetti are just about  
ready to write. The art of putting pen to  
paper & watching the imperfections ~~with~~<sup>disappear</sup>  
is all that is needed.  
My life here is almost an ideal mixture of  
liberty, pleasant duty & immense possibilities  
of joy. Ultima perfectio solitudinis.

Sunday September 15<sup>th</sup>  
Mozart's Credo Mass at the Augustenkirche, then  
Bernardi's Mass 'Il bivio e delle oigno' at  
the Theahner. The first magnificent & the  
second equally enjoyable - it is, I presume,  
Italian music of the early 17<sup>th</sup> c. ? Venice.  
I then visited the Pinakotek & had an  
exhilarating lunch. Two members of Trinity  
Hall, Hugh Pountney & Bernard Simons, were  
there - the first acquaintances I have met  
here.  
The Dinner from Apostles is incomparable.  
I returned with great pleasure to the little  
Chardin - a proof of the air of intimacy it  
conveys is the contrastingly antiquated  
character of his signature. That belongs to  
the 18<sup>th</sup> c., but the picture is immediate.  
The Titian of Christ being scourged is the  
best I have seen - its brushed & scattered  
pigment ~~is~~ remarkable & most appropriate.  
I read Lombard's sober & eloquent picture of Table Talk

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**Figure 17.**  
Stephen Bann, Journal recording the author's travel,  
September 1963.



**Figure 18.**

Exhibition catalogue, Eugène Delacroix: 1798-1863 Exposition du Centenaire, Louvre, Paris, May-September 1963, (Paris: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1963): jacket.



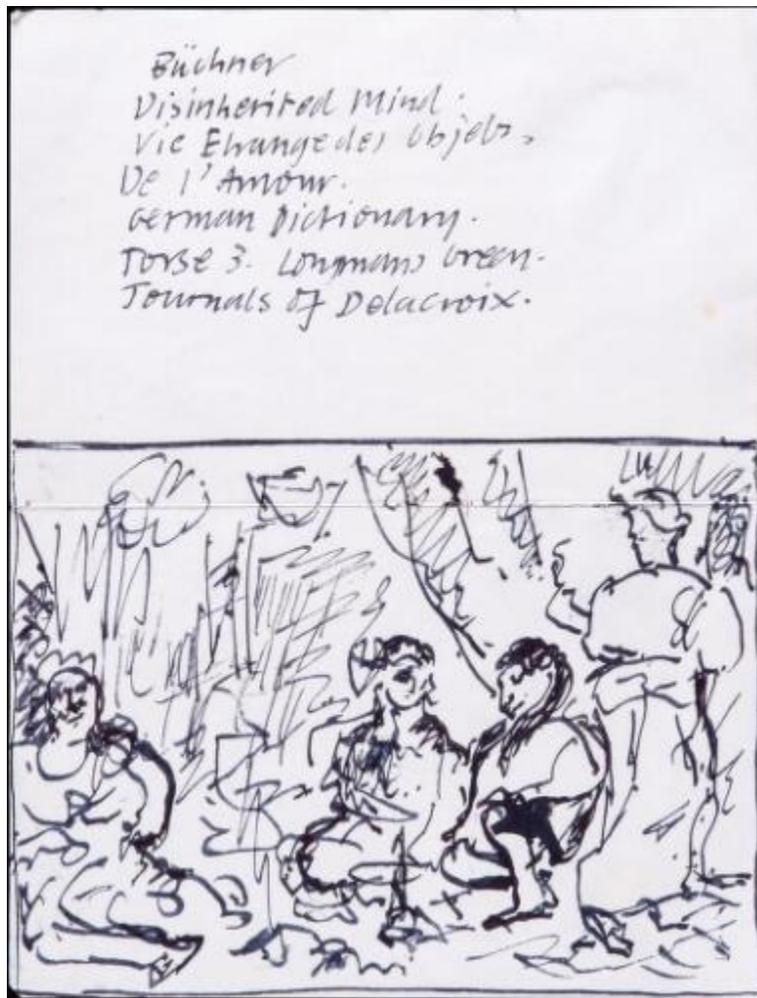
**Figure 19.**

Eugène Delacroix, Study for "Les Femmes d'Alger", pastel, 28 x 42 cm. Collection of the Louvre Museum, Paris (MI890). Reproduced in *Eugène Delacroix: 1798-1863 Exposition du Centenaire*, (Paris: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1963).



**Figure 20.**

Eugène Delacroix, *Les Femmes d'Alger*, 1834, oil on canvas, 74 x 93 cm. Collection of the Louvre Museum (MD 2015-9). Reproduced in *Eugène Delacroix: 1798-1863 Exposition du Centenaire*, (Paris: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1963).

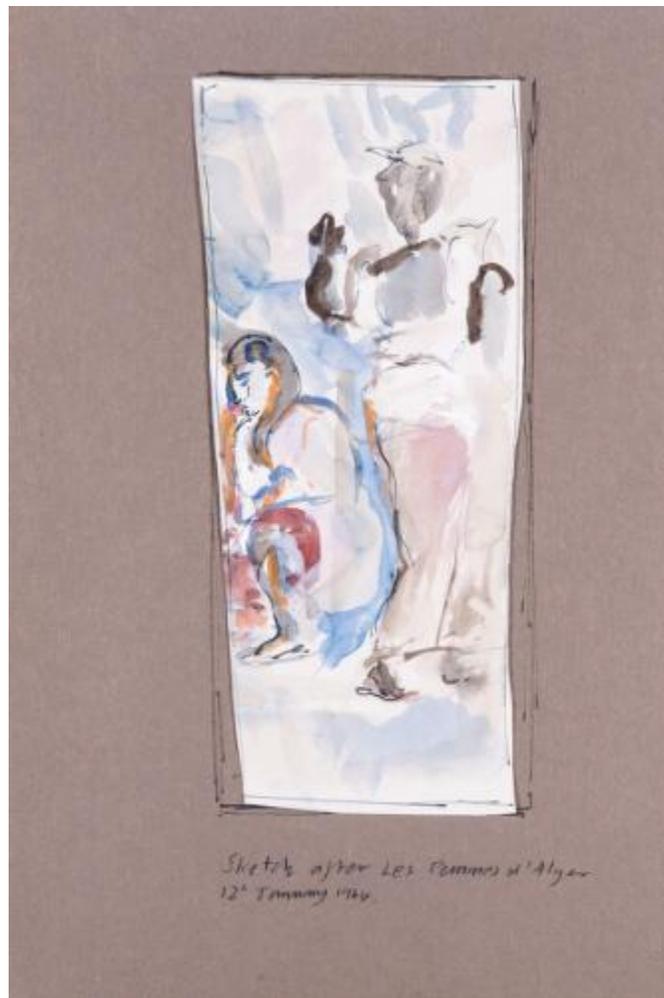


Büchner  
Disinherited Mind:  
Vic Etvange des Objets,  
De l'Amour.  
German Dictionary.  
Torse 3. Longman's Green.  
Journals of Delacroix.

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**Figure 21.**

Stephen Bann, Les Femmes d'Algers, ink sketch after Eugène Delacroix. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



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**Figure 22.**

Stephen Bann, Les Femmes d'Alger, watercolour sketch after Eugène Delacroix, 13 January 1964. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

## Rauschenberg & Representation

"PAINTING" relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act in that gap between the two.)

This subtly qualified statement by the American artist Robert Rauschenberg, now exhibiting at the Whitechapel Gallery, seems to me to indicate his intense concern with the problems of representation, which exist precisely in the gap between art and life. As Professor Gombrich explains in his essay, "Meditations on a Hobby Horse," there exist true and false traditions of representation. The false tradition, which gains its strength from the development in methods of illustrative painting since the Renaissance, assumes that representation should involve an imitation of the external form of the object. This belief, implicit in popular criticism of modern art, has no real foundation. It is based on the need to recognize the image in terms of everyday objects rather than to view it in itself. The true tradition of representation relates not to imitation of external form but to the "making of substitutes." A hobby-horse, although it resembles few of the features of a real horse, "represents" the horse in the sense that it is a substitute. Government spies exploited an interview that real hair could never serve to give the impression of hair on a statue—"In fact it seems to me that the form must be fixed in an absolute, immaterial manner, and not abandoned, like an arbitrary form, in which similar alone could create confusion with what one wants to do."

Rauschenberg stands in the lineage of those artists—namely Marcel Duchamp and Kurt Schwitters—for whom representation is not a matter of established definitions but a field of exploration—relating both to art and to life—which should be probed in the context of their work. Duchamp's notable contribution in this area was the "ready-made," the object encountered in everyday experience which is removed by the artist without any modification to the status of a work of art. Duchamp also illustrates the characteristic tension of this mode of representation. First of all, the ready-made is not separated from the world of objects, as was the traditional work of art, by a process of technical adjustment. The instantly perceptible difference between the finished sculpture and the original block of stone is obliterated in the ready-made, which is identical in essential terms to what it was before it was selected. Indeed part of the effect of Duchamp's ready-mades is to ridicule the idea that what makes a sculpture or painting a work of art is simply the process of material adjustment which the artist performs. Duchamp is emphasizing the fact that a work of art becomes such not through the processes which unite it to the actions of the artist but, on the contrary, through its absolute distance from him. Although Duchamp's views on the status of the work of art appear to be totally in variance with those of Gombrich, he is in fact essentially in agreement with him. The work of art must be "fixed in an absolute, immaterial manner. . . ." The notion of the ready-made hinges upon this fact. Duchamp ridicules the idea of representation as a mere imitation of external form by the blatant method of presenting works which, far from imitating other objects, simply are those objects, in substantial terms. All that removes them from the everyday world is the "absolute distance" conferred upon them by the artist, which depends not on any technical process or material distinction but on the intention of the artist. Duchamp's note for "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even" shows how he felt it necessary to record and plan his choice of ready-mades. "Limit the no. of rhymanes

yearly (7)," he writes. Again, "buy a pair of kn-ting on a Kolyvade." The entire process of rendering the ready-made distinct from everyday experience depends on the fact that the artist does not merely encounter it in his everyday life, but removes it hypothetically from the world of objects in his memories before he actually encounters it.

Rauschenberg's work should be seen first of all in this context, but it should also be seen in the context of Kurt Schwitters' individual use of collage. The problem of the use of everyday materials in the work of art is relatively simple to sculpture, since what is already an object is easily presented as a sculptural object. But, in painting, objects are never presented as such. They form part of a painted surface and the relation of the painted image to the object is a matter of pictorial illusion. Hans Schwitters subverts the individuality of his collage materials—chocolate papers, bus tickets, envelopes—in the unifying composition of the picture. The component pieces are pictorially incident in an overall plan and only secondarily objects relating to the real world.

To sort out the relative importance of the ready-made and the collage of everyday materials in the work of Rauschenberg seems to me a necessary, but by no means a simple task. It is clear that Rauschenberg differs from Duchamp in that he lacks the notion of equanimity to a metaphysical process. In Duchamp the metaphysical element is very strong—a striking example of this being his distinction between the sharp and the blunt razor-blade which hinges on the fact that the former has "cuttings" in reserve. Hence his ready-mades seem to "impress" the objects of their particular class in almost the same way as Plato's ideas represent the objects of a particular genus. As works of art, they seem to have arranged to themselves that ideal reality which Plato reserves for the eternal ideas in heaven. With Rauschenberg, however, objects proclaim their origin in the multifarious world of everyday existence. Schwitters covered his pictures with scribbled, soiled and worn fragments, which by combination acquired a transcendent beauty. Rauschenberg challenges Duchamp on his own ground and causes sculpture which, unlike Duchamp's gleaming lacquered boxes, derive from the most object and unassuming rubbish. In his "combine paintings" he is also significantly different from Schwitters, since where Schwitters allows the illusion of a continuous surface to absorb the individuality of his random scraps, Rauschenberg maintains an exact equilibrium between the painting in its entirety and the particular objects. These works are not sculptures, since they relate implicitly to the conventional four-sided area of the canvas. But the objective elements in them seem to alternate between full integration in the unity of the picture and an aesthetic tendency to appear as objects in their own right.

The meaning of this ambivalence is well illustrated by one of Rauschenberg's most numerous combine paintings, "Pilgrim 1965," in which a superbly painted, near to almost-indivisible sculpture, on the lower right hand side, an unimpeachable wooden chair. In a sense this could be called a picture of a chair, or, more accurately, a demonstration of what is implied in making a picture of a chair. The conventional habit of reading a picture involves a neglect for all "background" elements, and the singling out of objects seemingly confined within the picture in order to associate them with everyday objects. Rauschenberg offers a parody of this approach. The canvas can be seen as an abstract

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### Figure 23.

Stephen, "Rauschenberg and Representation", The Cambridge Review, 85, no. 2072, 7 March 1964: 333.

background for the chair. But if this evidently absurd belief is examined, the whole notion of a picture as an arena for the identification of objects becomes ridiculous. If we view the work of art as a final product, coming in its own right, then there is no reason for preferring a painted chair to an actual chair attached to the painting. The latter solution is much more satisfactory. Only if it is assumed that the process of reproduction is *per se* confers some mysterious quality on the image can there be any reason for preferring the former. And if there is indeed such a mysterious transposition, then the identification of objects in the painting cannot be a central part of our appreciation. The important thing becomes not the recognition of objects but the recognition of the distance which the image imposes upon the spectator. "Pictures" therefore poses the problem of representation and provides a solution in terms of this absolute distance. Rauschenberg achieves an effect totally different from that of Manet, when the latter carefully models a chair in bronze. Manet's chair is sculptural and, because it has been fabricated out of bronze, distinctly removed from the everyday world. Rauschenberg's chair, however, continues to suggest questions of value and value. "Do you realize that this chair is worth one thousand pounds," an attendant is reported to have said to a spectator who was about to make the experiment of sitting on it. There is nothing remarkable about a bronze chair being worth a thousand pounds, since its construction bears no relation to that of an actual chair. But for an ordinary wooden chair to be so valued is intensely paradoxical. One must conclude that the incorporation of the chair into this picture has removed it to an entirely new scale of values, and this is yet another way of grasping the absolute distance which exists, irrespective of any material factors, between the work of art and the spectator.

But, however impressive these cerebral paintings are, it remains true that they raise the question of the status of the representational object without at the same time presenting a solution. Up to 1963 Rauschenberg has concentrated to an increasing extent on the integration of one object—or a small group—with an abstract painted surface. But the immense skill with which he achieves this end only serves to disguise the basic contradictions in such a project. I would like to illustrate this with the aid of an analogy which seems relevant to Rauschenberg's development. In the 1820s, the French theatre was characterized by a remarkable increase in the importance of *mise en scène*. In place of the schematic scenery of the classical theatre, natural settings were devised, substantial objects and authentic costumes introduced. But by 1830 a reaction against this process had set in. Critics claimed that spectators no longer listened to the spoken word but concentrated instead on verifying the circumstantial accuracy of details of costumes and scenic objects. The very presence of these objects was leading to a disregard for the essential thrust of the drama. It seems to me that this lesson can also be applied to Rauschenberg. Objects held an even greater disruptive potentiality in painting than they do in drama. In the theatre there must always be a certain element of pure spectacle. In painting, however, it is not enough to balance this element of spectacle against the intrinsic properties of the picture. The introduction of such an element may lead to an increased intensity and vitality, but it is ultimately self-defeating.

Rauschenberg has evidently realized this, since his recent paintings (since 1963) achieve a triumphant unity of expression. Despite the shifting of images from widely differing sources

across the surface of each painting, this surface remains intact. Every element of the picture is immersed through the application of oil paint to canvas. Rauschenberg's use of self-screen printing has enabled him to reproduce the texture of the photograph without needing to introduce any alien element. But his investigation of the problems of representation is by no means abandoned. It attains, in fact, a new degree of subtlety and penetration. This new subtlety centres around the use of photographic material. Rauschenberg is perhaps the first contemporary painter to realize the degree to which modern man accepts photography as a sufficient model of visual reality and so challenges this assumption directly in the course of his painting. He realizes that we are willing to suspend our disbelief in front of the photographic image and perform the magical feat of projection—that is to say, we accept the objects represented in the photograph as real objects and the space enclosed as real space. As a result of this, the tendency to view all pictorial representation in terms of perspective and space has been strongly reinforced. Rauschenberg aims to recall to us in the first place that painting is not merely a means to such an evocation. This seems to me to be the significance of the motif which recurs like a signature in almost all his recent paintings, a continuously drawn geometric cube with an arrow pointing towards the top of the picture. For this is surely an allusion to the fact that we mentally project space into such a figure and a reminder that in the context of his painting such a projection is illicit. In "Barge 1963" drops from a passage of paint above invade the top of the cube, thereby reinforcing the suggestion that it does not and cannot include real space.

Rauschenberg's constant juxtaposition of freely worked paint with photographic images also acts as a reminder of this fact. Indeed his whole use of photographic material is designed to induce us to view such images in terms of their aesthetic qualities—the place they hold within the composition and the viscosity they lend to the surface of the canvas—rather than according to their privileged relationship, as photographs, to visual reality. To this end he starts certain photographic images with dominant colours that recall the component stages of a colour photograph. Because they are fragmentary as photographs, they gain power as images. Yet even when, as in the image of the helicopter in "Bicycle," the colours are overlaid to such a degree that all the ingredients of a colour photograph seem to be present, we are prevented from appreciating it in such because of the raw quality of the canvas, and once again feel we need to project space into the frame. Rauschenberg succeeds in making pictures of an extremely complex imagery, which present the possibility of an immense range of spatial projections and yet reverse the unity of the painted surface by preventing the attention from concentrating on any such projections. The Rubens Venus, contemplating her face in a mirror held by Cupid, occurs in "Bicycle" and in "Barge." In "Tower" another beautiful unclothed woman with her back to the spectator gazes out obliquely from the mirror in her hand. The significance of these motifs is clear. To introduce a mirror image within the total photographic image is to introduce a suggestion of a space within the picture which exists not for us, but for the figures within it. Whereas the Van Eyck portrait of Arnolfini and his wife reflect the painter in a mirror within the picture and thereby provide an ingenious means of entering vicariously the original relationship of the painter to the couple, the Rubens Venus remains steadfastly self-absorbed. Surely this is a remarkable way of conveying the fact that the space within the images is *involved*, bearing no

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## Figure 24.

Stephen, "Rauschenberg and Representation", *The Cambridge Review*, 85, no. 2072, 7 March 1964: 335.

relative to the position of the spectator? In other words, Rauschenberg's final solution to the problem of representation is that the picture exists not in terms of its reference to the objects in spatial existence of the real world, but in terms of the distance from the spectator. To have established this through the use of figurative, indeed photographic material, which in itself almost compels the acceptance of a spatial framework and denies the prior utility of surface, is a very real achievement.

Rauschenberg therefore vindicates in his unique way the truth about representation of which I spoke at the beginning of this essay. Representation is not the imitation of the external form of an object. It is not concerned with evoking real objects and providing vicarious experience of the everyday world, but with the creation of a substitute. The reason why this notion is so important lies in the fact that, if the substitute is not self-sufficient, if the distance is not preserved between the work and the spectator, then a painting becomes nothing more than a convenient surrogate for emotions and illusion, and representation loses the magical quality which is its essential property. To quote from Ernst Fischer's book, *The Novelty of Art*: "George Thomson remarks in *Aschylean and Aelian* that primitive magic is based on the idea that reality can be controlled by creating an illusion of controlling it. But at the same time, because magic leads to action, it embodies the valuable realization that the outside world can actually be changed by man's subjective attitude towards it. Illusions whose strength has been revived and organized by ritual mime are in fact better human than they were before." However paradoxical this may seem, our power to control the outside world has not superseded our need for that illusion of controlling it which is given by the work of art. These two things must not be confused. For magic does indeed lead to action and ritual mime makes a man a better hunter than he was before.

Ernst Fischer.

### *This Week's Books*

#### *The Later Romantic*

#### ENGLISH LITERATURE, 1815-1832.

By Ian Jack. (Oxford University Press.) 1963. Pp. 663. 7s.

The first thing to be said of this volume, the start of the *Oxford History of English Literature*, is that it is a good deal more of a history than the apparently random collection of essays which made up the twelfth, Modern, volume. Dr Jack at least sets out to cover the period, and finds it short enough for reasons in this environment. Practically everyone whose name ought fall within these vital years is mentioned and most of them, however minor, are succinctly discussed. Nevertheless, to be sure, the discussion is so succinctly-concise that it feels like the south of a wretched hand.

If he had lived longer it is possible that Brewer's attitude to the

Continued from page 335

cannot be credited with any transvaluation of values. He was no prophet; he failed to understand the pressing social problems that occupied the minds of his contemporaries. He could not see that millions of human beings were struggling desperately to become human, and that they had no time to spare for superstition. Perhaps Nietzsche's greatest error was that he envisioned Superman before man had learned to be human.

Gustave Mahler.

Christian faith might have been modified (p. 7).

p. 131, line 12, for with all but the greatest read among the most delightful (intermittent).

Against this, however, can be set a gift for art, almost epigrammatic economy:

In this the Quarterly was as characteristically English as the Edinburgh was Scottish: every Englishman is at heart a positivist, so every Scotsman is at heart a critic (p. 142, [in Blake's class]). It is as if Don Quixote had written the autobiography (p. 90).

Moreover, the Chronological Tables and the Bibliography—amounting all told to almost 200 pages—run both through and useful. Yet one is left dissatisfied, wanting not something better but something different.

The second thing to be said, in short, is that it is not fully a history; it lacks narrative and any sense of mobility and progression: the books just happen to be there in the period covered and we are told what is in them but not given a sense of cross-currents within a tale. This, in fact, is very much as *English Literature: A History*—very biographical, somewhat superficial, not at all political or sociological; where background comes in it is strictly literary, and even then superficial. For instance, Dr Jack is (quite rightly) sceptical about the usefulness of the term "the Romantic Movement." He is wrong, though, in saying that there can't have been one because the supposed members don't know about it and in fact disagreed with each other. Writers may well be much aware of their difference; it is up to critics, who have the advantage of distance and hindsight, to provide coordination. If there is anywhere a place for such generalization surely it is in a history (and a unifying factor can be found, as I've suggested elsewhere, in the idea of an Oxford Curriculum). But perhaps a true literary history is hardly possible. If so, one needs to wait the day, if through, chronic or reference work is to be written.

The third point, though, is not that the volume abounds in mistakes, but rather that its omissions are serious and systematic. Dr Jack is very good on many of the minor writers, but his bibliographical notes significantly omit "disappointing" the Pelican Guide which has some brilliant critical essays on major ones (in the larger period, from Blake to Byron, which might have been noted here). Previous attention he largely ignores Shelley's *Alas to the West Wind* is highly praised without any consideration of Lamb's deplorable but classic critical despair. There is no mention of *The Masque of Anarchy*, taken by some to be Shelley's best poem, nor of *Joan of Arc* (*The French and Peter Bell*) the third (presumably because the last is "unpublished" that Shelley had no sense of himself). Dr Brewer's convincing discussion on the second *Myssore* and on the significant difference between the two versions is also ignored in favour of a noncommittal but rather superficial survey. Similarly, Keats's *The Graveyard* is most magnificently put in the light of "the letter to which Keats describes the origin" (p. 101, see note).

No readerably throws its shadow over this point of tradition and acceptance (p. 118).

No? What about "beard clock," "self-dying," "washed down," "shabby beds," the light wind that "runs and sings," the "delicious lamb" as, most dismally: for a man who knew he was dying, the fact that "the gathering realises winter in the air?"

Shelley . . . regards nature as the harbinger of death. . . . Keats remains wholly in the present (p. 118).

Shelley about the refinement to sustain in the first stanza, the "songs of Spring" in the third, and the anticipation of winter in the redoubt "waiting in the roof?"

Yet when all is said on the adverse side, it remains undeniable that so much information is covered with such unerring correctness (evident that this volume is likely to remain for a long time both a general work of reference and a hand-book for the new research graduate.

Allen Rowley.

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## Figure 25.

Stephen, "Rauschenberg and Representation", The Cambridge Review, 85, no. 2072, 7 March 1964: 336.



**Figure 26.**

Robert Rauschenberg: Catalogue of Paintings, Drawings and Combines 1949-1969, Whitechapel Gallery, February-March 1964 (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964): jacket.

## Preface

*Robert Rauschenberg's work has been of key significance for young artists in Europe and America during the past decade. For young artists especially, because they are on his wave-length, they speak his language, and although they do not always share his American experience they understand his references. And the point of view which animates and gives fresh meaning to this experience is universal. Rauschenberg has in fact, evolved a new vocabulary, a new sentence construction even, that has permanently enriched our language. But it is probably only now, in the early sixties, that the general public is beginning to appreciate his contribution to recent art. And to see that when one has looked beyond the stuffed goat and the tyre, the winking light bulbs and the built-in radio sets, Rauschenberg is in fact, a classical artist with a fastidious sense of structure and a hypersensitive understanding of space.*

*His combines and paintings are part of a tradition accelerated and expanded by Cubism, and his object-sculptures and collages continue a path set by the early sculptures and constructions of Picasso and the work of the Dadaists, Duchamp and Kurt Schwitters. But what Rauschenberg has made is very much his own. In painting, he also has affinities with de Kooning, but here again Rauschenberg has imposed his own vision.*

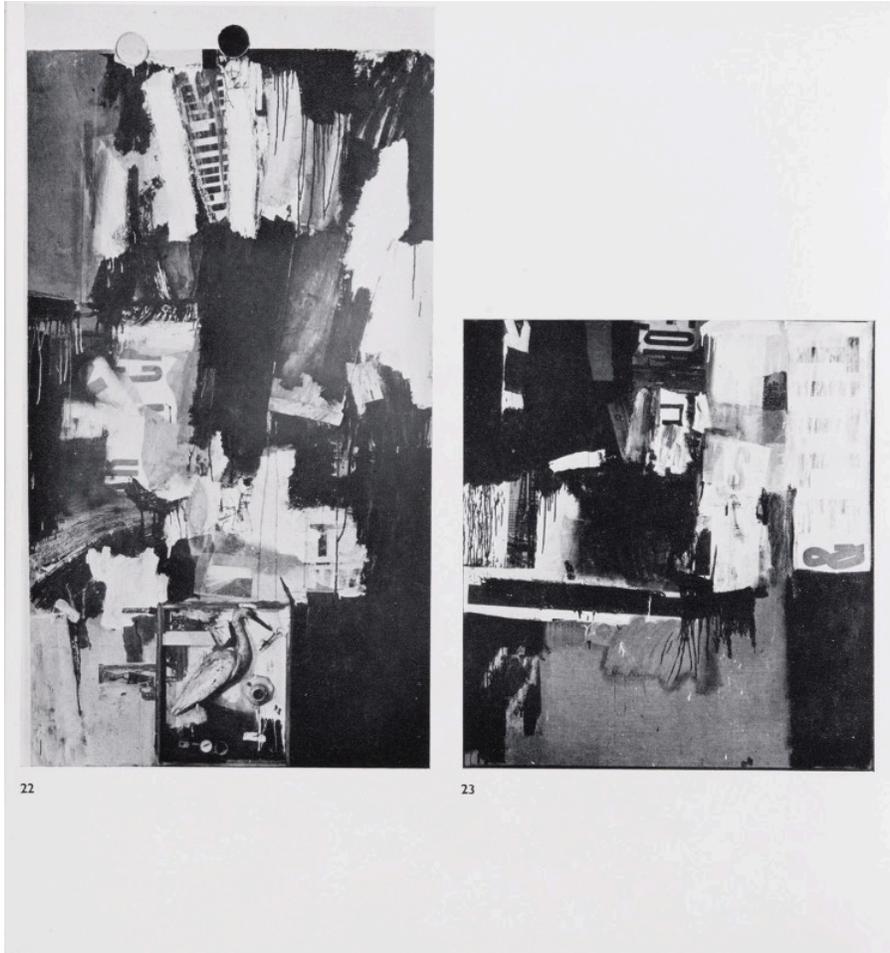
*Considering the details, the constituent parts, of a Rauschenberg painting or the hallucinatory antics, personages, motifs and emblems in the great Dante drawings – a supreme achievement in art during the past decade – it is also clear that he has shown us how to look with fresh eyes at commonplace objects and fragments of visual information which form part of our day-to-day experience; and he has enveloped these subjects with a new eloquence and poignancy. With all his humour, Rauschenberg also reflects, most accurately and beautifully, the tragic and elegiac spirit of his time – whilst maintaining a quintessential lightness, sharpness and delicacy of touch. And he has been absolutely truthful to the inner light and imaginative energy of a young intellectual living in New York in the middle of the twentieth century. Rauschenberg is a true artist, and not merely a compiler of documentaries, but he is leaving us some formidable records for the future.*

*His work as a designer of sets, costumes, lighting and occasionally choreography, for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company cannot be recorded in this exhibition. Otherwise, the assembly of work is reasonably comprehensive. Rauschenberg is of course much younger than the other American artists seen at Whitechapel in recent years, Pollock, Rothko, Tobey and Guston, for example, and it is hoped that the present exhibition devoted to one of the leaders of the younger generation will give some indication of its continuing vitality and resourcefulness.*

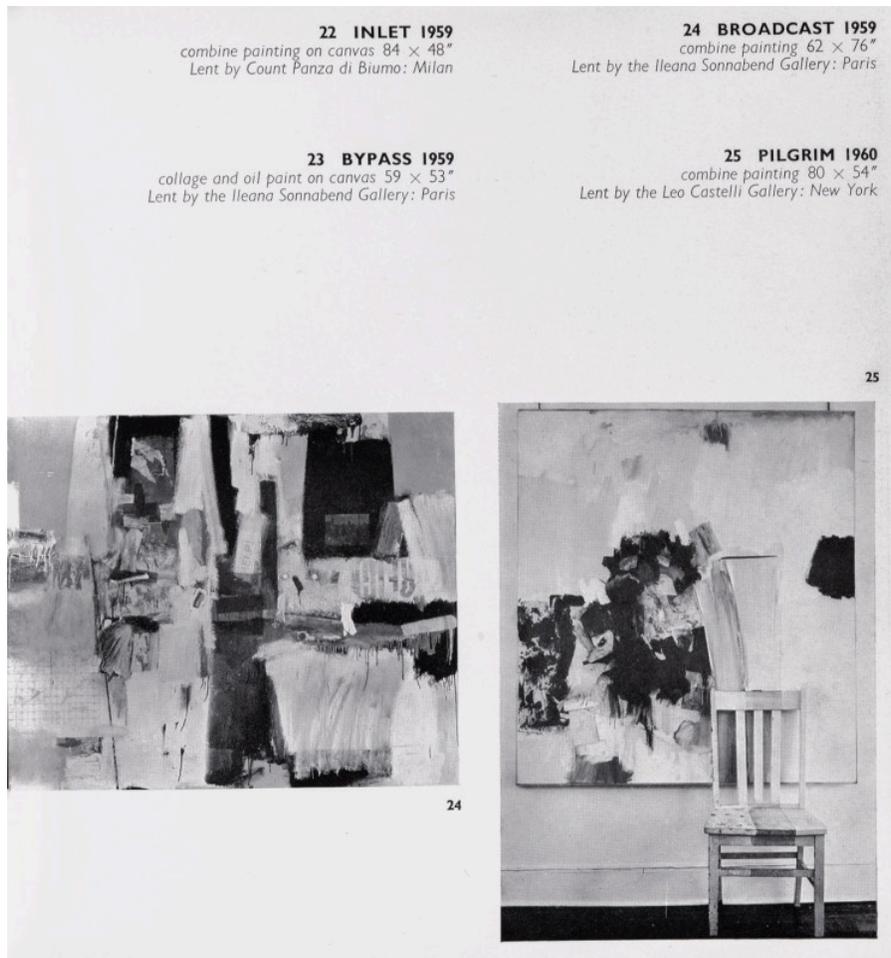
*Bryan Robertson*

### **Figure 27.**

Robert Rauschenberg: Catalogue of Paintings, Drawings and Combines 1949-1969, Whitechapel Gallery, February-March 1964 (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964): 3.



**Figure 28.**  
Robert Rauschenberg: Catalogue of Paintings, Drawings and Combines  
1949-1969, Whitechapel Gallery, February-March 1964 (London:  
Whitechapel Gallery, 1964): plates 22-23.



**Figure 29.**

Robert Rauschenberg: Catalogue of Paintings, Drawings and Combines 1949-1969, Whitechapel Gallery, February-March 1964 (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964): plates 24-25.

**Arts in Cambridge**

Cambridge was an excellent place to be in the early 1960s, as far as modern and contemporary art were concerned. The resources of the Fitzwilliam Museum had been supplemented by the initiative of Jim Ede, who from 1956 had reconstructed the cottages of Kettle's Yard and filled them with his personal collection of British and International Modernist art. I was a frequent visitor. The Faculty of Architecture, under whose wing the History of Art was blossoming into a degree subject, was headed by Sir Leslie Martin, architect of the London Festival Hall, and the former collaborator with Naum Gabo and Ben Nicholson in the Circle group of the 1930s. It was in the newly built faculty lecture theatre at Scroope Terrace that the Society of Arts, organised by Philip Steadman and myself, held many of its meetings with invited speakers over the years 1963-1964.

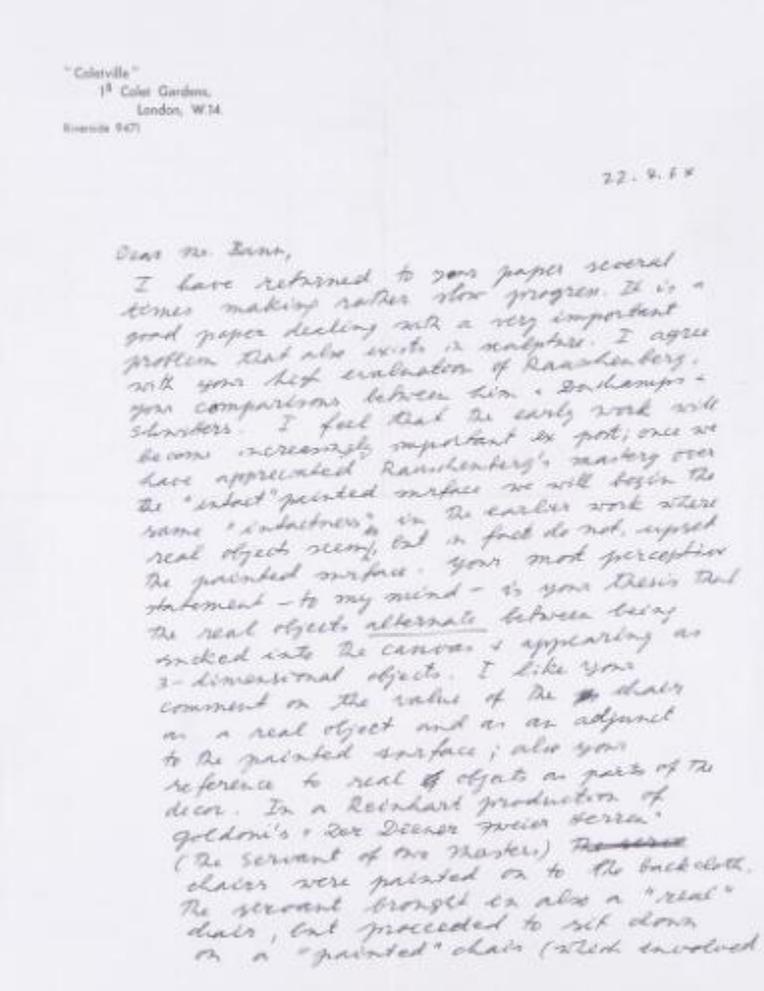
Cambridge also possessed, at the time, the only exhibition gallery outside London which was directly sponsored by the Arts Council. Its programme included important shows of contemporary British artists such as the "Situation" painters (so named by the critic Lawrence Alloway), which held an exhibition there not long after their first manifestation as a group in September 1960. I myself began to publish reviews of current exhibitions in 1962-1963 as an editor of *Broadsheet*, the roncotyped magazine edited by students, which covered the full range of artistic events taking place throughout the city. Though I took time off to praise the occasional London exhibition, such as Kokoschka at the Tate in October 1962, I was mainly focused on covering what was shown at the two commercial galleries in Cambridge (Heffers and the King Street Gallery) and, in particular, the Arts Council Gallery itself. It was through Muriel Wilson, the custodian of the latter and wife of the architect and collector Colin St John Wilson, that I then began, in 1964, to contribute very brief notes on the occasional Cambridge shows to the London-based magazine, *The Arts Review*.

The corollary was that I also began to write much longer reviews of London shows for a Cambridge-based publication. *The Cambridge Review* was a broadly based "Journal of University Life and Thought", priced at 1 shilling, which was published every Saturday during term. It had two editors, changing yearly, and in spring 1964, it was edited by two young English literature dons: Pat Rogers, an eighteenth-century specialist who later made his career in the United States; and David Morse, a modernist who moved to the University of Sussex. I can only suppose that I proposed to one of them that I should write an article on the work of Rauschenberg. But their acceptance must also have been a measure of the considerable stir which the exhibition had caused when it opened at the Whitechapel Gallery in February 1964. I opened my review with a quotation of the artist's "widely publicised statement". Before the exhibition concluded at the Whitechapel, I had been summoned to the television studios of Anglia TV at Norwich to take part in a critics' forum at which the work of Rauschenberg was under discussion.

There can be no doubt that the reading of Gombrich's essay, "Meditations on a Hobby Horse", had provided the interpretative framework for my review. But its message was reinforced from the start by a remark that I had gleaned from an interview with Giacometti, which explained that "real hair could never serve to give the impression of hair on a statue." No less relevant to my earlier enthusiasms was the suggestion that Rauschenberg should be placed "in the lineage" of Duchamp and Schwitters. What must be less obvious is the cross-fertilisation from my doctoral research. This comes across in my analogy between Rauschenberg's desire to integrate the object and the development of the *mise en scène* of French theatre in the Romantic period.<sup>12</sup> The final quotation from Ernst Fischer's *The Necessity of Art*

provides a somewhat incongruous conclusion in emphasising the “magical quality of representation”.<sup>13</sup> But as an enthusiast for the critical writings of Michael Fried, I look back with interest on my development of the proposition that “the Rokeby Venus ... remains magnificently self-absorbed”.<sup>14</sup>

The courteous reply that I received from Anton Ehrenzweig on sending him a copy of my Rauschenberg review was a much appreciated dividend. Ehrenzweig was one of the speakers whom we had invited to speak at the Society of Arts. He had delivered a fascinating paper, related to his special interest in textile design, on the subject of the dangers of ‘over-precise visualisation in the arts’. This would later appear in a definitive version in his highly influential book of essays, *The Hidden Order of Art*, published posthumously in 1967.



"Coleridge"  
18 Collet Gardens,  
London, W14  
Eirecode 947

22. 4. 64

Dear Mr Bann,

I have returned to your paper several times making rather slow progress. It is a good paper dealing with a very important problem that also exists in sculpture. I agree with your high evaluation of Rauschenberg, your comparisons between him & Zerkowicz-Schwartz. I feel that the early work will become increasingly important ex post; once we have appreciated Rauschenberg's mastery over the "abstract" painted surface we will begin to see the same "abstractness" in the earlier work where real objects seem, but in fact do not, appear the painted surface. Your most perceptive statement - to my mind - is your thesis that the real objects alternate between being sucked into the canvas & appearing as 3-dimensional objects. I like your comment on the value of the ~~the~~ chairs as a real object and as an adjunct to the painted surface; also your reference to real objects as parts of the decor. In a Reinhardt production of Goldoni's "Der Diener zweier Herren" (The Servant of two Masters) ~~the~~ chairs were painted on to the backcloth. The servant brought on also a "real" chair, but proceeded to sit down on a "painted" chair (which involved

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### Figure 30.

Letter from Anton Ehrenzweig to Stephen Bann, 22 April 1964.  
Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

a gymnastic feat as there was nothing to support his behind). Reinhardt then insisted that the painted chair was ~~not~~ more real and promising of rest than the 3-dimensional chair. What I mean to say is that 3-dimensional objects in Theatre decor must be designed by an artist of Rauschenberg's calibre who can - sometimes at least - annihilate the difference between 2 and 3-dimensions. I am sure that after modern Breughel (not to mention real objects like the dragon) there will be a return to ~~the~~ Rauschenberg.

May I say that the manipulation (or annihilation) of ~~space~~ <sup>common</sup> space belongs to the core of all visual art - and - in a different sense - even to music. You have certainly tackled a vital problem in an original and instructive way.

With my best wishes  
yours  
Anton Ehrenzweig

[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 31.**

Letter from Anton Ehrenzweig to Stephen Bann, 22 April 1964.  
Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

“Coletville” 1<sup>B</sup> Colet Gardens, London, W.14. Riverside 9471  
22.4.64 Dear Mr. Bann, I have returned to your paper several times making rather slow progress. It is a good paper dealing with a very important problem that also exists in sculpture. I agree with your high evaluation of Rauschenberg, your comparisons between him & Dachamp & Schwitters. I feel that the early work will become increasingly important ex post; once we have appreciated Rauschenberg’s mastery over the “intact” painted surface we will begin the same “intactness” in the earlier work where real objects seem to, but in fact do not, upset the painted surface. Your most perceptive statement - to my mind - is your thesis that the real objects alternate between being sucked into

the canvas & appearing as 3-dimensional objects. I like your comment on the value of the chair as a real object and as an adjunct to the painted surface; also your reference to real objects as parts of the decor. In a Reinhart production of Goldoni's "Der Diener Freier Herren" (The Servant of two Masters) chairs were painted on to the backcloth. The servant brought in also a "real" chair, but proceeded to sit down on a "painted" chair (which involved a gymnastic feat as there was nothing to support his behind). Reinhart thus insisted that the painted chair was more real and promising of rest than the 3-dimensional chair. What I mean to say the use of 3-dimensional objects in theatre decor must be designed by an artist of Rauschenberg's calibre who can - sometimes at least - annihilate the difference between 2 and three dimensions. I am sure that after modern Bayreuth (without real objects like the dragon) there will be a return to Rauschenberg. May I say that the manipulation (or annihilation) of commonsense space belongs to the core of all visual art and - in a different sense - even to music. You have certainly tackled a vital problem in an original and instructed way. With my best wishes Yours Anton Ehrenzweig

What alas! has all this to Cambridge? There has been little absolute decline in the number of candidates for the Classical Tripos since 1917, but the future supply may be affected by what is happening now in the schools, and by any signs away from intensive scholarship. Always prone to divert the relative emphasis on literature in Part I has led to current proposals that composition should be made optional. We must not think that this might encourage less careful, unprepared and less sensitive reading; but that it is a consequence that may have to be considered. Always prone to divert the relative emphasis on literature in Part I has led to current proposals that composition should be made optional. We must not think that this might encourage less careful, unprepared and less sensitive reading; but that it is a consequence that may have to be considered. Always prone to divert the relative emphasis on literature in Part I has led to current proposals that composition should be made optional. We must not think that this might encourage less careful, unprepared and less sensitive reading; but that it is a consequence that may have to be considered.

tion of schemes like those here described, for they are meant to be part of a broader course. But one thing we might already to have a separate honours course in Latin for those who take it in the Medieval and Modern Languages Tripos. It is desirable that such candidates should be required to do the Latin part of the Classical Tripos, which looks back to Greek, rather than a specially devised course that should look forward to French, Italian and Spanish, in which emphasis would be on matters and ideas that proved influential as much as on those that were good in themselves. Apart for an occasional honours course to provide provision is made for them. No wonder they are few. Yet if full classical studies decline they may become more numerous and much more important.

L. P. WILKINSON

### Bomberg, Picabia and the New Generation

INTEGRAL in the painting of David Bomberg was his conception of disintegration. The exhibition of his work recently on view at the Marlborough Gallery gave ample demonstration of this fact. "I am perhaps the most original artist in England," he once wrote, "and only because I am disintegrating first and painter second." For Bomberg the act of drawing was not simply a registration of the external outlines of a figure or landscape. It was a self-resolution and, at the same time, a discovery of hidden structure in the external world that mere mechanical rendering entirely ignored. "Drawing demands freedom, freedom demands liberty to expand in space—this is progress," he wrote. This idea of progress is linked to what seems to me his most fundamental definition of method: "A draughtsman has an opinion about the wrong and the right kind of art. He explores progress by the revelation of scale in the passage of time. The draughtsman cannot exist, unless being dead he speaks to those who have ears to hear." Here we have the essence of his work. Progress—the liberty to expand in space—is registered by the long, exploring strokes of paint which in successive creative and modify the structure of the scene. The "passage of time" is the important element, for Bomberg's paintings—the landscapes and flower pictures especially—give the impression not so much of a final composed structure as of a vital plan deriving from a sequence of actions. The magnificent "Tombstone in Blue, Cornwall" (1917) records the action of the painter in series of continual strokes towards structure—the sweeping strokes of orange reveal not only the inception, operation and termination of a single impulse, but also its order among themselves, and a constant interplay with the shorter strokes of contrasting colours. Bomberg writes that the draughtsman must be dead in order to work. Surely he means that the draughtsman finds perfect fulfillment only in the discovery, by "those who have ears to hear," that he speaks directly, fully and freely in the living structures of his work?

David Huxton, in the course of his excellent introduction to the catalogue, suggests Soutine as an artist akin to Bomberg, at least before Soutine fell under the influence of Courbet. But where Soutine gives the impression of a space-wreathed form, and makes the spectator conscious of the implacable force of his memory, Bomberg gives evidence rather of a breadth and fulness of reaction. With Soutine colour writhes and bubbles. With Bomberg it enfolds and flows. Yet both these artists have the power of revealing themselves totally in their work, without at the same time destroying the

essential distance imposed by the fact that the picture is a representation of visual reality. This exhibition displayed many sides of Bomberg, from the early post-Cubist works to the distinctive, enigmatic self-portrait of 1936. But of the entire course of his work he could write with justice: "It is all one—and shows the way of youth to age."

It would be futile to attempt to trace the ways in which Bomberg differs from his contemporary, Francis Picabia, whose work has been on show at the I.C.A. Gallery, Dover Street. Picabia's main aim is the crucial point of difference. "It was never ever his aim to progress (progress is contre le chaos)," he wrote. If Picabia's work has a unity, it lies in his consistent desire for imaginative experimentation, his refusal to wear out any distinctive manner of painting, his consciousness of style not as an expression of personality but as a method to be employed and then rejected. He proceeded, as Gabriele Buffet—Picabia remarked, by "an exasperation of his lyric vein." As a result, he produced pictures of a fascinating spontaneity and a virtual impenetrability. By calling them impenetrable, I do not mean that they are not immediately attractive. Quite the opposite, for a painting like the "Passe Hydrolique" (1922) possesses a fascinating balance and a vibrancy—in the two quadrants of lamp blue—that is sheer delight. Picabia's works are impenetrable in the sense that, behind the direct and touching lyricism, there is an personality with which we can make contact. The pictures have become entirely disengaged from their creator and remain in detached expressions of a spontaneous idea. The three famous Orphic pictures, which are reproduced only in the catalogue although several smaller works from the same period can be seen in the exhibition, exemplify this point precisely. "It is not a question of abstraction," wrote Guillaume Apollinaire, "for these works give direct pleasure. Their surprise gives an important role. Can the taste of a peach be called abstract? Each picture of Picabia has a definite existence, the limits of which are set by the title." In all Picabia's work this "definite existence" involves a distance between painter and spectator that is irradicable. Surprise and delight condition our immediate reactions—as in front of the amazing "Chartre" (1928-29)—but the external structure of the picture remains a puzzle. We are introduced to the work by a quality as direct and uncomplicated as the taste of a peach, but, once this bridge has been crossed, the work remains self-sufficient and impenetrable. We have entered just far enough to be aroused and active, not passive and uncomprehending, in the face of the work of art.

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### Figure 32.

Stephen Bann, "Bomberg, Picabia and the New Generation", The Cambridge Review, 85, no. 2075, 9 May 1964: 402.

In the introduction to the catalogue of the "New Generation" exhibition, which has recently been on view at the Whitechapel Gallery, David Thompson characterises the aesthetic aims and style of the twelve young artists represented with the words "toughness" and "ambiguity." This pattern seems to me precisely the one which I have described above in relation to the work of Picasso. The toughness resides in the fact the picture is regarded not as a means of expression—a unique deployment of the personality of the artist—but as a self-sufficient entity. The basic ambiguity relates to the need to break down the distance from the spectator which arises from such self-efficiency and to provide an element that is immediately accessible. Distance of the picture thereby becomes a progressive exploration of what is intrinsic to the work. Paul Huxley, one of the artists, exemplifies this approach exactly when he writes: "If I were asked to give a guide as to how my work should be understood I would remember Mark's quote from, viz: "Please do not understand me too quickly," and say that the curiosity that is possibly aroused in the spectator and the queries he may wish to make are the picture's subject-matter." Anthony Donaldson, writes David Thompson, "admits to getting a certain kick from exploiting the automaticity of sky-blue and body-prints." But on a more fundamental level he goes nothing away. "So, why should I be innocent in communication," he writes, "I am neither a prophet nor seer—worker." With John Hoyland the spectator is at first attracted by the direct clarity and clarity of the painted surface, but inwardly emphasises the irreparability of the work in itself. For the artist, too, this irreparability may be paramount. Hoyland writes: "The shapes and colours I paint and the significance I attach to them I cannot explain in any coherent way. The exploration of colour, form, shape is, I believe, a self-exploration constantly varied and changing in nature: a reality made tangible on the painted surface."

Almost all of the painters in this exhibition, despite the considerable variation in style, adhere to this basic pattern. Patrick Procter, whose twelve figure-paintings might seem to depart from the formula, rejects any suggestion that his paintings are representational. Although his figures, seen at first sight to contain exaggeration and deformity, he tries to present these figures without either sentimentality or bitterness—without a too rapid concession to the emotions of the spectator—and to achieve a realism based upon an "unshakable relationship with the figure I paint." David Thompson justly remarks that David Hockney's paintings, far from being representational, involve the artist "watching you watching him—being representational." For all their autobiographical character, they do not reveal the personality of the artist. It was the world of the figure cut off at the shoulder to form a head, which recurs constantly in Hockney's work, a constant upon the maximum which we truly suppose to be inherent in the pictures?

This is a remarkable exhibition. Among the artists whom I have not mentioned, Brett Whiteley and Adere Jorke are showing particularly fine work. Derek Bostler's recent pictures represent a magnificently assured departure from the somewhat lazy figuration of his earlier works (in fact his latest work is a recreation to that of his first student paintings). To return in my earlier argument, the perceptible theme of the exhibition is the integrity of the work of art. Ultimate signs of the action are for the most part excluded from the surface, and the viewer is established contact with a necessity—in remote a direct communication from the artist—is rigidly confined. Although elements of colour,

design or figuration may make a strong impact upon the spectator, they will rarely satisfy his anxiety, and the anxiety of the artist is devoted to making this immediate appeal subordinate to a more profound encounter. This anxiety has immense possibilities, especially since it is grounded in psychology. The notion of "typical distance," which Edward Balfour developed in the *British Journal of Psychology* in 1912, fits it exactly. This distance, he explains, "has a negative, inhibitory aspect—the cutting-out of the practical side of things and of our practical attitude to them—and a positive side—the elaboration of the experience on the new basis created by the inhibitory action of Distance." The negative aspect, which when it is predominant prevents any contact at all between the work and the spectator, is symbolised in these works by the attempt to minimise the personal involvement of the artist as it is observed in the manipulation of paint. To compensate for this, some of the artists introduce an element of what Balfour calls the "aguable," which is a "non-distanced pleasure." But the real fulcrum of aesthetic reaction is derived from acceptance of the distance—from "the elaboration of the experience on the new basis created by the inhibitory action of Distance." This is an art which demands a temporary abdication of the self, which desires and provides before it satisfies. Rapid and rapid reactions seem to have little or nothing to do with it. As Balfour says, "to be asked in the midst of an intense aesthetic impression, 'whether one likes it,' is like a summatable being called by name: it is a recall to one's conscious self, an awakening of practical consciousness which throws the whole aesthetic mechanism out of gear."

A critic reviewing this exhibition asked if, since modern goods are packaged, modern art should also be. Yes, I would say, if to package a picture seems to make it agreeable, provocative and irrefragable.

STANLEY BONE.

## This Week's Books

### Self-Imposed Limits

#### THE WORLD OF HARLEQUIN

By A. NICOLL (Cambridge University Press), 1963. £3 5s.

The Commedia dell'Arte has been the subject of an uncounting number of studies during the present century, and this very new contribution to its history should bring either new information on the subject or fully restate the results of investigations made by previous scholars.

Unlike most types of theatre, the Commedia was essentially an acting style, an "art" of improvised dialogue, action and activities. Because no texts of the actual words used in performance exist, historians are obliged to rely entirely on contemporary accounts of performances, comments made by the actors themselves and the "critiques" which were the fragments preserved as a guide by the actors. Naturally the very limitations of the information on the Commedia have given rise to inventions and extreme theorising, and Professor Nicoll states in the preface to his book that he has preferred to show a middle course. This in fact means that he has almost completely ignored each point of contention as the range of the Commedia and the probable social contexts contained in the improvised dialogue of the actors.

Professor Nicoll deliberately chooses not to discuss the origins of the Commedia because they "throw but little light on the qualities inherent in the Italian improvised theatre from 1550 onwards." This is but a personal point of view. It may equally well be said that the probable identification of the characters

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## Figure 33.

Stephen Bann, "Bomberg, Picabia and the New Generation", *The Cambridge Review*, 85, no. 2075, 9 May 1964: 403.

## The New Generation

Coming directly after the Rauschenberg show, the exhibition of the "New Generation" of British artists in March-May 1964 confirmed the Whitechapel Gallery as the most exciting venue for contemporary art in London. Its Director, Bryan Robertson, had in fact begun his career as an exhibition organiser when managing the art gallery which occupied the top floor of Heffer's main bookshop in Cambridge. Nor was Cambridge unaware of the success which he had achieved at the Whitechapel. An editorial in *Granta* noted that: "the government's competition for the Tate Directorship is taking place [...] secretly." The editor, presumably Reg Gadney, noted: "it would appear that Mr Bryan Robertson is a clear favourite; certainly his success at the Whitechapel merits every accolade that is available." <sup>15</sup>

*Granta* had already pinned its colours to the mast by inviting one of the “New Generation” artists, the painter Anthony Donaldson, to design a series of front covers for the magazine, based on a grainy black and white photograph of a nude.

My earlier piece for *The Cambridge Review* had been not so much a critical review of the Rauschenberg show as an essay that probed the theoretical concept of representation. In this shorter piece, I attempted a round-up of what seemed to me to be the most significant of the art exhibitions that were taking place in London in spring 1964. Besides focusing on the show at the Whitechapel, I considered what had been exhibited at what was probably London’s most prestigious commercial gallery, the Marlborough in Bond Street. I also took note of what was being shown in the nearby premises of the non-commercial Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in Dover Street. To some extent, I viewed the assignment as a way of engaging with other critics: David Sylvester, with whom I disagreed about the comparison between Bomberg and Soutine; David Thompson, whose choice of the words “toughness” and “ambiguity” coincided with my own intuition about the collective strengths of the New Generation; and indeed Guillaume Apollinaire whose comments on Picabia’s Orphist pictures (not actually shown at the ICA) had already struck a responsive chord.

I was clearly conscious of the difficulty of writing about three such disparate shows. Bomberg and his school had already become well known to me, since my subscription to *X* magazine had attracted me to the exhibitions of the Beaux Arts Gallery. Picabia was more of an unknown quantity, apart from what I had been able to glean from Apollinaire’s brilliant writings on Cubism. But I can recognise here in the structure of the review the early development of my tendency to advance the critical argument by means of a formal comparison. Having drawn the sharp contrast between Bomberg and Picabia, I then argue that the New Generation have nothing whatever in common with Bomberg, but will gain in significance if seen in the context of the historical avant-garde as exemplified by Picabia. This enables me to put a new gloss on some of David Thompson’s acute characterisations, with which I was broadly in agreement.

I can think of no obvious reason for my decision to bring in the concept of “psychical distance”, which had been published just over fifty years prior and derived from the work of the Cambridge aesthete, Edward Bullough. Probably my reading of Gombrich had alerted me to the need for a conceptual, and even scientific, base to judgements involving aesthetic appreciation.



**Figure 34.**

The New Generation: 1964, Whitechapel Gallery, March-May 1964  
(London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964): jacket.



**Figure 35.**

Granta, 69, no. 1236, 14 May 1964. Jacket image by Anthony Donaldson.

## Art in London and Kassel

These two pieces published in Cambridge in October 1964 had awaited the revival of *Granta* and *The Cambridge Review* at the beginning of the new academic year. Both had been written during the course of the summer, and my visit to *documenta* had taken place some weeks after the opening of the exhibition on 27 June.

My essay on Francis Bacon was, in effect, the culmination of my project of writing on Delacroix and Giacometti, which had hung fire since the previous year. I invoked both of these artists in order to provide a broader historical context for Bacon's mode of figuration. My reading of another of Gombrich's works, in this case *Art and Illusion* (1960), provided a theoretical point of departure for an examination of Bacon's "specifically painterly method". I

had become interested in Bacon's work as a result of my visits to the Beaux Arts Gallery and my early subscription to *X*. I gave my copy of the issue of *X* featuring Bacon to Michael Peppiatt, then a Cambridge undergraduate. At the time, Peppiatt was editing an issue of the occasional magazine, *Cambridge Opinion*, on British contemporary art. He later became the major authority on the life and work of Bacon. <sup>16</sup>

As I was already living in Paris by the beginning of October, I was unable to see proofs. Working from hand-written copy may explain howlers in the printed text like Delacroix's "*Massacre of Chivis*". The last lines of the article were unaccountably omitted and had to be inserted in ink in my own copy. No precise identification is given for the photographs of the paintings by Bacon, which had been obtained from Marlborough Galleries. In fact, they date from 1964 and show what was clearly intended at the time to be a triptych of Bacon's friend and fellow painter, Lucien Freud. These three large portraits have subsequently been dispersed. The right-hand painting was presented by Marlborough to the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. The left-hand painting, now in the Forbes collection, was shown at Tate Britain in the early months of 2018.

Bacon, however, was also represented by five paintings in the large exhibition, *Painting & Sculpture of a Decade 54-64*, which was held at the Tate Gallery in April-June 1964. I did not review this exhibition, no doubt partly because of the Cambridge publishing schedules, but also perhaps because I found my visit to be a frustrating experience. Beyond any doubt, this was the richest and most comprehensive British showing of contemporary art to date. Yet my reactions coincided precisely with those of a review I later discovered by Patrick Reyntiens: "twice as many works of art apiece as they should, each work being twice as large as it should be for comfortable viewing and as capriciously lit as any South American baroque church." <sup>17</sup> These works had been selected, at the invitation of the Gulbenkian Foundation, by Alan Bowness (shortly to become Director of the Tate), Lawrence Gowing, and Philip James (Director of Art at the Arts Council). But the introductory "notes" to the catalogue were anonymous and (to me) appeared somewhat alienating: "Abandon the philosophic guides. The idea of *expression* and the idea of the artist as someone in communication with us through some code that we can decipher are inadequate to the situation." <sup>18</sup>

This was not a sentiment that I was inclined to take seriously. But it was the "impression of cluttered riches" generated by the layout of the exhibition that perturbed me most, and provided the greatest possible contrast to the subsequent experience of *documenta*. I had witnessed a rather hasty exposition of the previous *documenta* in 1959, since our enterprising school art teacher, Grahame Drew, showed us without comment the vast number of slides that he had taken there. But *documenta III* was a much more

considerable event, consolidating the position of this Hessian city on the fringes of the Western bloc as the foremost showcase for contemporary art in the post-war world. The rationale of the exhibition, carefully explained by its director, the art historian Werner Haftmann, was certainly “more didactic than anarchic.”<sup>19</sup> But its success was due, above all, to the resourceful way in which this didactic rationale was underpinned by an inspired utilisation of the city sites.

As my review testifies, the achievement of *documenta III* was to set new standards for the very concept of an exhibition of modern and contemporary art. In part, this was a matter of financial resources. Reyntiens assessed the budget of the Gulbenkian show at £35,000 whereas *documenta III* cost “roughly £150,000” by my estimate. But it was also a question of visual realisation. Kassel provided several commodious and traditional spaces: the Museum Fridericianum, which had indeed been at its origin one of the first publicly accessible museums in Europe, and the later Alte Galerie, which was chosen by Haftmann to house an unprecedentedly broad display of modern and contemporary drawings. The Orangerie and the park surrounding it were devoted to the theme of “Painting and Sculpture in Space”, giving unstinted spatial provision to large pictures as well as to major items of sculpture. In short, ideal conditions were provided for close attention to detail, as well for exciting environmental effects. I continued to return to *documenta* in subsequent years, noting in particular the exhibitions of 1968 and 1972.

## Francis Bacon

Stephen Bann

The use of paint as a medium for representation involves a basic ambiguity. The artist works with whatever pattern he has abstracted from reality, but he also works with brush and pigments. This has always been so—and the very nature of representation dictates that these two aspects should always be borne in mind. But, since the time of Delacroix and the Nabis, the ambiguity has become much more than an incidental factor. Sir Kenneth Clark has written in a discussion of Velasquez' *Les Meninas* (I quote from Professor Gombrich's *'Art and Illusion'*) that: . . . he wanted to observe what went on when the brush strokes and dabs of pigment on the canvas transformed themselves into a vision of transfigured reality as he stepped back. But try as he might, stepping backward and forward, he could never hold both visions at the same time, and therefore the answer to his problem of how it was done always seemed to elude him.' This impossibility of uniting the illusion and the material may apply to traditional painting. But it does not seem to me to be true today. The best of modern figurative painting has more than an incidental ambiguity, upon which the spectator can exercise his power of perception. To change the term slightly but significantly, it is ambivalent—it forces upon the spectator the conflicting realms of image and material, without allowing him to seize hold upon either.

Two historical developments seem to me to clarify this position. In the course of his long career, Delacroix reintroduced the notion of the brushstroke not merely as an adjunct to satisfactory representation, but as a direct sign of the artist's agency. Later, the Nabis began to view the surface of the picture not simply as a vehicle of personal energy, but as a rectangle decorated and diversified with pigments. Delacroix, in bringing a subjective tinge to his brushwork, was resuming contact with Titian, Tintoretto and Rembrandt. In his portraits of Chopin and Paganini he demonstrates that the great painter can make us feel his passionate use of paint not merely as an indication of his own personality, but also as an evocation of the subjective energy in another. Where Delacroix is concerned with energy of this type the Nabis demonstrated a combination of atmosphere and material, the urge to fit their subtle carpets of colour to the very edges of the pictorial surface.

All this serves to introduce the work of Francis Bacon. First of all, Bacon exemplifies precisely the ambivalence which I originally referred to. He has said in conversation with David Sylvester that he is unable to differentiate in his works between the paint which has a purely expressive function and that which 'represents' human features. It is not simply a case, as with Sir Kenneth Clark, of a painting which changes from transfigured reality to dabs of pigment as the spectator approaches. With Bacon the transitions take place not in relation to the movement of the spectator, but across the surface of the work—and although we isolate some passages as 'pure dabs' and some as 'pure reality,' the work as a whole continues to suggest two

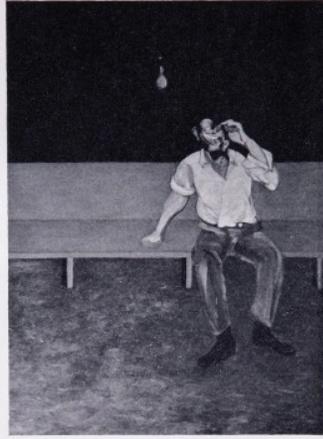


modes of activity simultaneously. Bacon's figures do not become transformed at closer inspection into amorphous patterns of coloured pigment. There is no way of cutting out the human, figurative element. On the contrary, this poignant element is intensified by the sonorous presence of the pigment, bringing to mind a remark by Rembrandt: 'Don't poke your nose into my pictures, the smell of paint will poison you.'

Bacon uses not only the signs of physical involvement which evoke human presence in a picture, but also the cohesion of surface which I have associated with the Nabis. He forms a skin of rich pigment—sometimes lush, sometimes chalky—and picks up with it the material presences of chairs, walls, tables and carpets. In this respect he shows himself to be more painterly than another great figurative artist, Giacometti. For Giacometti aims to create an illusion of space, within which he situates figures of a 'dureté intracassable.' He uses the picture to reproduce the mysterious self-sufficiency which is naturally associated with sculptural form. Here we touch on a criticism that has been levelled at Bacon's work. Reg Gadney in a previous number of this magazine, referred to a need for the modern painter to recover something of the nobility of Michaelangelo. But this is surely the nobility of sculptural presence—even in Michaelangelo's paintings the forms are moulded as if in volume. The inherent nobility of painting has always been different. It has involved acceptance of the infinitely manipulable, vegetable nature of pigment. Once again, this century has accentuated the fact. Bomberg's last self-portrait, in

### Figure 36.

Stephen Bann, "Francis Bacon", *Granta*, 69, no. 1238, 17 October 1964: 6. Illustrated is Francis Bacon, *Study for Portrait of Lucian Freud*, 1964. Courtesy of the estate of Francis Bacon (All rights reserved / DACS 2019).



which the shaded face seems to be invaded by a searing slash of paint bears witness to the fact that even a painter who is passionately attached to the old masters must obtain his tragic impact through a partial concession to the anarchic tendency of the material.

Bacon's attachment to a specifically painterly method—to a use of paint which is *positive* throughout the whole surface of the picture—has involved adjustments in the overall planning of his works. Much has been written of the so-called 'Grand Guignol' element in them. Sir John Rothenstein, in his introduction to the recent book on Bacon, suggested that it has declined to a minimum. But it seems to me that the scenic apparatus of Bacon's pictures has never been entirely, or even primarily designed to shock. In his interview with David Sylvester, Bacon spoke of his 'glass boxes' as being designed to concentrate attention on the figure. All his obvious devices can be explained in this light. They serve not to overlay the figure with specious ornaments, but to focus attention—to lead us directly into the theatre of events. Giacometti uses a parallel method when he fills the areas around his portrait figures with a smudged grey atmosphere—sometimes with a lined frame—and thereby makes more vivid the central presence. But where Giacometti's surrounding surfaces are negative—tending to evoke a spatial setting—Bacon leaves his surfaces definite and material. Therefore, in order to gain a central figure with intensity similar to that of Giacometti, he must make adjustments throughout the picture which *override these surfaces*. The development of his art can be traced to a great ex-

tent in terms of a movement from pictures in which these intermediate signs—cubes, tassels, etc.—are dominant to those in which they scarcely obtrude. In the *Triptych*, for example, the problem is brilliantly managed. The left-hand picture, in which the figure turns away and draws his knees towards him, contains three correctives to this stance—the hanging bulb, the dash of paint across the face and the two white blobs towards the bottom of the picture. The first supplies a vertical element to balance the relentless horizontal of the bench, the second in some measure cancels the indirect glance of the figure, the third emphasises the receding floor. In the middle picture, none of these are necessary. The figure provides a strong vertical in the middle of the picture, faces towards us and has his feet on the floor—no props are used. In the right-hand picture the bulb recurs to counterweight the posture of the figure.

If we grant that Bacon uses these devices primarily to focus our attention on his figures—to direct our reactions to the human element even if posture and situation prevent it from occupying the centre of the picture—we must still settle the basic question. What is the reason for this direct presentation? What is the state of the figures at which Bacon sedulously levels our attention? This I can most clearly answer by means of an analogy from Delacroix. His *Massacre of Chios* uses a device very close to that of Bacon. The foreground has a scrambled, hasty appearance that recedes dramatically to the main characters, like the rough purple foreground in Bacon's three studies. What we see in the *Massacre of Chios* is a state

**Figure 37.**  
 Stephen Bann, "Francis Bacon", *Granta*, 69, no. 1238, 17  
 October 1964: 7.

of arrested action—the presentation of a dramatic conflict—in which rearing horse and supine patriot are juxtaposed. There is no hint of moral pronouncement, as could be found in Delacroix' predecessor David. The impression is of a painter who is fascinated by action, and by the possibilities of moral choice, but who finds himself unable to present anything but an accentuated scene of dramatic conflict.

It is this quality that seems to me central to Bacon's work. But where Delacroix represents dramatic conflict—a sudden suspension of action, in which victim and persecutor are poised beside one another—Bacon represents a fixed state of the individual. The restless, disturbing quality of his work results not from a mere manipulation of our emotions but from the fact that it presents the possibility of action, which by the very nature of pictorial representation is stilled. This seems to be the significance of Bacon's fascination for photography. The single photograph surely attracts his attention not because of its literary quality, but precisely because of its incredibility—its absurd isolation in the flux of events. Bacon's pictures deal with this same impossible moment between past and future. Helen Lessore is right in claiming that *'Arabs Walking'* (1957) and the succeeding Van Gogh series mark a great step forward. This is true in the most literal sense, since they are concerned with the seated figures—substantial only in head and hands—of his earlier works, but with wilful, purposeful movement. Since these pictures, Bacon has returned to supine, embryonic or sprawling forms. Now, and especially in this Triptych, he moves again into the realm of expectancy.

The two flanking figures may confront an unknown menace. The central figure is nonetheless orientated towards action and discovery.

This question of subject matter is integral to the understanding of Bacon's work. Even though it is always possible to record the search of an artist for self-discovery in the course of his works, it is quite a different matter for an artist to choose the direction of his work with virtually no distraction. Instead of working through a diversity of genres, Bacon now gives all his energies towards portraiture, and, as he has stressed, aims always for a single perfect picture that will subsume all his attempts. The position of a figurative artist who insulates himself completely from social requirements, and, like Bacon, is able to create a submissive market rather than working to please a demanding public, is one almost without parallel in contemporary art. Bacon appears to work in a vacuum, with no gravitational pulls from the society which exists around him. It is significant that an increasing number of his recent portraits have been concerned with two artists—Lucien Freud and Frank Auerbach—both of whom share his passionate devotion to figurative painting. An image of Bacon the artist has been built up which represents his work almost solely in terms of creative and destructive will—in terms of whole series of pictures being attempted at the same time, and

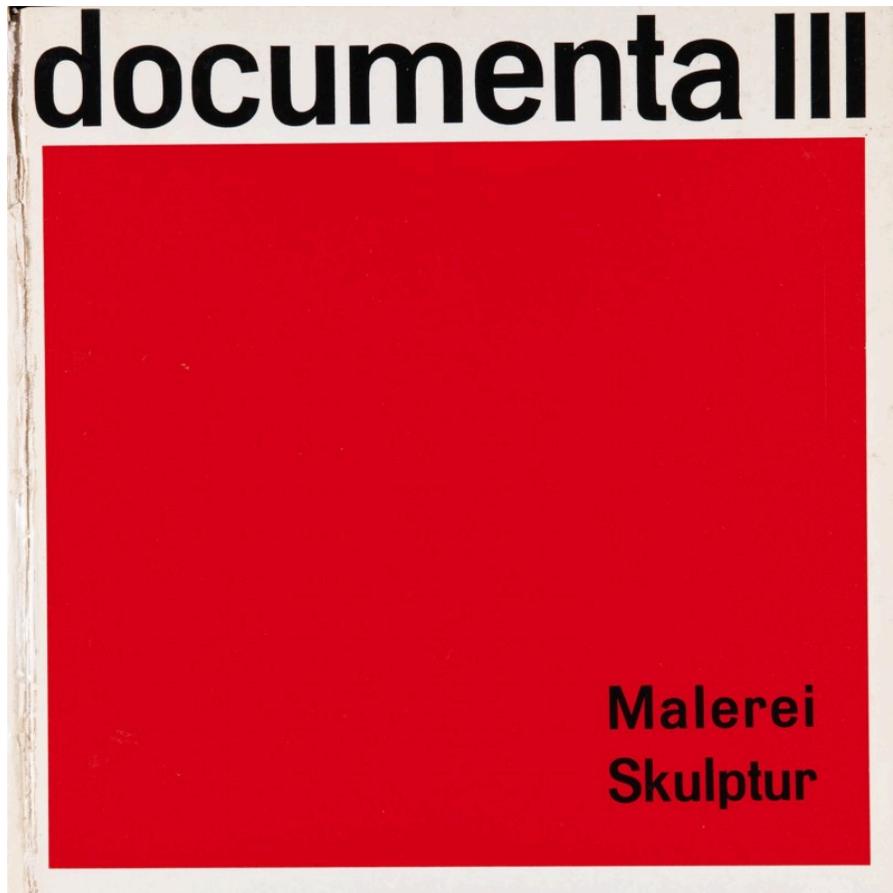
those which fail to show a certain quality being destroyed relentlessly. Like his Renaissance popes, Bacon proclaims his search for unity of expression—for a single work that will exemplify finally a single principle—in the midst of chaotic diversity. He exemplifies as much as any other European artist what Dore Ashton calls 'irony'—an element of dissemblance present in the public personalities of European as opposed to American artists. Even Rembrandt and Velazquez, he maintains, were actually recording events. Now, however, '... a really good artist ... would be forced to make a game of the same situation.' Bacon's public statements tend to give the impression of a disembodied will, gratuitously absorbed in an elaborate 'game,' for the sake of sensory excitement. He quotes with approval Valéry's remark: 'What we want nowadays is the sensation without the boredom of its conveyance.' He claims that 'the artist must really deepen the game to be any good at all, so that he can make life a bit more exciting.' Yet this concern with the elaboration of the game, and with the excitation of the senses, does not lead him away from the traditional subjects of artists who worked to 'record.' 'Man is haunted by the mystery of his own existence,' he said in *'Cambridge Opinion'*, and is therefore much more obsessed with the remaking and recording of his own image in his world than with the beautiful fun of even the best abstract art.' Although Bacon continually explains his adherence to the human image in terms of obsession and 'assault upon the nervous system,' this concern is ultimately inexplicable except in relation to the values which underlie human action.

In a recent note on the Italian painter, Morandi, Andrew Forge suggested that so apparently reactionary a painter was perceptibly modern in the sense that his work reflected an age in which the direct portrayal of objects involved a defiance of conventional standards of painting. In a similar way, Bacon's work becomes comprehensible only in the context of an age in which the function of the painter is being radically altered. To quote Bacon once again: 'Photography has covered so much: in a painting that's even worth looking at the image must be twisted ... if it is to make a renewed assault upon the nervous system ... and that is the peculiar difficulty of figurative painting today.' The availability of new mater-

ials & the existence of a tradition of non-figurative art have freed the artist from the scale of reference within which Bacon works — or made it possible for him to be free. The crucial question — one which will decide Bacon's importance to us — is whether his art is merely one of technique & representation, or whether the deepest values of humanity are inextricably bound up with the recording of man's own image in his world.

### Figure 38.

Stephen Bann, "Francis Bacon", *Granta*, 69, no. 1238, 17 October 1964: 8.



**Figure 39.**

Exhibition catalogue, documenta III, June–October 1964 (Kassel: Hessische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964), Vol. 1, Malerei Skulptur: front cover. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 40.**

Exhibition catalogue, documenta III, June–October 1964 (Kassel: Hessische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964), Vol. 1, Malerei Skulptur: back cover. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 41.**

Exhibition catalogue, documenta III, June–October 1964 (Kassel: Hessische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964), Vol. 2, Handzeichnungen: front cover. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 42.**

Exhibition catalogue, documenta III, June–October 1964 (Kassel: Hessische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964), Vol. 2, Handzeichnungen: back cover. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

**GROUPE DE RECHERCHE D'ART VISUEL DE PARIS**

**Le Parc**

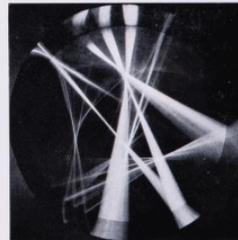
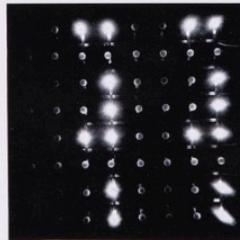
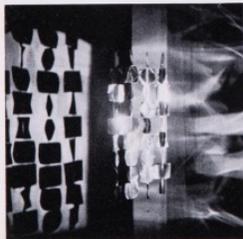
STRUCTURE MOBILE EN ALUMINIUM  
POLI 1963/64  
200×200×200 cm

**Morellet**

STRUCTURE LUMINEUSE NÉON 1963/64  
Vier Tafeln, je 80×80×80 cm

**Garcia Rossi**

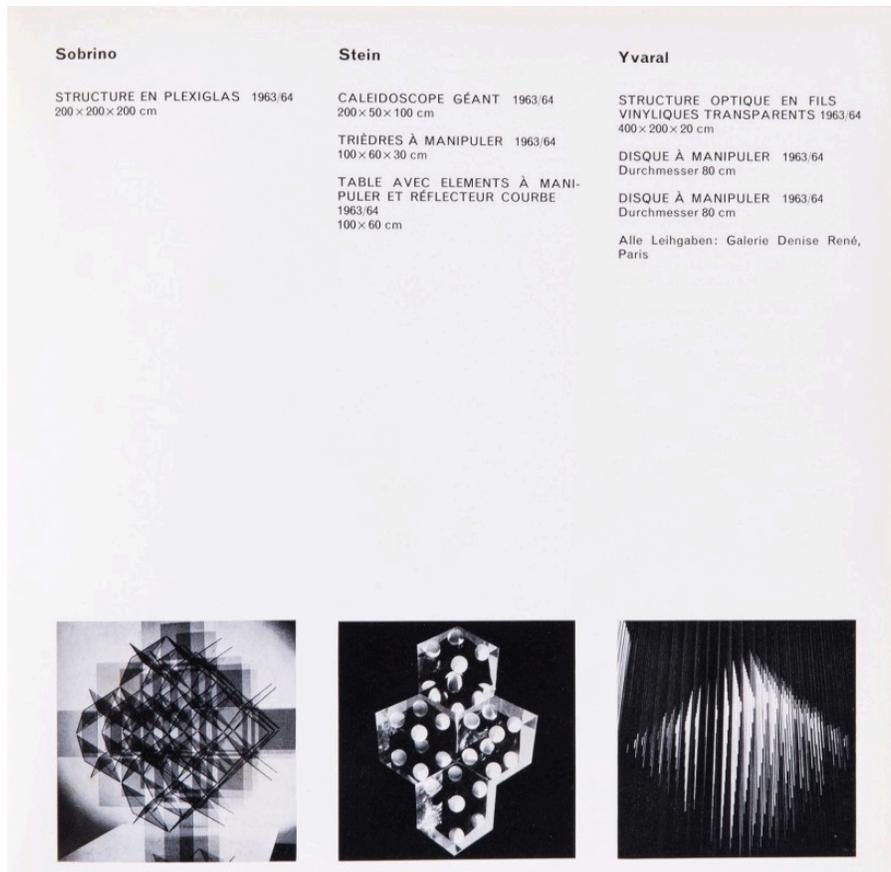
BOITE LUMINEUSE EN MOUVEMENT  
1963/64  
100×100×40 cm



410

**Figure 43.**

Exhibition catalogue, documenta III, June–October 1964 (Kassel: Hessische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964) (Vol. 2, Handzeichnungen): 410. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 44.**

Exhibition catalogue, documenta III, June–October 1964 (Kassel: Hessische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964) (Vol. 2, Handzeichnungen): 411. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

**Kitaj**

1932 in Ohio (USA) geboren,  
lebt in London.



1 SITZENDER WEIBLICHER AKT  
VOR EINEM SPIEGEL 1958  
Bleistift 44,5x34,9 cm  
Marlborough Fine Art Ltd., London

2 SITZENDER WEIBLICHER AKT  
IM PROFIL 1958  
Bleistift 48,3x34,3 cm  
Marlborough Fine Art Ltd., London

**Figure 45.**

Exhibition catalogue, documenta III, June–October 1964 (Kassel: Hessische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964) (Vol. 2, Handzeichnungen): 102. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 46.**

Exhibition catalogue, documenta III, June–October 1964 (Kassel: Hessische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964) (Vol. 2, Handzeichnungen): 103. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

Larry Rivers

geb. 1929 in New York. Studium in New York bei Hans Hofmann, dann in Paris. Lebt in Southampton, Long Island.

1 AFRICA 1962/63  
Öl auf Leinwand 286,5×338 cm  
Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York



384

**Figure 47.**

Exhibition catalogue, documenta III, June–October 1964 (Kassel: Hessische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964) (Vol. 2, Handzeichnungen): 384. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

So far we have managed without notice boards, handbills, theatre companies, advertisements, notices, notices, and other signs of institutional life.

In April, 1962, we started our first eleven new Fellows, all on the same day, and since then we have elected several more to the Quovring Lodge. So far from diluting the spirit of the college, whatever that might mean, they have made themselves indistinguishably one with Lockington but to the college as a whole. Four of our five Tutors are drawn from the Eleven, and several of the 100 Fellows supervise undergraduates as help administered the college as well as contributing to life at Lockington.

This year we have eighty-five graduates compared with 100 undergraduates, of whom sixty are Imperial Research students. Of the eighty-five, forty-one will be living at Lockington twenty-four

in the George Thomson Building, together with four Fellows. Seventeen of the others are married, many of them living in college flats, and the rest are living in college accommodation or in lodgings. Graduates have showed our great preference in the allocation of rooms at Lockington. In obvious manner, those in need of rooms on their night or week during term, of which one is a leader. Night on which married graduate students and their wives are especially welcome. We have deliberately not insisted a High Table, but the water provides drinks before, during and after dinner. Lunch is not provided at Lockington, but Fellows, graduates and undergraduates can all meet at lunch in the college Hall. During vacations there are no dinners at Lockington, but all graduates may dine in Hall. The George Thomson Building itself

has been planned, not only by the students at Cambridge New Architecture but also by the graduates who have just moved into it. It has twenty-four buildings which are graduate residents, but ten for resident Fellows and four rooms to be shared by non-resident Fellows. The students will have the benefit of such modern amenities as hot-water, central heating, electric lifts, a semi-annual staff society and such occasional student societies. Downstairs is a recreation room, meeting room for the graders, for games, cinema and meetings of societies, as well as desks, table tennis and other amusements. And upstairs, on the level, a library, student centre, provided by the Master, presides over the collection of the computer-players. It remains to be seen whether scholarship will flourish better in Lockington than in the gardens of Mill Road, or have decided to seek the mountains.

### Correspondence Art

To the Editors of The Cambridge Review.

Dear Sirs,—How May you ever find enough to review favourably my book on Cambridge New Architecture. I am glad to say that the first edition of 4000 copies has now almost sold out, and we are therefore embarking on a second revised edition.

I am well aware that the book has many imperfections, and the purpose of this letter is to ask your readers if they will kindly write any errors and omissions they have spotted in my text. There must be many—already quite a number have been pointed out to me. We have no time to go to press again at the end of October, so I would be grateful if all information could be sent to me by then.

Yours faithfully,

NICHOLAS TAYLOR  
104, Portman Road,  
London, N.W.8.

To the Editors of The Cambridge Review.

Dear Sirs,—May I advertise through your columns the reformer's volume of the History Research Club? This volume for research students in the History Faculty intended small support for many years, but, on the departure from Cambridge of its most recent officers, the work of editing must now be left unattended. If anyone feels moved to end this state of affairs, by or the club, by contacting me, claim for society's funds.

Yours sincerely,

D. E. LECROIX  
Churchill College,  
Cambridge.

#### DOCUMENTA III AT KASSEL

The partly circumstantial elements of this remarkable exhibition are the fact to compel our attention. A group of private people, with no affiliation or social interests, have assembled a collection of modern painting, sculpture and drawing that is unique in range and quality. They have filled two museums and a vast outdoor area with these works. In order to do this, they have raised roughly 225,000 from public, commercial and private sources.

It is therefore appropriate that the breadth and generosity of the enterprise should be immediately apparent in the situation of the works. Only on very rare occasions, from the atmosphere of one workshop with the appointments of another. A section of the exhibition—consisting of works by sixty-five artists distributed throughout the available space—is in fact called "Bild und Skulptur im Raum". A section of the exhibition—consisting of works by sixty-five artists distributed throughout the available space—is in fact called "Bild und Skulptur im Raum". A section of the exhibition—consisting of works by sixty-five artists distributed throughout the available space—is in fact called "Bild und Skulptur im Raum".

Private has assembled for the Kunsthalle at Kassel arranged in a library, leaving a library area also left. Kassel movement, E.W. Wayland's collection which found of his private living from the volume, a method which seems curiously inappropriate to the actual works, but suggests new methods of introducing the audience of the spectator by the use of light and distance. The advantage of placing the works of artists which is forms of their own in essence. Louis Neuberger's steel work which profits from the absence of distance to compare a room as viewed as the interior of an unoccupied pyramid. Richard Serra's lines, which produce an area of sculpture from the area of space of plastic forms in an occasion.

The excellent arrangement of pictures is by no means confined to this section of the exhibition. The top floor, devoted to "Eight and Mosaicist" includes especially Schapiro's "Christus II" and "Lax I" move gently and personally to a central, darkened room, while next door Tinguely's "Museum II" supplies a striking image of almost unrecognizable form. Indeed in the whole organization of the exhibition is a function of the nature that intensity of presentation can be imposed upon contemporary works. In a number of cases artists have been given the opportunity of creating a work to fit a particular context. In all cases, the Museum Friedlandstein has been used not as a presenting grid for the works, but as an area permitting a variety of special possibilities.

Although the presentation lends distinction to this way, it does not by any means inhibit an individual artist. As Dr Werner Hofmann explains in his

[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 48.** Stephen Bann, "Documenta III at Kassel", The Cambridge Review, 10 October 1964, 21. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

profile in the last catalogue when it is small one involved in drawings. The exhibition is dedicated to the artist, personally — to the notion that "Art . . . has the character not of a model to be followed or of a model, but of an experience which, consciously, unconsciously, or by the mere force of the exhibition lies in the fact that this situation of presentation does make it a united whole. To quote De Stijlisme once again: "The only group that has been formed is that of the individual and the individual, which defines itself only through the relation, relation, and interpretation of the single cells. The perfect image of an intricately patterned organic form." This claim is integrally borne out in the actual organization of the exhibition. Collections of modern works tend to appear heterogeneously, either because too few works of each individual artist are shown, or because there are glaring gaps in the selection. The systematic collection of modern masters were designed to give an indication of what is happening since there is an understanding of the relationship between happenings. The recent Guggenheim exhibition at the Tate, though it included works of the highest quality, gave an impression of cultural riches; the attempt to group artists according to loose stylistic categories was unconvincing, and the structure between works often took the form of sheer physical effort — the faded glass case by a man. Postmodern into the name of a Museum, or the air of confinement (induced by a gallery, Museum) in a sense than Schiller's "Classical V" should have been directed. At Kassel, however, a method has been found between isolation and integration (postmodern). Putting from a box devoted to Kassel has two or three with the works of Ben Nicholson does not make the smallest — each complete, and arrives the other. The overwhelming display of Vassarely takes place not far from the machine, supremely sound currents of Tappin. But the subjects of the overall planning permits the spectator to make his expectations and adjust himself to the new spectacle — with the last difficulty. The "White Plane" exhibited at Kassel made it possible of the truly architectural and aesthetic comparison, and, through presenting individual artists in isolation, to achieve what it is fact a far more suggestive scheme.

If the theme of the exhibition is the suspension of the artist's personality, then the focus of the entire display is the collection of modern drawings assembled in the Abu Galala. Again the former is remarkable — every drawing is enclosed in a system backless frame and there is none of the tension caused by widely differing methods of presentation. The collection comes from Gidon Kahan, Theodore-Laroc, Ginzburg and Guy de

Palacio and Kira. In addition to the works by acknowledged masters, of whom Van Gogh, Klee, Mondrian and Giacometti are especially represented, there are many of almost equal quality which are unknown. Kahan provides two superb abstract studies. Kira and Mirzakhani seem to have concentrated the essence of their art into a few simple, severe still lifes. Both Dehoffer and Pollock emerge as Surrealist abstractions, whose sketches are intimately related to their finished paintings, while Mirzakhani's delicately implied landscapes possess a subtlety that is sometimes absent from his larger works. A collection of modern drawings on this scale has never been assembled before, and the artists represented almost without exception justify that inclusion. It is possible to select the drawings of artists like Rothlisberg, Matisse, and even Pollock and Dehoffer to their works in the "White Plane" section of the exhibition. While Kira, however, who is represented as a draftsman and also in the "Aspekt" section, devoted to unique artists, it is significant that there is only one original ink. The artists in "Aspekt" seem to be more concerned than their allies with the distinction of the work of art. The fact that Bernard Cohen, a notable British addition to this section, included a set of notes (recently published in *Cosmologie Humaine*, "Notes on the photograph of the painting 'Géométrie'" seems to indicate that he regarded the photograph as something other than the painting as involving radical change. Recent pictures by Bernard Cohen also underline this point. These in "Aspekt" give the impression of a series of brief and special projects which have been compressed into the area of the white — as if the finished work were the sort of a number of related sketches. Bernard Cohen leaves no doubt of his intention, when he gives to a number of his pictures the most expressive of a series of juxtaposed sketches.

There is a more fundamental division between members of the two generations, of which this exhibition is merely one indication. Interest in modern painting is the distinction between the picture as a frame of activity and the picture as a final surface. This distinction is at least as old as the Nazis, and it occurs in the history of the works in the "White Plane". In pictures like Tappin, Albi Duvic, or William Roth, there is an immediate richness of surface and at the same time the implication of an overall atmosphere in which forms occur. With the next generation a new abstract genre: the conscious reaction against conventionalism which are suggested by the representational function of the work. One painting is "Aspekt" from the title, "Treaty of the Camera", and was indeed concerned with representing and bringing to mind the environment of a picture within line context.

The same treatment of a representational history indicates how younger painters are making explicit what had previously been regarded as the implicit components of the work of art. In one drawing this remarkably historical picture by Yves Klee, the notion of style as a medium for representing physical reality is treated to an amazing degree — the relationship of model, picture, pain and context is not taken for granted but probed in the context of the work. A small section by Hans Schwabert shows in many of the forms of his recent painting — the subtle perceptual cube indicating actualization of concrete-time space, the self-absorbed Klee-like form pointing to the self-history of the picture — and perhaps to an extent of confusion in the work of the artist. The inherent matter of a picture is no longer treated directly. Perhaps the remark of Fernand Lévy that photography has deprived the painter of his function as a recorder of events is somewhat here. Certainly Larry Rost is strongly attracted to the French history of the early nineteenth century — Ingres and David especially — whose conventionalized function was united with a significant modernity. The story of his work may seem to be a struggle to give action, in which the photographic element in traditional painting has been systematically removed — chiefly by heightened emphasis on the texture of the paint itself. In the "Aspekt" section, in which I have previously referred, the artist's manner at the exhibition only seems at first to emerge from a dedicated focus — until we observe, and are struck to observe, that she is simply straggling from a chain of images.

This struggle to probe not only the surface when but also the subtle implications of the work of art is characteristic of the American "Pop" artist. It has already led to a significant reaction — not merely an artistic movement that resolves the same problems in a totally different way. The key question in Pop art seems to me to be one of history — the extent to which the system is indeed to suspend his disbelief in front of the picture. Hans Schwabert leaves us with a modified theme, by reproducing the configurations of data that go to make a photograph and yet preventing it from creating objects in an illusory spatial context. In the new movement, the question of history is shifted from the realm of conceptual activity to that of action. Space is again the critical point. Form and colour are used in such a way that the situation of decision within the picture is spatially ambiguous. It is because this movement makes use of the accepted notions of the picture that it is sometimes described as "realist painting." Bernard Cohen's pictures are a good example since in them the "function" of line tends to suggest situation in space but

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## Figure 49.

Stephen Bann, "Documenta III at Kassel", *The Cambridge Review*, 10 October 1964, 22. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

the overall structure of the study can be seen.

"Recent painting-theater associations with the society of works classed at Kassel under the title, 'Light and Movement.' The 'Groupe de recherche d'art visuel', an association of artists in Paris—officially established with great ceremony in a text published in 1961—"We prefer to consider the artistic phenomenon in terms of directly visual experience, existing at the level of physiological perception and not cognitive reaction." The use of "artistic" synonymous with "artistic" movement is defined in these terms: "The term, up to now considered as valid as itself, and utilized with its original characteristics, denotes an autonomous domain, digested within the subject. In this way the relation between elements suggests a homogeneity and an essentially able to create sensitive structure, which are only perceived on the level of perceptual vision. The relationship of object, plastic surface and spectator is no longer constant. A critical movement is established." This action—and incidentally, the activity of the group—extends also to the use of real movement in the work of art. Just as the "Groupe de recherche d'art visuel" is more directly concerned with physiological response than Bernard Cohen—whose works must be set in the context of representational tradition and as freely as those of Larry Rivers—as there is a division in the field of real movement. While Taguchi sees the moving machine as a vibrating image of destructive force, Donald Schönfeld guarantees a liberally tolerant of spatial movement directed by the play of light and shadow.

If I may return to the theme of the last section of this essay, it is possible to perceive strong lines of development in recent painting. The close contact between surface plasticity and represented object, as familiar to modern painting from the late Impression to Francis Bacon, has acquired an additional element. Painters like Rivers and Rauschenberg have heightened the tension by an exaggeration of the typical conventions of representation. They have infused this, yet sharpened it with elements of ambiguity. In this context, "visual" painting appears free of all past conventions of optical illusion and ambiguity in the use of space. But both virtual and

real movement are now being used "on the level of physiological perception and not cognitive reaction." Whereas the artist, his/visual/imagery, lives not in fragments, and the suspension of the spectator all found a place within the framework of his American Pop painting, there is now a substantial group which excludes art and operates from the work of art. This does not mean that there is no individual usage of works which are actual or virtual movement. Artists like Raus and Agnes have developed highly individual styles. Nor does it mean that the spectator cannot make contact with the work. A picture by Raus or Agnes requires simply an open eye, and the movement of the spectator. The new ambiguity is not an impoverishment, but rather a more powerful order and discipline—of order for the artist that it is some extent autonomous and excludes the self while from surface and form; a discipline for the spectator, who is challenged to discover through his own situation and justify the subtle complexity of visual movement.

Documenta III involves such specifications, but, as I have indicated, makes no rigid classification. The tension is felt especially in one of selection and presentation—and this is precisely what an exhibition of this kind should do.

STEVEN BANN

**Calendar**

**FREE LECTURES**

In MR Lane Lecture Room, unless otherwise stated.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12

Dr M. A. C. Watson: "The Mosaicary Movement in Modern Britain," Trinity School, 5.

Professor Volzke: "Shakespeare and the Arts," Little Hall, Sidgwick Avenue, 2.

Professor G. Zornow: "Baroque and Neoclassical Sculpture," School of Architecture, 5.

Mr. K. Aron: "Renaissance Tardiness" (Second Year) (over 2 week course), Sidgwick Avenue, 5.

Dr G. J. Whitton: "Aspects of Time: The Nature of Physical Time," 5.

Dr B. Robinson: "Governance and Politics in New African States," 5.

Mr. K. Aron: "Introduction to Kantian" (over a week course), Sidgwick Avenue, 5.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13

Professor Pops-Herrmann: "The Renaissance Period," No. 1 Lecture Theatre, Chemistry Laboratory, 5.

Mr. K. Aron: "Renaissance Tardiness" (Second Year) (over 2 week course), Sidgwick Avenue, 5.

Dr A. C. Ewing: "Problems of Philosophy," 5.

Mr. K. Aron: "Introduction to Kantian" (over a week course), Sidgwick Avenue, 5.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

Mr. J. Bowker: "Introduction to the Old Testament" (Lectures for Teachers), 5.

Mr. K. Aron: "Renaissance Tardiness" (Second Year) (over 2 week course), Sidgwick Avenue, 5.

Dr C. B. DeLoraine: "Medical Renaissance and Medical Art," 5.

Mr. K. Aron: "Introduction to Kantian" (over a week course), Sidgwick Avenue, 5.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

Dr C. B. DeLoraine: "Renaissance Sculpture and Aesthetic," 11.

Mr. D. S. Mitchell: "Introduction to German," 5.

Mr. S. Mitchell: "Advanced German Translation," 5.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

Mr. A. M. Jahn: "The Origin and Formation of the Baroque Style," School of Architecture, 5.

Dr N. Pevsner: "Art and Architecture of the Renaissance," 5.

EXHIBITIONS

ARTS COUNCIL GALLERY: Young Contemporaries, 1964.

SOCIETIES

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

CAMBRIDGE FILM SOCIETY: French Can Can (Renoir, France, 1939), Opening Speech (Grosz, 1931), Drawing the Wall and Filling (Bridges, 1938), India Rubber Road (France, 1960).

CHURCH SERVICES WITH MUSIC

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

Kings: 2.30. Evening: Women in E; Arthur: "Aria, Op 10 movements of Gaur" (Secrets).

**ARTS — THEATRE — CINEMA**

TODAY at 5 and 8.15:

Suzanne York is A SINGULAR MAN

NEXT WEEK: Film Programme

KATHARINE HEPBURN, RALPH RICHARDSON

in Empire Grand

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT (A)

Stewart Pollockover 2.30, 4.0, 8.30

See page 14, 16, 18, 20, 22

TODAY at 2.30 and 7.30:

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (A)

SUNDAY at 3.0, 6.45, 8.30 BREATHTLESS (X)

NEXT WEEK (Mon. - Sat.) daily 2.30 and 7.30

de SODÁ'S BANQUET AT ORGOSOLO (Italy) (U)

Jean-Pierre Melville: HEAVEN'S BENT (France) (A)

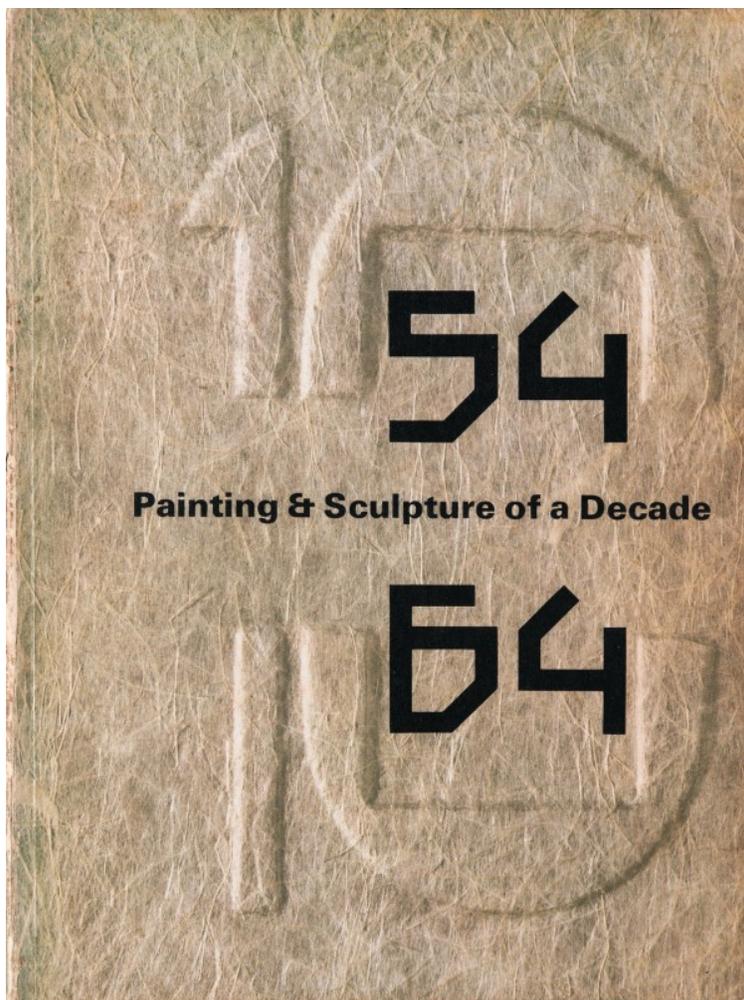
See page 14, 16, 18, 20, 22

See page 14, 16, 18, 20, 22

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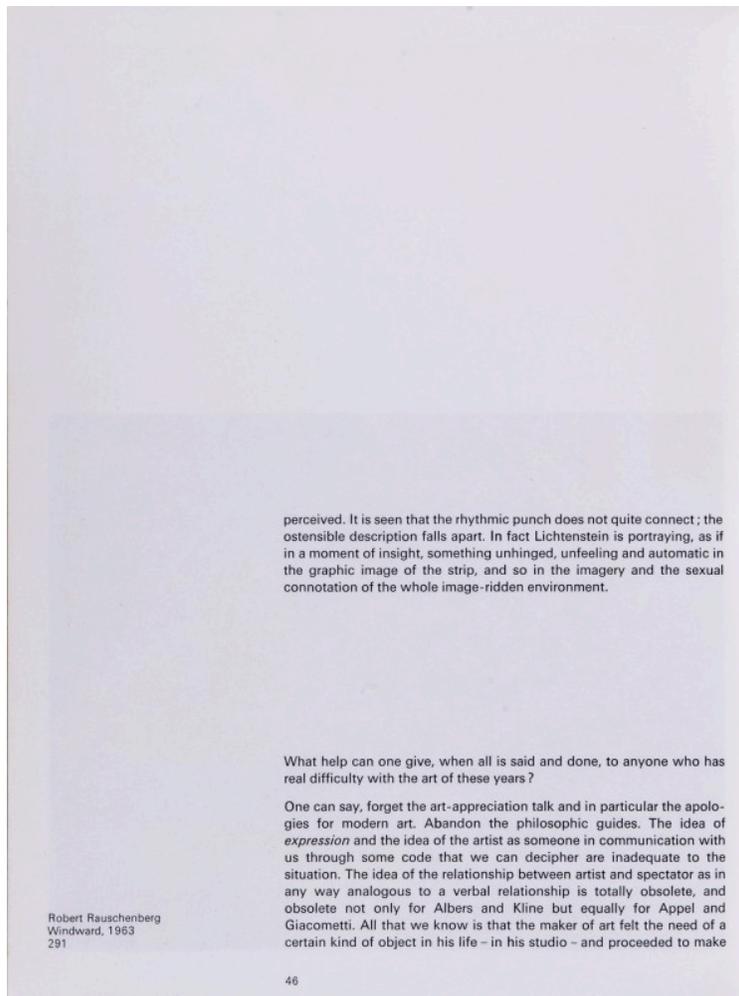
**Figure 50.**

Stephen Bann, "Documenta III at Kassel", The Cambridge Review, 10 October 1964, 23. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

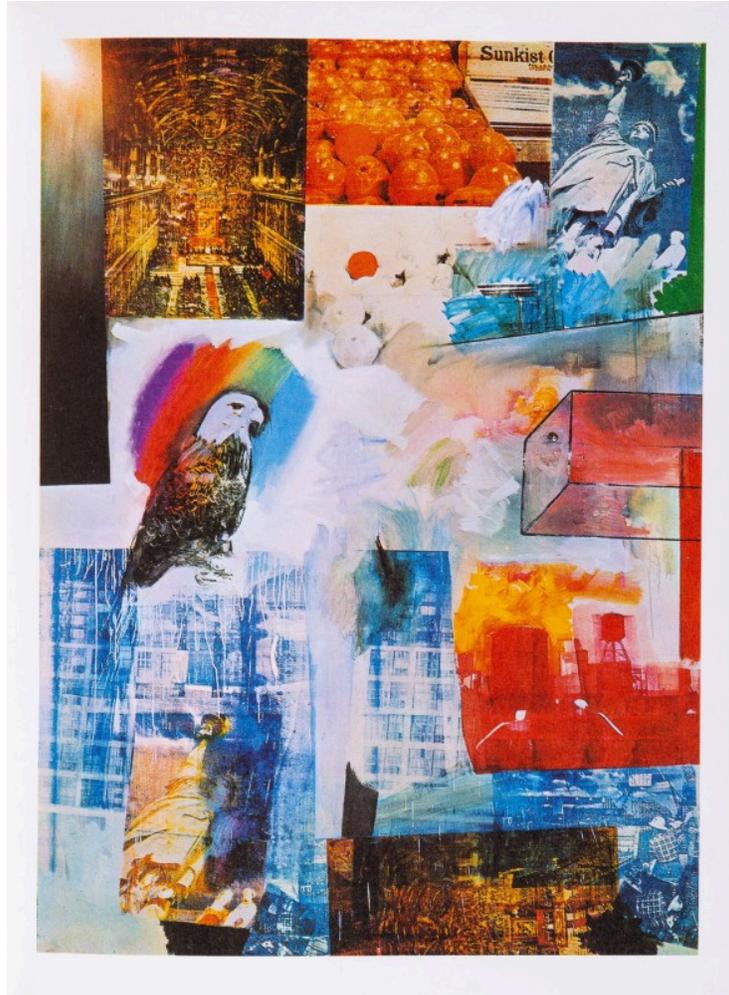


**Figure 51.**

Painting & Sculpture of a Decade 54/64, Tate Gallery,  
April-June 1964 (London: Shenvall Press, 1964): jacket. Digital  
image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 52.**  
Exhibition catalogue, *Painting & Sculpture of a Decade 54/64*,  
Tate Gallery, April–June 1964 (London: Shenvall Press, 1964):  
46. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



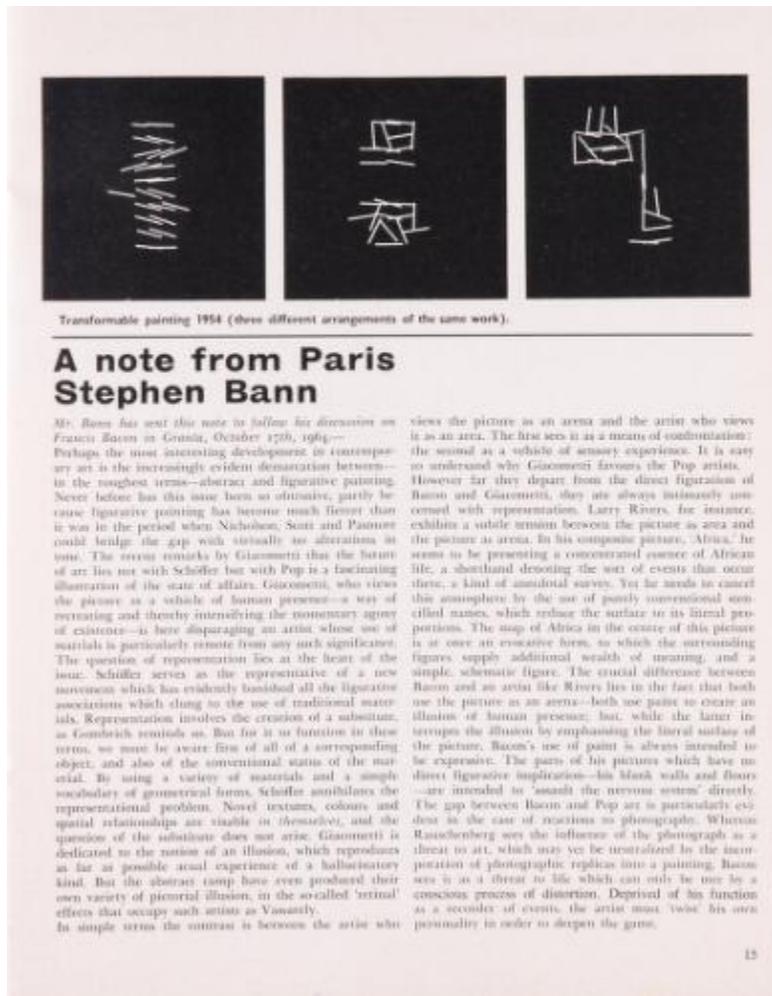
**Figure 53.**

Exhibition catalogue, *Painting & Sculpture of a Decade 54/64*, Tate Gallery, April-June 1964 (London: Shenvall Press, 1964): 47. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 54.**

Granta, 69, no. 1240, 28 November 1964: jacket.



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### Figure 55.

Stephen Bann, "A Note from Paris", *Granta*, 69, no. 1240, 28 November 1964: 15.

## Kinetic Art and Concrete Poetry

My "Note from Paris" in *Granta* (28 November 1964) was hardly more than a footnote to my earlier essay on Francis Bacon, which had been misprinted without its final sentences in the magazine the month before. But in citing the names of Vasarely and Schöffer in opposition to those of Bacon, Giacometti, and Rivers, I was reflecting a significant shift in my own critical focus which had begun to take place during the summer months. Reg Gadney, the editor of *Granta*, whose "note on Agam" (the Paris-based Israeli artist) occupied the remainder of the two-page spread, had introduced me to the milieu of Parisian kinetic art over the summer period. In company with Philip Steadman, we had visited Paris and enjoyed the hospitality of Gadney's friend, Frank Malina, an American rocket scientist who had

relocated to the city and was pursuing his own variety of kinetic painting. Our immediate mission that summer was to compose a special issue of *Image*. This was a new magazine published in London by Kingsland Prospect Press, with production values superior to *Granta*, for which Steadman was editor and art editor. Its planned focus was on kinetic art and concrete poetry. My own part in this project was, in the first instance, to compile two short articles on artists with South American connections: José María Cruxent, a noted Venezuelan archaeologist who spent part of each year in Paris developing his exquisite light boxes; and Gregorio Vardanega, an Italian-born sculptor in perspex whose artistic career had begun in Argentina before he took up residence in Paris in 1959.

I moved to Paris for a long period of residence in early October to pursue my historical research on Prosper de Barante. But I was also eager to continue furthering my interest in the contemporary area. My listing of appointments for October and November contains (in addition to a note of two tickets for the first Paris performance of the Rolling Stones<sup>20</sup>) indications of meetings with Malina, Cruxent, and the historian of modern art who had already established himself as a leading critic of the kinetic movement, Frank Popper. There was, however, a second aspect to this new critical agenda. Paris was also home to the elderly poet, Pierre Albert-Birot, the publisher of some of Apollinaire's most famous *calligrammes* and who was still (as I discovered) at the centre of experimental activity. The special issue of *Image*, published at the end of November 1964, was billed under the dual title "Kinetic Art: Concrete Poetry". Mike Weaver, a Cambridge friend who was completing his doctorate on the poetry of William Carlos Williams, was responsible for the second emphasis. He had effectively drawn my attention to the burgeoning international phenomenon of concrete poetry, which (like the kinetic tendency) drew on deep roots in the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century.

Of particular importance to my critical writing, and my artistic life, at this time was the connection that I began to establish with the Scottish concrete poet, Ian Hamilton Finlay. Mike Weaver had invited me to travel with him and his wife on a visit to Edinburgh to meet Finlay in late August 1964. This meeting resulted in a correspondence which would endure almost to the end of Finlay's life in 2006.<sup>21</sup> Weaver was by this stage well advanced in planning for a Cambridge venue the *First International Exhibition of Concrete, Phonic and Kinetic Poetry* (28 November–5 December 1964), whose catalogue formed an insert into the late November *Granta*. As I was resident in Paris for the autumn months, I was not able to assist in the mounting of the exhibition. However, I contributed an additional essay on concrete poetry to the special issue of *Image*, which was available by the time of its opening. I must have been dubious about the way in which the Introduction to the exhibition *Painting & Sculpture of a Decade*, held at Tate Gallery that spring,

had dismissed the “idea of *expression* and the idea of the artist as someone in communication with us through some code.” At any rate, my chosen guide in the interpretation of concrete poetry was indeed Gombrich’s essay on “Expression and Communication” (from *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*). I employed Gombrich’s analysis (and more particularly the notion of “semantic space” borrowed from the psychologist C.E. Osgood) as a means of exploring the manipulation of typography for semantic purposes that occurred in the poems of Finlay and other concrete practitioners.

The connection that I established with Finlay, and his consistently warm reception of my critical writing, encouraged me to write concrete poems of my own. The Cambridge show provided the first opportunity to display one of these works in public.<sup>22</sup> A school friend, David Maclagan, was completing a postgraduate degree in the painting department of the Royal College of Art at the time. He resourcefully accessed the printing facilities of the college, and produced a small edition of screen prints of my *ORANGE* poem, one of which was duly exhibited in the show. Even when I was a resident in Paris, Finlay did not hesitate to keep me up to date with his own publications. In a letter of 17 November 1964, he professed himself “delighted” that *Telegrams from my Windmill*, his second compilation of concrete poetry, had arrived safely.



*From left to right: anonymous lover, anonymous lover, Stephen Bann, Reg Gadney, Frank Popper, Phil Steadman and Citroen in Paris. Photo: Richard Hardwick.*

**Figure 56.**

Anonymous lover, anonymous lover, Stephan Bann, Reg Gadney, Frank Popper, Phil Steadman and Citroen in Paris, 1964. Digital image courtesy of Richard Hardwick.

# Communication and structure in concrete

The way in which concrete poetry makes use of the spatial possibilities of the printed page is direct and obvious. In the words of Pierre Garnier, it is a matter of allowing the word 'to take its own space'. Or it may be a case of separating the letters of an individual word in order to disclose new decorative and semantic possibilities. But what is more difficult to assess is the relation between this overt use of space on the page and the structure of the poem. This is the question which must be clarified, since a merely decorative use of letters would scarcely justify a new style of poetry.

My aim is therefore to present a brief account of the aesthetic underlying this new poetry, to clarify the types of structure which it involves and to examine it in terms of communication between author and reader. Professor Gombrich's brilliant essay 'Expression and Communication' has provided me with a convincing scheme for the analysis of concrete poetry and I have illustrated his concepts by quotations from the writings and works of several concrete poets.

Two features stand out immediately in any consideration of concrete poetry. It is concerned with a wide range of expressive techniques. Words are not simply arranged in lines and verses—they are fragmented, printed in varying colours and sizes of type, in short given an immense range of visual possibilities. But, on the other hand, it is essentially concerned with the conventional notation of the alphabet. It is entirely removed in origin from the indeterminate signs and forms that occur in abstract painting.

This may seem to some extent paradoxical. But it is appropriate to the view of expression which Gombrich puts forward in his essay. He attacks the traditional Romantic theory of communication in the arts, which depends upon a kind of 'emotional contagion' between the artist and his public. His complaint is that such a theory implies 'that expression is somehow rooted in the nature of our minds (that it therefore stands in no need of conventional signs)'. The defect of the theory is that it is totally unable to account for structure, and Gombrich's alternative thesis is that, although certain colours,

etc., correspond to certain states of feeling, this correspondence is by no means fixed and immutable. It is relative to our expectations, so, in the case of music, 'It is not the chord but the choice of a chord within an organised medium to which we respond'. From this Gombich concludes that we must think of the artist's public 'less in terms of minds mysteriously attuned to one another than in terms of people ready to appreciate each other's choice of alternatives'.

Gombich's theory therefore involves two positions—that a fixed vocabulary of conventional signs is necessary for communication in art and that the emotional weight of individual elements depends on their situation within a system of possibilities. Let us apply this test to the work of Pierre Garnier and especially to his poem *Janvier*. Unlike many concrete poets, Garnier tends to treat the single word, free from its enslavement to the sentence, as an indivisible unit. Each word inhabits 'its own space' and each must be in harmony with 'the atmosphere of the poem'. Every poem might therefore be said to have its particular climate; often it is the title, with its phonetic and semantic properties, that determines this climate. Garnier's poem *Janvier*, taken from a 'Calendrier' covering all twelve months, is a clear example of this feature. The words are arranged in vertical blocks of differing sizes which proceed across the page. One of the shorter blocks reads:

ACIER  
MIROIR  
SIFFLE  
SIFFLE

Transitions from word to word and relationships between blocks are not based on decorative similarities but on imaginative leaps. Yet these leaps remain within our comprehension because they fill out the area roughly defined by the title (and additionally modified by each word in turn as we read it). In the case of this poem the register is chiefly confined to the sharp, the sibilant and the shiny.

The repetition of words in Garnier's *Janvier* raises the question of structure in concrete poetry. Garnier rejects 'flow'—

the unilinear momentum of traditional poetry—in favour of 'permanence'; that is to say, a unified structure depending on the reciprocal relationship of whole and parts. The reader does not begin at the top left-hand corner and work his way steadily to the bottom right-hand corner. He is first of all aware of the skeleton of the poem—its formal arrangement. Then he isolates groups of words in no special order. His appreciation of the poem is the enlivening of a skeletal form with flesh and blood. Parallel to the reader's exploration of the actual space of the poem is his discovery of the 'semantic space' of the poem.

For elucidation of this 'semantic space' we turn to Gombich's article and particularly to his discussion of the work of C. E. Osgood. Semantic space is a graphic way of representing the relationships of words among themselves. Osgood used irrational questions like 'is black more sad than gay, more light than heavy', and constructed a simple model in which words were arranged according to their position in one or another of these alternative categories. This readiness with which we posit relationships between words that transcend their conventional meanings depends on our fundamental ability to assess information in terms of alternative categories. As Gombich neatly puts it, 'all kinds of relationships or transitions can be equated in our half-dreaming mind within the transition from 'ping' to 'pong'.' The following short poem by Eugen Gomringer appositely demonstrates the way in which this sort of antithesis underlies the semantic structure of this new poetry.

ping pong  
ping pong ping  
pong ping pong  
ping pong

The poem shows the cumulative effect of even the most facile counterpoint between words. Each successive alternation acquires interest because of the precision with which it is inserted into the overall structure of the poem.

These examples from Garnier and Gomringer are simple illustrations of important aspects of concrete poetry—Garnier's extract of the way in which individual

**Figure 57.** Stephen Bann, "Communication and Structure in Concrete Poetry", *Image*, November 1964: 8. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

# poetry

Ian Hamilton Finlay

words or blocks of words relate to and modify an established atmosphere, and Gombringer's poem of the function of alternation (a binary system) within the semantic strength of concrete poetry that it can utilise a more complex range of possibilities without overloading the expectations of the reader. Gombrich points out how the simple alternation of 'ping' and 'pong' is underlined if we write 'ping' in small type and 'PONG' in large, and it is complicated if we are writing 'PING' in large type and 'ᐅᐅᐅᐅ' in Gothic. The crucial point is that the reader of concrete poetry is aware of the scale of alternatives open to the poet—in choice of words, in size and colour of type and in positioning of letters. But, although he knows the materials and the format, he cannot in any way predict the combinations of certain effects and the relationships of precisely coloured, printed and positioned words within the structure of the work. Occasionally a poet will surprise us by discovering a new possibility. In a poem by Decio Pignatari, for example, the letters I, L, F and E in bold black type follow each other on successive pages. In each case the requisite strokes are added to form the next letter and the intensity of the black ink is such as to make each successive letter appear through the page above, emphasising the structural link between the letters by a method usually inconceivable in the form of the book.

The question of the complex balance between parallel systems of relationships in the concrete poem is well illustrated by Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Canal Stripe 3*, a poem presented on successive pages of a small pamphlet. The first double page shows to the left 'little fields' and to the right 'long horizons'. Although the relation of 'ping' to 'pong'—closed to open, small to large—is perceptible, a balance is maintained by the fact that both pairs of words are in identical type and at the same level. On the next double page 'little fields long' confronts a 'for' in a very small type and a 'horizons' printed as before. 'Horizons' here seems to have regained its rightful space. The small 'for' does not detract from this because it belongs to the verb on the other page.

Yet the 'for' itself vibrates with meaning because its presence along converts 'long' from adjective to verb, and thereby alters the complexion of the sentence.

It is this possibility of different systems—corresponding or diverging but always interacting—that makes the structures of concrete poetry so fresh and enticing. The poem is woven from as many strands as the poet chooses. Sometimes they diverge, for example, when a word important because of its position or its associations is minimised in size: sometimes they reinforce one another, as when a word of wide resonance and importance in the sequence is increased in size. This parallel development of different systems results in what Gombrich refers to as 'redundancies'. In other words, points where the different notations of these systems reinforce one another. It is relevant to conclude with Gombrich's judgment that: 'What we call form in art, symmetries and simplicities of structure, might well be connected with the ease and pleasure of apprehension that goes with well-placed redundancies'. All art makes use of these features, old poetry as well as new. But the unique feature of concrete poetry is that the sets of possibilities are sufficiently distinct in origin—though wedded in the final poem—for us to perceive the mysteries of structure at a conscious level.

## Stephen Bann

We acknowledge, in gratitude, the permission of authors and editors for material from the following books and periodicals:

1. *Noigandres 4*.
2. *Antologia Noigandres 5* (Massao Ohno Editora, Rua Vergneiro 688, Sao Paulo, Brazil).
3. *the constellations*, by eugen gombringer (eugen gombringer press, frauenfeld, switzerland).
4. *Les Lettres*, edited by Pierre Garnier (Editions André Silvaire, 20 rue Domat, Paris 5e).
5. *Telegrams from my Windmill*, by Ian Hamilton Finlay (The Wild Hawthorn Press, 24 Fettes Row, Edinburgh).
6. *Poor Old Tired Horse (POTH)*, edited by Ian Hamilton Finlay at the Wild Hawthorn Press.



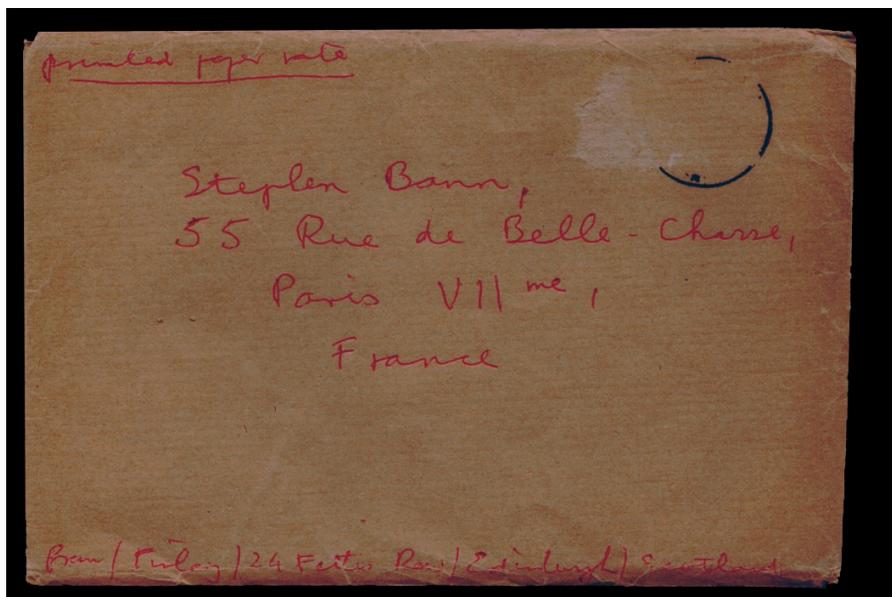
Mike Weaver

*Letter from Finlay to Pierre Garnier, September 17th, 1963.*

I feel that the main use of theory may well be that of concentrating the attention in a certain area—of providing a context which is favourable to the actual work. I like G. Vantongerloo's remark: 'Things must be approached through sensitivity rather than understanding . . .'; this being especially acceptable from Vantongerloo since he is far from being against understanding (it seems to me)—his 'must' I take to mean 'must' because the world is such and we are so. . . . An understanding (theoretical explanation) of concrete (in general) poetry is, for me, an attempt to find a non-concrete prose parallel to, or secular expression of, the kind of feeling, or even more basically, 'being', which says, if one listens carefully to the time, and if one is not sequestered in society, that such-and-such a mode of using words—this kind of syntax, this sort of construction—is 'honest' and 'true'. . . . One of the Cubists—I forgot who—said that it was after all difficult for THEM to make cubism because they did not have, as we have, the example of cubism to help them. I wonder if we are not all a little in the dark, still as to the real significance of 'concrete'. . . . For myself I cannot derive from the poems I have written any 'method' which can be applied to the writing of the next poem: it comes back, after each poem, to a level of 'being', to an almost physical intuition of the time, or of a form . . . to which I try, with huge uncertainty, to be 'true'. Just so, 'concrete' began for me with the extraordinary (since wholly unexpected) sense that the syntax I had been using, the movement of language in me, at a

## Figure 58.

Stephen Bann, "Communication and Structure in Concrete Poetry", *Image*, November 1964: 9. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

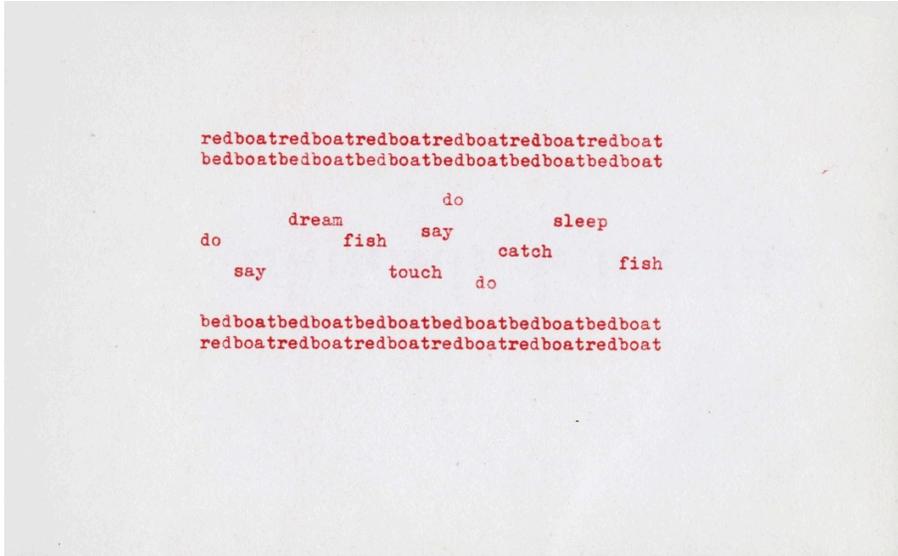


**Figure 59.**  
Ian Hamilton Finlay, Telegram, 1964, envelope.

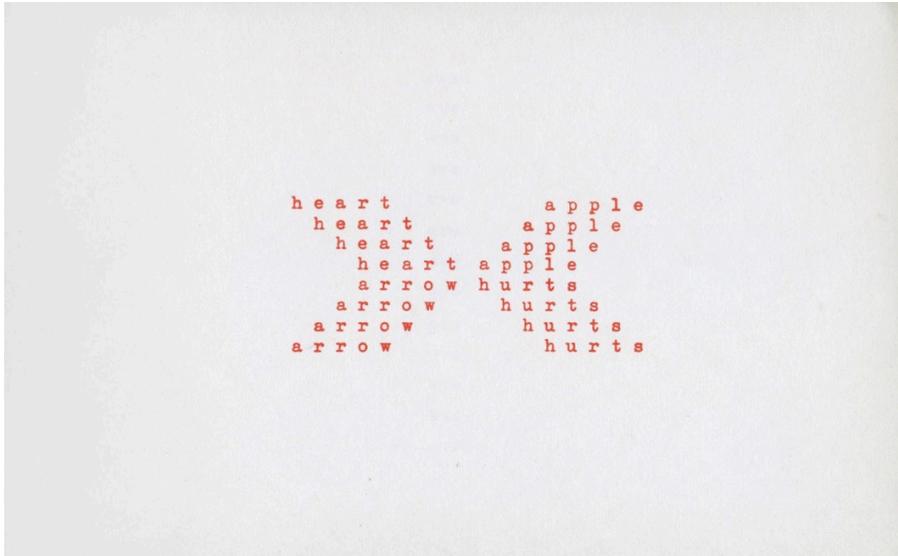
Counser No. ....		<b>POST OFFICE</b>		Serial No. ....	
Office Stamp		<b>INLAND TELEGRAM</b>		Chargeable words	Sent at/By
		24 3 <del>24</del> † EH 0		Charge	Circulation
For conditions of acceptance, see over					
Prefix	Handed in	Service Instructions	Actual words		
If you wish to reply insert R/E					
EH L 14 4.5 PM OF 20TH EDINBURGH C 22=					
— TELEGRAMS FROM MY WINDMILL IAN HAMILTON FINLAY —					
— WILD HAWTHORN PRESS 24 FETTES ROW EDINBURGH —					
— SCOTLAND+ <i>Stephen, from Ian -</i>					
<i>October 64 -</i>					
The particulars on the back of this form should be completed.					

**Figure 60.**  
Ian Hamilton Finlay, Telegram, 1964.





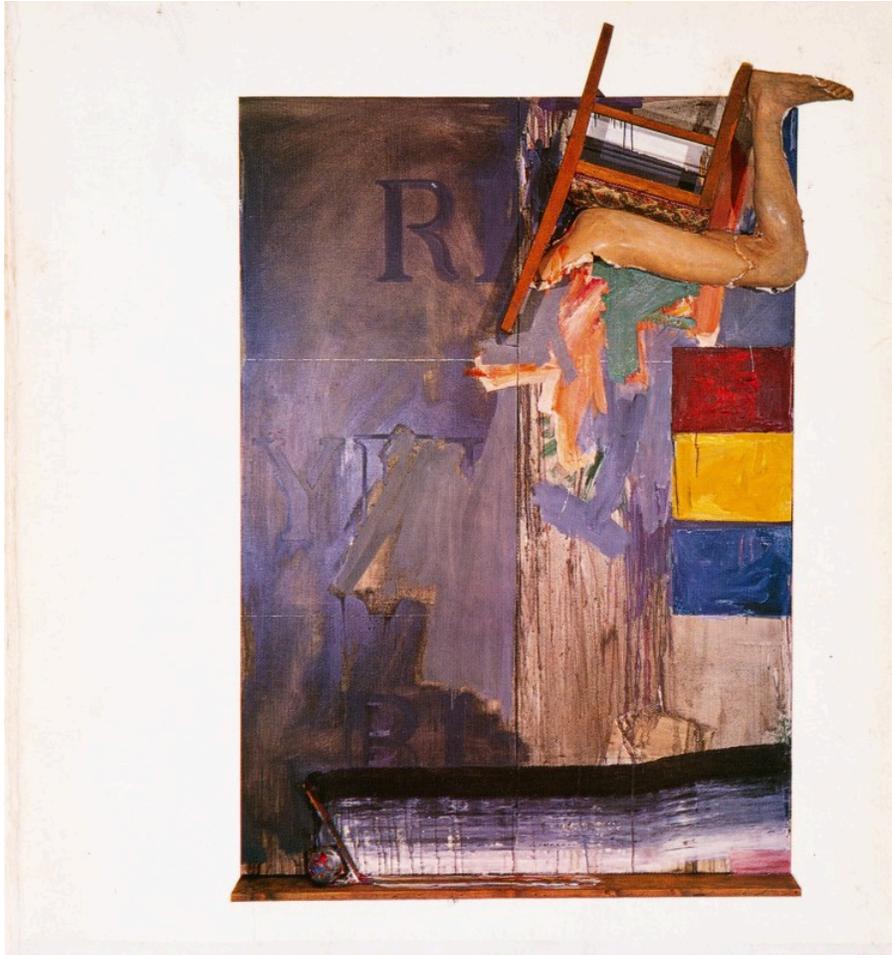
**Figure 63.**  
Ian Hamilton Finlay, Telegram, 1964.



**Figure 64.**  
Ian Hamilton Finlay, Telegram, 1964.

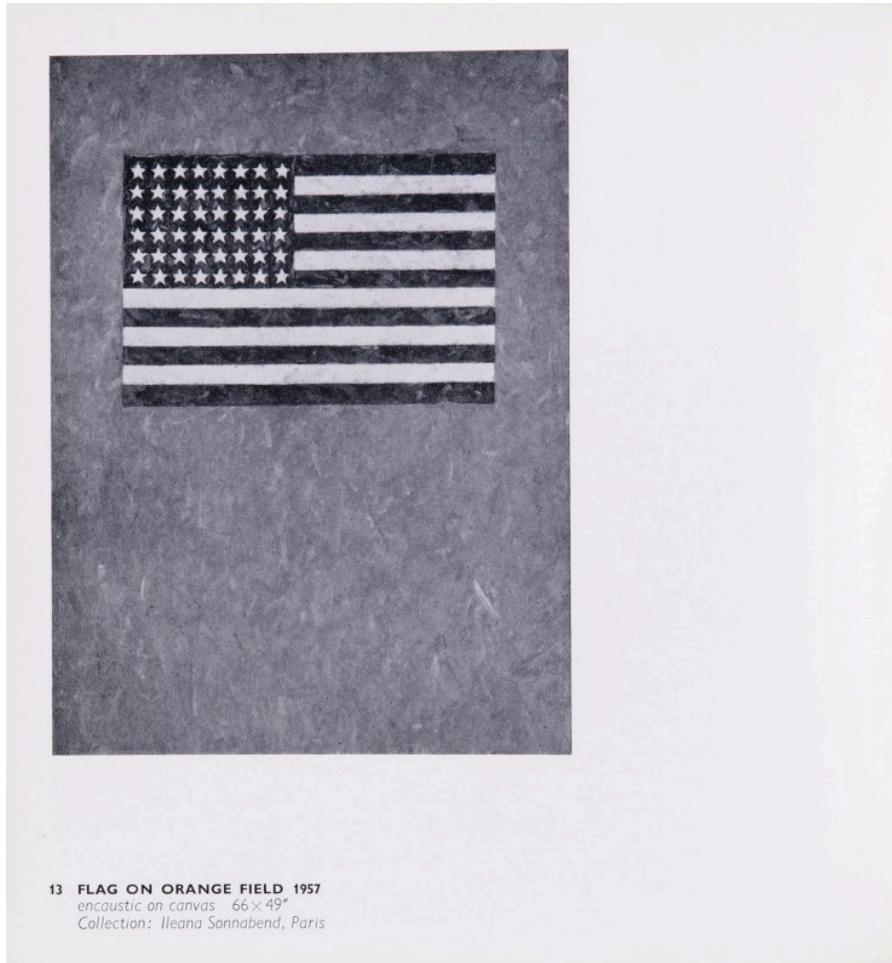


**Figure 65.**  
Stephen Bann, ORANGE poster poem, exhibited  
Cambridge, 28 November-5 December 1964. Digital  
image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



**Figure 66.**

Exhibition catalogue, Jasper Johns, Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, 1954-1964, Whitechapel Gallery, December 1964 (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964): jacket.



**Figure 67.**

Exhibition catalogue, Jasper Johns, *Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, 1954-1964*, Whitechapel Gallery, December 1964 (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964): plate 13. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



14 GRAY NUMBERS 1958  
encaustic and newsprint on canvas 67 × 49½"  
Collection: Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull,  
New York

**Figure 68.**

Exhibition catalogue, Jasper Johns, Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, 1954-1964, Whitechapel Gallery, December 1964 (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964): plate 14. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.



47 **MAP 1963**  
encaustic and collage on canvas 60×93"  
Collection: Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller,  
New York

**Figure 69.**

Exhibition catalogue, Jasper Johns, Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, 1954-1964, Whitechapel Gallery, December 1964 (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964): plate 47. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

48 FIELD PAINTING 1963-64  
oil on canvas with objects 36½ × 72"  
Lent by the artist



**Figure 70.**

Exhibition catalogue, Jasper Johns, Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, 1954-1964, Whitechapel Gallery, December 1964 (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964): plate 48. Digital image courtesy of Michael Blissett Photography.

## Jasper Johns at Whitechapel

An inscription on the first inside page of my catalogue indicates that I saw the exhibition of Jasper Johns at the Whitechapel Gallery on 12 December 1964. I soon wrote enthusiastically about it to Ian Hamilton Finlay. I had returned from Paris to Cambridge at the beginning of the month, and was to spend Christmas at my parents' house in Yorkshire. It was over the holiday period that I wrote the first draft of my review of the exhibition in longhand. The revised and typed version was then produced, very probably with the aid of one of the Cambridge typists who specialised in theses and other academic copy. The text was then sent to Alan Ross, Editor of the *London Magazine*. He had published my essay on the novelist, Robert Pinget, in the issue of October 1964. I must have had some intimation that a review of the

Johns show would be welcomed, but it was not published. I returned to Paris in the New Year. The typed version must simply have been filed, until I discovered it by chance in the archive of the *London Magazine* in the Harry Ransom Library, University of Texas.

I suggest that the review may be worth rescuing from oblivion and publishing in this context for two reasons. Most obviously, it forms a counterpart to my earlier essay on the Rauschenberg exhibition, and extends my thinking about the issues of representation provoked by these two American artists at the time of their first extended showing in Britain. I begin by commenting on the fact that the work of Rauschenberg stands out, even when seen in such crowded circumstances as those of *documenta III* or *Painting & Sculpture of a Decade* at Tate Gallery. Johns had indeed been represented by three paintings at *documenta III* and by five at the Gulbenkian (including a Flag, a Map, and a Target). But I had passed them over without comment in my review of *documenta III*.

The second reason is more difficult to define, but I had not yet at this point learned to use a typewriter. My texts were handwritten, and incorporated numerous insertions and crossings out. This manuscript is fully legible, but it contains the traces of the odd phrase that has been modified in the process of writing, and of a further revision that has taken place after the text was completed. Several further revisions must have been attempted before the text was ready for the typist. The manuscript therefore reveals, from time to time, what I had decided not to say.

For instance, in the first paragraph I fall back on a well-known analogy to outline the radical difference between Johns and Rauschenberg. The Oxford don, Isaiah Berlin, had published (for the first time in 1953) a celebrated piece which was later much republished, under the title "The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History". This a comparison between Tolstoy (the hedgehog) and his fellow Russian Dostoevsky (the fox). Making a similar comparison enabled me to draw an initial distinction between the two American artists. Yet, I rightly resisted the temptation to make it inappropriately concrete (manuscript: "Johns is the hedgehog, making progress in quiet stages, yet mostly seen rolled into a ball"; typescript: "and consolidating every advance").

Given that critical judgements necessarily proceed by comparison, I then elucidate what I acknowledge to be Johns' achievement as a "master of the pictorial surface". The judgement first of all involves dismissing comparisons with other "adjustments between surface and material": namely those of Max Ernst and Francis Bacon. It was doubtless my recent stay in France that led me to invoke the name of Jean Fautrier, a painter whose work did not feature at all in *documenta III* or in the Gulbenkian show, but whose last mistress I met at a dinner party given by Parisian friends. In the draft, I pass

rather too quickly over the definition of the “ontologic” quality as suggested by Michel Conil Lacoste, stating simply “it is there because it is there”. In the typescript, I am rather more explicit, using the more careful definition of the term to prepare for the seeming paradox that Johns associates “vegetable fluency of pigment with the introduction of subject matter”.

There is one section of the manuscript where a slight reinforcement of the rhetoric clearly betrays another oblique reference to my own contemporary experience. A propos of Johns’ use of stencilled letters, I suggest in the handwritten text: “If a certain conjunction of signs goes to make up the word ORANGE, then the spectator is likely to transpose it into terms of colour.” This sentence gains a greater immediacy when it concludes: “then the spectator leaps at once to consideration of the colour”. As far as I can see, Johns had confined himself in the Whitechapel show to referencing (and painting in formal rectangles) only the primary colours, RED, YELLOW, and BLUE. But I must have been bearing in mind the very recent manifestation of my *ORANGE poster poem*.



conjuring model & picture, subject & representation subject,  
 we are first of all astonished at the concealment  
 or remoteness of the subject in Johns' work.  
 Conspicuously, for instance, the ~~flag~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~  
 'Friday permanent' ~~the~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~  
 filled from each corner to create a central  
 diamond, giving the ~~flag~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~  
 image beneath the ~~flag~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~  
 or in Johns' 1956, where the same grey  
 film covers a frame in relief & suggests  
 that we are looking at a reversed canvas.  
 Remembrance in the magnificent play & thought  
 series, where we are unable to place the 'subject'  
 spatially. The flag ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~  
 distant, to see beneath the surface ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~  
 but this preliminary question cannot rest without  
 an answer for long. It simply seems to demand  
 our acquired reactions. For the diamond  
 of folded canvas is the picture & the  
 flag is the surface. ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~  
 picture is an area which ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~  
 requires of imitation. In order to appreciate  
 this, the spectator must first of all be ejected  
 out of his habit of reading pictorial signs  
 conceptually. If a certain conjunction of signs  
 goes to make up the word OCEANIC, then the  
 spectator is likely to transpose it into terms of  
 view. If the word occurs in a background  
 of grey, black & white, he realizes the  
 incongruity & returns to the signs.

Jasper Johns'   
 sculpture is an even clearer example of the  
 'where is it? But is it' formula. If presented  
 with a reconstructed object from real life, the  
 mind of the spectator immediately leaps to  
 comparison & judges the work in that  
 form. For the artist there are two ways of  
~~making~~ ~~his~~ ~~sculpture~~ ~~in~~ ~~fact~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~spec-~~  
 tator is impossible to refer to with this in  
 his own experience - the sculpture is ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~flag~~ ~~is~~  
 more vivid. Or he must make the sculpture  
 so significantly different from the everyday  
 object that the standard of comparison becomes,  
 all again, inapplicable. The second  
 of these methods are used by Johns. The second  
 is illustrated by his silver sculptural casts  
 of classic busts & faces, the first by

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**Figure 72.**

Stephen Bann, "Jasper Johns", unpublished  
 manuscript, London Magazine archive, December  
 1964: 2. Digital image courtesy of Harry Ransom  
 Center, University of Texas, Austin.

-Painted Bottle (Refrain) 2 -

has fantastically accurate beer cans & paint  
brushes, which, like Duchamp's marble sugar  
lumps, ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> losing their identity by their  
excessive weight.

I started this account with  
a mention of Robert Rauschenberg, & since he  
& Johns, ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> the two summits of American  
art, it is desirable to see exactly where  
they differ. In an article in Cambridge Review  
for March 7, 1966, I pointed out the  
difference between Duchamp's use of the  
Ready-made & that Rauschenberg - between the  
metaphysical purity of the plumbing 'fountain'  
& the object rubbish which Rauschenberg  
dumps into 'sculpture'. Rauschenberg works  
with objects & fragments of objects to which  
we would not immediately put a name, with  
- which appear as fragments of the matter  
of everyday existence immobilised in a  
sculptural situation. In this respect Johns is  
closer to Duchamp. His ~~objects~~ <sup>objects</sup> light  
bulbs, cast-iron ~~objects~~ <sup>objects</sup> cast in  
bronze or sculpture, reflect not an individual  
object but a whole class of objects. In the  
same way, Rauschenberg uses particular  
images, <sup>as</sup> his pictures, while Johns uses  
single images, with strong symbolic associations.  
Rauschenberg. Both Rauschenberg & Johns reject  
the ~~method~~ <sup>method</sup> notion of perspective, which, by its  
implication that the spectator has a direct  
spatial relationship not to the picture, but to  
objects in the picture, destroys the autonomy  
& unity of the work of art. Rauschenberg's  
way of restoring this autonomy is to utilise  
the techniques of photographic reproduction: the  
photograph, ~~film~~ <sup>film</sup>, which serves mostly for the  
reproduction of people & objects & has no surface  
touch, is reproduced by silk-screen, &, by the  
obvious use of paint, the element of  
artistic ~~action~~ <sup>action</sup> is withdrawn. Johns  
prints the same objective, but in an ~~unusually~~  
different manner. The objects he chooses -  
Flowers, Flags, maps, targets, - are at the  
same time ~~intensely~~ <sup>intensely</sup> visual & conceptual &  
intensely visual. We are able to tolerate,  
without any irritation, a rendering of the  
American flag which reflects all incidental  
effects of position & situation, because it

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**Figure 73.**

Stephen Bann, "Jasper Johns", unpublished  
manuscript, London Magazine archive, December  
1964: 3. Digital image courtesy of Harry Ransom  
Center, University of Texas, Austin.

holds each thing symbol's meaning. The problem  
 of relating to an object within the picture  
 simply does not arise, because the picture  
 extends to the viewers of the canvas. ~~It is~~  
 Rauschenberg works by the juxtaposition of  
 particular images. Thus by the presentation  
 of unique visual symbols Rauschenberg  
 makes use of our familiarity to images  
 & situations — the wave breaking, the  
 eagle at rest, the rocket blasting off —  
 in order to exhaust from them a kind of  
 grammar of symbols. Johns questions  
 of familiarity, but does not reduce it or  
 diminish it. It is no more than an  
 initial stage in the awareness of the  
 work of art. This relates to the point made  
 by the Alan R. Solomon in *NY* "Excellent  
 thing that accompanies the white chapel  
 catalogue: the speaks of the 'inertness' of  
 the subjects in Johns' paintings, &  
 adds it to his desire to 'disengage the  
 painting from technical & behavioral  
 considerations'. Here is the basic distinction  
 from Rauschenberg. While Rauschenberg leans  
 into the final aim, he feels it necessary  
 to immerse the spectator in a world  
 of ~~various~~ situations involving ~~things~~. The  
 stability of the picture depends on the  
 balance with which the various ~~things~~  
 are ~~carefully~~ composed. With Johns there  
 is no need for balance, because there is  
 no diversity. The pieces are unitary. ~~Distanced from~~  
 Johns large ~~work~~ introduces reservations about loss  
 the argument which I have called "Structural  
 not subjects — if only that will make us pause  
 long enough in our headstrong passage through  
 history to realize that Pop Art, if deduced  
 from his work, represents a misunderstanding, if  
 embodied upon as the next step after Pop  
 represents a non-sensibility. He is engaged in the  
~~fundamental~~ ancient task: the imitation of nature  
 (andly ~~things~~) in her original situation. If  
 Pop Art implies a certain type of subject matter,  
~~then it is not in common with it.~~ Then it  
 corresponds to no doctrine with which Johns can  
 agree. Johns' progress as a painter has  
 been concerned originally with the animation

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**Figure 74.**

Stephen Bann, "Jasper Johns", unpublished  
 manuscript, London Magazine archive, December  
 1964: 4. Digital image courtesy of Harry Ransom  
 Center, University of Texas, Austin.

of structure. Here we find the realization of the  
 subject/object dichotomy. There is no subject.  
 The surface lends flesh to the structure, &  
 because this vital influence is not a matter  
 of manipulation, but a factor of the picture as  
 it appears, ~~the~~ dismiss the notion of the subject,  
 since that implies the introduction of a  
 pre-existent entity. Instead there is ~~this~~  
 continual fusion, interplay & ... ~~of~~  
 means, as John Cage suggests, "this progress  
 has led away from these structures." Finally,  
 with nothing in it to grasp, the net is  
 weather, an atmosphere that is heavy rather  
 than light (something he means & refers to) is  
 illuminated with it it we had removed our  
 ultimate place: zero, grey distance.

This is the  
 analogy that seems to me most fruitful with  
 regard to the later notes to "The Day After  
 Tomorrow No. 2", with its hinted yellow for  
 the right horizon by stormy clouds of dark  
 pigment, for the left possibly its blurred  
 against the grain of the canvas. Here is an  
 almost overwhelming sensation of depth &  
 emptiness. The ruler, with its scale of  
 actual lengths, forms the lower edge of an arc  
 of blurred paint. The wire-suspended spots  
 create a grey shadow, acutely defined, upon the  
 stained canvas, while the blurred red also  
 reflected in one a blank left hand corner. The  
 elements of exaltation are nullified in the  
~~permanence~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~painting~~, the  
 condition of ~~existence~~ ~~in~~ ~~space~~. In contrast  
 to the earlier notes, these later paintings  
 (with the exception of Miss 1963) give an  
 impression of accidental origin. That is not  
 to say that they suggest a haphazard  
 involvement of the artist. The analogy  
 of action painting is entirely inadmissible,  
 for we are never aware of the picture as  
 an arena for action. Instead we are  
 reminded of the possibilities of painting, with  
 its between established order & chaos,  
 between vibrant colors & darkness, between  
 fixed form & indeterminability. Each picture  
 is a condition <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~artist~~ ~~between~~ ~~these~~ ~~extremes~~,  
 which makes us conscious of the abyss shaking

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**Figure 75.**

Stephen Bann, "Jasper Johns", unpublished  
 manuscript, London Magazine archive, December  
 1964: 5. Digital image courtesy of Harry Ransom  
 Center, University of Texas, Austin.

contingent magnetic relation in "Field Pictures".  
 in each dimension. <sup>with fixed points</sup> <sup>shin field</sup> According to what (1964)  
 the letters of RED, YELLOW, BLUE (in order  
 along a strip in the canvas, which separates  
 them from the same sequence of letters  
 arranged as if in reflection <sup>along the strip</sup>  
~~with~~ a fixed ~~point~~ <sup>relation</sup> between them  
 indicated by heavy dark letters - a fixed  
 state between the use of words & "grey  
 disintegrated" Reflection - a logical  
 impossibility since if the picture itself  
 reflects, then it will reflect ourselves; but  
 this is a confused reflection, within the  
 world of the picture. <sup>Edouard Beland</sup>  
~~colored~~, in the central column of squares  
 & circles, is set in the middle of distance  
 from the left hand within letters, a  
 kind of free canvas projects, reaching to  
 the ground. ~~From~~ <sup>from</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~ground~~ <sup>ground</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~ground~~ <sup>ground</sup>  
 doubly atmosphere of this canvas conflicts  
 with the reflective character of the projection  
 Thus there is the inverted chair at the  
 top left hand <sup>with</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>original</sup> <sup>by</sup>  
 & Hugh <sup>with</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>original</sup> <sup>by</sup>  
 the speaker, in the context still adjusted  
 to human dialogue? <sup>Can</sup> <sup>quere</sup> <sup>from</sup>  
<sup>disappearance</sup> "As a subject that tells of  
 the loss, destruction, disappearance of objects,  
 does not speak of itself, tells of others,  
 will it include them? Deleuze"

... I spoke earlier of the element of  
 remoteness or concealment in Johns' earlier  
 work. In these recent pictures it is not only  
 the primary impression, but the dominant one.  
 Contemporary aesthetic is returning to the  
 demand of the self-sufficiency of the work of  
 art, its freedom from the personality of the  
 artist & the appearance of the object. Artists  
 as far apart as Duchamp & Art ~~return~~ <sup>return</sup>  
 stress this theme in their different manners.  
 Johns is unique in ~~exactly~~ <sup>exactly</sup> ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~outstanding~~ <sup>outstanding</sup>  
~~as a~~ <sup>as a</sup> ~~not only~~ <sup>not only</sup> ~~inward~~ <sup>inward</sup>  
 pointing but also towards others. The picture  
 speaks of what it has lost, & registers its effects  
 through a reflection of ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> ~~short~~ <sup>short</sup> ~~cuts~~ <sup>cuts</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~communication~~ <sup>communication</sup>  
 its ~~rejection~~ <sup>rejection</sup> ~~activity~~ <sup>activity</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~giving~~ <sup>giving</sup> ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> ~~getting~~ <sup>getting</sup>  
 a ~~relation~~ <sup>relation</sup>

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**Figure 76.**

Stephen Bann, "Jasper Johns", unpublished manuscript, London Magazine archive, December 1964: 6. Digital image courtesy of Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.

JASPER JOHNS

In the spring of 1964 the Whitechapel Gallery gave us a chance to see the work of Robert Rauschenberg. In December 1964 presented us with an exhibition of work by Jasper Johns. Although the first show attracted more attention, the second was perhaps even more veridical. Rauschenberg's talent is strong and assertive. Even in past exhibitions like Documenta III or the Guggenheim he seems as immediate impression. The pictures of Jasper Johns, on the other hand, do not layings so readily on the saturated attention of the spectator. Their logic becomes fully perceptible only when they are seen in sequence. If Rauschenberg is the fox of modern American painting, restlessly foraging in his own between art and life, Johns is the hedgehog, making progress in quiet stages and consolidating each advance.

To begin from the evidence of the work themselves - Johns is a master of the pictorial surface. The subtlety of his adjustments between surface and material is unexpressed in modern painting. Impassive on canvas, collage on canvas, oil on canvas, dramatic as canvas with enlaid metal and wood, plastic on canvas, pencil on stained paper, pencil and graphite wash, conte on paper, carbon pencil (relief drawing), India ink on nylon film - these combinations indicate the diversity of Johns' effects. His use of surface is entirely different from, say, the magical pattern-making of Paul Gauguin, or the expressive manipulation of pigment to be found in the work of Francis Bacon. Perhaps one could apply to him a judgment made on the late Jean Fautrier by Michel Lezotte, - that his material as it has been worked possesses an 'ontologic' quality, that the fact of its presence transcends the emotive or symbolic significances which it may bear. Yet nothing could be further than Johns' work from the permissiveness of such conventional 'abstract' painting, in which the vegetative fluency of pigment is used to create an ill-defined materialistic effect. In fact, his method of retaining the evocative function of the picture, of stressing its 'ontologic' quality, has in the earlier work depended precisely upon the introduction of subject-matter.

I suggest that the clearest way of expressing the resultant tension between subject and surface is by referring to the reactions of the spectator. The picture first of all poses a question: 'Where is it?' Since we are accustomed to confusing model and picture, subject and represented subject, we are first of all disconcerted by our inability to 'place' the figurative subject in a spatial framework, by its unrecognition or apparent non-existence. Consequently, for instance, in 'Disappearance No. 2', where canvas has been folded from each corner to create a central diamond, suggesting a concealed image beneath the layer of canvas and grey encaustic. Sometimes in the magnificent flag

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**Figure 77.**

Stephen Bann, "Jasper Johns", unpublished typescript, London Magazine archive, December 1964: 1. Digital image courtesy of Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.

and target series, where our first impression convey an image that appears to float beneath the surface of the picture. Where is the object? This preliminary question hangs rest for long without an answer. It simply serves to disorient our acquired visualness. For the blurred of folded marks in the picture, and the flag in the surface. 'Where is it?' receives the answer 'This is it'. Another example of the way in which Johns separates what we infer from what we observe lies in his use of abraded letters. If a certain conjunction of signs goes to make up the word CHAIR, then the spectator leaps at once to consideration of the colour. If the word occurs against a background of grey, black and white, he realises the incongruity and returns to the signs.

Here it must be emphasized that Johns does not, and of course could not, nullify our habits of reading, any more than he could prevent us from identifying a certain combination of stars and stripes as the American flag. The point is that he should emphasize the irrelevance of our conceptual habits to the subconscious world of the picture, that he should establish it as an area free from the necessities of imitation. Johns' sculpture is also directed towards this end. If we are presented with a sculptural object based upon an object from everyday life, we instantly leap to comparison and view the work as these terms. For the artist there are two ways of modifying this reaction. Either he can make his sculpture so exact that the baffled spectator finds it unnecessary to refer to objects within his own experience - the sculpture itself is so vivid that it casts remembered objects into the shade. Or he must make the sculpture so significantly distinct from the everyday object that the standards of comparison become, once again, inapplicable. Both of these methods are used by Johns. The second is illustrated by his silver sculptural casts of electric light bulbs and torches, the first by his tactfully accurate 'Painted Bronze (Dear God)', which like Duchamp's marble sugar lumps finally betray their identity only by their excessive weight.

I started this account with a mention of Robert Rauschenberg, and since he and Johns represent the two extremes of the modern American painting and sculpture referred to as 'Pop', it is valuable to say exactly where they differ. In an article in the 'Cambridge Review' for March 7, 1964, I pointed out the difference between Johns' use of the Readymade and that of Rauschenberg - between the metaphysical purity of the glassing 'Pencil' and the object rubbish which Rauschenberg combines into a sculptural assemblage. Rauschenberg works with objects and fragments of objects to which we could not immediately

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### Figure 78.

Stephen Bann, "Jasper Johns", unpublished typescript, London Magazine archive, December 1964: 2. Digital image courtesy of Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.

put a nose - which appear as fragments from the welter of everyday existence immobilized in a sculptural situation. In this respect Johns is closer to Duchamp. By casting a light ball in bronze or enameled, he evokes not a particular object but a whole class of objects, grouped under the name 'light ball'. In his pictures Baschenberg juxtaposes particular images while Johns chooses single subjects, with strong symbolic associations. Both Baschenberg and Johns reject the notion of perspective which, by the implication that the spectator has a direct spatial relationship not to the picture but to objects within the picture, destroys the autonomy and unity of the work of art. Baschenberg's way of restoring this autonomy is to utilize the techniques of photographic reproduction. The photograph, in so far as it serves for the recognition of people and objects, has no surface unity. Baschenberg restores this unity in his reproductions of photographic images by a silk-screen technique which makes the use of point evident and thereby concentrates attention on the surface. Johns pursues the same objective in an entirely different way. The objects which he chooses - flags, maps, symbols, targets - are the at the same time conceptual and intensely visual. He selects, without consciousness, a rendering of the American flag which neglects all incidental effects of position because it exists in our minds as a visual scheme rather than as an individual object. Baschenberg solves one of our familiarity with images and situations - the wave breaking, the eagle at rest, the sunset blotting off - in order to extract from them a universal grammar of signification. Johns questions our familiarity but does not reduce it or transform it. It is no more than an initial step, in our awareness of the work of art, which is in essence unfamiliar. Here we come to a point made by Alan S. Dillman in an excellent essay that accompanies the Whitepaper catalogue. He speaks of the 'inertness' of the objects in Johns' painting and relates it to his desire to 'disassociate the painting from temporal and behavioural considerations'. This is a basic distinction. Baschenberg involves the spectator in a vector of situations implying external change and projective force. The stability of the picture depends on a balance of these forces, a reaffirmation of heterogeneity. In the earlier work of Johns, there is no need for such a balance of forces, because the images are for the most part inert and unitary.

A sentence from John Cage introduces some reservations about the argument which I have traced. 'Structures, not subjects - if only that will make us pause long enough in our headstrong passage through history to realize that they are, if deduced from his work, represents a misdirection, if selected upon as the next step after his, represents

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### Figure 79.

Stephen Bann, "Jasper Johns", unpublished typescript, London Magazine archive, December 1964: 3. Digital image courtesy of Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.

4.

a non-segular. He is engaged in the endlessly changing ancient task: the imitation of nature in her manner of operation'. If Pop Art implies the choice of a certain type of subject matter, then it corresponds to an doctrine with which Johns can assent. Johns' progress as a painter was concerned originally with the imitation of structures. Here we reach the resolution of the apparent dichotomy between subject and surface. Hence the notion of a subject alone that implies the introduction of an alien entity. The surface in the flesh of the structure, and the structure therefore ceases to live only in terms of the picture as it appears. Yet, as Gage suggests, Johns has moved away from the precise structures of the earlier works; 'Finally, with nothing in it to grasp, the work becomes, an atmosphere that is heavy rather than light (something he knows and regrets); in oscillation with it we tend toward our ultimate place: here, grey disinterest'.

I wrote earlier of the element of concealment in 'Disappearance No. 2' (1961). The atmosphere of withdrawal which pervades this strange picture has become the dominant feature of Johns' work. In 'Disappearance No. 2' there was still a strongly implied, unitary structure. In successive stages this element has disappeared. The spaces and forms which appear suspended in several works of this period seem, by their incongruity, to ridicule the notion of a central, commanding structure. In 'Out the Window' (1962) there is contained an overwhelming impression of depth and emptiness. Plans of the sterilized wood TULLOCH, on the right obscured by a store of dark pigment, appear on the left faintly outlined against the goals of the canvas. The ruler, with its scale of literal measurements, forms the lower edge of an arc of blurred paint. The wire-suspended space casts a grey shadow, exactly drawn, upon the stained canvas, while the blurred arc is also reflected in a black left hand bottom corner. All these elements of complexity are required in the storm-laden atmosphere of the painting. The ruler, a link with the exact measurements of the physical world, is at the same time presented as an agent of chaos, which, by scraping the surface according to a written direction, obliterates any vestige of structure. In contrast to Johns' earlier works, these later paintings (with the exception of 'Map 1963') give the impression of an almost accidental origin. This is not to say that they suggest a haphazard involvement of the artist. The analogy with action painting is entirely inapplicable, for the work is never promoted as the arena of the artist's activity. On the contrary, we are reminded of the range of possibilities lying within the sphere of the painting, between control and chaos, between witless colour and darkness, between fixed form and vulnerability. Every picture appears as a stage between these extremes and makes an occasion of the signs which has best avoided.

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**Figure 80.**

Stephen Bann, "Jasper Johns", unpublished typescript, London Magazine archive, December 1964: 4. Digital image courtesy of Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.



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### **Figure 81.**

Stephen Bann, "Jasper Johns", unpublished typescript, London Magazine archive, December 1964: 5. Digital image courtesy of Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.

## **Typography and Exhibition Catalogues**

So many of the publications included in this feature are notable for their innovative and expressive uses of typography. I can date my own interest in typography and book design back to my schooldays in the late 1950s. A printing press was discovered in the Museum at Winchester College and my seniors industriously put it to good use in printing a *Book of Prayers* for Evening services in the Chapel. The book was printed in Eric Gill's Perpetua typeface, with Romulus Initials. My own achievement at the press was an excessively elaborate personal bookplate. I became more familiar with the mechanics of book production when editing the school's literary magazine, *Ariel*, in 1960. Here, there could be no question of influencing the layout or

typography to any great degree, since the process was controlled by the printer: “Warren & Son Ltd, General and Commercial Printing and Publishing”.<sup>23</sup> An original design for the cover allowed each issue to have a certain degree of visual impact. But, for the most part, visual interest was confined to the display of advertisements that appeared throughout the pages of the magazine, which were supplied in the form of ready-made blocks. For the issue of summer 1960, I managed to acquire full-page adverts from sources that ranged from the Royal Navy to Olivier Fine Virginia Tobacco and Madame Prunier’s Restaurants (London and Paris). Though graphically undistinguished in the main, these adverts enabled the school magazine to cover its costs more effectively than others with which I have been subsequently associated.

The exhibition catalogues reproduced here testify to a general shift in practice, beginning in the 1960s, which was starting to condition the processes of critical writing and publication. Writing a rough draft in manuscript, and perhaps producing or commissioning a type-written script, had been previously the prelude to typesetting undertaken by the printer, and was then followed in due course by the editor or author’s review of the proofs. But in the course of the mid-1960s, a significant change in practice was taking hold. New typefaces, technically known as “neo-grotesque sans-serif”, were beginning to achieve widespread penetration, the most prominent among them being the Swiss designer Adrian Frütiger’s “Univers” font. Conceived as an essentially neutral, visually unencumbered medium of communication, this typeface was originally released in 1957. Its rapid dissemination was partly due to the fact that it facilitated the use of a range of different weights and sizes of lettering. However, another decisive advantage was the fact that it subsequently became available for photo-setting (the so-called “photo-lithographic” process), and thus effectively bypassed the traditional route of text being set by the printer in “hot metal” type.

My selection of publications dating from 1964 (and a little before) illustrates this decisive shift, which transferred a major role to the graphic designer in conditioning the reception of critical texts, and indeed in framing the reproduction of the works of art themselves. A major exhibition catalogue like the Arts Council’s *Picasso* (held at the Tate Gallery in 1960) had employed sans-serif type sparingly, reversed in white on the front cover for the one-word title, and subsequently used for the titles of works and headings throughout the text. Continuous passages of writing were still set in traditional type, though the lining to the right margin of continuous prose did convey an overtly “modern” approach. By contrast, the great centenary exhibition of Delacroix, held at the Louvre in 1963, had a catalogue whose

cover still drew on a curious medley of different typefaces, resolutely centred, and ranging from “Display” capitals to a Gothic “Paris” redolent of the world of Victor Hugo’s *Notre-Dame de Paris*!

A clear example of the use of the new Swiss typography to enshrine a total vision comes with the *documenta III* catalogue of 1964. This vision not only underwrites the utility of the catalogue as an educational document, but also contrives to promote a cultural and historical view of the significance of the exhibition as a whole. Arnold Bode (1900–1977), who had initiated the concept of the “documenta” in the West German city of Kassel, was an architect, painter, and designer as well a curator. Having himself been removed from his employment by the Nazis in the 1930s, he conceived this series of major exhibitions as a means of reconnecting his own country, and Western Europe as a whole, with a modernist tradition which had been rudely interrupted during the Second World War. The two-part catalogue for the 1964 *documenta* was designed in his own studio, and made use of the range of possibilities opened up by the new typefaces to achieve an exemplary clarity in the design both of general documentation and of continuous prose. The bold red and blue squares dominating the two covers differentiate the two major aspects of the exhibition, while endorsing a generic view of modernism as being clearly identified with geometric abstract art.

The British catalogue that probably comes closest to this total vision is the one which was designed for *Painting and Sculpture of a Decade*, held at the Tate Gallery under the auspices of the Gulbenkian Foundation in 1964. Credited with the design on the first page of text are Edward Wright (1912–1988), who then headed the Graphic Design department at Chelsea College of Arts, and his younger colleague Robin Fior (1935–2012). Both the design of the cover itself, with its hand-drawn numerals and embossed effect, and the provision of brown, slightly corrugated endpapers, anticipate a highly individual but disciplined approach, which is borne out by the rigorous distribution of text and images. The latter are placed invariably on right-hand pages facing the documentation, which itself ingeniously exploits the varying weights of the sans-serif type.

The Gulbenkian catalogue was produced by Shenvall Press, a small printer mainly located in Harlow, Hertfordshire, which was advertising itself at the time as “specializing in typographic design and fine colour reproduction”.<sup>24</sup> Another regional printer, Tillotsons of Bolton, Lancashire, had already produced in 1963 what must surely have been the most sophisticated catalogue to date for any one-man exhibition at a London commercial gallery. Gordon House (1932–2004) was an artist and member of the London “Situation Group”, as well as working as a graphic designer. His design for the Kitaj one-man exhibition, *Pictures with Commentary*, shown at Marlborough Fine Art in February 1963, is an impeccable exercise in

deploying the new typography, which does not compete for attention with the excellent photographic illustrations of Kitaj's work (themselves produced from blocks made by Engravers Guild Limited).

It is however noteworthy that the four exhibition catalogues produced for shows at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1964 do not fit the prescription of having a named designer, who follows the protocols of the new typography. To judge from the byline that occurs only the last of the series (*Jasper Johns*), Bryan Robertson chose to employ the London-based printer, Foss & Cross Ltd, which had a long record of printing official posters and leaflets, such as the guide to the South Bank Exhibition of 1951. These Whitechapel catalogues remain traditional in their typography, but their individuality is expressed in the other features that they hold in common. For one thing, they all adopt an identical small square format, with a striking image on the cover, whether of a specific work (in colour for Rauschenberg and Johns) or of a featured artist portrayed by a professional photographer (Bert Stern for Kline, Lord Snowdon for Bridget Riley). Apart from the text on the slender spines, no exhibition title or artist's name appears on the outside of the catalogues. But Robertson was doubtlessly right in thinking that the Whitechapel "brand" would be highly recognisable in this distinctive format.

The broader field of art book design was also being influenced during this period by the intervention of major graphic artists. The Peregrine paperback edition of Nikolaus Pevsner's *The Englishness of English Art* that appeared in 1964 contained no significant revisions—as far as the visual arts were concerned—to the original text published in 1956. But the new edition benefited from a striking collage-style cover, including bold sans-serif titles, which was designed by Herbert Spencer (1924–2002). Editor of the magazine, *Typografica*, from 1949 onwards, Spencer had been foremost in facilitating the discussion, and so promoting the use, of the new typography in Britain. In *Typografica* 8 (1963), he was also responsible for publishing the first article to appear in Britain on the practice of concrete poetry (dom sylvester houédard's "Concrete Poetry and Ian Hamilton Finlay").<sup>25</sup> But the enduring legacy of book design in Britain over this period is also demonstrated by the wholly different approach of the German-born designer, Hans Tisdall (1910–1997), who progressed from textile art to designing book jackets for the publisher, Jonathan Cape. His striking cover for Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* (1964) is a demonstration of his distinctive "brushstroke style" of hand-drawn lettering. As late as 2001, the epigrapher and letter designer, Michael Harvey, who acted as one of Ian Hamilton Finlay's most successful collaborators for almost half a century, succeeded in adapting the "Tisdall script" to create a new typeface.

## Footnotes

- 1 In his Introduction to the first volume of the series, Bryson commented: “all art history needs to do is [...] take from literary criticism everything of service to itself”, see Norman Bryson, *Calligram: Essays in New Art History from France* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- 2 See Neil McWilliam (ed.), *A Bibliography of Salon Criticism in Paris from the Ancien Régime to the Restoration 1699–1827* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Neil McWilliam (ed.), *A Bibliography of Salon Criticism in Paris from the July Monarchy to the Second Republic 1831–1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- 3 Richard Wrigley, *The Origins of French Art Criticism: From the Ancien Régime to the Restoration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
- 4 Michael Fried, *Manet’s Modernism: Or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- 5 *PMC NOTES*, no. 6 (May 2016), 5.
- 6 Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (London: Yale University Press, 2000).
- 7 Francis Haskell, “A Century Reassessed”, *Times Literary Supplement* 3811, 21 March 1975, 297.
- 8 See David H. Solkin (ed.), *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780–1836* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
- 9 Mark Hallett, Sarah Victoria Turner, and Jessica Feather (eds), *The Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition: A Chronicle 1769–2018* (London: Paul Mellon Centre, 2018), <https://chronicle250.com/>.
- 10 See Stephen Bann, “Reading Back from *Experimental Painting*”, in Bronac Ferran and Elizabeth Fisher (eds), “The Experimental Generation”, *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 42, nos 1–2 (March–June 2017): 54–65.
- 11 See Cecilia Hurley Griener and Claire Barbillon (eds), *Le Catalogue dans tous ses états* (Paris: École du Louvre, 2015).
- 12 My source for this material was Marie-Antoinette Allévy, *La mise en scène en France dans la première moitié du dix-neuvième siècle*, (Paris: E. Droz, 1938).
- 13 This book by the veteran Austrian Marxist Ernst Fischer had first appeared in an English edition in 1963, and attracted some criticism for its insistence on the “magical” antecedents of art. It was republished in a paperback edition in 2010, with an Introduction by John Berger.
- 14 Cf. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
- 15 *Granta* 69, no. 1236, 14 May 1964, 1. Reg Gadney was one of three editors, but was concerned particularly with the coverage of matters relating to the visual arts. It was Gadney who commissioned Anthony Donaldson to design the series of covers which would notionally have added up to a complete nude figure.
- 16 *Cambridge Opinion* 27, a special number titled “Modern Art in Britain”, came out in 1963. It contained contributions from a remarkable range of artists, including the “Situation” group, the school of Bomberg associated with the Beaux Arts Gallery, David Hockney, and Anthony Caro. The critic Lawrence Alloway also provided an essay.
- 17 Patrick Reyntiens, *Blackfriars Review*, July 1964.
- 18 *Painting & Sculpture of a Decade 1954–64*, Tate Gallery, April–June 1964, 46.
- 19 I relied for my quotations from Dr Haftmann on an English translation of the Foreword to the catalogue which was provided by the Press Office.
- 20 The verdict of the press on the day following this uproarious occasion was “some seats broken, one attendant slightly wounded”.
- 21 See *Midway* (2014) and *Stonypath Days* (2016).
- 22 A proof of this edition was accepted as a gift to the national collection at the Tate in 2018. It joined a selection of my other ‘poem-prints’, produced with the aid of different collaborators, which date from the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.
- 23 This company, based in Winchester, did however advertise a connection to Taylor & Francis of London, which has over time become a printer and publisher of major international importance.
- 24 See the advertisement on the back cover of *The London Magazine* 4, no. 7, October 1964. This magazine was also printed by Sherval.
- 25 *Typografica* 8 (1963): 47–62.

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