

# MoMA

## The Museum of Modern Art

---

What Abstract Art Means to Me

Author(s): George L. K. Morris, Willem De Kooning, Alexander Calder, Fritz Glarner, Robert Motherwell, Stuart Davis

Source: *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, Vol. 18, No. 3, What Abstract Art Means to Me (Spring, 1951), pp. 2-15

Published by: The Museum of Modern Art

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4058250>

Accessed: 05/08/2009 17:20

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=moma>.

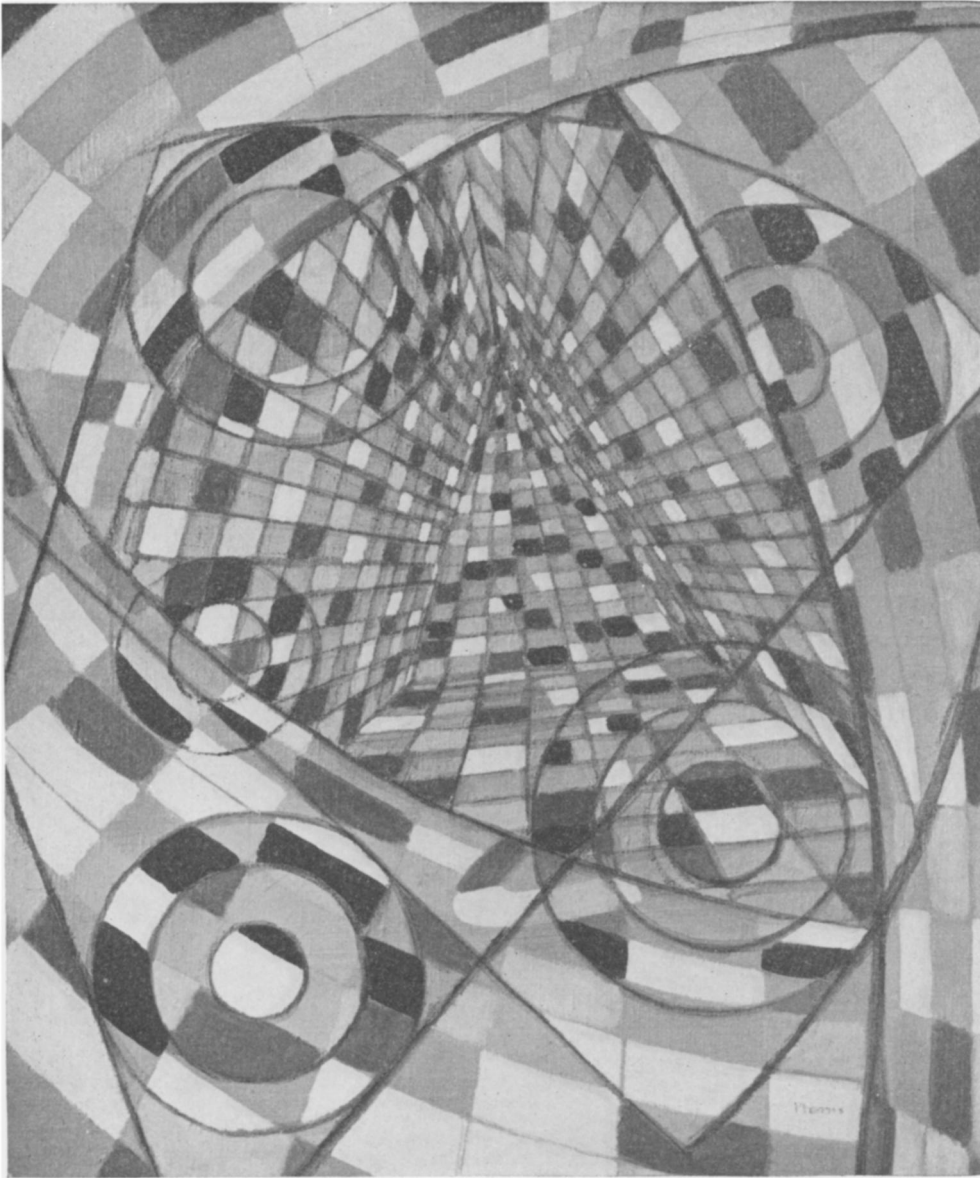
Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*The Museum of Modern Art is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art.*

<http://www.jstor.org>



**MORRIS:** *Suspended Discs. 1950. Oil, 23 x 19". The Downtown Gallery.*

## WHAT ABSTRACT ART MEANS TO ME

*On the evening of February fifth, 1951, the Museum of Modern Art presented a symposium on Abstract Art in connection with the exhibition then current in the Museum, Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America. Organized by a committee of the Junior Council, with Mrs. Mathew T. Mellon as chairman, and Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, acting as Moderator, this meeting aroused wide public interest and brought forth many requests for publication of the papers by the six artist speakers. The latter were asked to give their views on the proposition: "What Abstract Art Means to Me." Their statements follow, in the order in which they were read.*

### GEORGE L. K. MORRIS

Somehow it doesn't seem long since I trudged in a picket-line; in the street here, and in the rain. A fairly muted demonstration against the Museum, which wasn't always in a mood for showing abstract paintings by Americans. It was fun I suppose—needless to say, the picketing produced no results. Yet a majority of the picketers are visible through their works at the moment, upstairs on the third floor, where it's warm and out of the rain. However, this is no time to celebrate—in fact it's better if artists *never* celebrate. New abstract picket-lines are doubtless assembling, to protest the former picketers.

And I hope they are. It has been our contention from the start that the problems of abstract art can be hacked at from countless points of view. And it takes fanatics (in art as in history) to establish sound precepts. Our problems may not be new to art, but the conception of an abstract picture as we know it, certainly *is*. Can you imagine it in any other time — an artist just putting shapes together—shapes that represent nothing, either alone or in combination? He puts a frame around it, and offers it on the open market, just as

a good thing to have around and look at; something that will speak to you as an independent personality, and yet is very quiet.

No one has been offering art like this for very long; just forty years, and fitfully at that. Painters are only beginning to anticipate what happens to forms in design under given circumstances. Not much can be taken for granted, no art can ever accommodate rules; and there is plenty of room still to push and pull at the problems.

New possibilities for liberation—now we come to the sources of salvation or disaster. To free one's emotions—that's necessary, but it isn't very much in itself. Any one can find a way for that, and it certainly takes much more to produce life that will endure up on a wall. I have found in the long run that it's a counter-force, the effort of control and pacification, that releases character. It's this *harnessing* of freedom that has endowed great paintings with a poise and distinction to move us still after centuries. There lies a danger, always threatening, that the artist's sense of freedom will lead to false assumptions, that his own personality—seemingly so precious and unfettered—may be

more important than the thing he is after. The demands for controlling forces—those that will fit the emotional gamut exactly, moreover—are all too easily submerged.

Whistler's observation has been often quoted,—that an artist who paints Nature without a high degree of selection is like a "pianist who *sits* on the keyboard." Had Whistler been familiar with abstract art, he might have cautioned further against someone who "sits on his palette." If a painter *should* sit on the palette he'd probably produce something strong and brutal—there might even be a suggestion of agony. But can an artist thus found a base of operations on which to build a changing world and when the shock is over, how will it strike the eye in repose? Anyway, it should never be uniqueness we are after, but the basis of style.

This brings me to a second aspect. No one ever hated modern art more violently than our late critic, Mr. Royal Cortissoz. Yet I will honor him for a penetrating notation, which I frequently recall. He once summed up a modern exhibition with the outburst "This may be all very interesting, but Oh, the *looks* of it!" He puts forward so memorably a truth which can never be over-stressed—that painting is basically an optical experience. (And by "looks of it" we must hang on to our instincts for quality, and not false conceptions of appearance.) After this instantaneous effect, fine pictures of course require long and repeated study—but to a surprising degree the initial tell-tale glance will carry through. And for abstract art this test is merciless. There is no hiding from it through subject-interest; confusion can cloud it for a moment, but we are interested in something that will last.

Much more could be said about the two ingredients of abstract art—the emotional impulse and the structural fabric that is essential to make it credible. In primitive art the ability to fuse the two is quite natural and appropriate. No wonder the Cubists started from Negro sculpture—and they themselves produced a unity that was welded as tightly as a fist. How do we find this ourselves? There is not much to follow beyond one's qualitative sense. And now I am approaching the territory where words can hardly follow. Taste and quality are as difficult to trace consciously as to delineate the exact points of superiority between a rare vin-

tage-wine and a bottle of Coca-Cola. Yet it is a sense of quality which governs entirely the two points I have been stressing. One false note in an abstract picture can turn vintage-wine into a nasty medicine, and we must be ever alert for the taste. Moreover there are no rules for drawing the boundaries. Still, I will close with a generalization—that art produces two opposing forces, like the intake and outlet of the breath; it takes one individual impulse to activate a painting with life—the second fastens it with control, and makes possible a firmer activity toward the next creation.

#### WILLEM DE KOONING

The first man who began to speak, whoever he was, must have intended it. For surely it is talking that has put "Art" into painting. Nothing is positive about art except that it is a word. Right from there to here all art became literary. We are not yet living in a world where everything is self-evident. It is very interesting to notice that a lot of people who want to take the talking out of painting, for instance, do nothing else but talk about it. That is no contradiction, however. The art in it is the forever mute part you can talk about forever.

For me, only one point comes into my field of vision. This narrow, biased point gets very clear sometimes. I didn't invent it. It was already here. Everything that passes me I can see only a little of, but I am always looking. And I see an awful lot sometimes.

The word "abstract" comes from the light-tower of the philosophers, and it seems to be one of their spotlights that they have particularly focussed on "Art." So the artist is always lighted up by it. As soon as it—I mean the "abstract"—comes into painting, it ceases to be what it is as it is written. It changes into a feeling which could be explained by some other words, probably. But one day, some painter used "Abstraction" as a title for one of his paintings. It was a still life. And it was a very tricky title. And it wasn't really a very good

one. From then on the idea of abstraction became something extra. Immediately it gave some people the idea that they could free art from itself. Until then, Art meant everything that was in it—not what you could take out of it. There was only one thing you could take out of it sometime when you were in the right mood—that abstract and indefinable sensation, the esthetic part—and still leave it where it was. For the painter to come to the “abstract” or the “nothing,” he needed many things. Those things were always things in life—a horse, a flower, a milkmaid, the light in a room through a window made of diamond shapes maybe, tables, chairs, and so forth. The painter, it is true, was not always completely free. The things were not always of his own choice, but because of that he often got some new ideas. Some painters liked to paint things already chosen by others, and

after being abstract about them, were called Classicists. Others wanted to select the things themselves and, after being abstract about them, were called Romanticists. Of course, they got mixed up with one another a lot too. Anyhow, at that time, they were not abstract about something which was already abstract. They freed the shapes, the light, the color, the space, by putting them into concrete things in a given situation. They *did* think about the possibility that the things—the horse, the chair, the man—were abstractions, but they let that go, because if they kept thinking about it, they would have been led to give up painting altogether, and would probably have ended up in the philosopher’s tower. When they got those strange, deep ideas, they got rid of them by painting a particular smile on one of the faces in the picture they were working on.



*DE KOONING: The Mail Box. (1948). Oil on paper, 23½ x 30". Coll. Nelson A. Rockefeller.*

The esthetics of painting were always in a state of development parallel to the development of painting itself. They influenced each other and vice versa. But all of a sudden, in that famous turn of the century, a few people thought they could take the bull by the horns and invent an esthetic beforehand. After immediately disagreeing with each other, they began to form all kinds of groups, each with the idea of freeing art, and each demanding that you should obey them. Most of these theories have finally dwindled away into politics or strange forms of spiritualism. The question, as they saw it, was not so much what you *could* paint but rather what you could *not* paint. You could *not* paint a house or a tree or a mountain. It was then that subject matter came into existence as something you ought *not* to have.

In the old days, when artists were very much wanted, if they got to thinking about their usefulness in the world, it could only lead them to believe that painting was too worldly an occupation and some of them went to church instead or stood in front of it and begged. So what was considered too worldly from a spiritual point of view then, became later—for those who were inventing the new esthetics—a spiritual smoke-screen and not worldly enough. These latter-day artists were bothered by their apparent uselessness. Nobody really seemed to pay any attention to them. And they did not trust that freedom of indifference. They knew that they were relatively freer than ever before *because* of that indifference, but in spite of all their talking about freeing art, they really didn't mean it that way. Freedom to them meant to be useful in society. And that is really a wonderful idea. To achieve that, they didn't need *things* like tables and chairs or a horse. They needed ideas instead, social ideas, to make their objects with, their constructions—the “pure plastic phenomena”—which were used to illustrate their convictions. Their point was that until they came along with their theories, Man's own form in space—his body—was a private prison; and that it was because of this imprisoning misery—because he was hungry and overworked and went to a horrid place called home late at night in the rain, and his bones ached and his head was heavy—because of this very consciousness of his own body, this sense of pathos, they suggest, he was overcome by the drama of a crucifixion in a painting or the lyricism of a group

of people sitting quietly around a table drinking wine. In other words, these estheticians proposed that people had up to now understood painting in terms of their own private misery. Their own sentiment of form instead was one of comfort. The beauty of comfort. The great curve of a bridge was beautiful because people could go across the river in comfort. To compose with curves like that, and angles, and make works of art with them could only make people happy, they maintained, for the only association was one of comfort. That millions of people have died in war since then, because of that idea of comfort, is something else.

This pure form of comfort became the comfort of “pure form.” The “nothing” part in a painting until then—the part that was not painted but that was there because of the things in the picture which were painted—had a lot of descriptive labels attached to it like “beauty,” “lyric,” “form,” “profound,” “space,” “expression,” “classic,” “feeling,” “epic,” “romantic,” “pure,” “balance,” etc. Anyhow that “nothing” which was always recognized as a particular something—and as something particular—they generalized, with their book-keeping minds, into circles and squares. They had the innocent idea that the “something” existed “in spite of” and not “because of” and that this something was the only thing that truly mattered. They had hold of it, they thought, once and for all. But this idea made them go backward in spite of the fact that they wanted to go forward. That “something” which was not measurable, they lost by trying to make it measurable; and thus all the old words which, according to their ideas, ought to be done away with got into art again: pure, supreme, balance, sensitivity, etc.

Kandinsky understood “Form” as *a* form, like an object in the real world; and an object, he said, was a narrative—and so, of course, he disapproved of it. He wanted his “music without words.” He wanted to be “simple as a child.” He intended, with his “inner-self,” to rid himself of “philosophical barricades” (he sat down and wrote something about all this). But in turn his own writing has become a philosophical barricade, even if it is a barricade full of holes. It offers a kind of Middle-European idea of Buddhism or, anyhow, something too theosophic for me.

The sentiment of the Futurists was simpler. No space. Everything ought to keep on going! That's

probably the reason they went themselves. Either a man was a machine or else a sacrifice to make machines with.

The moral attitude of Neo-Plasticism is very much like that of Constructivism, except that the Constructivists wanted to bring things out in the open and the Neo-Plasticists didn't want anything left over.

I have learned a lot from all of them and they have confused me plenty too. One thing is certain, they didn't give me my natural aptitude for drawing. I am completely weary of their ideas now.

The only way I still think of these ideas is in terms of the individual artists who came from them or invented them. I still think that Boccioni was a great artist and a passionate man. I like Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Tatlin and Gabo; and I admire some of Kandinsky's painting very much. But Mondrian, that great merciless artist, is the only one who had nothing left over.

The point they all had in common was to be both inside and outside at the same time. A new kind of likeness! The likeness of the group instinct. All that it has produced is more glass and an hysteria for new materials which you can look through. A symptom of love-sickness, I guess. For me, to be inside and outside is to be in an unheated studio with broken windows in the winter, or taking a nap on somebody's porch in the summer.

Spiritually I am wherever my spirit allows me to be, and that is not necessarily in the future. I have no nostalgia, however. If I am confronted with one of those small Mesopotamian figures, I have no nostalgia for it but, instead, I may get into a state of anxiety. Art never seems to make me peaceful or pure. I always seem to be wrapped in the melodrama of vulgarity. I do not think of inside or outside—or of art in general—as a situation of comfort. I know there is a terrific idea there somewhere, but whenever I want to get into it, I get a feeling of apathy and want to lie down and go to sleep. Some painters, including myself, do not care what chair they are sitting on. It does not even have to be a comfortable one. They are too nervous to find out where they ought to sit. They do not want to "sit in style." Rather, they have found that painting—any kind of painting, any style of painting—to be painting at all, in fact—is a way of living today, a style of living, so to speak. That is where the form of it lies. It is exactly in its

uselessness that it is free. Those artists do not want to conform. They only want to be inspired.

The group instinct could be a good idea, but there is always some little dictator who wants to make his instinct the group instinct. There is no style of painting now. There are as many naturalists among the abstract painters as there are abstract painters in the so-called subject-matter school.

The argument often used that science is really abstract, and that painting could be like music and, for this reason, that you cannot paint a man leaning against a lamp-post, is utterly ridiculous. That space of science—the space of the physicists—I am truly bored with by now. Their lenses are so thick that seen through them, the space gets more and more melancholy. There seems to be no end to the misery of the scientists' space. All that it contains is billions and billions of hunks of matter, hot or cold, floating around in darkness according to a great design of aimlessness. The stars I think about, if I could fly, I could reach in a few old-fashioned days. But physicists' stars I use as buttons, buttoning up curtains of emptiness. If I stretch my arms next to the rest of myself and wonder where my fingers are—that is all the space I need as a painter.

Today, some people think that the light of the atom bomb will change the concept of painting once and for all. The eyes that actually saw the light melted out of sheer ecstasy. For one instant, everybody was the same color. It made angels out of everybody. A truly Christian light, painful but forgiving.

Personally, I do not need a movement. What was given to me, I take for granted. Of all movements, I like Cubism most. It had that wonderful unsure atmosphere of reflection—a poetic frame where something could be possible, where an artist could practise his intuition. It didn't want to get rid of what went before. Instead it added something to it. The parts that I can appreciate in other movements came out of Cubism. Cubism *became* a movement, it didn't set out to be one. It has force in it, but it was no "force-movement." And then there is that one-man movement, Marcel Duchamp—for me a truly modern movement because it implies that each artist can do what he thinks he ought to—a movement for each person and open for everybody.

If I *do* paint abstract art, that's what abstract art means to me. I frankly do not understand the question. About twenty-four years ago, I knew a man in Hoboken, a German who used to visit us in the Dutch Seamen's Home. As far as he could remember, he was always hungry in Europe. He found a place in Hoboken where bread was sold a few days old—all kinds of bread: French bread, German bread, Italian bread, Dutch bread, Greek bread, American bread and particularly Russian black bread. He bought big stacks of it for very little money, and let it get good and hard and then he crumpled it and spread it on the floor in his flat and walked on it as on a soft carpet. I lost sight of him, but found out many years later that one of the other fellows met him again around 86th street. He had become some kind of a Jugend Bund leader and took boys and girls to Bear Mountain on Sundays. He is still alive but quite old and is now a Communist. I could never figure him out, but now when I think of him, all that I can remember is that he had a very abstract look on his face.

## ALEXANDER CALDER

My entrance into the field of abstract art came about as the result of a visit to the studio of Piet Mondrian in Paris in 1930.

I was particularly impressed by some rectangles of color he had tacked on his wall in a pattern after his nature.

I told him I would like to make them oscillate—he objected. I went home and tried to paint abstractly—but in two weeks I was back again among plastic materials.

I think that at that time and practically ever since, the underlying sense of form in my work has been the system of the Universe, or part thereof. For that is a rather large model to work from.

What I mean is that the idea of detached bodies floating in space, of different sizes and densities,

perhaps of different colors and temperatures, and surrounded and interlarded with wisps of gaseous condition, and some at rest, while others move in peculiar manners, seems to me the ideal source of form.

I would have them deployed, some nearer together and some at immense distances.

And great disparity among all the qualities of these bodies, and their motions as well.

A very exciting moment for me was at the planetarium—when the machine was run fast for the purpose of explaining its operation: a planet moved along a straight line, then suddenly made a complete loop of 360° off to one side, and then went off in a straight line in its original direction.

I have chiefly limited myself to the use of black and white as being the most disparate colors. Red is the color most opposed to both of these—and then, finally, the other primaries. The secondary colors and intermediate shades serve only to confuse and muddle the distinctness and clarity.

When I have used spheres and discs, I have intended that they should represent more than what they just are. More or less as the earth is a sphere, but also has some miles of gas about it, volcanoes upon it, and the moon making circles around it, and as the sun is a sphere—but also is a source of intense heat, the effect of which is felt at great distances. A ball of wood or a disc of metal is rather a dull object without this sense of something emanating from it.

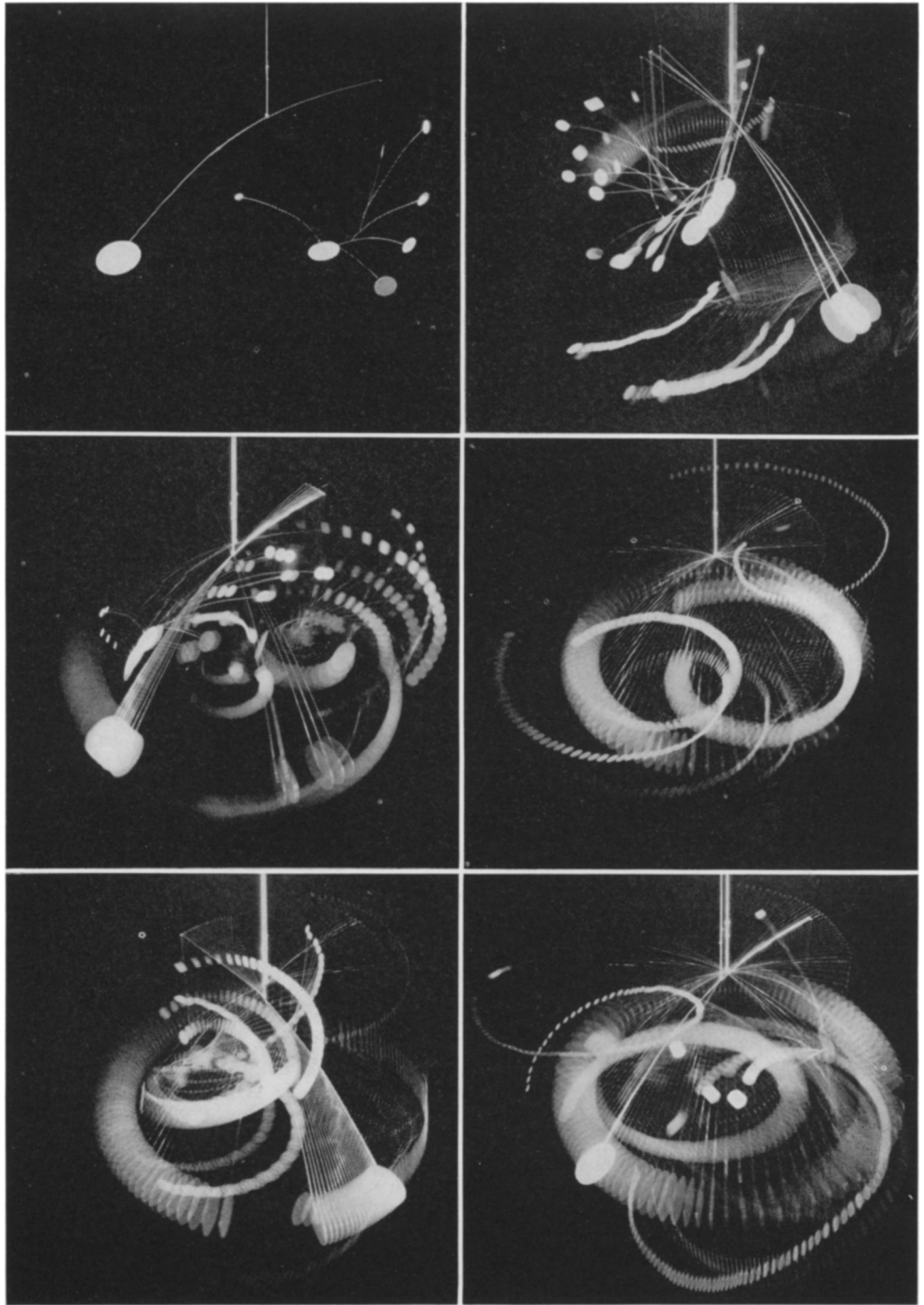
When I use two circles of wire intersecting at right angles, this to me is a sphere—and when I use two or more sheets of metal cut into shapes and mounted at angles to each other, I feel that there is a solid form, perhaps concave, perhaps convex, filling in the dihedral angles between them. I do not have a definite idea of what this would be like, I merely sense it and occupy myself with the shapes one actually sees.

Then there is the idea of an object floating—not supported—the use of a very long thread, or a long arm in cantilever as a means of support seems to best approximate this freedom from the earth.

Thus what I produce is not precisely what I have in mind—but a sort of sketch, a man-made approximation.

That others grasp what I have in mind seems unessential, at least as long as they have something else in theirs.





*CALDER: Hanging Mobile. 1936. Aluminum, steel wire. Ca. 28" wide. Coll. Mrs. Meric Callery. Still (upper left) and in motion.*

## FRITZ GLARNER

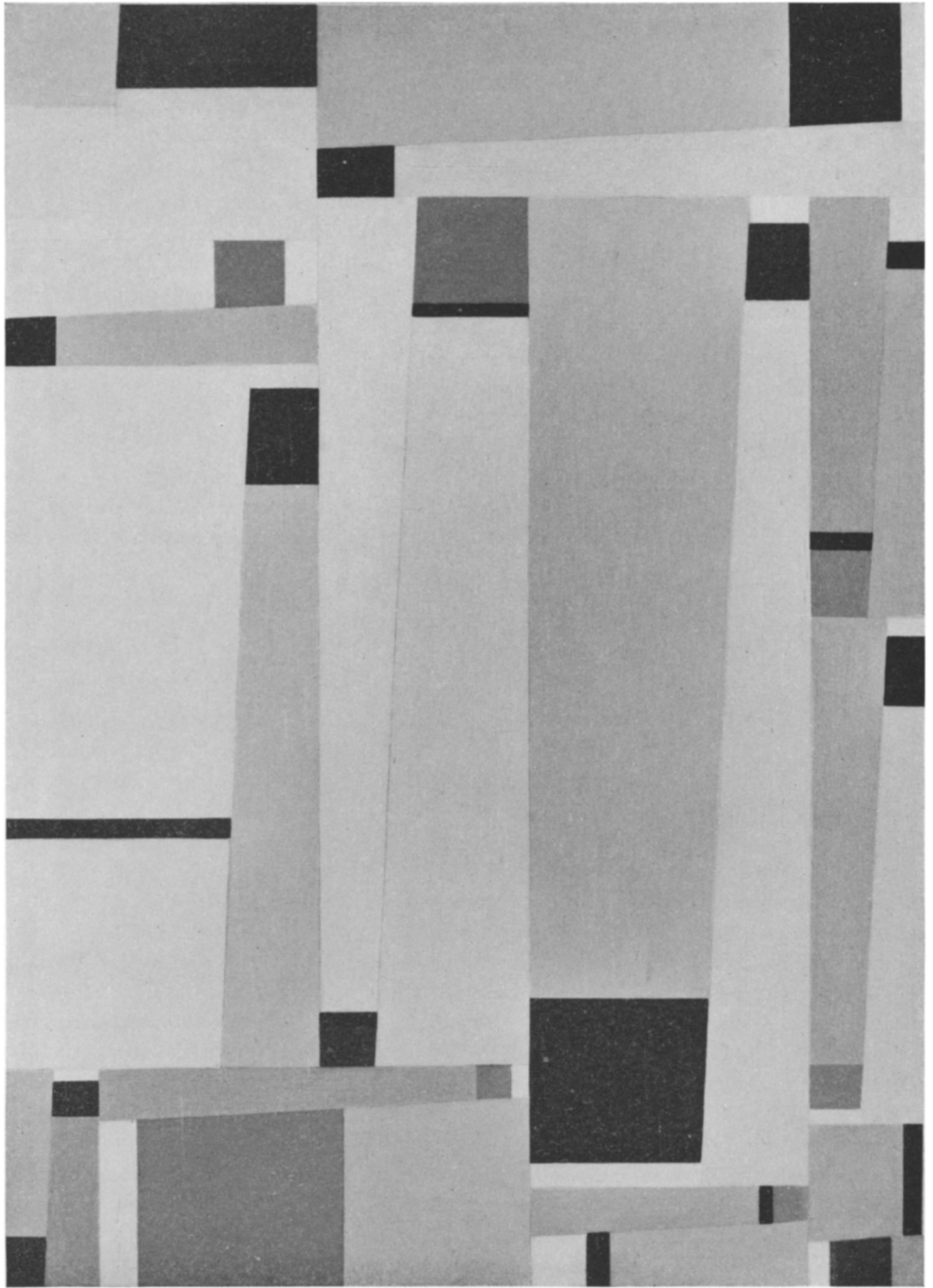
A painter should never speak because words are not the means at his command. Words cannot express visually dimension at a glance—they can only establish their own relationship in time. However, it is possible for a painter, at certain moments of his development to formulate some of the problems he is facing in the growth of his work. A painting cannot be explained. Words can only stimulate the act of looking.

A visual problem is never put a priori as a mathematical problem but is born in the process of painting and evolves in a state of unawareness of the painter.

Throughout my search for the establishment of essential values, throughout my struggle to free my painting from the naturalistic, I was impelled little by little to dematerialize the object, eliminating all that appeared to me as superficiality, reducing it to an appearance no longer specific—to a form symbol. When the motive for the form-symbol can no longer be identified by the spectator, a degree of abstraction has been obtained.

To liberate form, it is necessary for the form-symbol to lose its particularity and become similar to space. To liberate form it is necessary to determine space so that their structures become identical. When the form area and the space area are of the same structure, a new aspect arises in which pure means can reveal their intrinsic expression. The differentiation between form and space has to be established by color, proportion, oppositions, etc. Color, pure color, no longer assigned to dress up a particular form-symbol is free to act by its own true identity. It is my belief that the truth will manifest itself more clearly through this new condition.

Man can only free himself by a process of give and take. In painting form has to lose its specific identity and space has to acquire one by determination. To express life—its duality, its pulsations, its rhythms, its exact recurrences—the artist of our age should find through his own development the sensitive point of balance between the subjective and the objective expression.



**GLARNER:** *Relational Painting*. 1950. Oil, 58 x 48". Rose Fried Gallery.

## ROBERT MOTHERWELL

The emergence of abstract art is one sign that there are still men able to assert feeling in the world. Men who know how to respect and follow their inner feelings, no matter how irrational or absurd they may first appear. From their perspective, it is the social world that tends to appear irrational and absurd. It is sometimes forgotten how much wit there is in certain works of abstract art. There is a certain point in undergoing anguish where one encounters the comic—I think of Miró, of the late Paul Klee, of Charlie Chaplin, of what healthy and human values their wit displays. . .

I find it sympathetic that Parisian painters have taken over the word “poetry,” in speaking of what they value in painting. But in the English-speaking world there is an implication of “literary content,” if one speaks of a painting as having “real poetry.” Yet the alternative word, “esthetic,” does not satisfy me. It calls up in my mind those dull classrooms and books when I was a student of philosophy and the nature of the esthetic was a course given in the philosophy department of every university. I think now that there is no such thing as *the* “esthetic,” no more than there is any such thing as “art,” that each period and place has its own art and its esthetic—which are specific applications of a more general set of human values, with emphases and rejections corresponding to the basic needs and desires of a particular place and time. I think that abstract art is uniquely modern—not in the sense that word is sometimes used, to mean that our art has “progressed” over the art of the past; though abstract art may indeed represent an emergent level of evolution—but in the sense that abstract art represents the particular acceptances and rejections of men living under the conditions of modern times. If I were asked to generalize about this condition as it has been manifest in poets, painters, and composers during the last century and a half, I should say that it is a fundamentally romantic response to modern life—rebellious, individualistic, unconventional, sensitive, irritable. I should say that this attitude arose from a feeling of being ill at ease in the universe, so to speak—the collapse of religion, of the old close-knit community and family may have something to do with the origins of the feeling. I do not know.

But whatever the source of this sense of being unwedded to the universe, I think that one’s art is just one’s effort to wed oneself to the universe, to unify oneself through union. Sometimes I have an imaginary picture in mind of the poet Mallarmé in his study late at night—changing, blotting, transferring, transforming each word and its relations with such care—and I think that the sustained energy for that travail must have come from the secret knowledge that each word was a link in the chain that he was forging to bind himself to the universe; and so with other poets, composers and painters . . . If this suggestion is true, then modern art has a different face from the art of the past because it has a somewhat different function for the artist in our time. I suppose that the art of far more ancient and “simple” artists expressed something quite different, a feeling of *already* being at one with the world. . .

One of the most striking aspects of abstract art’s appearance is her nakedness, an art stripped bare. How many rejections on the part of her artists! Whole worlds—the world of objects, the world of power and propaganda, the world of anecdotes, the world of fetishes and ancestor worship. One might almost legitimately receive the impression that abstract artists don’t like anything but the act of painting. . .

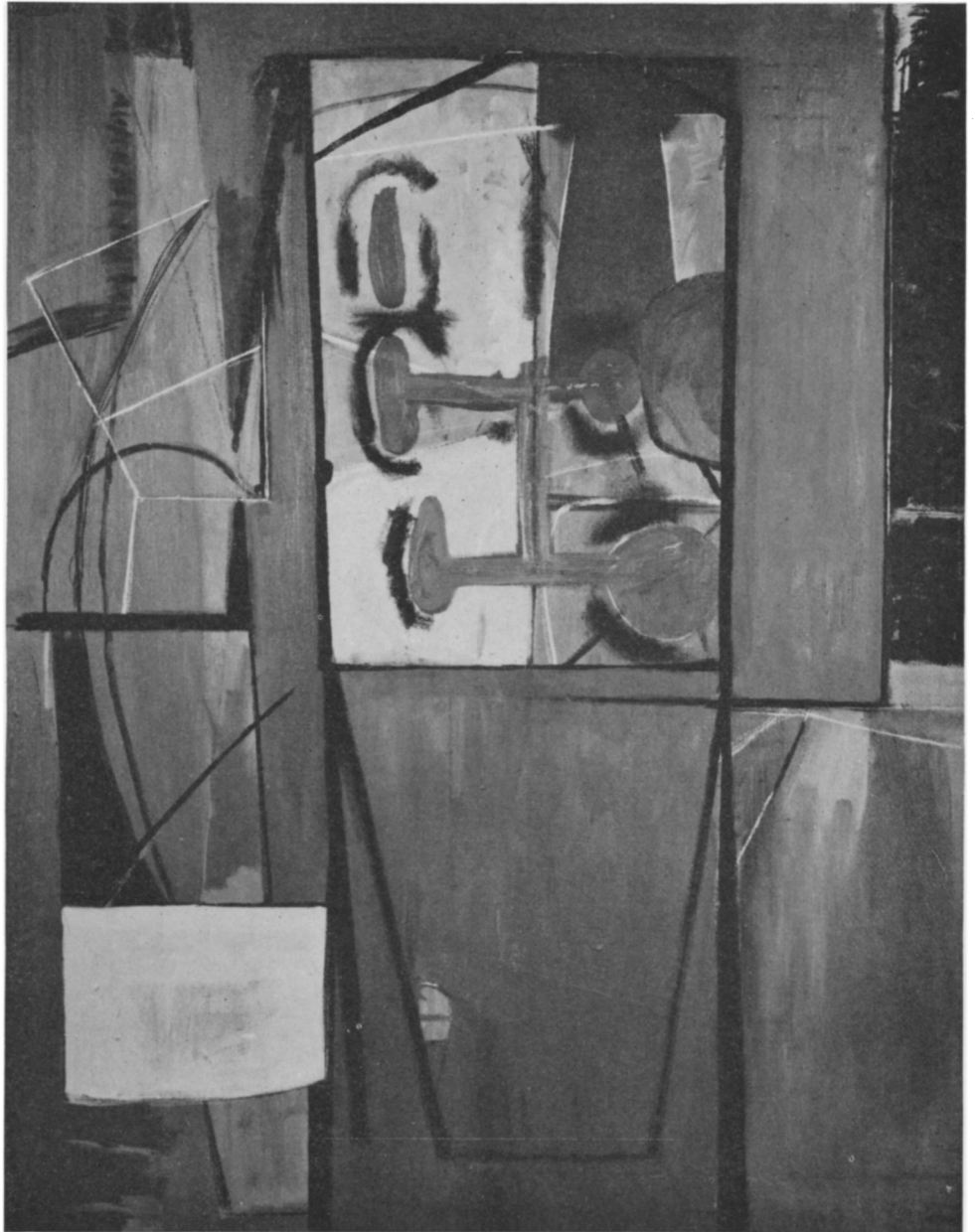
What new kind of *mystique* is this, one might ask. For make no mistake, abstract art is a form of mysticism.

Still, this is not to describe the situation very subtly. To leave out consideration of what is being put into the painting, I mean. One might truthfully say that abstract art is stripped bare of other things in order to intensify it, its rhythms, spatial intervals, and color structure. Abstraction is a process of emphasis, and emphasis vivifies life, as A. N. Whitehead said.

Nothing as drastic an innovation as abstract art could have come into existence, save as the consequence of a most profound, relentless, unquenchable need.

The need is for felt experience—intense, immediate, direct, subtle, unified, warm, vivid, rhythmic.

Everything that might dilute the experience is stripped away. The origin of abstraction in art is



*MOTHERWELL: Personage. 1943. Oil, 48 x 38". Norton Gallery and School of Art.*

that of any mode of thought. Abstract Art is a true mysticism—I dislike the word—or rather a series of mysticisms that grew up in the historical circumstance that all mysticisms do, from a primary sense of gulf, an abyss, a void between one's lonely self and the world. Abstract art is an effort to close the void that modern men feel. Its abstraction is its emphasis.

Perhaps I have tried to be clear about things that are not so very clear, and have not been clear about what is clear, namely, that I love painting the way one loves the body of woman, that if painting must have an intellectual and social background, it is only to enhance and make more rich an essentially warm, simple, radiant act, for which everyone has a need. . .



**DAVIS:** *Hot Still-Scape for Six Colors*. 1940. Oil on canvas, 36 x 45". Coll. Jan de Graaff.

## STUART DAVIS

I think of Abstract Art in the same way I think of all Art, Past and Present. I see it as divided into two Major categories, Objective and Subjective. Objective Art is Absolute Art. Subjective Art is Illustration, or communication by Symbols, Replicas, and Oblique Emotional Passes. They are both Art, but their Content has no Identity. Their difference cannot be defined as a difference of Idiom, because all Paintings have the Laws of Design as a common denominator. Design exists as an Idiom of Color-Space Logic, and it also exists in an Idiom of Representational Likenesses. Objective Art and Subjective Art exist in both Idioms. Their difference can only be defined in terms of what the Artist thinks his Purpose means—its Content as a Design Image.

Objective Art sees the Percept of the Real World as an Immediate Given Event, without any Abstract Term in it. But there is Consciousness of Change, of Motion, in it. The Real Object, its Image in the Idiom of Idea, and the external Image of Idea as Design, are experienced as a simultaneous event in Consciousness. These three distinct realities are Perceived as a single Object; a Headline on the Display-Surface of Common Sense. The consciousness of change experienced in these separate identifications is understood as the Total Form of this Object. To know this is the experience of its Free Accomplishment; an act amenable to Volition. This is the Total Appearance, hence Total Content of Objective Art, Absolute Art. Its Universal Principle is the Sense of Freedom.

Subjective Art is a 'Horse of Another Color,' to use the current Bop phrase; as it refers to shots of 'Horse,' or Heroin, which come in different colors to suit the Esthetic Taste and Poetic Mood of the client. Taste and Mood are well-known attributes of Subjective Art, inherent in its concept of Re-

ality. Unlike Objective Art it sees the Change between the Real Object, the Idea Object, and Real Design, as an Abyss, a Chasm, a Void. These terms appear frequently in its literature, and often as Holes in the Paintings. Its concept of Universal Principle has no Objective continuity. Spanning the Gaps in it is accomplished in an emotional Context of Anxiety, Fear, and Awe. That is how Subjective Art was born. Its Universal Principle has more the character of a Universal Bellyache.

The Security Image of Objective Art is in the Familiar Likeness of Change as a Topical Subject. But the Security Image of Subjective Art has a hypothetical location somewhere in Tibet. As a result it has become the greatest builder of Arachnoid Bridges in the world. Like the Laminated Iconography of the Scholars, it has a Perverse Passion for the Detour. It Eschews Route 66, and has a million broken bones to the mile. Over 30 years ago, Learned Proponents for Expressionism variously identified its Content as a "Psychic Discharge"; "Soul-Substance"; and a "Belch from the Unconscious," communicating the Distress of the Suffering Artist, as a sort of Moral Cathartic.

My interest in Art does not arise from this kind of Distraction, which still has a number of Fans. Art is not a Subjective Expression to me, whether it be called Dadaism, Surrealism, Non-Objectivism, Abstractionism, or Intra-Subjectivism. But when paintings live up to these Advance Agent Press Releases, I turn on the Ball Game.

Fortunately any similarity between the Painting and the Publicity is purely coincidental in many cases. In such a number of cases, in fact, that Modern Art as a whole is not more subjectively expressionistic in character than the most Durable Remains of Past Art. So-called Abstract Art to me is an Idiom of Color-Space Logic as the Design of a Topical Subject, understood as the Universal Free Subject. In that understanding there is No Abstract term. My intention is to keep it that way.