From: **Dan Duray** Daniel.Duray@gmail.com
Subject: Questionnaire for "Leave the Theory at Home - Writing About Art"
Date: August 31, 2013 at 08:40
To: Dan Duray dduray8@gmail.com
Bcc: campbellvi.e@gmail.com

Hello all,

I'm the TA for David Salle's art writing class at the Bruce High Quality Foundation University. You've received this email because their records show you're interested in attending that class.

Please take a look at the attached questionnaire and submit your responses to dduray8+bhqfu@gmail.com by Wednesday evening (Sept. 4). Interest in the course has been high and class size is limited so we'll be accepting students based partially on their writing sample.

I hope you all have a restful weekend.

My best,
Dan

--
Dan Duray

QUESTIONAIRE FORBH...x.docx

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BHQFU CLASS

1. Define the difference between satire and sarcasm.
2. Describe in ONE SENTENCE the best show you saw last year, and why you liked it.
3. Describe in ONE SENTENCE a show you saw last year – or any year – that was so bad it offended you, and why.
4. Describe a show or work of art that presented a moral quandary or hazard.
5. What thing(s) in the realm of the arts give you a feeling of unalloyed joy?
6. Answer in 3 sentences or less: Do you consider originality in art to still be possible and/or important?
7. Describe an original idea of your own.
8. What is the difference between cant and Kant?
9. If you happened to see the Jeff Koons show at David Zwirner last May, describe in 2 sentences or less what the work was about. If you did not see it, make something up.

Assignments/Readings for 9/30

Dan Duray <dduray8@gmail.com> Wed, Sep 18, 2013 at 1:53 PM
To: Steven Kaplan <stevenkaplan2010@gmail.com>, nhs261@nyu.edu, luisekaunert@gmail.com, Stephen John Wuensch <stephenwuensch@gmail.com>, Simone Krug <simonemkrug@gmail.com>, Keiko Narahashi <knarahashi@gmail.com>, Alex Casso <alexandercasso@gmail.com>, Patrick Gantert <patrickgantert@gmail.com>, Lap Le <lapleluu@gmail.com>, Paul Smith <polsmit@hotmail.com>, Whitney Platt <whitney.platt@gmail.com>, Matthew Hughes Boyko <matthewhughesboyko@gmail.com>, Cindy Cruz <cindyskylar@gmail.com>, Lynn Maliszewski <l.malizoo@gmail.com>, Jen Ortiz <jenortiznyc@gmail.com>, CHRIS DORLAND <dorland535@gmail.com>, paige huntley <paige.huntley@gmail.com>, Nickolas Calabrese <nickolascalabrese@gmail.com>, Penley Chiang <penlex@gmail.com>, Alisha Wessler <alisha@alishawessler.com>, Catherine Despont <catherine_d@me.com>, Young Sun Han <youngsunhan@gmail.com>, Stewart Campbell <stewart.w.campbell@gmail.com>, Matthew Grumbach <mmgrumbach@gmail.com>, jonah bell <spagicmaceman@gmail.com>, Nicholas VanVoorthuysen <nick@nvanv.com>, Joyce Lainé <joycelaine@gmail.com>, grayson revoir <grevoir@gmail.com>, "Catherine Y. Serrano" <penandapage@gmail.com>, Edwin Smalling <esmalling@gmail.com>, elena tavecchia <elena.tavecchia@gmail.com>, Victoria Campbell <campbellvi.e@gmail.com>, Jennifer Shear <yojshear@gmail.com>, Nick DeMarco <nickvdemarco@gmail.com>, Todd Florio <toddf@creativetime.org>, Shira Schwarz <sns272@gmail.com>, Federico de Francesco <federicodefrancesco@gmail.com>, Sarah Moran <sarah@sarahmoran.com>, Scott Calhoun <calhoun.scott@gmail.com>, Jenny Eagleton <jenny.eagleton@yahoo.com>, Ahmed Helwa <zack.helwa@gmail.com>, Jamie Morra <jamiemorra@gmail.com>, Mikki Halpin <mikki@stim.com>, Eric Shows <erictshows@gmail.com>, Graham Hamilton <grahamg.hamilton@gmail.com>, elizabethcooper66 <elizabethcooper66@msn.com>, Kaj Kraus <kajkraus@gmail.com>, Joel Snyder <joelcsnyder@gmail.com>, K-S <redredrob1@gmail.com>, Jeff Schneider <jeffschneidernyc@gmail.com>, Myriam Vanesch <myrvan@gmail.com>, C Wladis <carriewladis@gmail.com>

Hello "Leave the Theory at Home" students,

Great class on Monday!

Attached please find the readings for our next class. They are a selection of writings by Fairfield Porter, Sanford Schwartz, Veronica Geng and Renata Adler.

And here's a summary of the assignments David mentioned at the end of class:

1.) David read a description of a work that says: "Now there will be ice cream." Think of 10 examples of art that says something similar for you, The “now there will be” part is not necessarily a food, or even a thing, but rather a state of mind or being which can be represented by a thing, or action or verb,, etc.

2.) The painter Alex Katz categorizes work based on where it would feel at home – what its real context is – NOT the context In which it purports to be or aspires to. For example, a certain painter makes pizza parlor art; Tracey Emin’s work is hip restaurant décor. The place where it finds its natural audience. This is not to encourage rude dismissals; rather, placing something in its real context is a good way to really get to know it. Think of 10 examples of art and place them in their appropriate settings.

3.) David talked looking at a work and finding himself thinking: “ This work puts me in mind of…….” (fill in the blank). The blank should be filled in with something not necessarily linear or literal. The point of this exercise is to use your imagination be stimulated by looking at and thinking about something, and to follow that initial reaction to see where it attaches to – either to a thing, another

artwork, or a specific human situation.

We'll be reading some of the ones we liked best out loud in class.
Please send your completed assignments to dduray8+bhqfu@gmail.com by
September 27, the Friday before our next class.

As always, please don't hesitate to email me with any questions,
though please do send it to my Bruce account,
ddduray8+bhqfu@gmail.com, so it doesn't get lost among my other
emails.

Our next class is September 30, 7 to 9 p.m.

See you all then!
Dan

--

Dan Duray

---

6 attachments — Download all attachments

sanford schwartz - polke.pdf
3393K View as HTML Download

sanford schwartz - kiefer.pdf
1036K View as HTML Download

fairfield porter various writings.pdf
1168K View as HTML Download

renata adler pitch dark.pdf
334K View as HTML Download

The Art of the Impersonator by Sanford Schwartz _ The New York Review of Books.pdf
1587K View as HTML Download

veronica geng partners.pdf
669K View as HTML Download

POLKE'S DOTS, OR, A GENERATION COMES INTO FOCUS

Art of Our Time is a grandiose title for the four-volume catalogue of the collection of Charles and Doris Saatchi, who live in London, but this collection lives up to it. The collection, which includes over four hundred and fifty works by fifty-one artists, is composed principally of Minimalism, and a little bit of Pop Art, and more recent work, which has been called Neo-Expressionist, or Image, art. This is work by, among others, Philip Guston, Julian Schnabel, Joel Shapiro, David Salle, Anselm Kiefer, and Sigmar Polke. The collection is a record of a shift in the way the generation of the nineteen-sixties and the present-day generation think about art—and about themselves. It takes us from a shallow-spaced and gleaming, smooth-surfaced art to an art of porous surfaces, flickering light, and a shifting space. It takes us from an art that prided itself on being immediately "readable" and clear—and, also, rather distant—to an art that is pleased to be ambiguous, that asks to be interpreted in different ways simultaneously. The past seven or so years have been a very free, undoctrinaire period for painting and sculpture. European painting is more innovative now than it has been in years, and, for the first time, the strongest European and American artists have a comradely closeness in their attitudes. There have been important shows of this new art (the best have been in Europe), yet no museum has presented it with the scope that can be seen in these volumes. And what makes the Saatchi collection unique is that the Saatchis have assembled this new work along with the work that, so to speak, fathered it.

There is something off-putting, though, about how they have gone about things. Charles Saatchi is Saatchi & Saatchi Compton, Ltd., an English advertising firm whose best-known client is Margaret Thatcher. Doris Saatchi is American and writes for art and travel magazines. They are contemporary versions of the Arensbergs (who collected the advanced art of the teens and twenties) and the Sculls (who collected in the sixties). The difference is that the Saatchis aren't gentle encouragers, or enthusiastic appreciators, of the new. They are more impersonal, professional, and self-effacing. They have chosen an immodest title for these books of their collection. (It's peculiar to attach any title to a collection other than one's name.) Yet there isn't a scrap of writing by, or about, them anywhere in the four volumes; they never actually state what their aims are. It is clear, though, that they are after the major works by the leading artists of the day. Essentially, they want to be their own Museum of Modern Art, and it's astounding to think of two individuals having such an ambition. (Unlike the Modern, they aren't interested in drawings, prints, or sketches; at least, few of them are illustrated in the catalogues.)

This past spring, they opened, in London, a public museum for the collection, which will be presented in separate units, each on view for a number of months. The museum—its address is 98A Boundary Road—is made up of five enormous connecting rooms and is set on one floor, with some rooms stepped up. (The building was formerly a paint-storage warehouse.) There is no seating of any kind, the light includes natural lighting, the steel girders are exposed, the floor is a painted gray cement. The proportions of the rooms are a touch too long, low, and spread out, and the space—the architect was Max Gordon—has a stiff and awkward but organic quality. At the first show, which closed in the fall of 1985 and was made up chiefly of works by Donald Judd, Andy Warhol, Brice Marden, and Cy Twombly, the building overwhelmed the art.

The Saatchis' catalogues are of a piece with their museum. These large-size but easily handled volumes are oddly official and ostentatiously plain. The texts, which are about the individual artists, are by numerous critics and art historians, including Peter Schjeldahl, Hilton Kramer, Rudi Fuchs, Robert Rosenblum, Kim Levin, Phyllis

Tuchman, and Michael Auping. There are sensitive descriptions and perceptions throughout, and Schjeldahl (especially on the Minimalists and Warhol), Kramer (especially on Schnabel), and Fuchs (on Polke) are particularly good. Kramer and Schjeldahl have doubts about some of the artists they write about, and it is a tribute to the Saatchis that these writers have been allowed to retain their doubts. But most of the writing is not on their level, and the mere sight of all these appreciative-historical-critical pieces, set at the beginning of each volume, is cramping. Every artist is given a sort of art-historical pat of approval. The whole art world has been attended to and is reporting in.

In their desire to marshal the field of developing art, the Saatchis, one can feel, have trampled some of the real art out of everything. And yet they are in tune with a key element of some of the best work of the past twenty-five years. They are in tune with its confidence, its almost belligerent belief in its history and importance.

The first two volumes of *Art of Our Time* cover the Minimalists, and the Saatchis must have one of the finest collections of this art in the world. Here are choice works by Judd, Marden, Robert Ryman, Sol LeWitt, Bruce Nauman, Agnes Martin, and Carl Andre, plus top examples by artists who, older than, or not quite associated with, the Minimalists, fit in a Minimalist setting: Warhol, Twombly, Eva Hesse, Richard Artschwager, Frank Stella, Lucas Samaras. Many of the most influential figures of American—and world—art of the last two decades are here.

In the past few years, with the deluge of ingratiating, movie-inspired, and cartoonlike painting in the galleries and art magazines—paintings of angelic and heroic figures who float through the sky or dart through space like Batman—a viewer may have thought longingly about Minimalism, about how refreshing its cool, blank, uningratiating spirit would appear now. But looking at the Minimalist works in the Saatchi catalogues, and at the first show at their museum, I have to say that for me, at least, the time hasn't come. Twenty years ago, Minimalism was certainly the leading avant-garde style; but Minimalism lacks the figure, and so, in retrospect, it seems related

primarily to landscape, architecture, and design. Minimalist paintings and sculptures have the same effect on me as Impressionist pictures; I respect them, but when I'm in a museum I have to force myself to spend time with them. The Minimalists are a lot like the Impressionists. They're both pioneering yet emotionally undeveloped movements. They are both about pure sensation: the look and feel of color, weather, light, different materials. The Impressionists and the Minimalists are portrayers of the classic norm of things. Both seemed arrogant to their first audiences because the artists said, in effect, "We're not interested in people, or emotions. That has been done."

And Donald Judd, the preeminent Minimalist, reminds me of Winslow Homer, who, though not exactly an Impressionist, also painted the appearance of everyday, outdoor life. Homer is a superb picture-constructor. He is an artist of a clean cool breeze whom you like to turn to now and then, but he doesn't deliver a complicated message. He is strong because he avoids certain emotions. Judd is strong in a similar way. One feels with both that here is the work of a manly man, a kind of bachelor artist, who is, surprisingly, in love with style for itself—and who may not realize how stylish his work is. One believes that neither artist is aware of how much we are drawn to his work because of its sheer dapper elegance.

There is conviction to Judd's art of geometrical purity and sleek industrial materials—to his boxes that sit on the floor or are stacked on a wall. His color can be smolderingly handsome, especially when, in an untitled piece, he brings copper together with glowing red-orange Plexiglas. He looks best when his entire range of work can be seen at the same time, when a viewer can get the look and feel of raw, dry galvanized aluminum; copper; polished, shiny aluminum; tropical blue and aquarium-green Plexiglas; unpainted pale tan plywood. His most recent work—pieces that were exhibited last year and are not in *Art of Our Time*—adds a new note to his repertoire. They are large rectangular metal boxes, made of many interlocking units, which are painted in muted yellows, oranges, pinks, and blacks—varsity colors. And Judd has been a real presence on the art scene for more than twenty years. He is a highly competitive and—at least as a writer—a

ruthless soul; he is devoted to the highest standards of creativity. In his art criticism (which he stopped doing full-time in the sixties) and in his sculpture, he stands on the field like a tough drill sergeant, impossible to please. His work says to fellow artists, "Can your work be this tough? Can you do it without laying on an ounce of charm? I did." Judd is, one can believe, a distillation of an arrogant, nervously self-confident time in American art: the era of the Abstract Expressionists and their admirers, who watched Paris decline as the capital of world-class art and believed that the torch had been passed to them. Judd's objects are the epitome of a purely aesthetic way of looking at the world. There are, of course, more than purely formal qualities in his work and in Minimalism. But to our eyes, now, they are buried and stunted.

Andy Warhol, though, looks fresh in the pages of *Art of Our Time.* He looks better than any artist of the sixties. (It should be noted that the collection includes no work by, among others, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, Helen Frankenthaler, Alex Katz, Ellsworth Kelly, or Jasper Johns.) As Peter Schjeldahl points out in his catalogue essay, Warhol was at his best practically right at the start, when he was in his early thirties, between roughly 1962 and 1965 (which is when most of the Warhols in the collection are from). Warhol was an original artist when Kennedy was President and right after, and his pictures are an expression of that time. The early sixties were like a debutantes' ball for this country. It was a moment when the country took on a more sophisticated sense of itself, after Ike's sleepy reign, and Warhol was the guy who loved the party the most and was still high during the crash that came the next morning.

His pictures of the time are his most well known: paintings based on images taken from newspaper photos, which he silk-screened onto canvas and then colored in. Looked at now, his Marilyns, Elvises, Lizes, and mourning Jackies, and his car crash, tuna fish can disaster, wanted man, atomic bomb, and electric chair paintings present, with an audacious directness, some of the most glamorous and tragic (and laughable) themes of American life. With their all-pervasive silvery, metallic colors, and with bits of bright red and turquoise and yellow floating on the silvery expanses, there's something sleek and alienat-

ing about these pictures. Yet they're shabbily sad, too. Seeing one is like passing a construction-site wall that has been plastered with row after row of the same announcement for a long-gone event. Warhol's paintings are like Walker Evans's photos of street posters from the thirties come alive, and the mood of that decade—of the Depression—adds a bass note to his art. Warhol was born in 1928, and his work is a kind of commentary on a thirties sense of things. His most wanted men, auto crashes, and electric chairs have a Depression-era violence to them, and his idolization of movie stars has a thirties ring to it, too. Warhol's best pictures have a layered power; he caught the spirit of his moment and of the time when he was a child. His being, in a way, a man of two periods makes him especially interesting now, because much current art has a two-decadeness to it. We are drawn to the look and spirit of the fifties; we laugh even as we stare at the objects, cars, clothes, and personalities of the time. That era is like credit in a bank that we didn't remember was there. The fifties are barely known to artists born between, say, 1950 and 1955; the era, it might be said, seeped into this generation's consciousness, as the thirties seeped into Warhol's.

And there is a finality about Warhol's art. It is unlikely that someone would still want to base an art on celebrities, movie stars, tabloid disasters. Warhol wrapped up that material. We are probably interested in what lies behind the facade of modern media fame.

The real excitement and energy of *Art of Our Time* is in the more recent work, in volumes three and four, which show the painting of Philip Guston and Malcolm Morley, Sigmar Polke, Anselm Kiefer, and Francesco Clemente, David Salle and Julian Schnabel, and the sculpture of Joel Shapiro. There are many more artists in these volumes; the most notable are the painters Elizabeth Murray, Terry Winters, Eric Fischl, and Bill Jensen, and the sculptor Scott Burton. But it is these others who best represent the aims of recent art. They come from different generations and schools of thought (and different countries). And not all of them are satisfying artists. They show, though, the range of the new art, which is done by artists who use the figure but aren't conventional "figure" painters or sculptors; whose art

is about the unconscious; who aren't "literary" artists but who are poets.

Philip Guston may be the cornerstone of the second half of the collection—and of recent art. When he died, in 1980, at sixty-seven, people were in the process of coming around to him; he was still something of a new painter. He produced a lot of work in the last decade of his life; it was his best work, and we are at the phase where we want to see more and more of those paintings.

Guston's story is, in part, about how he slowly found his voice, how he gave himself to different art movements, then broke free from them. He started out, in the thirties, as a poet of social realism. He painted scenes of lonely boys in bed, kids fighting in streets; he showed ominous moments when people wait for something to happen, or play instruments. The pictures (most of which I have seen only in reproduction) are too artful and rather commercial. Then, in the late forties, Guston joined ranks with the Abstract Expressionists. He became a painter of marks on an empty field. These marks—they're the size of pats of butter, and have a buttery texture—nudge and push against each other. These abstractions are subtle and sumptuous. But as the years wore on, Guston appeared to become frazzled, impatient with pushing marks against marks; the subject of his pictures, as the fifties wore on into the sixties, seems to be frustration. Then, beginning in the late sixties, Guston began making good-sized cartoonlike paintings, and one felt he had finally come into his own. He seemed to bring together his early subject matter with the sumptuous touch he had created as an abstractionist.

The real point about Guston, though, is less his development than the depth and variety of his final body of work. Many artists create a race of cartoon characters. But Guston is the first whose cartoon art is genuinely challenging and august. From his lively recorded talks and interviews, Guston apparently believed that his subject was modern anxiety, and, on the face of it, his pictures are nightmarish. But Guston is great because he dares to be silly on a grand scale. And his painted world isn't barren—it is unusually inviting. His potato-head creatures, who are seen in profile (and with a bulging eyeball), stare manically forward. His Klansmen ride in convertibles; gather together and plot; whip their enemies. In some of his best pictures, the scene is a scantily furnished room in a city. There's an old wood door, a lamp on the floor; a window is open, and there is one of those shades on a spring with a circle pull at the end of a cord. Through the window are visible massive biscuit-colored buildings: the office and municipal buildings of any downtown. (We might as well be in an artist's studio.) The place is an American city of an earlier, pre–Second World War time. The characters are small-time hoods. They talk away the sunny, empty Saturday afternoon—at least, it feels like a weekend afternoon—smoking and playing cards. I don't think Guston actually painted hoods playing cards, but somehow you hear a deck being shuffled when you immerse yourself in some of his scenes.

If you look at Rube Goldberg's cartoons—the famous ones are from the twenties—you will see the same downtown buildings, the same cars with big round rubber tires, the same rubbery people, even the same windows and window shades. And finding so much of Guston in Goldberg's drawings (and Guston no doubt looked at other cartoon creators) only makes Guston better. Part of the point of Guston is that his images and style of drawing, with big rounded forms and lots of thick black outlining, to show sculptural solidity, aren't his own. The pleasure of Guston's work is in watching him re-create the world using a visual vocabulary—the cartoonist's stripped-down language—which he didn't invent.

Guston is a less romantic, and a less spiritual, figure than any of his fellow Abstract Expressionists. He is different from virtually all other American artists in that his subject isn't mythical striving, or beauty, or youth, or sadness. Guston is a teller of macabre, what-if stories, an appreciator of the gross, the stupid, the corrupt. And yet—this is the amazing part—he isn't cynical or ghoulish. His work is hearty, vigorous, and humorous. He is the first American whose work stands in the company of Goya and Ensor.

There is a stage in the development of recent art that is hard to account for. How and where did many of the strongest new artists, including Schnabel and Salle, Polke and Kiefer, come to create their

respective worlds of floating, overlapping images? And is this new kind of picture making related to Guston's cartoon art? I think so—at least, for American artists. The relationship has to do, in part, with the sense of impermanence one feels in a Guston. He painted without set images in mind; he treated his canvases as if they were big sheets of paper that he could doodle on until he "found" images that felt right. In many Gustons, you see cloudy areas that have dark lines, or different colors, underneath. These flushed, often beautiful, areas are where a first or a second thought was covered over. His pictures almost always have a quivering, still-being-composed quality. Little is fixed in his world.

Little is fixed in the world of the new painting, either. When a viewer looks at a Julian Schnabel, say, he may find himself focusing and refocusing; his eyes may go from one image in the painting to the next, and as his eyes move the different elements become alternately sharper and blurrier. The elements can be a realistic image; a stylized and cartoonish drawing; an area of abstract brushwork; an actual object; a patch of empty canvas. Each is of equal interest—to the artist and to the viewer. Sometimes the elements come together, and tell a story; sometimes they don't, and the picture may still feel right. Many artists now draw, with paint, on patterned fabrics, or on photographs, and when oil is drawn over, say, a decorative fabric a layer-upon-layer effect is produced—a 3-D sense of things going back into space.

After looking at these pictures, you may see earlier artists, even Old Masters, differently. You may find yourself "bringing forward" the backgrounds of paintings, and reading backgrounds and foregrounds as a sort of blinking, throbbing surface. The effect, or point, isn't only optical or formal. It's emotional, too. The marginal, "soft" stuff in a picture now becomes as interesting as the supposed center of attention. It is as if this were a period that wants to reintroduce heroes in paintings—wants to bring back the figure—and yet wants to show the not always substantial thoughts of these heroes.

The layering of Schnabel and the others might be called a development of Cubism, or a continuation of the collage spirit. But to our eyes the Cubists made pictures whose separate parts hang together, as

if on an invisible net, and generally tell one story. Collage as the Cubists—and as later artists, such as Robert Rauschenberg—understood it was about an overall balancing act, a syncopated beat. When Rauschenberg, in the fifties, brought together in a single picture patches of smeary paint, real objects (a tire, say), and silk-screened photo images, one felt that he was saying that there was beauty—or, even more, a pathos—in the jumbled (and frequently junky) heap of things.

Layering in recent art is more directly a demonstration of the way people think now—that is, with many seemingly unrelated thoughts and images hanging in the air simultaneously. That you take in these works by focusing on different parts doesn't mean that the pictures are merely painted versions of photographs or movie stills, or that these artists are the products of a movie-oriented culture. The relation of photography, movies, and TV to recent art is subtle. For some artists, this relationship may be there only slightly, or not at all. Yet the way images appear in photos, movies, and TV has helped produce a feeling for the relatedness of all images: images taken from book illustrations, magazine ads, studies of plant and animal life in books, even pornography layouts—as well as from movies and TV shows and commercials. Visual information itself has become a subject. It is a subject the way geometry, or modern urban life, or nature, or mythology have been subjects.

Fine art—museum pictures, art styles—has become a subject, too, partly because museums have changed so drastically in the past twenty years. The change is felt as much in museums in Santa Barbara and Toronto as in the Met and the Modern. If you first went to museums in the fifties and sixties (or earlier), you can feel that museums have become rather similar, in tone, to department stores and TV. Museums are no longer anonymous settings for works of art. We are bombarded, in museums, with videotapes, postcards, posters, slides, books, acoustiguides, and calendars about artworks and artists. There's a genuine hum of energy at museum bookshops; they can seem like the true center of life of the place. And we have become so used to seeing all paintings reproduced in color that many works of art now appear tame and flat compared with how they look in books.

Yet earlier art has not been devalued, and we haven't been made skeptical about it. We are actually beyond the stage where it is exciting to make ironic jokes about classics; Marcel Duchamp's having put a mustache on *Mona Lisa* seems insipid now. We have become more intimate with works of art. The figures and faces of previous art—the characters in paintings by Watteau, say, or Munch—now seem to be touchstones for artists to express more of themselves. In *My Head*, one of the most impressive paintings in the Saatchi collection, David Salle takes a Watteau drawing of a shoeshine boy—he is seen from the front and from the back—and draws him in a yellow-orange oil and in a soft, brushy way, over a background image. That image is a series of views, done in a black and white brushed-on oil that resembles a grainy photo, of quasi-abstract sculptures set on a table in a darkened room. (The other major element in this mural-size work is a stretch of unpainted plywood, with wood pegs projecting from it—each painted blue at the end—which is placed above the images in the bottom half.) Quoting from Watteau, Salle seems to tip his cap to an admired painter. There is some contempt in his attitude, too; he treats the Watteaus impersonally, as decorative grace notes, and implies that he could have borrowed something from any artist. Yet Salle also has an affinity with these figures, which are rather romantic. There is a gentle erotic charge to them.

An artist runs a risk of being jokey, or fancy, when he or she refers in a painting to an earlier work of art, or takes a Munch painting, say, and redoes it; but it seems possible to take a known image and, so to speak, inhabit it. And there is little difference whether that image is a Munch painting, a Giotto fresco, or a still from "The Honeymooners." In the realm of images, Giotto is on the same footing as stills from TV shows.

There is a detachment to the new art. It is there in the way many of these paintings are made, and it may be an underlying point of view. In paintings where disparate images float side by side, or on top of another, and different styles, or ways of drawing, are brought together in the same work, the meaning may be that there are no connections between things. In continually referring to the past, these artists may imply that the past was more full, or real, than the present, that our identity will be complete only when we re-create the past. Yet the prevailing mood of the new art isn't sour or grayed; it is appreciative, sensuous, voracious.

One of the big differences between the current generation of artists and previous ones is their relation to popular culture. Popular culture used to be something an artist brought into his work in order to give it a jolt of real life; the point was to bring art down to earth. Popular culture is more ingrained now. A young artist may no longer make a leap from his or her serious thoughts to, say, a comic strip, a TV, or a rock'n'roll way of thinking, where everything is simplified, intensified; he or she may now begin with such a sense of things. Didn't Jean-Luc Godard, in his movies of the sixties, create such a world, where people were walking and talking cartoon characters? Godard was a forerunner, but the difference between his movies and art now is that his tone is witty, analytical, self-conscious. In his movies, everything is arch; every kiss and every murder is in italics. That self-consciousness is gone. Many artists now seem to feel that they can be most serious—that they can be most themselves—when they put their feelings in the mouths of puppets.

In retrospect, it can appear as if much of the new art of the fifties and sixties—the work of Judd, Warhol, Twombly, Flavin, Katz, Johns—was about transforming vernacular, popular art forms (and industrial materials, such as house paint and fluorescent lighting) into high art. In the years when Johns made his American flag paintings, when Warhol made Marilyn Monroe his subject, and when Katz rethought traditional painting motifs in terms of movie stills and billboard ads, beauty was imbued with a lordly irony. And Judd, Flavin, and the other Minimalists have the same distant, removed stance. On some basic level (which, over the years, we may have lost sight of), Judd's work is sardonic, even taunting. He is as aggressively tongue-in-cheek about aluminum and plexiglass and simple box shapes as Johns is about the American flag.

The artists of Katz's and Johns's generation came of age not long after the United States and Abstract Expressionism had become world-conquering forces, and their work reflects this. It's expansive,

worldly. But it has the attitude of a son who takes over the family business empire and makes it even bigger, and yet is not altogether comfortable, happy, or satisfied with the job; he had the role thrust upon him, and he finds himself locked into perpetuating a family image that wasn't originally his. Not only is the sense of space in the work of Judd, Katz, Johns, Frankenthaler, Twombly, and the rest extremely shallow, but the works themselves push out against a viewer like so many shields. Each piece seems to say, "You'll get no secrets, no inner thoughts from me. I am my surface alone." Johns summarized an aspect of his generation in *No*, a 1961 picture of a gray surface, a sort of wall, that has a metal line running over it from the top to the bottom. At the bottom of the line is the word NO in stencils. The picture is touching; it is also bruised, angry, somewhat frightening. And its main point is: No, don't come any farther.

Artists now in their twenties and thirties have been inspired by the previous generation in their work, and have inherited its confidence, too. But they don't have such a masklike and ironic sense of things. They're more romantic and gullible and less guarded; they are also, expressively, less tight. The new painting, in its surfaces and sense of space, says, "Enter." This is where Guston is, again, very much our contemporary. When his cartoon work was first shown it was said that he was slumming. Here was an intellectual on vacation, the argument went, applying a luscious, painterly touch to dumb cartoon scenes. For many of the early admirers of his work, though, the idea that Guston was slumming—that he was ironic—didn't arise; slumming was an idea from an earlier time, when popular culture was brought into one's work coolly, or with a tone of daredevil boasting. Guston's new pictures were realistic (though I suppose we didn't think of them in just this way). They were "realistic" in that they seemed to show how people thought. A viewer might have felt, This is what it is like inside my mind—everything does pass by in this shifting, exaggerated, sweaty, nervous, heroic, mock-heroic way. Guston's Klansmen, his potato-head characters—even his inanimate subjects: his shoes and clocks—seem to say, "Am I a jerk? A genius? Will they get the point? Will they love me? Who could really know how great I am? I'm dying."

Guston showed how comic-strip art—and, really, any art—could present the feel, the texture, of psychological moments. Not psychoanalytical, primal, or disturbed moments; not the material that the Surrealists (with their bizarre, dreamlike images) and Giacometti (with his sculptures that suggest impotence and impending violence) presented. The sense of psychology in Guston and in younger artists is more something that's taken for granted; there is an equal interest in an act and in the motivation for an act.

Like Guston, Malcolm Morley, who is fifty-four, has been thought of as a link between an earlier generation and recent art. There are Morleys from every phase of his development, from the mid-sixties up through the present, in *Art of Our Time*, and I can see why this English-born artist, who lives and works in New York, has been important in the past five years. Like younger painters, he brings together seemingly unrelated images, occasionally done on separate canvases, in one work, and, like Guston, he communicates the feeling that a painter is free to make a substantial work out of any image he chooses, no matter how wild. For me, though, Morley is important less for his actual work than for his presence on the scene, his example. I feel the same way about his work looking at it in *Art of Our Time* as I did seeing it in his retrospective in 1984. (It came to the Brooklyn Museum.) I left his Brooklyn show liking Morley himself: his gusto, his belief in art. He appears to be excited by the very tubes of paint, the brushes, the pans of watercolor, the sticks of charcoal. Yet his pictures seem to be mostly experiments in this or that way of painting. Some crucial element in them is unbelievable.

Morley began, in the sixties, as a Photorealist—he coined the term "Superrealist." His early works are painstaking copies of images of cruise ships and of cruise life, taken from ads. He also copied works of art; the Saatchis own his copies of Vermeer's *Portrait of the Artist in His Studio* (Morley's is much larger than the original) and of Raphael's *School of Athens*. On a theoretical level, these pictures were ahead of their time: Morley was making paintings about how paintings appear in photographs. But his Photorealist works, when you see them, are irritating; what you are conscious of is the tedious job he gave himself.

Follow his career and you see him literally breaking apart his early diligent art. Going through a Morley retrospective is a little like reading a novel. You see a man growing, stretching; he seems to say to himself, "This early stuff of mine, it's so tight and stiff, I've got to bust open." Over the years, the surfaces of his pictures and his images themselves become increasingly messy, loose. He opens things up very literally; he makes paintings, for instance, where those cruise ships are attacked by planes. It can look as if the very canvases have been blown up by shrapnel. There are paintings, too, where cities—and the whole world, it would appear—are going up in flames. The feeling of catastrophe and chaos sometimes seems to mirror the period in which Morley painted. In the late sixties and early seventies, he made pictures whose subject matter is riots in cities, busing, Vietnam.

In the past five years or so, Morley has become a vigorous, brushy painter of fairly traditional subjects—beach scenes, exotic places and animals, cows in a pasture—which he sometimes treats in odd ways. *Farewell to Crete* is an enormous collagelike picture; it shows huge bathers quite close to us, tiny bathers in the distance, and, painted to the sides, on top, and over them, large and small Cretan horses and statues. *Arizonac* is a fiery Southwestern landscape. In it, two gigantic Hopi Indians—they're much larger than the mountains—rush toward us, while on the ground, at their feet, is a speck-size Indian on a horse. And there are pictures of faraway places that may refer to Britain's colonial past. These recent works are more appealing than his Photorealist ones, but the new pictures feel hollow, too. Why does Morley distort shapes, and mix very big and very little sizes? Why, in the Crete painting, is red paint thrown on top of the image of sky and water, and why is a trail of blue paint going around and over the Cretan statue? With another artist, these details might be parts of a flowing whole; when David Salle lets paint from one area in a picture run down into another we don't stop to think about what he means by it. But with Morley the quirky elements and oddities of painting halt us; we feel that they have to be explained and that knowing what they mean won't make the pictures better.

One looks forward to Morley's shows; one wants to know what he is

going to do next. The main question about him, though, is biographical, not aesthetic. Does he calculatedly keep abreast of changes in current art, or is he on his own course—a course that happens to parallel what other people are doing? His real subject, it can seem, is being an artist. He always appears to be giving himself formal problems and trying to solve them. Morley himself may be more tangible than his work, but if he lost some of his respect for Painting his work might be more personal.

The revelation of *Art of Our Time* for American viewers is likely to be Sigmar Polke. This German painter, who is forty-five, has had three shows in New York in the past few years but is still barely known here. Based on the dates of his pictures—the earliest ones in the Saatchi collection are from the mid-sixties—he is the first artist to float disparate images in one picture in a way that feels new.

In Polke's best work, he generally uses a bit of an ad, a poster, a cartoon, or a photo, which he silk-screens on. Then he subtly mucks over that image: he buries it under vaporous washes of color, he draws doodles around or on top of it. He usually doesn't work on canvas. He frequently uses sections of old, faded, inexpensive fabrics, often with ornamental patterns that probably come from—and certainly make us think of—the fifties. Polke is like Klee in so many ways he seems to be Klee's heir. He resembles Klee in his wit, his venturesomeness with materials, the way he at first appears to have no one style. He's like Klee in that some of his works are so slight they barely seem to be there at all. But you don't think of Klee when you see Polke—you don't think of anyone. His work may be the most original any artist has made so far about Germany after the war. He seems to use already-existing images because he is saying that these images are all that is left. His pictures sometimes feel as though they were the products of a post-apocalypse person who doesn't know what art is but has a desire to make paintings, and so uses, as starters, whatever images he can find—cartoons, ads, posters—and then, in a somewhat spastic and dribbly way, decorates them.

Polke is the opposite of Warhol. A Warhol bank of Elvises, or even a single Liz, keeps you at a distance, and that is one of the classy and

best things about the picture. Warhol printed the images on the canvas and colored them in a slipshod way, but his pictures are the opposite of tacky. They're stiff, like icons. He says, "Look, world, these are the new gods." Polke wants a world without gods. He almost seems to want a world without artists. When we look at an individual picture of his we often feel we're seeing the work of many different hands. His art is almost programmatically uncommanding—even impoverished. Seeing his pictures in reproduction doesn't give a sense of their deliberate flimsiness. His marks can be very faint; his paint can be watery, milky; he doesn't always use stretchers, so the pictures can sag. He's not particularly fussy, and he works with very large sizes, but there's something private, veiled, evanescent about his works. He asks a viewer to get very close to his surfaces; you feel you have to be surrounded by the picture before it begins to happen to you.

Rudi Fuchs, in his catalogue essay, says that Polke believes he's making a political point by not giving us imposing images. We sense this, too, and the pictures become heartier when we know that there are philosophical reasons for them to look the way they do. Polke might as well be saying, "No more heroes, no more tyrants, no more logos." Isn't he also indirectly criticizing the overbearing, self-important quality of so much American art since the Second World War? His point might be: no more Mark Rothko floating squares, Barnett Newman stripes, Judd boxes, or Marilyns—no more chapels of art, with icons that we have to bow down to. I want this to be a world of fuzzy, fluctuating bits of this and that.

His *Liebespaar II*, a roughly six-foot-high posterlike painting from 1965, which shows a man touching a woman, is the single most startling image in the Saatchi collection. I am exaggerating, but this picture—it has not been in any of his New York shows—is like the beginning of a new consciousness in art. The painting seems to borrow from Dada, from Pop, and, vaguely, from Expressionism and Abstract Expressionism. But *Liebespaar II* is not a joke (as a Dada image would be), it's not a stylishly soulless picture (as a Pop image would be), it's not particularly muscular, or heroic. It is more like a melancholy and nasty meditation on life. It is full of disturbing

touches. The smiling man, who is in a gray suit, has a black dot for an eye and seems like a toy—he might be the grown kid of the Dubonnet Man, dressed for the prom. The woman's features are more realistic (she recalls Joan Crawford); her eyes really look out at us. The image is like a date between two people with different kinds of limitations. There are dots, in different sizes and colors, painted over her neck and face, among other places, and it is the dots that make the picture revolting. There is something sadistic about the way her face and neck are covered by dots. We can imagine Polke first painting her, then taking a wormy pleasure in painting these dots over her. It is as though he's airily sprinkling her with a disease. Polke is not altogether nice. His art is sly, grim, and indirect—as well as beautiful and novel. This may be why he is still relatively unknown in this country and why he may always be an artist most appreciated by other artists.

Yet he has painted his poster couple with such care! He handles paint in the pure and quietly adept way that an old-time journeyman artist, making a sign for a tavern, would. And by fouling his woman—those dots—he gives her a personal quality she wouldn't have otherwise. That is the daring and original thing about Polke. He takes poster people and cartoon characters and fragments from photographs and makes them agents in a kind of psychological drama.

Anselm Kiefer, the other important German artist—he is also represented by a large number of choice works in *Art of Our Time*—is Polke's opposite number. They have very different approaches to the same subject: recent history and their Germany. If Polke's motto is "Flippant at all moments," Kiefer's is "Heroically I take my stand." The slight difference in their ages—Polke was born in 1941, Kiefer in 1945—probably has something to do with the big differences in their tones. One half believes that Polke keeps up a frivolous tone in his work because, as a very young child, he experienced some of the actual war. And one half believes that Kiefer is determined to keep re-creating the war because he just missed experiencing it. He wants us to hear bombs going off in the distance when we look at his paintings.

Not all of Kiefer's pictures are directly about the Second World War. There are pictures, for instance, with Biblical themes. But nearly

everything of his suggests devastation or a swelling national harmony. In his many landscapes of fields and fewer interiors—they are of cavernous, burned-out public places—it appears to be the winter or spring of 1945. It is the last days of the Third Reich. Kiefer's large pictures feel enormous even in reproduction. Viewing them, we believe we are an inspection team; we walk through the rubble, or fly low over the fields in a small plane. Everyone is absent—dead, or moved on. But the sites are choking with different emotions. The earth is squishy, we suspect that there is fresh blood in it. We pick our way over burnt logs, piles of bricks. We become German. It is a heady moment. We're relieved that the fighting is over, and bitter at the waste. We have a secret sense of loyalty, too; we are sure that the victors cannot be as proud as we are.

Kiefer's paintings are mostly in sooty grays, rust-reds, earth colors, black. There are slate-blues and, occasionally, daubs of turquoise or pink. You can find yourself staring at a Kiefer for a long time. This happens in part because he paints—and adds materials, such as straw and wax—directly on top of already-existing images. In some of his landscapes, he paints on top of (and almost obliterates) blown-up photos of landscapes that are affixed to the canvas. In pictures made up of rows of portraits, he paints on top of wall-paperlike sheets of portraits, made from woodcuts. Sometimes we have the pleasantly weird feeling that the images are pulsating as we look at them.

The surfaces of his pictures are a mixture of the molten, the blotchy, and the blistered. When he paints on top of a photograph, the pictures can have a waxy, opaque texture. When he adds straw to his surfaces—he does this frequently—we get another rough, raw, and brittle texture. Yet a Kiefer generally gives the impression of something elegantly off-kilter and full of tasty different little textures. His paintings are among the most sheerly beautiful that anyone has made in the past ten years.

There is something that doesn't sit right about Kiefer's lyric beauty, though. A viewer feels that he has to tailor his feelings in order to enter Kiefer's world. You don't just drift into and out of these pictures; you have to take them on their own exalted-and-pitying terms. Kiefer

reminds me a little of Rouault and Francis Bacon. Their work has a similar sanctimonious and jazzily despairing air. These artists seem to think more like novelists than painters; they want their work to be about the "condition of man." They impress us when they become known, because they take amazing liberties with their materials; they seem to invent new ways to paint in order to tell their stories. They are certainly involved with the matter, the stuff, of painting. Yet they seem to be above mere art; there is no thinking about form in their work. Their paintings seem to be based on a conception that they come back to again and again. When we stop being absorbed by the story each man tells, we are left feeling that their art is so much artifice.

This sense about Kiefer has grown on me after having seen a number of his New York shows. It's hard to have doubts about his twenty-three works in *Art of Our Time,* though. Even if he never painted again we would know his attitudes as a social historian and his themes as a poet. And there are some unusual Kiefers in the Saatchi collection—pictures which aren't landscapes or interiors, but which are as good as anything he has done. *Baum mit Palette* shows, against a dark background, a portion of a huge tree trunk which, though it's not realistically painted, has, in the reproduction, anyway, an amazingly treelike presence. Affixed to its center is a painter's palette, made of metal and painted battleship-gray. Its color and material remind us of war, and the image of a palette—Kiefer uses it often—makes us think that the picture might be an allegory about the artist's power, or ineffectuality. The painting seems to cry out, "Analyze me!" We don't want to. It seems enough to say that *Baum mit Palette* feels both new and like an image from a book of tales. It is like a portrait of an ancient, half-dead tree granted immunity from the axe—a tree in a prince's forest, to which an itinerant court painter, traveling through the forest, has affixed his emblem.

Three other Kiefer paintings—they are made up of rows of faces—are even finer. Two of the pictures are titled *Wege der Weltweisheit: die Hermannsschlacht* and the other is *Noch ist Polen nicht verloren IV.* The first two show logs, flames, and circular lines drawn over rows of woodcut portraits of famous Germans of the past, and *Polen* shows

faces painted over and through a ploughed field, which recedes into the distance. These paintings present a less heroic—and, possibly, a more personal and original—side of Kiefer. We feel we are encountering a bookish man who might have been a historian and someone who, perhaps even from childhood, might have been in love with the swirl of personalities that make up his nation's intellectual family. (There are actual swirling lines of oil paint going in and out of the portrait heads.) These face paintings ought to seem literary, yet they're Kiefer's most abstract works. They are the works of his that most resemble the work of other painters of his generation. One wants to see them in the company of pictures by Schnabel, Salle, Polke, and the rest.

Francesco Clemente, who was born in Naples, and now lives for parts of each year in India, Rome, and New York, is a genius with his hand, a genius inventor of images. He first became known in New York with versions of Indian miniatures that perfectly re-created the minutely detailed, ornately colored, and smooth-surfaced nature of this art. Clemente also showed pastels, and they were even more impressive. They were in a class with the best pastels ever—those by Redon, Samaras, Cassatt, Degas, Miró. In later exhibitions, Clemente presented oils and then watercolors that were equally amazing as performances. They showed that, regardless of his subject, he brings out the special flavor of whatever medium he uses.

In his art, Clemente seems to say, quite calmly—and his images and mood are generally calm, no matter how weird—"You're not going to believe this." A Clemente picture is like the glass wall of an aquarium that we look into. Drifting by, and sometimes looking out at us, are people, disembodied faces, and, sometimes, little animals (rodents, mostly). Many are in the process of becoming something else. It is a land of oozy metamorphoses. Clemente does for the human body and its orifices what Chagall did for Eastern European village life and the romance of Paris.

The center of Clemente's world is a very short-haired, wide-eyed, and often unclothed figure who resembles the artist and who we automatically assume is Clemente. At times, he's unaware of us; he's absorbed by problems, we're simply watching him. At other times, he

dreamily peers out at us, or scowls. He can appear as a sullen little satyr. We often see him from below; we're aware of his nostrils. His face is porcine; he is sensual and superior, eunuchlike, evil. Sometimes he appears in a shirt and slacks, and stands a bit sheepishly, his back a little hunched. In these images, Clemente captures a type we know from movies but have not seen in paintings: the modern Italian intellectual. This fellow is simultaneously stylish, professorial, sexy, urban, dissatisfied, and shy.

Clemente's art throws into relief the work of his contemporaries. He does instinctively what the others do in a perhaps more theoretical way. He switches from one level to another level of space—and one kind to another kind of drawing—in the same picture with the unthinking fluency of a mimic. In his fullest works, which are often his pastels, he blends fantasy images with imitations of children's drawings and of patterned decoration. Yet, so far, some core feeling is missing from his art as a whole. (He is thirty-three.) Going through the pages on him in *Art of Our Time* is elating at first. It's a barrage of fascinating, lewd, and amusing dream images, done in startlingly bright and perfumy soft colors. But I don't carry away a lot; there is something neutralized in his vision.

Clemente may want to produce a kind of pacified state in the viewer. He seems to think like an Indian artist; some of his images derive from Indian art, and the cosmic space that his figures swirl in feels Indian. And his art has the same effect on me as Indian miniatures, which are phenomenally beautiful, but always beautiful in the same way. After seeing a number of them, my mind wanders. Clemente's art is like Indian miniatures, too, in that, no matter what the actual size of his pictures, they have more impact when seen in a book. The sensuous and decorative beauty that he is after somehow comes across best in a small format and when a viewer is in private contact with it. Clemente has spoken of his love of William Blake, and, like Blake, he makes certain work specifically for books, often to accompany a text (he has collaborated with Allen Ginsberg).

Yet Clemente isn't simply a European who works out of an affinity for Eastern art and thought. The resignation that is felt in his art comes from him personally; it is felt in many Western artists now.

Clemente merely takes it further than anyone else. Without intending to do so, he gives us the dilemma—as well as the mind—of a mimic. We see an artist whose hand is effortlessly capable of reproducing any effect or known style, and we see the sense of inner void that can underlie that talent.

For the past five years or so, Julian Schnabel and—to a lesser extent—David Salle have been the foremost new artists in New York. They are the American masters of the floating, layered vision, and, at least from what has been shown in New York, no European matches them. Until very recently, their pictures have seemed superficially alike, and Salle has been somewhat overshadowed by Schnabel. Salle's pictures are lighter in tone, subtler in their emotions, more restrained and indirect. He has perfected one of the central formal ideas of recent art: the contrast of elements. Many of his pictures are composed of juxtapositions of scenes painted with a dry brush, in shades of gray, with scenes painted in oil in rich, full colors. Sometimes he contrasts his filmy, grayish scenes with vignettelike images, or actual objects, or words. Almost everything he does has a one-two structure, a play of color against colorlessness, coolness against heat, intangibility against graspableness, memory against the present.

Schnabel doesn't dwarf Salle—or Guston, Kiefer, or Polke. But Schnabel, who is thirty-four, seems to have in him something of everyone else. He is exciting because he seems to come from nowhere and to obey no rules. He is obviously aware of twentieth-century art and its theories, and his painting is indebted to earlier figures, but one feels that the weight of twentieth-century thought has been lifted from him. His work has, if anything, a nineteenth-century—and a European, rather than American—appearance. He often affixes antlers, chains, or pieces of broken crockery to his paintings, and paints on velvet, pinto-pony hides, pieces of flannel—even on Oriental carpets. His pictures have an air of King Ludwig's Bavarian castles. These nineteenth-century castles are conglomerations of previous styles: Byzantine, Gothic, Moorish, and Louis XIV, with elements of Alpine hunting lodges and Mediterranean grottoes blended in. Schnabel's paintings are also concoctions of old and new art, and

they are also lush and luxurious, beckoning and charming—and, at times, heavy and musty. Most of his pictures include figures and faces but some are abstract. They are about ambition, strength, and, one can feel, broken strength. They often show wrestlers, warriors, saints, powerful babies, muscular men whose eyes are shadowed and sunk in and, so they appear, stern men with big plans, big-time losers.

Schnabel's pictures have a distinctive scale. They aren't bigger, in general, than other artists' pictures; but he has a natural feeling for a boxy, squarish format, and his forms often have an attractive lumbering quality. A viewer sometimes feels with a Schnabel that he is encountering a single large protruding form, and that the sides of his pictures count for relatively little (whereas in a Salle every element seems to be smoothly and adroitly going out to you and pulling back from you at the same time).

Schnabel is a more exuberant, giving—and also bullying—talent than Salle, or Polke. We can be surprised by these painters, but we know their minds; at least, we think we know the problems they have set for themselves. With Schnabel I am often in a position where I love a work but have no sense that he will return to its type and build on it. I especially don't know what he's driving at in his abstract pictures. Sometimes it seems that they are made out of bravado alone—that he'll walk up to a canvas (or piece of velvet) and forge ahead with whatever comes into his mind at the moment.

Yet Schnabel's abstractions, which are often of flat shapes, are some of his best works. Schnabel is often at his most mysterious and inventive when he brushes the paint on in odd, sprawling shapes. They are interesting shapes; they are like the shadows of creatures that are part human, part vegetable. We seem to be watching something swaddled that is squawking and about to tear itself apart. That Schnabel goes back and forth between abstractions and pictures with figures and faces in them can be taken as a sign that he is torn between the two. Or perhaps he is saying that the distinction between abstraction and representation has become virtually meaningless. And there is another layer of meaning to his abstractions. The shapes in them often seem to be shadows, or remnants, and in this they are

about what abstraction has become: a memory of something once powerful.

The twenty-five Schnabel paintings in the Saatchi collection—it is a top-notch group—are dated 1977–78 to 1983. There is wonderful variety to them. No one "Schnabel look" emerges. But there is a built-in set of problems to his overall approach, and it has materialized in more recent work. He seems to want to systematically go against all conventions, and this has taken him into some long unexplored types of pictures, such as crucifixions. He has had to paint faces, real faces with features, and his faces haven't been successful. They feel made up; they're ghoulish and ugly. When the faces in a Schnabel are too fleshed out (as they were in many of the pictures in his 1985 New York show), the whole work tends to become heavy, inert. So far, Schnabel clicks when he paints figures and faces with a few quick lines. There is an unexpected unity between the lathered-up surfaces of his pictures, and their baronial sizes, and the doodle-like figures and faces that pop out of them.

One of the best Schnabels in the Saatchi collection, though, has one of these coarsely drawn, anonymous faces in it. *Pre History: Glory, Honor, Privilege and Poverty* (his titles are generally on the windy side) shows, floating next to one another, one of those faces; a male baby, who points his finger; and a simple line drawing of an upside-down Eskimo-type man. There is also what looks like an enormous pear with a knife beside it. *Pre History* is on pony skin, and it is primarily a black and white, tan, brown, yellow, and dark green picture, with lots of antlers stuck on it. It has the colors and flavor of an Adirondack "camp," one of those rustic retreats made for a millionaire eighty years ago. For some reason, the man's face in *Pre History*—it is Big Brotherish—works. Maybe because the picture seems to be a page scrambled from history, anthropology, and art-history textbooks.

Schnabel is one of the warmest talents in American painting ever. The warmth is in his feeling for color, for textures. His color isn't easily labeled; he doesn't stylize color around a few chords, as Kiefer does. He doesn't, like Salle, play hot color off cool grays. He isn't, like Clemente, a master of a rainbow range of equally intense bright and dark colors. Schnabel likes colors to glow. He may have been

prompted to paint on velvet because it is a no-no; but he may also have been drawn to it because bright colors shimmer on velvet. When he affixes broken plates and cups to his thick oil surfaces, the effect is voluptuous, especially when a work is seen from a few feet away or in a reproduction. Schnabel's color and touch are comforting, hearthlike, rousing.

The sculptor Joel Shapiro is one of the links between Judd and Schnabel—between an uncompromising formalist and, it would seem, an egoist who says that there are no more rules. Shapiro, who creates vaguely puppetlike figures seen in awkward positions, isn't, at first sight, a commanding figure; his pieces can be slight, and they aren't, in size or appearance, "important" or monumental. Yet he is one of the central figures in recent art. Like Polke, he straddles two points of view. Polke came up from Pop Art and transformed it; Shapiro has done the same for Minimalism, and in this he also resembles the Saatchis themselves. His evolution parallels theirs as collectors. One feels that they collect Minimalist art (and the work of other artists of that generation) with a sense of respect; but they seem closer to, more at ease with, the work of Guston and the younger artists.

Shapiro became known for working with theatrically small sizes and for bringing recognizable images into sculpture at a time—the early seventies—when most serious sculpture was abstract, or a work of Earth Art, or Process Art. Some of his early pieces (virtually everything of his is untitled) were of a chair or of a house. These primitively simple pieces, often done in cast iron, were like images of the idea of "chair" or "house." They were about three or five inches high and were placed without pedestals on the gallery floor. Later pieces were abstract but referred in some way to a house, a shelter, a fortified place. His work has been getting bigger in size, more recognizably of the figure, and better. Most of it is made from wood beams, then cast into bronze. His figures are like the wood-block sculpture that children make in shop classes. A Shapiro might be called a child's sculpture that, because of the way the parts fit together and the way the piece is placed on the floor, has been given an inner life.

His figures are generally of a lone man. These figures don't have faces; some don't even have heads. And their arms have no hands; the beams are simply cut off. Yet by angling this "arm" beam to this "torso" beam in such a way, Shapiro creates figures that seem enveloped in a thought, a state of feeling. He takes a few blocks, makes out of them a torso, a head, and arms, then turns this "figure" on its side—and we have, say, a sleeping person. But not only sleeping: Shapiro makes it appear as though this figure were also lonely, restless, wiped out. His finest pieces are often painted wood figures. (None of these are in *Art of Our Time.*) His color—he has used, among others, a red-black and a nighttime blue—can seem arbitrary, mental, fanciful; yet it is put on in such a way that you feel as though the wood were blushing this particular color.

Shapiro's sculpture would enhance pictures by Kiefer, Schnabel, and the rest if they were placed together in an exhibition (and vice versa). His pieces, too, are composites; he is a joiner, not a carver or a modeler. And his sculpture recalls a lot of other sculpture: De Stijl and Russian Constructivism and American folk-art toys; the sculpture of William King and the figures in the work of the early twentieth-century English painter David Bomberg.

Shapiro's pieces are so many literal and formal balancing acts. They're emotional balancing acts, too, and this is what makes his work an emblem for the new art. What he's juggling, on the face of it, are different attitudes about his artistic past. He began as a quasi Minimalist—or, certainly, when Minimalism was the challenging style—and whether his subject is a house set by itself on a floor, or a figure balancing on one leg, his geometrically rigid forms recall that style. A viewer can feel that Shapiro is afraid to move on from a Minimalist aesthetic; Judd seems to be breathing down on him. At other times, he's like someone who remains at a declining institution out of sympathy for it and a desire to give it new blood. Sometimes he seems to toy with, to ridicule Minimalism. And, at times, you believe he's not interested in Minimalism at all. He seems beyond it; he is in competition with the great works of figurative sculpture of all periods.

Shapiro's work evokes many separate emotions. An individual figure of his can seem, moment by moment, despondent, hesitant, pugnacious—or powerfully assured. His figures seem to have a troubled awareness of how self-absorbed they are. His work may come to represent the spirit of the present time.

—1986

ORIGINALITY

PHILIP TAAFFE'S ART CAN BE dismissed as naughty. He takes paintings by other artists and, sometimes working with the same sizes as the originals, redoes them. He also makes paintings that, while his own invention, recall other art or scramble elements from different artists. In his recent show at the Pat Hearn Gallery—it was his second one-man show in New York—the works were lifted from, or recalled, Bridget Riley, Barnett Newman, Paul Feeley, and Vasarely. Though they're very different figures, these are all abstract painters of the fifties and sixties who used "hard-edged" shapes and large canvases. Taaffe (pronounced Taff) works a bit like a craftsman who has been given an outline drawing for a billboard or a mosaic wall; he sticks to that outline, but he fills it in with colors and textures that are subtly different from what the original artist called for. It's clear that these Taaffes are takeoffs—or that he's an "appropriator," to use a recent word for it—but how are people meant to interpret this borrowing? I found Taaffe's art disembodied; he might be making belated pieces of Conceptual Art. But some of his pictures have a beautiful physical presence—one that he creates, that has nothing to do with his sources. There is a surprising and unforced elegiac quality to his pictures, and something courageous, too.

Taaffe's best paintings are the ones based on Riley and that suggest Vasarely—the Op Artists. Their works are made up of wavy lines or diamond shapes set in patterns. A characteristic Riley is of black and

is that it is possible to be loyal to both spirits at the same time—you can be less pure than you expected to be and still be strong. Perhaps Kleist believed that his changing sense of things would have sapped him, as a man and a writer. On the basis of *The Prince of Homburg,* though, it's likely that he wasn't about to lose his core subject. Few writers have shown how swift a sword the fervor of youth can be. At the end of his life, Kleist may have been on the verge of showing the different power and freedom you gain by growing up.

—1983

ANSELM KIEFER, JOSEPH BEUYS, AND THE GHOSTS OF THE FATHERLAND

THE PAINTINGS ANSELM KIEFER showed in November at the Mary Boone Gallery in New York are huge by any standards, but you feel so much easy, flowing energy in his arm, and it takes so little time to adjust to their scope, that you wish they were bigger. The pictures, most of which are landscapes, are all at least nine feet high and ten or twelve feet across; *Landschaft mit Flügel*—or *Landscape with Wing*—the largest painting in the show, is a bit more than ten feet high and a little over eighteen feet wide. The sizes themselves aren't record-breaking; American artists have been working with roughly similar dimensions since the forties. But Kiefer's paintings of orangy-yellow fields are big in a new and different way. They aren't wall-like, they don't resemble vast, friezelike Oriental screens, and they don't convey a sense of unruffled, intimidating power. If anything, they're close to the paintings from the Romantic era in the Louvre, the ranks of Géricaults, Delacroixs, and Courbets that make you gulp and then laugh the first time you see them because you never imagined paintings this big. Kiefer's landscapes have the same combination of earnestness and theatricality. They're the work of someone who has an almost hollow, yet engaging way of announcing that he must work big because he has great material in him.

Now thirty-seven, Anselm Kiefer has been talked of for the past few years as possibly the most distinctive and original of the many new German painters. In a report in the September-October 1982 *Portfolio* on the summer's Documenta 7 show in Kassel, Gerald Marzorati wrote that Kiefer's new landscapes stole the mammoth international exhibition and that the painter's "name was repeated around the tables like a mantra." The seven paintings he showed in New York, all of which were made in 1981, bear out Marzorati's report in more ways than he intended. Because there is something you want to be drawn into, and, later, pulled out from, about Kiefer's paintings. Enthralling and bleak at the same time, they're like a visit to a great cathedral on a winter's afternoon, when the light is sunless and white, snow is in the air, and you have the place to yourself. As you go away, you may believe that you have taken the sacred and sad drama into yourself, and that it has ennobled and elevated you; later, though, you may be left with a feeling that your experience can't be made part of the rest of your life, and that it sucks out from you more than it gives.

Kiefer has exhibited in New York twice before, most recently in April 1982 when he also showed good-sized landscapes with high horizons, where the broken soil seemed to be rising up and about to topple down on us. In their presentation of a gashed and violated earth, those primarily black and rust-brown pictures had a poetic and psychological depth that no recent American landscape painting could match. (They made you wonder why American landscapists have been meek and blandly lyrical and impersonal for so long.) Kiefer's paintings kept some viewers at a coolly admiring distance, though; a bit too pointedly grim and dark-toned, they were original but less moving than they had it in them to be. The paintings he showed in November were made around the same time as those he showed in April, yet, consistently larger and brighter in color, and containing more references to German life—such as a title from a

Wagner opera or the name of a German city, which he paints right onto the canvases—they felt as if they were from a less cooped up, more liberated time in his life.

These are pictures you want to linger with, in part because Kiefer is a big and still relatively unknown personality. They hold you mostly, though, because the moods of the individual pictures keep shifting, from something enraptured to something trampled. The images themselves keep going in and out of focus, too, no matter what distance they're viewed from. Kiefer often works with straw and sand and bits of string, which he paints over or lays on top of the paint (and, on occasion, on top of blown-up, indistinct black and white photographs, which are stapled to the canvas). In some paintings, the straw is meant to be itself, straw in a field, while in others it seems to be used primarily for its flamelike color and crinkly texture. But whether there are bale-sized chunks of it or merely strands of it here and there, Kiefer doesn't seem to be doing anything more than sloshing around the straw, paint, and bits of string as if in a shallow bowl, like a prospector tipping and tilting his pan, looking for gold.

Never attempting to be realistic, he yet always creates the illusion of a furrowed, wet, believable earth. He rarely spells out that these pictures are about war, either, yet he suggests nearly every aspect of it. Looking at his landscapes, we feel that we're simultaneously foot soldiers and pilots. We feel that our faces are about two inches from the mucky ground and that we're also soaring high above it. In *Landschaft mit Flügel,* he has hung an enormous bird's wing, made out of lead, from the top of the canvas. Hanging down on two narrow cords, like a medal on a pilot's chest, the matte, hammered-out, pale gray wing makes the splotchy tan and black landscape of ploughed fields and distant marshland look sparkling and seem miles and miles beneath us. We believe that there is a whole bird there, guiding our path as we fly across the vast landscape. We're reminded of the magpie, with wings outstretched, that glides across the cold winter sky in Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow,* leading the hunters and their dogs back into the village. And yet Kiefer's picture has an intimate quality, too; it's like a large version of a display that might be found in a glass case in a war museum. It's like a browning old photograph of an

obscure battlefield that a museum curator has thought to decorate with a shredded object found on that field.

The one time Kiefer goes at the war directly, though, in *Innenraum,* he falters. The only work that isn't a landscape and doesn't suggest the outdoors, this essentially black, white, and brown painting shows an immense room that has dark, imageless panels on the walls, a gridded floor, and a gridded ceiling. We believe we are in a once grand stateroom that was always forbidding and is seen here in the moment before it will collapse or go up in flames. The trouble is that we register this too quickly. We're too immediately reminded of the chilling and ugly grandeur of fascist architecture; Albert Speer's *Inside the Third Reich* has a photograph of the reception hall of Hitler's Chancellery (which he designed), taken after the hall was destroyed—it was clearly the basis of Kiefer's painting. Maybe it's because Kiefer worked so closely from a photograph that *Innenraum,* though it is roughly as large as the other paintings in the show, is so puny and tight in scale and proportions. And maybe because the image is so photographic in feeling, his approach seems illustrational. He isn't doing more than dolling up an existing image by spreading viscous and bedraggled materials over it. He isn't telling us anything about Nazi wreckage that we don't already know. But in his landscapes, he reveals the Second World War, as a subject, in a pleasurably slow and indirect way, and he blends it in with other events and themes in German history. Loamy and ravaged, his images of straw-bestrewn earth feel as if they have in them mixed together the bequests of Hitler and Wagner and everyone else going back in time to the elves and trolls of the Teutonic forest primeval.

Kiefer appears to be flaunting his Germanness, and he has been criticized for this in his homeland. According to the catalogue for his retrospective held at the Folkwang Museum in Essen in 1981 (which traveled, though with some changes in the selection of pictures, to the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London in the spring of 1982), his countrymen have objected to his art over the years because, in their eyes, he's flirting with the ghosts of the Fatherland. Certainly he doesn't keep his material at an oblique or satirical distance. He doesn't want to tell us about the stunted, garbled lives that crawled out of the war,

as does, say, Georg Baselitz, whose upside-down heads and figures are painted with a chicken-claw hand in squawking colors. And he doesn't show the tensions in his divided country, as does, say, Jörg Immendorff, whose cartoonlike epics are often set in a sweatier version of the same glittering and disillusioning cabaret that Christopher Isherwood's and George Grosz's characters met at.

Kiefer wants to work from the vantage point of an innocent, a troubadour-knight who composes elegies for the tragedy of all German history and, maybe too, of all European history. *Balders Traum,* of an immense, black and tan field, flecked with red, from which hangs a large, yellowed branch of what is probably mistletoe (it is attached from behind the canvas), has a benedictory, moment-of-silence breadth that makes us feel that the image has as much to do with the futile waste of the First World War—or any war—as the victories or defeats of the Second. The picture seems to be less about a specific site than a re-creation of a moment when everything was lost, to no purpose.

Kiefer's wounded-soil romanticism is unsettling to his fellow Germans and it leaves us up in the air, too. He is a tricky artist to judge. You believe that, even before he has thought through his individual works, he knows the effect he's after: he wants the members of his audience to bury their differences in the presence of his pictures, to be hushed, to walk out of the gallery with their heads bowed. He seems to be a liberal by temperament who is turning to his like-minded friends and saying, with the quiet, calm voice of someone who knows he has the final word, "There are emotions, you know, that go deeper than our political ideals, and unite us with all men." He is giving us the same stultifyingly fatalistic message, which is supposed to make us feel anonymous but also good, and which puts us in the position of a little boy, looking up at and honoring his father, that Michael Cimino wanted to leave us with in his movie *The Deer Hunter.*

Yet Kiefer does something positive and breezy in telling us that we don't have to tiptoe around the German past. You like the way he lumbers along at his own backwoodsman's pace, unfazed by the fact that so many painters, writers, and movie directors have treated

everything that has happened in Germany between the twenties and today as if it were a gruesome dream or a self-consciously tacky, melodramatic farce. He is pious, but his piety doesn't sum him up. The viewer feels that, on some level, Kiefer's lofty resignation is no deeper than a decal to him. It is a jazzy idea that makes him hot and provides him with the spur to do what he most wants—which is to bowl us over with pictures of overarching immensity.

When he writes "Nürnberg-Festspiel-Wiese" across the sky in *Nürnberg,* he may be supplying the work with the key to its meaning. Even if we have a literal translation and gather that he's referring to a festival and the fields connected with the medieval city, we assume that the words are loaded with outside references, especially since Nuremberg was the site of Hitler's most famous rally and also of the war crimes trials. But there is something so appealing about the awkward formality with which Kiefer has written these words that we bypass their connotations and take them in as lovely elements in the composition. The script has the simplicity of the letters you would see on a blackboard in kindergarten; the lettering seems to emanate from the child's-toy, wood-block houses and village church with a steeple, drawn in a mock-crude, Fauvish style, on the horizon line of the painting.

When he writes "Die Meistersinger" in the clouds that are above the field in *Die Meistersinger,* he may be saying that it's time for Germany to stretch its Wagnerian muscles and take pride in its past once again. Or he may be saying, "Look what Wagner and his lofty conceptions have brought us to—a rank field, a moldy legacy." Yet when you see the words Die Meistersinger up in the pale blue and cloudy white sky, your immediate response, unless you come equipped with thoughts about this opera, is that the title has an audaciously grandiloquent ring, and that it fits this mightily proportioned, straw-embowered, orange-black European landscape in the same corny and stirring way that Ile de France fits a transatlantic luxury liner, or that Man O'War fits a racehorse. Putting the words Die Meistersinger up in the narrow strip of sky of a landscape that has clumps of brushy straw all over it, Kiefer emphasizes how much of an object—almost a living, breathing object—rather than a painting,

this is. We feel the distant trees, the fields, and the sky together as one noble, immense, silent creature, one that might raise itself on its haunches and slowly move away.

Kiefer's paintings have a special power for many people of his generation, and not only his fellow Germans, because they put in an unexpectedly stately form some of that generation's most potent—and least precise—early memories. Especially if you were born during the Second World War or in its wake (as Kiefer, born in 1945, was), his landscapes prod you with the idea that there are feelings stored up in you about the war and about your own past that may be more rhapsodic than, and are certainly different from, those that have been presented over the years, and that your generation alone possesses. For many kids growing up in the late forties and early fifties, in this country and in Europe, countless daydreams, and sometimes bad dreams, were set in a Second World War milieu that we knew from TV documentaries, picture books, photo spreads in magazines, and movies. I pored over the pages on Hitler and the Third Reich in my World Book encyclopedia when I was, I suppose, in the early years of grade school, and one of the first books that I knew was for grown-ups but that I remember feeling was as much—or even more—for me was a picture history of the Second World War, published by *Life.* It was a large, heavy volume with thick, glossy paper and a red, leatherlike cover.

The images that held me most were Hitler's face, the enormous, narrow banners with swastikas in the center, and the Nazi helmets. The helmets, which made those of the American soldiers seem clean-cut, and those of the British soldiers quaint, were most frightening and mesmerizing in the pictures of the Nuremberg rally, where the helmeted troops, lined up in rows, seemed to go off into infinity. The rally pictures never became stale or dull; I always imagined that I was actually at the rally, caught in the ranks, and then I would be faced with the same dilemmas: How will I manage not to be seen? How do I get out?

Even more trance-inducing was Hitler's face. Whenever I looked at him in the World Book, I sensed I was doing something that should be kept secret; I had a hunch that people would wonder and worry about

me if it were known that I spent so much time reading about and scrutinizing him. He was one of the first people, living or dead, who made me feel embarrassed about something in myself. What made me keep returning to him had to do with a test I gave myself. I think I wanted to see how I would stand up, facing such badness and ugliness. Would I give in? Could I fall under his power? Did I really like him? That was the one impossible thing—that I would develop some feeling for him. Whenever I opened to his page in the World Book, the same tension sprang out. He must have represented the cockeyed, crazy essence of the foreign, adult, outside world.

Germany was the country of some of our most frightened childhood feelings—it was a kind of negative Narnia or Oz, because its villains, the Nazis, were so purely evil. But it wasn't only scary. Identifying yourself, if only for a flicker of a barely conscious moment, with sleek and impassive Nazis allowed you to mentally mow down all of the people in your life who always did the right thing and won every point. Vanquished in history's two biggest wars, Germany also stood, perhaps especially for boys who weren't yet adolescent, and who were more interested in the fact of winning or losing than in the ideals that lie behind opposing sides, as a noble wreck. For a kid, whose life is full of monumental and permanent-seeming obstacles, it sometimes made you feel bigger and clearer about yourself to look out on things from the vantage point of the defeated. You didn't think you were a loser; you felt you were a winner, but in a way that wasn't so clear to others at the moment.

Based on what has been shown in the galleries in the past few years, there are no American—or Italian—artists Kiefer's age who have as powerful a connection with the war (or with landscape) as he does. The war isn't felt in the paintings of Julian Schnabel, who holds the same preeminent place among newer American painters that Kiefer does among German ones, and who works with the same vast, Homeric sizes. But Kiefer, with his images of tank-ridden and fertile fields, presented in ashy and golden colors, is only making more explicit the despair-loving, heroically hopeless mood that is in the work of many of his contemporaries. Many artists now seem to want to convey some version of the saddened romance that the German past

and the Second World War have given Kiefer. It is as if artists want to re-create experiences that they themselves didn't have directly but whose aftereffects are swimming around inside them.

The man who has possibly more of those heroically hopeless experiences in him—or has preserved them best—is Joseph Beuys. Kiefer studied with Beuys between 1970 and 1972, and Kiefer's landscapes are, in part, a salute to his teacher. Kiefer's paintings don't resemble specific works by Beuys, and there aren't details in them that can be called borrowings from him. But Beuys's spirit hovers over these landscapes, and, if you are acquainted with his art, it's hard not to think of him as a kind of invisible, ghostly character in them. Beuys is no doubt the most significant artist Germany has produced since Max Beckmann, and, in a way, he has become influential for doing exactly the opposite of what Beckmann did. Beckmann became the foremost German painter of the first half of the century because he assiduously internationalized his art; his work stands as a model of how an Expressionist was able to recharge and replenish his viewpoint over many decades by absorbing the un-Expressionist lessons of classic French painting. Beuys has gone in the other direction. He has become more and more of an influence for Europeans and, in the past five or so years, for Americans, too, because he has slipped his own sensuous and oblique brand of German soulfulness back into the mainstream.

Much of his career is based on a single event that happened during the Second World War. In 1943, his combat plane crashed in the snow in a part of the Crimea that was aligned with neither the Soviet Union nor Germany. As the story goes, his buried, unconscious body, given up for lost by a German search party, was found by Tartars, who took him to their camp and revived him by swaddling him in fat and then wrapping him in felt. He returned home, to Cleves, which is near the German-Dutch border, after the war, and for a number of years gave himself to a time of nervous, listless self-absorption, much of it spent doing manual labor—cleaning stables, working in fields.

He emerged in the fifties, purified, apparently, of his lingering fright, and ready for action. He has gone on to re-create, in one form or

another in much of his art, what happened to him in the Crimea when he was twenty-two. Many of his sculptural pieces, works on paper, and performances tell a story of death and rebirth, of being lost and cold and then saved and warmed. Going about the world for the past twenty or so years, lecturing at universities and public halls, staging his "actions," attempting to link arms with youth and to change its consciousness, he has been, despite his witch-doctor manner, as much a living example of Germany's return to life from the rubble as any of its politicians, industrial designers and engineers, or business executives.

And yet Beuys's idealistic politics, whether described by him in statements or interviews, or presented in straightforward seminars or group-therapy-like happenings, never seem to be truly what he stands for. His utopian, free-spirit belief that each of us is an artist has always seemed to be an ephemeral afterthought for him; his ardent, mystically positive social, aesthetic, and medical theories, which are linked together in his mind and which he diagrams on blackboards, like a football coach or a philosophy professor, have almost come across as a pose, and have helped to keep him a slightly unbelievable figure to Americans and even, possibly, to Europeans. What is real and tangible about him is his stricken yet dangerous presence. Beuys isn't someone you suspect you could, or would want to, have as a friend, but there is a blend of vanity, vulnerability, and deadness in him that makes you want to gaze at him and, if only for a while, float into his sphere.

He once did a number of collages which incorporated the image of Greta Garbo, taken from photographs. As artworks, these pieces are stillborn and silly—an artist with a regular-size ego would have filed them away in a cabinet in the studio. But it's clear why he was drawn to her, and why he was trying to bring her into his domain. Because Beuys must realize that he himself is equal to, or perhaps more important than, the sum of his individual works, and that, like the stars of silent movies, his greatest piece of poetical equipment is his face. The most extraordinary photographs of him are those taken in his youth, in the years after the war, just as he was getting underway as an artist. There is a wonderful snapshot of him from this time in

Caroline Tisdall's catalogue for his 1979 Guggenheim retrospective and another, more posed picture in the suavely produced, book-length catalogue, published last year, of works belonging to the German collector Erich Marx.

With his hair cropped close and his shirt buttoned all the way to the top, in the photo from the Guggenheim catalogue, he could pass as the creep at school who was always off on his own and yet who also made you feel as if he could be listening in for the teachers. He might also be taken as a former member of Hitler Youth, still at the ready, his body tense and Doberman-like, and yet now glazed-over in his eyes, lost within himself. Scared and sad, and seemingly in love with his haunted beauty, he appears, for American audiences anyway, as a European Montgomery Clift—a Clift, that is, who could also be wily and devilish, and who could easily spend a night or two off by himself in a forest, with nothing around him but his leather jacket, sustained by the nuts he might crack open and eat indifferently.

Beuys probably believes that the core of his work is in what he calls his "actions"—his generally slow-paced, often frightening performance pieces, where his stiff movements suggest a wind-up doll that forever seems to be creaking out its few final steps. There is another Beuys, though, a less arresting but equally mysterious and poetic man found in his pencil drawings, watercolors, and oils on paper. And it is in these pieces, though they don't represent his most formidable efforts, and are among his earliest mature works, that he presents the same moody, penetrating, and transfixed side of himself that is in those early photographs. It is the side of him that most haunts Kiefer's work, I think, and that of some American painters now, too, particularly Julian Schnabel.

A number of Beuys's whisper-soft, sketchy graphites were at his retrospective at the Guggenheim. The most memorable were those that looked to be abstractions at first glance, but which included, buried in the scumbled lines, images of, among other things, women and noble yet bony and wilted stags. The sketches appeared to be as frail and precious, as objects, as the few drawings which remain by some of the early Renaissance masters—Pisanello, in particular. Beuys's drawings were surprisingly similar to the northern Italian

painter's drawings in spirit, too. Beuys's images seemed to be so many fragmentary, twisted, shell-shocked versions of Pisanello's world of leggy princesses, nomadic horsemen, and pensive stags—that heraldic world where the satiny, carved, and gilded beauty of the medieval castles is a stone's throw from the uncivilized beauty of the mountainous pine forests that surround the walled castles. Seeing Beuys's exquisite drawings, many of which were delicately touched with color, sometimes pale purple, you had a glimmer of how much his work is about a yearning to create a modern version of that heraldic world, a kind of outpost realm that is lawless and fierce and calls to us, too.

The best place to see that realm is in three superbly produced, large-format, hard-to-find volumes devoted to his work on paper that have been brought out in Germany over a period of years by different publishers, under the direction of Heiner Bastian. The first volume, of pencil drawings, is in German only; the second and third, of watercolors and oil pastels respectively, are in English and German. The writing is by Franz Joseph and Hans van der Grinten, brothers who have collected these works. The van der Grintens are close friends of Beuys's and also come from Cleves. Their lengthy descriptions of the individual pieces, at least as translated into English, amount to elevated gobbledygook, but that doesn't matter. The viewer doesn't especially want the images, the majority of which are from the fifties, to be explained. It's more pleasurable to go back to these books each time as if to a hoard of illustrations to nursery rhymes or tales of chivalry made by an artist whose mind was set to wandering, and who came up with pictures that, in their own unhinged way, are so many new versions of the rhymes and tales.

Beuys's drawings and paintings create a setting where abstraction and representation slide in and out of each other so easily that you forget that they were ever thought to be different. He moves from barely decipherable images of, say, a sled or a bee seen in magnified close-up or a boat tossing in a harbor or a nude woman at rest to pages that appear to be no more than studies of vapor or of fiery, phosphorescent textures. And while these disparate images don't relate to each other in any clear way, and don't, taken one by one, quite stand up on

their own, they seem to connect and tell a story. Even the purely abstract pieces feel as if they contain messages. With their novel and delicious combinations of copper tans and waxy earth browns, surprisingly sensuous grays and metallic yellows, blushing strawberry reds and assorted blues, ivories, and smoky purples, these works, many of which are on pieces of scrap paper, suggest off-the-cuff distillations of remembered events or transformations of theories and thoughts into color. The viewer senses that there is a code underlying the images, and that if the code were broken we might see, among other things, what happened to Beuys in the Crimea, what it was like for him to return to Cleves, and how he turned his memories into one man's private mythology.

It isn't necessary to know anything about Beuys's biography, though, to believe that these pictures are about an unhappy period for him. With their sweeping, curtainlike washes, and the emphatically fragile and weirdly tiny figures that sometimes appear in the washes, the images leave the impression of someone whose life was cloaked and hidden. The variety and spontaneity of the pieces imply that Beuys was reluctant to give up his hiddenness; he may even have wanted to perpetuate it. Though it's apparent, from his not making something full-fledged out of any of them, that he was impatient, too, and that he was working to release himself. If the underlying confusion and fear expressed in these paintings and drawings seep into you, you know why Beuys has wanted to bring more of the real, outside world into his art. The smothered and scarred quality of these works also hints at why he is a torn personality: a man who has the greatest artistic energies and is determined to leave art works behind him, and yet who, out of a belief that art itself is a paltry thing, is inclined to stomp on and leave in a decaying and rubbled state many of the things he produces.

Anselm Kiefer isn't struggling to relieve himself of unhappy and somber memories—he's searching them out. There is a father-and-son rightness—and edgy wrongness—about the way Kiefer complements and alters Beuys's themes. Beuys has always wanted to enchant people, and he has been successful at it in a variety of mediums. Yet,

whether because of the grueling and chaotic conditions of his youth and early manhood or other reasons, Beuys himself seems unenchantable. Without being cynical, he is a very professional shaman; his professionalism is there in his face, which is lost in its own spheres and is simultaneously appraising the degree of our lostness. Kiefer, at least in his work, doesn't have that wary eye. He makes art about his own enchanted absorption with his sorrowful material, and he hopes his audience will be carried aloft, as he is.

Yet Kiefer seems to be holding back some part of himself. His pictures make us hungry for something we can't quite name. It's not that they are formally incomplete, or that we wish he had included figures in his images. An actual figure in any of the landscapes, or in *Innenraum*, the interior, would be ruinous. It's that there is a starved and yearning quality about these works. (This may be why, though they're monumental in size, our eyes take them in so quickly, and we wish that they could be even larger.) It's as if he has made so many great settings that now await the man or woman who will measure up to them and, emotionally, complete them. It's almost as though he has made sets for Joseph Beuys to finally let himself go in, to lope through as the hero that Kiefer—and, possibly, his generation in Europe—may have been longing for, and would love to have in their midst.

Looking at Beuys's work and at the numerous photographs of him that have been published, you understand why Kiefer would want to lay down some part of his spirit for this man. Like the ashen-faced, enfeebled King Arthur, Beuys says to us, his knights, "Find the Grail. Relieve me. Bring life back to this winter-bound kingdom." More than he himself is probably aware of, Beuys implores us to help him lift the damper from his zombied soul. On the rare times when he has been photographed in a jubilant (or even pleased) moment, his pent-up sexual glamour pours forth, and, whether you admire his work or not, you feel that a weight has been lifted from your shoulders, too. There is a photograph of such a moment in his Guggenheim catalogue. It was taken in 1976, after his students rowed him across the Rhine in what was presumably one of his "action" pieces. Striding along the rocky beach in Düsseldorf, swirling into his arms the hooded cloak that he wore when he stood at the prow of the boat

during the crossing (there's a photograph of him in the boat, too), he has a big, beautiful, gleaming smile. Though there is no one else in the picture, you sense that he is moving toward other people, just outside the frame of the picture, who are as buoyed up as he is.

If German artists have few peers at portraying unhappiness, they have also given world art some of its most memorable images of happiness. It is not an everyday or a passionate kind. Best seen in the paintings of the Romantic landscapist Caspar David Friedrich, it comes at certain softened, early-morning moments, when the world appears newly washed and the sun is felt rather than seen. This happiness doesn't exist in Beuys's sculptural pieces or in his works on paper, which seem to absorb rather than radiate light. But it's felt in Kiefer's art, especially when he includes skies and clouds in some of his high-horizoned landscapes. In Kiefer's scheme of things, these details are probably no more than finishing touches, and he hardly draws them in a clear-cut way—he merely lathers on his blues and whites. Yet each time I saw his show, it was these clumps and globs of fleecy white and of a pale royal blue, a steely Prussian blue, and a serene slate blue that my eyes settled on, and that I didn't want to stop lapping up. No recent artist has made me want to stare so long and appreciatively at sky and clouds.

When Kiefer paints skies and clouds, he seems to be attempting to bring the beautiful into his art. Evidently this is a difficult thing for him. It probably doesn't square with his desire to encompass the past or to be honest about being a German today. Yet you sense that part of him wants to paint more of the natural world's warmth, and you wish he would. It is a big achievement to make us live through the old German painfulness in a new way, as he has. His bigger accomplishment, though, may be in painting a new version of German beauty.

—1983

DAVID HOC

WHEN DAVID HOCKNEY showed his pho
at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York in 1
that they had what his paintings, drawing
light and texture of the real world. His s
those in his canvases and graphic work: a
body, seen from the rear, in a bathroom;
Panama hats, placed, along with an aftern
chairs; the entrance to a Mediterranean b
fragrant moment, probably after the day
surprise and pleasure of the show came fro
objects, and places that, in so much of h
juiceless, tepidly stylized existence.

The photographs left a mellow memory
standards of other photographers (and of
photographs are known to the public), Hoc
were in color, were old-fashioned and un
that he didn't like to play with light—he
for his immediate needs—and so his pict
tonality, a kind of Kodak glow, and a lack o
appearance, his elegantly composed phot
those an advertising firm would use to mak
corner of Europe (or, in the case of the nu
these mild, even commercial factors comb
refreshing. Hockney's seeming lack of int
phy, combined with the fact that his sub
regardless of whether or not he caught th
photos a distinct place in the field of rece
and friendly snaps, it seemed, might eve
next to the work of photojournalists and

INTRODUCTION

I

When Fairfield Porter died in 1975 he was known as one of the best painters in America. His own opinion was that he was stronger as a critic. Whatever one's thoughts on that comparison, it can certainly be said that no practicing painter of distinction has ever made so complete a map of the art of his contemporaries—a map to which he himself invented the key, which is also the key to his own mind and art. This book of his writings, which is mainly about the art of his own time, is the complement to Fromentin's *Masters of Past Time.* In another respect, the philosophical depth with which an artist tried to probe the nature not just of his own art but of all art, Porter's writing is alone in its field.

His painting did not seem to fit any of the more publicized categories of a category-loving period; he was regarded as an independent. But Porter's independence took a different form from the known instances in art. He was not a resentful eccentric like Blake, nor a recluse like Morandi: far from it. He exhibited regularly and eagerly in the artistic capital, and his work affected other painters; he went assiduously to exhibitions of all kinds of art whether to review them or not, and he was famous among his fellow artists for suddenly inviting himself to their studios to see the progress they were making. And it would be hard to name a more attentive and respectful listener—not a quality for which artists are noted.

In the critical disputes of his time his was one of the sharp minds, and this is where independence became an issue. It was not that Porter liked contention: he loved art, and felt it was deeply important that critics, who mediate between art and its public, should represent it truthfully. Mainly he was at odds with a criticism which, ignoring the evidence that actually surrounded it, purported to deduce art's future from its immediate past; and so control it, as Porter put it, by imitating "the technique of a totalitarian

party on the way to power." If Porter's painting looked out of line to some people, it was the influence of this criticism that gave it that complexion, more than anything else.

He disliked the criticism but loved the art which surrounded him.* W. B. Yeats said "there can be no great art without a great criticism"; the converse also seems to be true. Alberti had the early Florentines, Baudelaire had Delacroix, Ruskin had Turner, Fry had Cézanne. Porter had de Kooning. He revered de Kooning the painter, and was continually preoccupied with a definition of his art which he felt had deep significance, aesthetic, political, and human. He learned profoundly from him in his own painting, and he loved him as one of the great oracular aestheticians. Porter, artist and critic, relates to de Kooning as Valéry relates to Mallarmé. By a personal intellectual alchemy he fused de Kooning's art with that of Bonnard and Vuillard, but especially Vuillard, his other great enthusiasm; drawing on the spirit as much as the formality of these two masters he created his own art, and a critical point of view that was magnetic north in his experiences with other kinds of art.

Artists who are dissatisfied with the criticism of their time have to invent their own, even though they seldom write it down. Such criticism usually has the authenticity of a direct report from inside the studio, but is limited for that reason to a narrow point of view. Its topic is likely to be an as yet undiscussed or undervalued style. Porter had every reason to write like this since his own style lacked a champion. But, compared to the leading critics of his day among whom he was the only artist, Porter can least be said to have pushed one style at the expense of others. This was the result of his approach. He knew what artists are peculiarly equipped to know because they experience it every day in the studio; that is, that no matter how skillfully and knowledgeably they organize what in literary criticism are called the Aristotelian elements of a work—in painting these would be composition, imagery, color, space, drawing, brushwork—a picture will not necessarily catch fire, come alive. This is why artists often read criticism impatiently when it deals only with these elements. Something is missing from such discussions, the most important thing. A sentence in criticism is often clogged with adjectives. This happens when a critic's nouns

*Writers on art that Porter did like included Bernard Berenson, Suzanne Langer, and Adrian Stokes.

and verbs refer to those Aristotelian elements of a work that can be isolated from the whole, while the adjectives try to characterize what has not been accounted for: namely, the energy that animates them. Porter's criticism is noticeably sparing in the use of these adjectives because he writes, in analogies, directly about this energy, which determines the character of the whole work. He understands the gap between what artists can consciously control and talk about (and what they do talk about continually), and what actually happens in the painting—the gap, in other words, between the recipe and the dish. This gap often eludes criticism because what bridges it is neither subject to the artist's will nor explicit in his choice of forms. It is an aspect of his temperament, and gets in in spite of himself.

Porter once shocked me by his response in a letter to something I had written about a painting: "I think you do something here that all aestheticians I know about (precious few) do, (except Suzanne Langer) and that I think leads them away from the object of their analysis. (Perhaps only in

1. Fairfield Porter: *Trees in Bud*

criticisms of painting and sculpture.) You begin to depart into what the painting ostensibly refers to, that is expressed in the title. I do not think Wallace Stevens does this, though, in his discussion of the Colleoni; he talks about what the statue refers to almost in the artist's subconscious. I believe in doing this, and I believe in Freud's art criticisms—even if they be mistaken, they are on the right track." As psychiatry aims to define the emotional force in an action or a statement, Porter aims to define the force that brings a work of art to life. Porter's interest in Freud is unorthodox in art criticism, but he was no respecter of persons (in this case "all aestheticians I know about"); he does not juggle with existing theories or get waylaid in anybody else's dialectic. His thoughts are his own, and his writing is consequently fresh and full of surprises.

Aristotle divided his discussion of tragedy into the formal elements and the emotional effect, catharsis. Art's resemblance to a reality beyond the work, and catharsis, justified art socially, a justification Plato had questioned. In the Renaissance this division developed into the formula that art instructs by pleasing. Ruskin and Fry split this territory between them. But critics who argue that the value of art inheres in something moral or something formal cut themselves off from too much; their systems are disqualified by the art they exclude. Porter is less systematic: the divide between his likes and dislikes cuts surprisingly across those boundaries we expect to define a taste, i.e., between style and style, school and school; he often likes an artist from a school he disfavors, and often writes illuminatingly about things he does not like. In short, the energy he looked for does not erupt in any consistent relation to particular forms or attitudes.

This energy Porter called "vitality." Something like it was also noticed by the late Anton Ehrenzweig, who wrote about the importance of unscored musical slurs and subtleties of the artist's brushing. But Ehrenzweig went on to treat them theoretically as a category of style which he called "Secondary Form Elaboration." Porter wrote about the content of this energy to make his relation to actual pictures closer. Art history also tends to concern itself with categories of style which are by now almost more familiar than the works they were intended to classify. With Porter, classification turns into insight, and the history of art becomes a series of attitudes to reality: "Critics who find

non-objectivity anti-traditional, do not see that tradition is a process. It leads to non-objectivity like this: first, acceptance of nature as including the artist, who is, like one of the details of his painting, an equal part of creation; next, a questioning of what things are, of what we see; then a questioning of how we see; from here to a consideration of vision itself; then to the one who sees, the artist as part of a duality of nature and recipient; to the artist in introspection, and a denial of objectivity." In Porter's criticism there is none of the traditional difficulty about whether or how art connects to life; when he writes about Berthe Morisot's paintings, for instance, he seems to be writing about both at once: "She loves, but in proportion, and she is perceptive without malice."

As Porter felt that "it is not possible for an artist to put into his products anything that remains untouched by the artist's nature," he also held that "art, like all social activities, cannot help expressing the common basis of social life." So he sometimes discusses art from the point of view of political attitudes it expresses, or makes a social criticism from the point of view of art. In his later writing themes that wound discreetly through his reviewing emerge collected into a big antithesis, its values rooted equally in art and life, with Porter as an increasingly firm polemicist. Here he distinguishes the nature of art from the nature of science, and so arrives at his definition of art and his statement of its value: in contrast to the thrust of scientific method, which organizes specifics into ideas and in its applied form, technology, becomes destructive, art asserts the innate life of individual things.

What Porter really does here is to explore the most far-reaching implications of his taste. For what he loved above all, and all along, is art that is yieldingly attentive to the life of its materials and to particular sensations of reality. Here, too, by implication, is the subject of his mature painting: to keep as far away as possible from any organizing principle or procedure that could put limits to his feeling for uniqueness. Composition, which he was taught to think meant looking for likenesses and repetitions, he came to believe consisted in making distinctions. He would never return to a site to finish a landscape painting because the light would never be the same. And perhaps no still life painter has ever elevated the art of painting whatever was left on the table after breakfast, just as it is, to the heights

2. Fairfield Porter: *Field Flowers, Fruit and Dishes*

that Porter did. No matter how philosophical Porter's later writing became, no matter how much he preoccupied himself with what he thought art is not, his thoughts kept bearing on his practice as an artist, and the definition of what he thought art is.

Porter's intellectual world, then, was extraordinarily complete. He was a practicing artist with a developed theory of art, and a practicing critic with a developed theory of criticism. In person, he seemed to form concise, measured ideas about everything, and they added up; his intellectual poise made you want to improve your own. He spoke with an authority which did not stem from will, but was that of someone who had made sure of his point of view and could therefore permit you yours. He was absolutely straightforward; he knew what he had to say, and said it. Some found his manners harsh, even rude. He was tall with a windblown complexion, and stood very straight. He entered

and left a room suddenly without ceremony, and his walk was a stride. His directness in conversation could be uncomfortably challenging; when he was not interested he would be conspicuously silent, or walk away. It was only that what was important for Porter mattered beyond compromise, and time was not to be wasted on the little conventions that make the fabric of easy social life. His friends found his clarity a priceless exchange, and his warmth, expressed in a smile you could call boyish, completely trustworthy.

II

Fairfield Porter was born in Winnetka, Illinois, "sort of the Scarsdale of Chicago," on June 10, 1907, the fourth of five children. His father was an architect of private means who designed the Greek Revival family home himself, and decorated it with photographs of great Italian paintings and architecture, and casts of the Parthenon friezes. On a visit to the Maine coast to look for a suitable seaside home for the summers, from a wharf on the mainland he spotted an island that took his fancy, inquired after the owners, and made them an offer before visiting it. On this island, Great Spruce Head, he built another house; over the years he and the caretaker cut trails, planned so as not to disturb the vegetation, from the house to the shore and back again by different routes. Fairfield Porter later inherited this house which he continued to visit many summers throughout his life; its main living room, its porches, and the views nearby appeared again and again in his paintings.

Porter was educated in the public schools of Winnetka. When he was fourteen the family visited Europe, and at the London National Gallery, Porter discovered for himself Titian, Veronese, and Turner—his father's enthusiasms being for the Italian seventeenth century. At sixteen he was admitted to Harvard, but was considered too young to go directly to college and was sent first to a prep school, Milton Academy, where he spent what he considered a wasted year. At Harvard he studied art history, and was stirred by the teaching of Arthur Pope. He thought history was well taught, aesthetics not so well, lacking as it did any connection to practice. Renaissance art was presented through the eyes of Berenson, and this was one of the few intellectual formulations about art made by someone else that Porter

carried into his own thinking unaltered. Quite as important was to study philosophy with Whitehead. "What I remember of what I got from him was the importance of having very clear terms in your discussion and knowing what they mean. In other words he wants to escape from vagueness. He also told us that the artist doesn't know what he knows in general, he only knows what he knows specifically. What he knows in general or what can be known in general becomes apparent later on by what he has had to put down." In the summer of 1927 Porter made a walking and bicycling tour in France, which ended with his flying from Berlin to Moscow. This brief visit to Russia, during which he heard Trotsky being interviewed, made a marked impression on his political attitudes, especially during the Depression. (A sketchbook survives from this trip with place names carefully written in Russian; it includes a drawing of the interior of the tiny plane, with its curtained windows, which made the fifteen-hundred-mile flight to Moscow at speeds of up to a hundred miles per hour.)

In 1928 Porter received his degree in art history and went directly to New York to the Art Students' League, where he studied with Boardman Robinson and Thomas Hart Benton. The classes were in figure drawing but not painting: "I don't think anybody in America knew how to paint in oils then." Benton, for instance, "had no sensuousness as far as the medium is concerned. After all a painting is made of paint. Benton is one of those who seems to be trying to overcome this. He told us that reality is a series of hollows and bumps." Porter preferred Robinson, because he treated each student differently, whereas Benton had a system. In his Fifteenth Street rooming house Porter had a painting by Harold Weston, and neighbors who recognized it through his open door one day introduced him to John Marin and the critic Paul Rosenfeld of the Stieglitz circle. He was delighted by Rosenfeld's impressionistic way of talking about paintings, and his work was temporarily influenced by Marin whom he continued to admire throughout his life. Stieglitz's idea that paintings should sell for prices high enough so the artist could live off his work was new in America at the time: it left its mark on Porter's thinking.

In 1931 Porter went to Italy; he met Berenson, and told him of his enthusiasms for Tintoretto and Rubens, imbibed from Benton. Berenson replied that Veronese or Velásquez were the best of all. Porter himself, toward the end of his

life, came to like Velásquez best. In the winter of 1931 he copied in the Uffizi and the Pitti. Returning to America, in September 1932 he married the poet Anne Channing whom he had first met while at Harvard when she was sixteen. They settled in New York City.

At this time Porter painted New York street scenes and studied anatomy at the Cornell Medical School; after a day of dissecting he walked out on the street and remarked: "People look so beautiful just because they are alive." At the League, Porter had met Alex Haberstroh who painted a mural in the socialist Queens Labor Center. Through him Porter became involved in the activities of the Socialist Party. Though he called himself "the least of dilettantes" he painted a mural himself, representing imperialist war turning into civil war, and taught evening classes at the socialist Rebel Arts Center. This center published a short-lived magazine *Arise*, which was conceived as a counterpart of and in opposition to *The New Masses*. Porter was on the masthead along with Haberstroh and the poet John Wheelwright who published a series called 'Poems for a Dime' for which Porter made lino cuts. In *Arise* was printed his first piece of criticism, "Murals for Workers," an account of left-wing murals then existing in New York City.

In 1936 Porter moved back to Winnetka where he stayed three years. There he met the German refugees Paul Mattick and Fritz Henssler, writers and political theorists. Their politics, which they called Council Communism, impressed Porter. Their idea was to create a genuinely classless society, one, unlike any existing form of socialism, without a bureaucratic class. Porter wrote a statement of his political beliefs soon after this which appears in Chapter IX. The Council Communists were sharply critical of conventional leftist politics, and Porter's outspokenness made him unpopular with members of the regular parties in the area. He disliked, among leftists, the lack of connection between ideas and actuality. Years later he wrote, "Before the war I was much influenced by some German refugees, radicals, Marxists, but not Trotskyists, or, of course, not Leninists or Stalinists. And one thing that impressed me was their manners in argument. They NEVER interrupted. They also really listened, even when what you said was by no means new to them." The photographer Ellen Auerbach, who, with her husband Walter, also a Council Communist, met him at this time, recalls that he was reading Toynbee un-

abridged; he would come from reading, suddenly entering the room where company was sitting, and, without greeting, start right in: "He says . . ."

In the fall of 1939 Porter moved east again, to Peekskill, New York. Through the Auerbachs he met the dance critic Edwin Denby, and through him, Willem de Kooning, the photographer Rudy Burckhardt, and the painters Elaine Fried (later Elaine de Kooning) and Edith Schloss. Like Denby and Burckhardt he would from time to time buy paintings by the then unknown de Kooning; from him he said he learned what workmanship means for a painter: "it means not knowing what you are going to do ahead of time. The ability to be open to what is happening while you work."

These were crucial years for Porter's art. He had never painted an abstract painting, and never was to. In Chicago in 1938 he saw an exhibition of Vuillard and Bonnard. "I had never seen so many Vuillards before or maybe so many Bonnards before. I looked at the Vuillards and thought 'Maybe it was just a revelation of the obvious, and why does one think of doing anything else when it is so natural to do this?' When Bill de Kooning was first influenced by modern art it was Picasso he was emulating. With me it was Vuillard." Then, after the move to Peekskill, he met Clement Greenberg. As Porter recalled it: "We always argued. We always disagreed. Everything that one of us said, the other would say no to it. He told me I was very conceited. I thought my opinions were as good as his or better. And he once said—I introduced him to de Kooning —he was publicizing Pollock and he said to de Kooning (he was painting the *Women*), "You can't paint this way nowadays.' And I thought, 'Who the hell is he to say that?' He said, 'You can't paint figuratively today.' " De Kooning's comment on this was, "He wanted to be my boss, without pay." Porter's reaction was, "I thought, 'If that's what he says, I think I will do just exactly what he says I can't do! That's all I will do.' I might have become an abstract painter except for that." When, in 1940, Greenberg first came out with his program for the arts in *Partisan Review*, Porter was prompt to reply in a letter to the editor: "He seems to say in 'Toward a Newer Laocoon' that History justifies the latest fashion. He confuses the arts of painting and history instead of the arts of painting and fiction. I would say that art exists not for history or for fashion, but

for men." This exchange prefigured the politics of style in New York painting for the next thirty years. Porter also recalled that Greenberg, who had just become an editor at *Partisan Review*, asked him to contribute a piece on de Kooning; Greenberg and Dwight MacDonald liked it, but it was turned down by the other editors, and again by the *Kenyon Review*, this time on the grounds that de Kooning was unknown. This was Porter's first article on de Kooning and, evidently, the first written by anyone about this artist.

In 1943 Porter moved to New York City and stayed for seven years. During World War II he worked for an industrial designer who had Navy contracts; "as soon as VJ day came I quit." He took night classes with Jacques Maroger, the former restorer at the Louvre, who taught his students to make and use special painting mediums which were supposed to approximate the recipes used by the Old Masters. Porter, who had previously been painting in tempera, used this medium thereafter—"it stays wet and it stays put," he said—except for a brief period with acrylics in the 1960s; on them he liked to quote Neil Welliver: "they dry too slowly."* It was during the war that, copying one day at the Metropolitan, "a little man with very, very bad breath," who said he had known the Impressionists, told Porter that, unlike the work of other copyists, Porter's had light. This was a refugee painter named Van Hooten, who gave Porter some practical lessons that he felt were extremely important to him. He told him that the Impressionists did not copy, and encouraged him to be more spontaneous. Porter had to work hard for his eventual accomplishments. Rudy Burckhardt recalls seeing in his studio a painting with an awkwardly cropped composition; when he pointed this out, Porter replied that first he had to learn just to paint: composition he would worry about later. But he was certainly not bothered by self-delusions on this issue; he once wrote to a friend, "It is interesting about your reaction to my early paintings. It was not so different from my own: I, too, thought them atrocious." It is a feature of Porter's criticism that he shows little tenderness toward the evidence of struggle in paintings. Rather, he writes almost enviously of

*When Welliver first made this remark, Porter asked him to elucidate. Welliver said, "When I paint in oils I work all the time. With acrylics I have to keep stopping to wait for them to dry."

French facility and French tradition, and of all English painters likes the dashing Sir Thomas Lawrence best. In 1949 Porter settled in Southampton, Long Island, which was not yet popular with artists, going to the family island those summers he could afford it. "We moved here because I wanted to be in connection with New York, as a painter. It seemed a place that, if we couldn't afford to keep going to Maine, would be a place where in summer one could swim in the ocean."

In 1951 Porter was arguing again, this time with Elaine de Kooning over a Gorky exhibition at the Whitney Museum. "She talked to me about how good they were. I talked to her about how bad they were. We had a complete, thorough disagreement about them." Whereupon Elaine de Kooning recommended Porter to Thomas B. Hess as a reviewer for *Art News*. Here Porter would review about a dozen shows a month. At the beginning Alfred Frankfurter, the chief editor, commented, "He is so intense, I give him a year." But he kept this up for eight years, as well as writing feature articles and, of course, painting. His short reviews cover almost every aspect of art; Porter's mind placed things in relation so that, taken together, these reviews make him seem like the empirical Carl Ruggles of art criticism. Bad art and famous art bring out the worst in a critic; they tempt him to suspend his attention. But in Porter's reviews, for all their range of topics, it is hard to find instances of him lapsing into adulation, contrariety, indignation, or contempt. Porter kept a calm head in the face of all the novel trends that were so much the preoccupation of criticism in the fifties and sixties; he kept his eye open for fresh individual talents. There had been the early critique of de Kooning in the forties; Porter was the first to write something consequential about Alex Katz's paintings; and he wrote enthusiastic, perceptive reviews of the first shows of Roy Lichtenstein, Alfred Leslie, Jane Freilicher, Wolf Kahn, and Jasper Johns, among others. In 1958 Porter published a firm article called "The Short Review" in *It Is*, a magazine edited by and very much for artists—the house organ, one might say, of the Eighth Street Artists' Club. It sets out his opinions on reviewing and criticism. It appears in Chapter VI, followed by a brief selection of his own reviews. In 1955 he had published an equally firm letter to the *Partisan Review* criticizing Clement Greenberg's article, " 'American-type' Painting." He undertook the responsibilities of a double talent, writing in one case as the painter-as-critic addressing artists, in the other as the critic-as-painter addressing a critic and his audience. Porter made verbal contributions too to the Artists' Club meetings: once there was a discussion as to whether or not it is vain to sign your pictures. Porter said, "If you are vain it is vain to sign your pictures and vain not to sign them. If you are not vain it is not vain to sign them and not vain not to sign them."

At about the same time Porter went to *Art News* he started to exhibit his own paintings regularly. John Bernard Myers of the Tibor de Nagy Gallery has written: "My friends are a bit surprised when they learn that it was Bill de Kooning who first suggested I exhibit Porter. I told de Kooning I would show the work *sight unseen* if he thought it was that good. 'But it is!' exclaimed de Kooning. Needless to say, I discovered the paintings to be dramatically different from what I imagined they would be." Recommendations also came from Elaine de Kooning and Thomas B. Hess, as well as from Jane Freilicher and Larry Rivers, artists already in this gallery, which also showed Robert Goodnough, Grace Hartigan, and Alfred Leslie. Wolf Kahn recalls how impressed he and other painters were when they first saw one of Porter's paintings at the de Nagy Gallery; he seemed to be doing so successfully the sort of things they were concerned with in their own work. Myers edited a magazine called *Semi-colon* which published the group of poets who, with the painters mentioned above, made up Porter's circle of friends at this time: Frank O'Hara, Kenneth Koch with whom he once exchanged verse letters in the sestina form, James Schuyler, and John Ashbery. Meeting at the Cedar Tavern, "they would take poems and short plays out of the side pockets of their jackets and pass them around." Porter wrote one of the earliest and still one of the best critiques of this then little known group, and he wrote poems himself, including translations of Mallarmé; in his criticism he takes a special interest in the painters who associated with Mallarmé, Vuillard having been among them. Porter's circle of artist friends soon grew to include Alex Katz, Paul Georges, Jane Wilson, John Button, Neil Welliver, and Robert Dash. He acknowledged the influence of Freilicher, Katz, Button, Rivers, and Joe Fiore, all younger than he, on his own work; no doubt the effect was reciprocated in many cases.

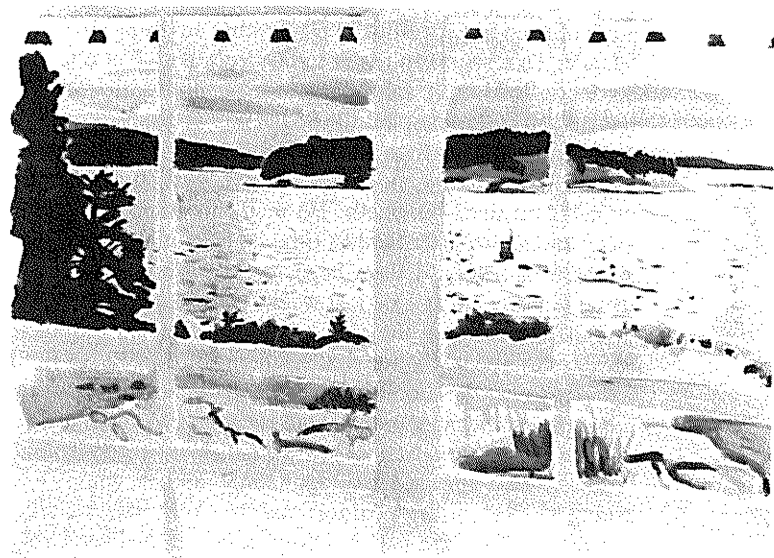
In 1959 Porter became art critic at *The Nation*, where he wrote a column almost every week. He thought this his best

criticism. He had freedom of topic and considerable latitude of length, and these columns (they constitute most of the contents of Chapters I through V) sum up, synthesize, and enlarge upon all the years' experience at *Art News*. Like the Salon reviews of Stendhal or Baudelaire they are full of fine writing and fresh, resonating ideas that survive the occasion; at the same time they convey the flavor of how art was experienced in the artistic capital of the day: in Porter's case, the excitement of New York gallery and museum going. Here, in one-man shows and group shows, haphazard or focused, a wide variety of contemporary and past styles jostled for attention, often championed by polemicists. Porter gave them all a hearing, and, as the surprising juxtapositions, the connections and contrasts he makes between different artists indicate, he experienced them all in the present tense, and on their own merits, something that criticism, in search of greater historical and categorical tidiness than actually existed, does not always manage to do.* In these columns one sees how Porter's thoughts develop from direct experiences, from what he is looking at: his criticism has this quality of contingency. Sometimes in a disparaging way he uses the phrase "literary criticism" by which he means, not the criticism of literature, but the criticism of art conducted in a literary way, where art becomes the background for ideas; this he opposed to criticism which sticks close to the object of its attention, which "tells you what is there."

Robert Hatch, cultural editor at *The Nation*, recalls that Porter worked hard at his columns. When he asked him why he did it, since he was doing well as a painter, Porter said, "I want to be better known." Two years later, talking with Hatch about plans to leave the job, he put in: "I'm better known now, you see." In a letter to the poet Howard Griffin he wrote, "I am not going to review in *The Nation*, or anywhere after June, but concentrate on painting, which I haven't been able to do for some time, because criticism seems to take more and more time, for possibly less and less lines. I guess it is my resentment at writing about paintings and sculpture instead of doing it, that makes it go so slowly." During the years at *The Nation* Porter was elected to the International

* In a letter, Porter expressed his views on history by way of a comparison between Marc Bloch and Hannah Arendt: "I think of him as opposed to her as Darwin is opposed to Marx: Darwin is empirical, Marx somewhat 'formalistic.' "

Association of Art Critics and received a Longview Foundation award for criticism. He had, in 1959, published a short book on Thomas Eakins for a series on American painters published by George Braziller and edited by Thomas B. Hess. The subject he wanted was de Kooning, but "Eakins was what there was." It is unfortunate that the Eakins book, interesting though it is, together with the number of articles he was assigned to write about older American painters for *Art News*, seems to have spawned the notion that Porter was "in the tradition" of American realism. But a reading of this book will show that those were not the painters he admired or felt close to. Porter perceived the development of modern art in a strikingly original way. He saw Impressionism as a revolution in favor of empiricism, which Vuillard developed and Cézanne reversed. American abstract painting in the 1940s, responding to aspects of the American situation and environment, returned to a form that relates to the Impressionist-derived art of Vuillard. "Abstract Expressionism and Landscape," an essay published here for the first time, is Porter's fullest statement of this idea, which threads through his criticism and provides his painting with a more



3. Fairfield Porter: *Morning from the Porch*

appropriate context, one to which the opposition between abstraction and figuration is irrelevant.

In the 1960s Porter's painting grew more confident and more influential. He appeared in the Sao Paolo and Venice Biennales and had a retrospective at the Cleveland Museum. His reputation was that of a uniquely distinguished and respected individualist, but not that of a celebrity; that was neither in the nature of his art nor of his temperament. Neil Welliver once remarked to him that his prices seemed too modest and that perhaps he should raise them. No, he said, he didn't think so; to sell for higher prices would only mean raising his living standards. Nineteen sixty-one had been his last year of reviewing, and it was now that his criticism took its increasingly philosophical turn. He was requested at numerous schools as a guest lecturer, and he took this job extremely seriously: it was the new outlet for his writing. The paper called "Art and Knowledge," which ultimately appeared in *Art News*, grew out of many trial versions read at various colleges—there was no question of condescending to his audience. As a painting teacher, what he did was probably what all artists do when they teach, but it did not satisfy Porter: "I think one reason I dislike teaching (which I also like very much) is that all I can do is communicate exactly what I do or want to do, and I do it in spite of myself, and in spite of even not specifically advocating anything, in spite of silence. This seems to me not good enough." But one of his students, Ted Leigh, said, "He took me more seriously than I did myself." Porter spent the year 1969–70 as visiting artist at Amherst. It was then that he began an ambitious paper he called "Technology and Artistic Perception," which preoccupied him until his death. He read this paper in long versions and short; after the last time he gave it, April 1975, he wrote in a letter, "I have been awfully busy rewriting my usual talk to read at Yale last week. But after hearing myself at Yale, or 'hearing' the effect on the audience, I think I still have to rewrite it. I agree that aesthetics should be, or I think I prefer to say, is, a collection of personal remarks, avoiding systems and extrapolations. That is the trouble with my talk. At the New York School of Visual Arts a conceptualist student, who annoyed me right away, and to whom I was trying to explain my position, asked, 'Why do you talk in general terms?' He had a telling point." But Porter might have answered that if his attack on systems was itself systematic, this is not the paradox it seems; for the nature of a plea is

not to be confused with the nature of what is being pleaded for. Porter kept up a busy correspondence during the years he worked at this paper, in which he told his friends of its development, and explained himself when they misunderstood or disagreed; his letters gloss a dense and radical train of thought. As in the 1930s when he had taken the political line that seemed right to him, though it was unpopular and unconventional, so during these years he was open to all sorts of corners of knowledge and experience that seemed to him too easily dismissed by official opinion; Sufi wisdom, folk medicine, Velikovsky . . . He read extensively about organic farming and even thought of giving up painting to practice it, which he also thought of doing to join the fight against atomic energy, on which he was extraordinarily well informed. But happily he did not; for surely his painting was the strongest expression of what he called "artistic perception," or the affirmative side to his critique of technology. He was producing some of his most beautiful work, and exploring the theme of his ambitious paper, when he died on September 18, 1975.

I

Contemporary Artists

Willem de Kooning

[*1959*] The exhibition by Willem de Kooning, which has just closed at the Janis Gallery, was an event. It has always been so with de Kooning; his first exhibition in 1948 established for the public what the painters who went to his studio already knew: that a painting by de Kooning has a certain superiority to one by any other painter, which is that it is first-hand, deep and clear. A painter of my acquaintance said of de Kooning, "He leaves a vacuum behind him."

The phrase "abstract-expressionist" is now seen to mean "paintings of the school of de Kooning" who stands out from them as Giotto stood out from his contemporary realists who broke with the Byzantine conventions of Siena. The paintings are very big, approximately square; or if small, in the same big scale; in very broad strokes of a house painter's wide brushes, with a dry speed and some spatter; in deep ultramarine, a brownish pink, a very high-keyed yellow green, a cool bright yellow, white and a little black. They represent nothing, though landscape, not figures or still life, is suggested. The colors are intense—not "bright," not "primary"—but intensely themselves, as if each color had been freed to be. The few large strokes, parallel to the frame and at V angles, also have this freed quality. So does

the simple organization, the strange but simple color, the directions and the identification with speed. And in the same way that the colors are intensely themselves, so is the apparent velocity always exactly believable and appropriate. There is that elementary principle of organization in any art that nothing gets in anything else's way, and everything is at its own limit of possibilities. What does this do to the person who looks at the paintings? This: the picture presented of released possibilities, of ordinary qualities existing at their fullest limits and acting harmoniously together—this picture is exalting. That is perhaps the general image. The paintings also remind one of nature, of autumn, say, but autumn essentially, released from the usual sentimental and adventitious load of personal and irrelevant associations. The names of the paintings are misleading (*Lizbeth's Painting, Ruth's Zowie, September Morn*). They are partial, they do not tell all, they do not tell what the painting may have come from (which it may be impossible to verbalize) so much as what the painting partly in each case became. The first incorporates a child's hand prints.

Abstraction in these paintings has a different significance from that in other abstractions. Thus there is an abstract element in classical Florentine painting which says that the deepest reality is tactile: what is real is what you can touch. For the Impressionists, light counted most, for the post-Impressionists, geometry. Or the Bauhaus painters said that mathematics is the most real thing. Nor is there in de Kooning's paintings the idea that abstraction is the historically most valid form today: which might be called the sociological basis for abstraction. All these theories put something ahead of the painting, something that the painting refers to, that it leans on, and if this is removed, the painting may often fall.

Once music was not abstract, but representational, representing a secular tale or ballad, or a religious ritual. When the first abstract music was made there was a release of energy, and people expressed something about sounds in terms of some instrument that was not verbal. After this the human significance of music was also released, and in this way, de Kooning's abstractions, which are in terms of the instrument, release human significances that cannot be expressed verbally. It is as though his painting reached a different level of consciousness than painting that refers to a theory of aesthetics, or that refers to any sort of program:

in short any painting that is extensively verbalized. His meaning is not that the paintings have Meaning, like certain vast canvases notable for the difficulty of containing them in any given space. Nor is their meaning that They Have Not Been Done Before. Nor is it the romanticizing of nature, as with the West Coast abstractionists. The vacuum they leave behind them is a vacuum in accomplishment, in significance and in genuineness. No one else whose paintings can be in any way considered to resemble his reaches his level.

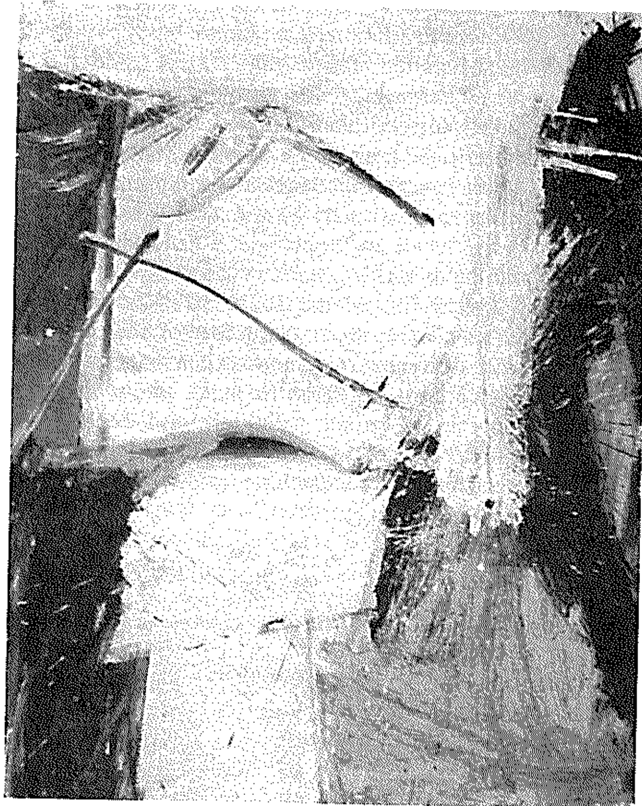
Richard Stankiewicz

[*1959*]

"*. . . Is it to sit among mattresses of the dead,*
bottles, pots, shoes and grass and murmur aptest eve:
Is it to hear the blatter of grackles and say
Invisible priest; *is it to eject, to pull*
The day to pieces and cry stanza my stone?
Where was it one first heard of the truth? The the."*

The sculpture of Richard Stankiewicz is welded together from junk: scrap iron, pieces of discarded machinery, and broken castings. It is to sculpture what the collages of Schwitters, glued together from transfers, tickets, wrappings, and pieces of advertisements are to painting. As Wallace Stevens in *The Man on the Dump* associates nouns and adjectives one would not naturally associate, so Stankiewicz associates a spring, a weight, and the casting from the top of a gas cooking stove to make a non-machine frozen into immobility by its own rust. "Where was it one first heard of the truth?" Stankiewicz' creativeness is childish and barbaric. He uses things for purposes that were not intended, or only partly so, as the early Christians used pieces of temples for their basilicas, or as a child makes wheels for his cart out of crayons. The original material still shows. Respect for the material is common enough in art; it is part of the organic theory. But his material has already been used once and it retains the quality of some previous construction, which was mechanical and functional.

* Lines from "The Man on the Dump" by Wallace Stevens, reprinted from *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens,* by kind permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.



4. WILLEM DE KOONING: *September Morn*

As a stone carver sees the statue in the stone—Michelangelo said carving was easy, because all the sculptor had to do was cut the stone away from the statue—so Stankiewicz sees a beginning with his outer vision, which is sensitive to entirely new relationships between the given parts. Modelers in clay and other welders (who are closer to modelers than to carvers) shape material to a pre-existent image. His is not pure art, because it is related to what it reminds you of. His machines look as though they might run. There is an ambiguous representation—has he made a birdbath, a sun-dial, the emergency steering gear on the afterdeck of a ship, a winch, or what? The ambiguity gives it a

II

Contemporary Styles

American Non-Objective Painting

[*1959*] International interest in American art is a new thing. It is comparable to the nineteenth-century interest in Japanese popular art, or the twentieth-century interest in Impressionism and Cubism. American painting has a new quality that attracts interest even behind the iron curtain: Polish artists admire it, and Russian art circles take time to express disapproval. From international exhibitions it looks as though this painting style, which is more accurately called non-objective than abstract, is not a spontaneous growth contemporary in all countries, but that it has its greatest authority in New York. The new American painting comes from a variety of sources, mostly French and Japanese. It does not matter who influenced who, or who came first; quality is what counts. Arthur Dove and Kandinsky may have made the first abstract paintings in 1908 or whenever, but Picasso's and Braque's Cubism has more authority. De Kooning derived from Picasso, Picasso from Toulouse-Lautrec, Bonnard from Gauguin, Cézanne from Pissarro, van Gogh from Hiroshige and El Greco from Jacopo Bassano. But the distinction that finally counts is not how unlike one artist is from another, but how much this quality stands by itself and honors what it came from.

The new quality in Japanese art that was attractive to the nineteenth century was an expression of the temporary nature of experience. Impressionism expressed the empirical theory that what you know you can know only in your sensations. The new American painting expresses the habit of thinking that what one does is what one is; that a past origin is no more real than its present derivative, and that the significance of future ends is contained in present means. From this it follows that art does not stand for something outside itself. This notion contains the difference between typically American non-objective painting and the European abstraction that preceded it, and also between American non-objective painting and the contemporary European painting that resembles it. Non-objective European painting still either stands for something outside itself or, if not, then the painter, being used to making symbolic art, does not pay close enough attention to the painting before him.

As painting reveals, like handwriting, the state of the artist's soul, so a national school shows the strength and weakness of the class that produces it. The finest French painting is in a great national tradition. French non-objective painting is as much outside this tradition as American Cubism. The French non-objective painters express the chauvinism and avarice of the French petite bourgeoisie. It is as if they thought it were enough to be French, and also cynically believed that they were getting away with something. Soulages is a French painter whose work somewhat resembles Kline's: but Soulages does not "follow the paint" as Kline does: his painting is less attentive to the paint than to a pretended mystery of representation—say, the sky seen through tarred fence boards. Manessier, more cubistic than de Kooning, is very far down what Clive Bell would call the slope that starts with Picasso.

Non-objective Italian painting looks very much like American painting, but it is tidied up. Tidiness is inadequate formality. Except for Burri, the Italians have a common sense of humor that prevents them from taking their art seriously enough. They are like wise clowns inhibited by a knowledge of the vanity of all human effort. The Germans are still under the influence of the Bauhaus idea, and they believe in the supreme importance of the communication of ideas, as if art existed for education's sake, as a guide to the good life. As ideas in German have a concreteness that

they lack in any other language, so in abstract German painting the details embody general ideas, and the painting as a whole is something that can be taught rather than experienced.

The British are the most sympathetic in their understanding of American painting. Alan Davie (who derives from early Pollock) and Peter Lanyon have shown two qualities that exist in no other national school: a sense of the division of the canvas reminiscent of the division of the wall in eighteenth-century architecture, and a love for the countryside. Americans have no continuing sense of what architecture is: we are sentimental about the past and about functional engineering; and, since the American countryside is still in the process of destruction, our colors are drug store colors.

However, the new American painting stands by itself, and one remembers it on its own terms. That happens when the artist pays profound attention to the painting itself while he is making it. Art is measured by an interior intensity. The intensity may have taken place previous to the specific painting, or even in some other artist's work. (This latter is the carried-over intensity of a highly skilled performance.) But somewhere along the line the greatest possible attention has been paid to something whose importance to the artist is a measure of its reality to him. The painting compels the imagination of the spectator as it compelled the painter's. The Impressionists taught us to look at nature very carefully; the Americans teach us to look very carefully at the painting. Paint is as real as nature and the means of a painting can contain its ends. Shaw said of playwriting that once the characters are started, the writer must follow them, not will them; he must pay attention to the life that has been given an independent existence. This idea of creation is non-intellectual. Also, because what continues to interest in such a work of art is the work itself and not outside references, this idea necessarily stresses formal values. In the criticism of painting it has led to an emphasis on decoration as a standard, which has in its turn the weakness of a standard external to the painting (what is decorative ornaments the environment), and so what is only decorative has no life of its own.

The non-intellectuality of self-sufficient art is quite different from the anti-intellectuality of the Nazis or the Com-

munists, who want to be the only client of art, which they can then use to advance their power, as Madison Avenue wants to use art to advance the power of its various clients.

Any number of accustomed things may be real to the painter of non-objective paintings, but one thing is new to the paintings under discussion, namely that the labor of the process is a subject of contemplation. To be attentive to a process is a way people have of making tedious tasks palatable. If one loses oneself in washing the dishes or in cutting the grass, one makes a game of it. The task is transformed by attentiveness to the process: work becomes play, and it is said that one is being artistic about it. The non-objective artist separates the process from the work result.

Symptomatic of this attitude is the use of accident. Accident would seem to be an element unworthy of the ends of a completed painting that has been willed in advance (as the Bauhaus painters planned their art). But when an artist pays the closest possible attention to the work as it goes along, it does not escape his attention that the accident may have a place. (When Japanese painters copy this characteristic look in American painting, the effect is that of putting artificial worm holes in new furniture.) The organic use of accident, that is, the attentive use of it from following the painting as Shaw said a playwright must follow the characters, makes painting as art relate in a new way to painting as labor, and to its function as a protection against the weather. American non-objective painting is playful about work. The practical end of work is disregarded. In this particular way work has not been turned into play before. It makes art out of the contemplation of work, as Stendhal made art out of the contemplation of love and politics, or as Dostoevsky made art out of a contemplation of the conflict of Christian belief with atheism. I think of a carpenter who built a barn for my father. He was very skillful, and to entertain the children who watched him, he would either hammer in a nail very rapidly, never missing the head, or else, in parody of a clumsy novice, make what he called "hammer blossoms"—scars around the nail where he had just as accurately missed. He turned labor into comedy.

The quality of American painting comes partly from a playful exploitation of the medium and partly from the fresh eye of an outsider. It is as though American painters had, as John Strachey said of T. S. Eliot, "ransacked" the history

of art in search of how the classics were made, and taken these means out of the context of their original purposes. The fresh attitude toward the process is like the fresh attitude of a small child toward the words that he has known for only a year and a half, but it does not mean that the painter is interested only in the process any more than the child is interested only in the words for themselves, and not in what they can do. American non-objective painting has an articulateness coming from a sudden mastery of a tool, making the tool seem full of bright and unrealized possibilities. European non-objective painters are inhibited by a realization of the greatness of their past.

Here it may be appropriate to say something about Russian painting, which is so different from what has so far been discussed. Judging from the selection at the Coliseum last summer, Russian paintings lean on extraneous ends even when there is no obvious propaganda purpose. One immense painting of flowers tells you that what moved the artist in nature can be reduced by conscientiousness and hard work to an unpleasant task, stoically carried out. And of the propaganda paintings one thinks, what a laborious way to point a moral! It is like American advertising art with the difference that what an American commercial artist paints in less than a week, is shown by the dates on the Russian painting to have taken years to complete. Taking the Russian paintings as space covered with paint, they protest their spots of meaning with a literalness that has less to do with life than with a will that is everywhere in opposition to natural processes. These moments of meaning—that Stalin was there, that the sun sets behind new constructions as well as old ones, etc.—are like a musical composition stopped on a single note, that blows and blows. They are connected with conscientious passages of gray and brown paint. Structure is arithmetical, nature is transformed into jargon. Art is turned into work. Russian painting is closest of all to the painting of the early development of capitalism. The conscientiousness resembles the bad conscience that Eakins struggled with in presuming, by his decision to be an artist, to live off the money his father had earned through hard work. But the conscientiousness induced by the Russian state has none of the intensity of Eakins' burden.

You look at a Russian painting and appreciate the hard work that must have gone into it, but also you wonder why anyone bothered to make the effort. It is a way of making

a living, like another. You think of a good American painting, how easily done, what a pleasure; I, too, would like to do that! Russian painting is a skill for those willing to pay the price exacted by a government-induced conscience: American painting presents the pleasure of art in a way that makes it possible for the spectator to participate.

New Images of Man

[*1959*]

The new show at the Museum of Modern Art is held together by a tenuous theme. It is called "New Images of Man," and like most themes, it is forced, and therefore interesting. The common superficial look of the exhibition is that it collects monsters of mutilation, death and decay. It is less an exhibition for people interested in painting and sculpture than an entertainment for moralists. It has a painterly-plastic side and a literary side. The painters are Appel, Bacon, Diebenkorn, Golub, Balcomb Greene, de Kooning, Lebrun, McGarrell, Müller, Oliveira and Pollock: the sculptors, Armitage, Baskin, Butler, Campoli, César, Paolozzi, Richier, Roszak, Westermann and Wotruba. Dubuffet and Giacometti appear in both categories. In his introduction to the catalogue, Peter Selz, director of the exhibition, says, "Like the more abstract artists of the period these imagists take the human situation. . . rather than formal structure, as their starting point." And in the preface, Paul Tillich, the theologian, writes: "The image of man became transformed, distorted, disrupted and it finally disappeared in recent art. But as in the reality of our lives, so in its mirror of the visual arts, the human protest arose against the fate to become a thing."

The most monstrous creations are contributed by the sculptors, and the most horrible paintings by the British Francis Bacon. His gratuitous horrors illustrate the conclusions of untold stories: why is the Cardinal screaming (or maybe yawning) in his brass cage; and Van Gogh's shadowed face, is it mutilated by a leprosy? After a while Bacon's images become absurd. With a very few notable exceptions the English have been literary artists, at least since Blake. Their strongest impact or most haunting memory comes from a suggested story. For instance, Paolozzi's muddy concretions of broken clockwork are richer for the

suggestion of the aftermath of a bombardment. Paolozzi is British. But Dubuffet's *Knight of Darkness* or César's incomplete torsos are essentially plastic and say their say in terms of volumes. They are French. So is Germaine Richier. She makes human figures of insect vitality from the slash left by the lumberman. She sees figures in the forest. Hers is not so much a new view of man as an anthropomorphic view of nature. Baskin is American. His smaller than life-sized, unemployed fat men come out of a Turkish bath. They have none of the eloquence of his statement: "Our human frame, our gutted mansion, our enveloping sack of beef is yet a glory. . . . Between eye and eye stretches an interminable landscape."

There are straight monsters, and there are formal ambiguities. There is the ambiguity in a Balcomb Greene painting about what is light and what is form. There is the ambiguity of making something real by looking to one side. In this way a figure by Giacometti is real because its thinness and height bound the space around it: its surface is infinity's single limit, as zero is the single limit of the series of all the numbers. Instead of feminine grace, de Kooning's women have the grace of the stroke of the brush at the end of his arm. Diebenkorn's ambiguity is that one is doubtful, not of what anything is, but only of where it is: the definiteness of structure comes from the indefiniteness of spatial relations.

To react against formalism is to begin a new formality. It would be difficult to say for sure whether the first motivation of these artists is formal structure or the content of the human predicament. For instance, Golub's archaic classical giants covered with an artificial patina, or Oliveira's re-rendering of a Renaissance painting, show neither "total commitment" nor a concern with the human predicament. Neither do they show any clear preference for formal structure.

Or if one takes as his subject matter the pit of Buchenwald, as Lebrun does, one takes for subject matter something safely remote from the smallness of daily-life experience. Are these artists protesting against the terrors of the modern world, or against a fear of not being accepted? Are they protesting the dehumanization of modern man, or are they afraid of the responsibility attached to an assertion of individuality? Do they show man-become-a-thing because they are afraid of it, or because they wish to be so them-

selves; because they wish to be ordinary? The violence of their subject matter may very well hide a fear of appearing ridiculous. The violent image of man has the purpose of making a creation acceptable to critics, it gives an easy subject matter to critical writing, for these paintings and sculptures seem to mean something profound in proportion to the amount of distortion and the violence of their appearance, and in this way the artist clears himself from a conscience made uneasy by his choice to be only an artist in a society where moral threats emanate from sociologists and practical threats from politicians. The artists want to be as needed as scientists or generals or bureaucrats or entertainers. The new image of man may be a disguise, an excuse, an apology for the artistic profession.

On hearing Stavrogin's confession of his ugly crime, Dostoevsky's priest commented that fear of ridicule would prevent him from making his confession public. And in the same way the artist's indifference to moral censure covers up his fear of ridicule. He may seem to be courageously facing the human predicament, but this courage saves him from the harder necessity of accepting the difficulties of art and public contempt. It has probably been like this only since the artist was told that he is a prophet, and that art is a substitute for religion. His job would be easier to face fruitfully if he did not think that he was supplying a lack that it is not his business to supply. The fate to become a thing may not be so terrible as the pressure to become a seer.

Happenings

[*1959*] The Reuben Gallery is a new gallery at 61 Fourth Avenue, New York. It plans to show avant-garde art that you can see nowhere else. The first exhibition is not of paintings but is an "event" consisting of eighteen "happenings," by Allan Kaprow. Kaprow has had thirteen one-man exhibitions, and he teaches art history at Rutgers University. He wishes to stretch the limits of art; he wants to make something outside the old classifications, to which one responds with several senses. Like a composer of opera, he wants to combine all the arts in one form. He is ambitious; and as a teacher conscious of history he is impatient with the brush: he re-

sembles the critics who say, "you can't do such and such any more, it has already been done."

To see the "Eighteen Happenings" it was necessary to reserve seats in advance. During the performance different things go on in each of three different rooms, which are separated by semi-transparent plastic partitions. After two sets of events, you move, during an intermission, to another room, according to instructions given you at the door. After two more events you move to the remaining room, and so each member of the audience sees one-third of all that goes on; but you can hear and partly see what is happening in the other rooms. Actors come in, read or speak or play a musical instrument, or paint, or just move; and accompanying this are tape-recorded sounds and the activity and noise of wound-up mechanical toys. Sometimes the words spoken are drowned out by other sounds. In one room is a collage of artificial fruits, partly painted over. There are varicolored lights.

The movements are military, disciplined and solemn: the words spoken have a similar solemnity, the fragments of ideas are romanticized, there is something about time from T. S. Eliot, phrases like "art: dear to you all" and "the mocker mocked." A game is stiffly played according to plan by two players with cubical blocks.

The details, like the details of collage, are ready-made: reminiscences of sets by Rauschenberg for dances by Cunningham, of Cage's music (this in the quality of timing), of modern poetry, of Dada and German Expressionism. The action is monolithic, the materials of the setting flimsy, and the voices have an unrelieved seriousness. Kaprow's method is almost the opposite of most artists, literary or visual, who make something out of clichés or ordinary things or rubbish: he uses art, and he makes clichés. Kaprow debases what he quotes and what he refers to. If he wants to prove that certain things can't be done again because they have already been done, he couldn't be more convincing. The "Eighteen Happenings" devalue all art by a meaningless and deliberate surgery. And the final totality is without character, it never takes off from the sidewalk.

Avant-garde art has the merit of surprise. Kaprow's avant-garde "event" constantly disappoints one's expectation of surprise. Like so many science fiction movies about the future, his subject matter is the undigested immediate past.

Abstraction in Sculpture

[1959]

Sculpture is a displaced art. Since the Renaissance, at least, there have been many fewer sculptors than painters, and the quality of sculpture has not equaled that of painting. And, except for Rodin, the best sculpture since the eighteenth century has been made by painters: Degas, Renoir, Matisse, Picasso and Giacometti. Nowadays the problem of exhibiting sculpture is a very difficult one. It is hard to get space enough: outdoors is usually better than indoors. But even the Museum of Modern Art's sculpture garden looks like a cramped storage room; only Rodin finally holds his own there.

Is sculpture an adjunct of architecture? It certainly has been; but how can it be an adjunct of modern architecture, which is mostly anti-art and anti-ornament? Before the Industrial Revolution architecture was monumental; *things* were made. Art made thingishness coherent, logical and objective, in a single building or façade, or in a larger way, in the baroque street or square, or the Paris of Napoleon III. Paris has the beauty of a visible humane coherence. Buckminster Fuller once suggested that the architecture of the future would be invisible. In the twentieth-century urban environment of America the presence of the present is ghostly and the connections with the past are weak. The coherence of New York is invisible, though it can be experienced.

The most visible urban coherence of this century is the Los Angeles system of freeways. Los Angeles or New York is a complex of functions. Experience of our twentieth-century-created environment is linear and textural: lines of force of traffic, water, gas and electricity, and texture that builds nothing. "Man" is not an object to be looked at in the round; instead he is what one is inside of. Man is interior and subjective, and it is unprecedented for artists to try to express this with three-dimensional objects.

And so modern sculptors, I suppose influenced by their environment, often do not present any image of man at all. They present an image of the environment. The current fashion for steel as a material comes from the use of steel in modern construction. (It also comes from the absence of craftsmen trained in bronze casting.) Beside the challenge

and pinkish sky, presenting the essential structure of landscape, nature is not structure to her, but rather a sensuous experience. As a whole, nature is irregular and it is partly in its specific irregularity that it reveals its presence. Being tied to no place, except near the sea, the irregularity looks abstract. So beauty does not mean for her clarity and logic, but the total fact that nature is naturally specific and never the same.

For Paul Georges, who exhibits fifteen self-portraits at the Great Jones Gallery, beauty is to be found in reality, of which art is the mirror. And for Georges logic is subordinate to reality. Reality is stronger than thought, feeling, the means of its achievement, the artist's ego or his subjectivity. He uses tonal contrasts and close values and a freely decided choice of colors, of which red, green and brown stand out. His paint is thick and juicy. In the large painting facing the door, divided into the painter on one side and the wide brown back of the canvas on the other, there is a rapid linear indication of the feet. All these means, any means at all, and the variety of individualities in one single model, impress on you the reality of the person looking out at you. Realist painters often complain that the human figure should be the chief concern of art, and that it is missing from current styles. But most of these artists seem to see only some arbitrary, even abstract concept of the way man should look. They see a lay figure or a caricature: they do not see without prejudice. Because Georges gets an unprecedented and always different individuality, he can be called one of the few true realists painting in New York.

Realism Transcends System

[1960] The following four exhibitions have something in common: the Rembrandt drawings from American collections at the Morgan Library; the oils, pastels, drawings and prints of Degas at Wildenstein; the welded iron sculpture of Richard Stankiewicz at the Stable; and the painting constructions of Robert Rauschenberg at Castelli. For each of these artists realism transcended and transcends any systematic artistic formality.

Rembrandt created a total world of greater human depth

and breadth than any other visual artist. The language of his drawings is, like Chinese, or the English of newspaper headlines, a language without grammar: the part of speech depends on the context. In a Rembrandt drawing a detail is almost meaningless by itself, and there is no form separate from the form of the whole. A line, or lines, or the wash, tells where, before it tells what: where in space, where in action and where in dramatic significance. A figure is analyzed in terms of its presence, which precedes its articulation; and the articulation may be expressed with physical vividness by the expression of a face. The turn of a neck is indicated by the eyes. A line does not mark an edge or change of plane any more often than it marks the center of weight. A line either separates what is on each side of it, or it gives integrity to where it is. Artists have had and still have certain common ways of translating external reality through appearance or tactility into flatness, but for Rembrandt essence comes first. Figures are either emphasized or made unimportant by thicker lines, as one may shout or whisper to attract attention. Wash is color, or shadow, or projection, or recession, depending on the context of the drawing as a whole. Nothing can be abstracted; the parts are meaningless, rubbishy, tattered: the ground which as a whole has its total feel all the way to the horizon, is in detail only muddy litter; the clothes of his figures as a whole may be grand or poor, but they always suggest the temperature, and in detail they are just rags. The unreality of the detail gives connectedness to the whole, which is held together by the artist's compassion. It is interesting to observe his copies of Mantegna and of Indian miniatures, which give the human effect of these works without any attention to the artistic style.

For Degas, the tension of his paintings and pastels is in the conflict between the decorum of art and the unprecedented nature of nineteenth-century society, whose form was more and more determined by the mechanization of industry. Visual form is contrapuntal to dramatic form: what people do is one thing, and art is another. A jockey lies wounded on the ground, while the beautiful motion of the horses continues. Chance dominates decision. The humanity of his dancers has nothing to do with their skill. Degas seems to dislike life for not being art; though he had sympathy for it. The whole is greater than the part,

19. REMBRANDT: *Indian Warrior with a Shield Leaning on a Stick*

but since Degas lacked the energy of Rembrandt's compassion, even a whole painting by Degas has something fragmentary about it. Degas could not include an attitude of the whole in one canvas. The grandeur that he could perceive lay more in art than in man; and art for Degas meant Ingres, Delacroix, Holbein and possibly the Florentine fifteenth century, even more than it meant the talent of his fellow artists, or his own. Except for the motion of horses and women, the present inspired sarcastic distaste. And Degas chose to express the disorderly present with the

orderly grammar of the art of the idealists, whose remoteness from him made them idealists.

The idealists of New York painting are the non-objective painters, who isolate art from details of actuality. They wish to see profoundly and they are against illusion. Or perhaps they simply wish to seem to see profoundly. Rauschenberg's art is disorderly in its incorporation of real elements. His red, white and black, or blue, white and black are slapped on with the skill of hand of the New York school. This is his allusion to art; he alludes to his contemporaries, as Degas' classical line and subtle values alluded to the masters of the past. Rauschenberg combines in his paintings a catalogue of real parts: radios that can be turned on simultaneously to different stations, stuffed birds, homemade ladders stained with drips of paint, chair backs, squares from cotton pants, a compass, can opener, light socket with chain, flattened and crumpled metal, photographs and pieces of newspaper, umbrellas opened flat, rough-sawn lumber and assorted hardware. His extremest construction called *Gift for Apollo,* consists of a cupboard door mounted on doll-carriage wheels, with a doorknob and glued-on necktie smeared with green; from this hangs a chain ending in a bar embedded in the hardened cement in the bottom of a battered pail.

There is a resemblance to the scavenged metal work of Stankiewicz, with the difference that Stankiewicz's material has, as it were, spoken to him before he has used it, as the piece of wood in the beginning of *Pinocchio* spoke to Master Cherry even before Master Cherry touched it with his axe. Stankiewicz responds to a preceding life of things, and Rauschenberg does not; for Rauschenberg the life of the parts depends on the final context. When a part of a Rauschenberg construction has its own life, the effect is disturbing, calling attention to a general grubbiness; I never find his stuffed birds sufficiently assimilated. In a Stankiewicz sculpture the life of a part gives character to the life of the completed sculpture. Rauschenberg's work completely counters so many preconceptions that in order to see what it is one must be open to new form beyond old formalities. He expresses a morality of poverty, inducing a monastic respect for things that no one values. He protests the waste in this society, where we take for granted that automobiles are disposable, and that our trash cans

are filled with paper work. He calls attention to the success of industrialism opposite to the way the Bauhaus did, which saw industrialism as it wished to be seen. Moholy-Nagy was like an academician finding beauty in the copying of something already beautiful, with the difference that what he found already beautiful was not the Parthenon, but the skills released by modern machinery. Rauschenberg's work has more personality than anything like it. Its weakness is that it tends to approach the chic.

Rauschenberg is able to assimilate his real elements better than he usually cares to. It is as though in calling attention to the unassimilable, he disparaged art in favor of reality. Stankiewicz's fantasy about plumbing makes him sometimes illustrative, as in the two boiler-bathers playing at the beach. His more formal, abstract and untitled sculptures have greater reality; it is in these that one feels more strongly the human life that has rubbed off into his broken pieces of machinery, or the inevitably inherent life of hardware, like the resistance of things to man's purposes.

Against Idealism

[*1964*]

Berenson said that it was an English and American vice to try to limit the means of your expression.

Artistic manifestos indicate where the artist directs his attention. His attention is directed to the place that interests him as most important to him, and this place is either his conception of where reality resides or of what he is sure he knows. Artistic "realism" is usually conceived as an interest in things as they appear to be. This is neither the scientific idea of reality, nor the idea of most philosophies. However realism depends on using the help of science to reproduce appearance.

The opposition between "realism" and "abstraction" is a misleading one. Both realists and abstractionists think they embody an ideal of art of which each work is the shadow: the realist making a reflection of the natural world and the abstractionist making a reflection of the world of ideas in the largest sense, which of course includes non-verbal ideas. Both think that what is real about art exists in the realm of Whitehead's "eternal objects" and no matter how much either one pretends to prefer either reality or unreality (like

Clive Bell), this reality or unreality is an eternal object which an artist of whatever persuasion constantly refers to whenever he makes something. So is the opposition between "Humanism" and whatever a humanist thinks is non-humanist, unclear. It can mean, for an artist who wants to represent appearances, a preference for representing the human figure. It can also mean putting concern for man's welfare ahead of indifference to it. Such art chooses a content of social consciousness, and such a content in turn usually implies a criticism of the social order. This art wavers between a satire that is most effectively put into words, and sentimentality. Yet it is not possible for an artist to put into his products anything that remains untouched by the artist's nature.

It was fashionable a few years ago to disparage, in the cause of abstraction or non-objectivity, what the abstractionists called "illusion," as if their own products were without illusion. A few years ago at the Museum of Modern Art in New York there was simultaneously exhibited in adjoining galleries the works of Jackson Pollock and of Balthus. And on the stairs leading up to these two exhibitions hung the museum's purchase, de Kooning's *Woman.* I suppose most people would agree to include Balthus among realists, and Pollock among non-objectivists. In this example of his work de Kooning falls into neither category, though it would certainly be included with the anti-illusionists. Balthus has always used the illusion of appearance. What was the effect of these paintings? Balthus' paintings, based on the use of illusion as it was understood at the time, gave the strongest sense of the actual presence of something —what? I suppose the presence of the personality of the painter. Certainly the sense of a directed and still unresolved emotion. The Pollocks communicated rather a sense of consistency. The de Kooning had least sense of the continuity and flatness of the paint surface: most of all three artists' works his was like something floating in the atmosphere, it was phantom-like, and like all ghosts, illusory. Pollock's paintings and de Kooning's one painting belonged to the category (invented not by artists but by critics) of "abstract expressionism." Expressionism is meant to mean art in which the content is an expression of strong emotions: but the effect of Pollock's painting is one of all emotion spent: these are the aftermarks, from which whatever emotional pressure may have gone into their making has evapo-

opinion on what El Greco was from his paintings in the Escorial outside Madrid, which like all the paintings there have retained a freshness unseen anywhere else in Europe. This is a place free from industrial smoke, with a dry climate favorable to paintings. I doubt that they have been restored.

My criticism of much restoration is that, for all its science, it is not artistic enough. Aesthetically the present restoration is less than one could wish for. The eccentricity of El Greco's style actually expressed more vividly than his contemporaries the Baroque that it seemed to deviate from. The restorers see the vividness as if separated from its ambience, and their over-emphasis diminishes this vividness. They make him into a mannerist. A principle of Baroque composition that El Greco exploited is the question-and-answer motion of curved forms against and in continuation of each other. This restoration tries to separate him from the Baroque and place him among the Expressionists.

VI

The Short Review

The Short Review

[*1958*]

The members of the Artists' Club speak of their purposes, their integrity and originality. Who is most part of his time? Who is most honest to a personal vision? Relative claims are presented in this spoken art criticism, which is the competitive function of these discussions. An artist says that the critics do not understand him, to which the critic would answer that he does; that either there is nothing to understand or that what there is is inappropriate or immoral according to certain rules; he might say that this is not art. The abstract painters are against representation, which the realists find necessary. There is in all this written and spoken criticism a more or less suppressed implication that other people are phonies and their work trivial. Who is most important? Who most deserves the admiration of other artists and of the public?

A short review is thought to denote small importance: the critic evaluates by the inch. At the Club are discussed the common stupidity of critics and public, and the competition that artists have with each other for attention. This makes for a verbal self-assertion, different from the self-assertion of an exhibition. Artists and dealers are attentive

to criticism, they read what is written. The critic is important to them, and they are sensitive, and on the lookout for slurs. But most published criticism is literary criticism, and it happens that the artist and dealers are most attentive to literary criticism. Editors of avant-garde magazines assert their leadership in the intellectual world, and their conviction of leadership is convincing, or at least very persuasive; and so artists and dealers are much influenced by the philosophical and sociological fashions of the literary critics, and look for guidance there. "Where do I stand? What is my place in the world?"

A review can describe as vividly as possible the quality, the look, and implication of an exhibition. Naturally a reviewer does not like everything and his understanding and taste is limited. But it is his taste that is most limited, and that by education rather than by innate capacity. People in general do not trust themselves enough. A genuine and ordinary reaction to paintings and sculpture, like one's first impression of a new person, is usually very much to the point. I believe that accurate impressionist criticism is the kind that communicates to a reader of a magazine what the character of a painter's work is—a remark of the following sort (de Kooning about Charmion von Weigand's paintings): "She makes little cushions." I do not much believe in criticism of contemporaries that estimates importance, because although some things are better than others, as Shakespeare is better than Shaw, this has too much to do with restricting, either morally, like a minister, or pseudo-scientifically like a social worker; and it makes art and art criticism competitors of ethics, which they are not. Some art has a very open meaning, and can be written about in terms of this meaning; but the chances are that if the meaning is the most interesting thing about it, it does not stand alone, it does not assert itself. It leans on what it means. An implied meaning is richer. And the evaluation of the critic is most interesting when it is implied rather than explicit, because if it is explicit, something is almost unavoidably left out. A review can be at best a parallel creation, its subject being the nature of the painting or sculpture. Criticism creates an analogy, and by examining the analogy you see what the art essentially is. Criticism should tell you what is there. A long criticism may have irrelevant observations, and almost surely lacks the intensity of say, Wallace Stevens' description of Verrocchio's *Colleoni*.* The point is, whether it is successfully done.

Painting and sculpture are made to be seen and touched; they are sensuous things; even if they are about ideas (dramatic, like Orozco), rather than about the sensuous world, still these ideas are sensuously communicated. Realist painting, which has an obvious subject matter, can be most valuably discussed in terms of its form—how and how well is its reality presented? Abstract painting in which the sensuous elements are undisguised and obvious can perhaps best be written about in terms of its subject matter, which is largely the artist himself, that is, his character.

Reviews should be short. Who likes to read art criticism? One likes to read it if it is worth reading, as Ben Shahn said. But this has nothing to do with the correctness of its evaluations; nor with the painting to which it refers; just as it is not what painting or sculpture refer to, but what they present, that makes them worth looking at.

Vuillard, Bonnard

[1954]

Edouard Vuillard is being shown at the Museum of Modern Art in his first big retrospective exhibition in New York. Along with the exhibition, the Museum and Simon & Schuster are distributing Andrew Ritchie's illustrated book on the artist. Because his fame started early in his life, it is sometimes surprising to learn that he was of the generation of both Toulouse-Lautrec and Matisse. This reviewer does not agree with the usual American estimate, shared by Ritchie, that the early, small arabesque paintings, influenced by Gauguin, were his best. The exhibition seems intended to prove that after 1900 the Symbolist influence began to disappear under a mass of detail. It also emphasizes the indoorish side of Vuillard, "the fustiness of Symbolism" as Georges Duthuit put it. And Ritchie says, "His park scenes have a curious quality of the indoors about them." But this is not true of the landscapes, not included in this exhibition, painted after 1900 in Normandy, and *The Park at Les Clayes*, painted in the '20's; nor of *The Arbor* (1900) which is shown. Another serious

* In *The Necessary Angel*, Chapter I.

"I am quite sure that after he left me, he emigrated to America to recruit spies. He had a secret past; for him to have had a secret future as well would have been most unfair.

"I do think that whenever one has any secrets to impart to the Soviet Union, one should be quite candid.

"Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after he is imprisoned.

"And if Ernest was not the 'sixth man,' I feel sure that he was someone equally important."

Partners

MISS TEAS WEDS FIANCÉ IN BRIDAL

The marriage of Nancy Creamer Teas, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Russell Ruckhyde Teas of Glen Frieburg, N.Y., and Point Pedro, Sri Lanka, to John Potomac Mining, son of Mr. Potomac B. Mining of Buffet Hills, Va., and the late Mrs. Mining, took place at the First Episcopal Church of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

The bride attended the Bodice School, the Earl Grey Seminary, Fence Academy, Railroad Country Day School, and the Credit School, and made her début at the Alexander Hamilton's Birthday Cotillion at Lazard Frères. She is a student in the premedical program at M.I.T. and will spend her junior year at Cartier & Cie. in Paris.

The bridegroom recently graduated from Harvard College. He spent his junior year at the Pentagon, a military concern in Washington, D.C. He will join his father on the board of directors of the Municipal Choate Assistance Corporation. His previous marriage ended in divorce.

Cabinet, Delos Nuptials Set

Ellen Frances Cabinet, a self-help student at Manifest Destiny Junior College, plans to be married in August to Wengdell Delos, a sculptor, of Tampa, Fla. The engagement was announced by the parents of the future bride, Mr. and Mrs. Crowe Cabinet of New York. Mr. Cabinet is a consultant to the New York Stock Exchange.

Mr. Delos's previous marriage ended in an undisclosed settlement. His sculpture is on exhibition at the New York Stock Exchange. He received a B.F.A. degree from the Wen-El-Del Company, a real-estate-development concern with headquarters in Tampa.

Miss Burdette Wed to Man

Pews Chapel aboard the Concorde was the setting for the marriage of Bethpage Burdette to Jean-Claude LaGuardia Case, an account executive for the Junior Assemblies. Maspeth Burdette was maid of honor for her sister, who was also attended by Massapequa Burdette, Mrs. William O. Dose, and Mrs. Hodepohl Inks.

The parents of the bride, Dr. and Mrs. Morris Plains Burdette of New York, are partners in Conspicuous Conception, an art gallery and maternity-wear cartel.

The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Erasmus Tritt, a graduate of Skidmore Finishing and Divinity School and president of Our Lady of the Lake Commuter Airlines. The Rev. Tritt was attended by the flight crew. The previous marriages he has performed all ended in divorce.

Daisy Lauderdale Featured as Bride

Daisy Ciba Lauderdale of Boston was married at the Presbyterian Church and Trust to Gens Cosnotti, a professor of agribusiness at the Massachusetts State Legislature. There was a reception at the First Court of Appeals Club.

The bride, an alumna of the Royal Doulton School and Loot University, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Harvester Lauderdale. Her father is retired from the family consortium. She is also a descendant of Bergdorf Goodman of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Her previous marriage ended in pharmaceuticals.

Professor Cosnotti's previous marriage ended in a subsequent marriage. His father, the late Artaud Cosnotti, was a partner in the Vietnam War. The bridegroom is also related somehow to Mrs. Bethlehem de Steel of Newport, R.I., and Vichy, Costa Rica; Brenda Frazier, who was a senior partner with Delta, Kappa & Epsilon and later general manager of marketing for the U.S. Department of State; I. G. Farben, the former King of England; and Otto von Bismarck, vice-president of the Frigidaire Division of General Motors, now a division of The Hotchkiss School.

Affiancement for Miss Convair

Archbishop and Mrs. Marquis Convair of Citibank, N.Y., have made known the engagement of their daughter, Bulova East Hampton Convair, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff of Arlington County, Va. Miss Convair is a holding company in the Bahamas.

All four grandparents of the bride-to-be were shepherds and shepherdesses.

"Now these," she said, "are from Isfahan. And these are from Chichicastenango." She was old. She had been, for more than thirty years, beginning at the time and with the help of Senator Joseph McCarthy, the dragon of the passport office. Now she was retired, showing me her house. "When were you in Chichicastenango?" I asked, holding my little notebook. "I don't recall the year," she said.

To begin with, I almost went instead to Graham Island.

I broke the law, perhaps I ought to confess this at the start, I fell afoul of the law at last, in an unlikely place, on the road to Dublin from a town called Cihrbradàn. I left at three in the night, unseen, I hoped, unheard. I was saved, further down the road, by a teamster to whom I lied, though he did not ask me much, and who may have lied to me as well. A lorry driver, they would have called him there, but his truck was immense; he drove, as he told me, all night two nights a week. When I asked, he said he was a union man, so he would have been a teamster here. I left the country and the jurisdiction by plane and traveling under a pseudonym, or a name that was anyway false. I am a fugitive from the jurisdiction now. But then, in extenuation, there were so many things. In extenuation, there are always so many things. The surgery. My state of mind. The shady business at the airline ticket office. Look here, you know, look here. I am trying to leave. All the little steps and phases and maneuvers, stratagems, of trying to leave him now, without breaking my own heart, or maybe his, or scaring myself to death, or bounding back.

This is the age of crime.

Was there something I did, you think, or might have done, I ask you that, some thing I did not do, and might have done, that would have kept you with me yet a while?

This is the age of crime. I'm sure we all grant that. It's the age, of course, of other things as well. Of the great chance, for instance, and the loss of faith, of the bureaucrat, and of technology. But from the highest public matters to the smallest private acts, the mugger, the embezzler, the burglar, the perjurer, tax chiseler, killer, gang enforcer, the plumber, party chairman, salesman, curator, car or TV

repairman, officials of the union, officials of the corporation, the archbishop, the numbers runner, the delinquent, the police; from the alley to the statehouse, behind the darkened window or the desk; this is the age of crime. And recently, I think the truth is this, over a period of days and nights some weeks ago, I became part of it. How else account for the fact that I found myself, at three a.m. on a dark November night, haring in a rented car through the Irish countryside, under a sickle moon? At times it rained. Sometimes the sky was black and clear, with the moon and stars precise and perfect overhead. It was cold. The car's radiator did not work. And there I was, speeding along the road, I hoped, toward Dublin, from a place called Cihrbradàn. I had no clear plan, but I thought I had at most ten hours to be gone.

Beside the road, invisible, the fields, the long stone walls. On the road, few cars, three perhaps an hour, all of them coming toward me. Nobody following, then, no one in pursuit. And yet, as I passed through the small, dark, widely separated towns, I wondered whether my headlights and engine were noticed, whether a policeman, perhaps, or some sleepy but eager informer, had picked up the receiver, and called the next town. Phones ringing, then from town to town, not even for me necessarily. What lawful errand, after all, could send a cheap, small rented car out on a Southern Irish road, at this speed, in this weather, at this hour? Except that, with any luck, it no longer gave much sign of being a rented car. That afternoon, in broad daylight, I had peeled its rental sticker off. In fact, though I did not know at what precise moment I had crossed over into crime, that removal must have marked a turning point. On the one hand, they, they could say that it proved guilt or at least criminal intent. I, on the other hand, I could make what I had begun to think of as the argument of What kind of fool do you take me for. I mean, do you take me for such a fool as to remove a rental sticker in broad daylight when what I have in mind is a furtive escape. The argument, I knew, hardly ever worked, in politics, or criminal law, or private life—and yet, in my case there was no criminal record, and so little evidence. It made no *sense* for me to be doing what I seemed to be doing, in view

Palestinians have been supporting the people in the camps. Because the camps, as you know, are a UN responsibility. But from the UN they were only getting one dollar, per month, per family. I said, rather mildly, Surely not, surely it was more than that. And she said, No, it is true; I know it for a fact. I said, But Diana, when were the first hijackings, the early sixties, and the UN mandate began in 1948; surely, in the years between, the Palestinians were living on something. And she said, Yes, on one dollar, per family, per month. It is simply not generally known. And as she went on, explaining, as she thought, what had happened in the Middle East, I said, with an inner irony but ashamed of myself for lying this low, It is odd that no one has ever written this history. Diana said, Pierre, of course, will write it, in his book about Israel and the Palestinians. Until now, he has not had time. But, when he has time, he will write it. In his research, at Princeton, he has found many documents, previously unknown. And Sylvia muttered something, which I thought included the word collaboration. I said I hadn't understood. There was a pause. Sylvia said, more loudly, About the collaboration. I said, Collaboration between whom? And Diana said, Well, you see, Pierre has discovered in his research these documents, at Princeton, about collaboration between the Nazis and the early Zionists. I said, Surely, Diana, that would be a considerable scoop, and it is odd that Pierre has not gotten around to it. She said, Yes, it would be of enormous value to the Palestinians. Pierre has simply, so far, not had the time. I said, Look, there are not, there do not exist, at Princeton or elsewhere, previously unknown documents about such a collaboration. It is the most exhaustively, publicly, documented period. Ah well, Diana said, certain interests of course would like to suppress them, but Pierre has seen them; the documents exist.

I should perhaps have left the table then, or minutes before, or never been at the table, but I thought, still trying, there must still be some way, some way to repair this. And one of the other guests said, pacifically, Well, you know, they may not have deliberately suppressed them. The documents may just not have been found till now, in all those boxes. And I said, very slowly, This is the nineteen-eighties,

here we are at lunch, but if we are talking about any documents at all, the sort of documents you mean are the Protocols of Zion. Well, Sylvia edged a little away, and the other guests became rather intent on their eating. Diana said, I should perhaps have studied the matter more deeply before I speak, because with your background, your heritage, you would be sensitive to all the implications. And we were, how to put this, we were still at this point, friends. I said, Look, it's not a matter of background. I should hope I would know enough, feel obliged to know enough, about this matter in our century, no matter what my background was. And it went on, this edgy, awful conversation, and the point is, I did not leave. I argued, but I did not leave. Later, when Diana walked me to the courtyard, I was still trying. I said, I'm sorry, your poor daughter, she must have been surprised to have set off such a stormy discussion. Diana said, No, it was my fault; I should have studied the matter more deeply, so that I had the documentation when I spoke. I said, Diana, there is no documentation. She said, again, something about my background. I said, It's not a question of my background. There was, after all, the catastrophe of the six million. She said, Even if it was only three million, I should be more careful what I say. The clear implication of her three million was derisive, as though the actual quantity were fewer and she was being generous. I said, Look, I don't want to haggle over millions. Some people have begun to say that there were no millions at all, that the whole story is untrue, a conspiracy of Zionists and bankers. Now she said, Yes, and in a way I am more concerned with the millions of Russians, for instance, who died also; but who received much less publicity.

He said, Kate, give me your flight number. I'll meet you at the airport. We need to spend some time together. He said other things as well.

This is how it began. The turning point at the paper, as it happened, was the introduction of the byline. There had always been bylines, of course, but only on rare stories and those of the highest

importance. Sometime in the early sixties, the paper began to put bylines on nearly all stories, by everyone. No one could have predicted where this would take us. It seemed, at first, a step in the direction of truth, of frankness. Part of every story had always been, after all, says who? But the outcome, in retrospect, was this. From anonymous reporters, quoting, as a matter of the highest professionalism and with only the rarest exceptions, from named and specific sources, we moved gradually, then rapidly, to the reverse: named reporters, with famous bylines, quoting persons, sources, who remained anonymous. There were several results. The reporter himself, with his celebrity, his byline, became in many cases the most powerful character, politically and otherwise, in his own story. The "sources" lapsed, became sometimes highly placed officials floating as facts rumors to which, like pollsters, they wanted to test a reaction, sometimes disenchanted employees or rivals, trying to exact a revenge, or undermine a policy, or gain an advantage, sometimes "composites," a euphemism for a more or less fictional character introduced for some specific purpose of the reporter's own; finally, perhaps inevitably, absolute fictions, inventions of the reporter's to enhance his byline, meet completely new journalistic pressures, advance his own career. Within a period of months, three of the most important newspapers in the country printed stories that were absolute fabrications. The first of these, which invented a child and implied that he was typical of a whole, heretofore unrecognized category of children, was the most obviously false. Any editor, any reader whose intelligence, whose common sense, had not been blunted by the new appetite for this sort of investigation, would have recognized at once that the story was not and could not be true. But first, they tried to get it a prize, and got it. Then they called it a hoax (not the mot juste, surely); and went on to say that the story existed, somewhere, just not in this instance, that they were the victims of on the one hand a hoax and on the other a vendetta, and that they would find the true instance of just such a child. Finally, they spoke of the talent for fiction. What an odd notion it was that fiction was just a matter of getting facts completely, implausibly wrong.

And here we come upon the oddest thing. What it was that people were actually caught at. Falsifying laboratory results. Falsifying medical credentials. Falsifying degrees. Falsifying military records, personal histories. And it was not, it was *never*, though this was supposed to be an era of investigative reporting, it was never journalists who caught the falsifiers at all. And, though this was supposed to be as well, the age of information retrieval, when everybody's records were on file in everybody else's computer, everywhere, people risked their falsifications, and were never caught by computers, either. And, of course, in a way, this was not entirely a bad thing. Because, since well before the earliest days of the republic, it had always been a tradition, first a frontier and then an immigrant tradition, that there should be crannies of identity, that a man should be free to make up, in this free country, a new life and a new name.

Well, sometimes it may be just a matter of hanging around until the breaks can find you. The brakes? No.

This is about a murderer with whom I recently had lunch. I had never met him. His trial had been widely covered in the press. He had been convicted, but not yet sentenced. My view, and Jake's, was that he was guilty, but that the evidence against him had been fabricated; that he had done it, in other words, but nonetheless been framed. The host for this lunch was a designer. He asked me, I think, on an impulse. I hesitated. But what kind of journalist, what citizen of my time am I, I thought, if I take it that just because a man has been found guilty of murder—specifically, attempted murder, of his wife—he is in fact guilty; and even if he is, what kind of journalist am I not to see such a person, once, at lunch. I had also this relation with the host, Billy Warren. Eight months before, he had invited me to dinner, in honor of old friends—a couple who were in town only briefly, from abroad. That day, that very day, when I came in from my country house, I had found on the door of my apartment a Notice of Eviction, paragraphs of which had been encircled by our landlady, who had perhaps again been drinking, in nail polish of a

particularly vivid red. I was going to take the train back to the country that same evening after dinner. Somehow, I arrived at Billy's apartment early. Well, not early, but fifteen minutes after the time I had been asked for, which in that group meant I was by far the earliest guest. The host was still buttoning his cuffs when I arrived at his door, carrying my little suitcase. I've been evicted, I said, a little breathless. Billy blanched, then said chivalrously, and with real kindness, Do you need money? I didn't, but what a kind reaction, especially since he must have thought from the suitcase that I had some thought of moving in.

Anyway, when I went to Billy's lunch, I arrived fifteen minutes late, and again that was too early. This time, not even the host was there. The cook, or in any event an employee who was cooking something in the kitchen, let me in. The sole of my shoe had been loose for days, now it was flapping. As I waited, it occurred to me to ask the man in the kitchen for some glue. He found some Elmer's Glue-All. I carried it to the living room, to a place well away from the carpets, near a window. I took off my shoe, glued the sole, put the shoe back on. And some of the glue dripped from the sides. With a Kleenex from my purse, I wiped the highly polished floor boards. This left the polish dimmed. It seemed clear to me that a wet cloth was required. Carrying my shoe in one hand, Kleenex and Glue-All in the other, I crossed the carpet back toward the kitchen. The doorbell rang, the door opened, and the murderer walked in. We introduced ourselves. I said, I can't shake hands, you see, because I've been, my hands are. I let that sentence lapse. With shoe back on, and a wet rag in my hand, I returned to the dimmed boards near the window, and began to wipe them off. Though the window was closed, there were some leaves scattered on the floor. I had wondered briefly, when I came in, whether they had blown in earlier, or whether they were from a houseplant which had for some reason been removed. I ignored the leaves, and concentrated on the spot, which was in fact dull, or at least less shiny than the highly polished floor around. Then, I turned to the murderer, shook hands, said, How are you? We sat on a sofa. I asked, Where are you staying now? He said, Well, I'm not in

the penitentiary yet. I said, No, I meant was he living in Boston, where his house was and his trial had taken place, or in New York. In New York, he said, I've had enough of Boston, thanks very much. A silence. I said, Does nobody talk to you about anything else? He said, Well, they're going to talk about nothing else when I'm not present, so I might as well talk about it when I am. Face it, you see, I'm a vedette.

They were rich, they were publicly generous. In private they were miserly beyond belief. They were slumlords, but they were on the boards of a lot of charities, and therefore oddly placed to do a lot of good. And this they did. So that, on balance, one has to say, I don't know what. There was all the difference in the world between the beneficiaries of what they were on the boards of and anyone who actually depended on them. They had a meddlesome, inconsiderate, pious, bullying rapacity; and yet they wanted, as a last straw, to be thought poetic. So, one by one, he told the wives of his tenants that he was in love with them. He had no ear whatever for language. He liked to say, I'm very sensitive. Meaning quick to anger. He spoke of heighth, of nucular, of walking with he and I. When his best friend was dying, he said, he's being fed intraveniously.

And I, don't you see, and I, and I. Imagine, if you will, being me.

When one of our oldest reporters, a not untalented man, wrote a long piece, in three parts, entitled Can the Rich Write?, I asked one of my favorite editors why on earth we published it. It's satire, he said. Satire? I said. It's the most slavish, interminable, pointless exercise in snobbery I've ever seen in print. Ah, well, he said, you see, it's satire that cuts both ways. I've had twenty years to think about this, and I know that, whatever the editor can have meant—satire of subject and author, satire of subject and reader, satire of author and reader—whatever he can have thought he meant, there is simply no such thing as satire that cuts both ways.

In the matter of problem one, hope is almost at an end. Well, need it be all or nothing, dear? No, but do you call these crumbs and stale rinds half a loaf? Crusts, not rinds. Crusts. You call this having your cake and eating it? You call this emotion recollected in tranquility?

In the matter of problem two, he does not return our calls. Problem three keeps calling; we have him on hold. Problem four, long-term solutions, there are none. Problem five: we have lost the correspondence, though the subpoena lies here on our desk. Problem six, immediate pleasures, has no active file.

But, look here, my typewriter spoke to me. I mean, I had rented what is called a memory typewriter; I liked it so much that I forgot to read its instructions. When I had typed a page, and pressed the Recall button, what it typed was: "Memo, June 23, 1981: Salary Increases." At another page, "Any of the deferred weeks which have accumulated may be taken in any year, in addition to the regular time scheduled for that year. Pay for vacation actually taken, including both regular and the deferred vacation time, is based on the employee's salary." At every page, there was something from a prior user. Three times, it typed exactly this:

> I have scheduled an interview for you on at If this is not convenient, please let me know so we can make other arrangements for the interview.
>
> Your application is on active file and available for consideration whenever appropriate openings develoo/ Should a suitable opening become available, we will contact you.
>
> Again, thank you for your interest in our company.
>
> We appreciate your interest in our company.
>
> We anticipate a pleasant visit and look forward to hearing from you soon.
>
> Please contact our personnel department and arrange an appointment to discuss job opportunities.
>
> Please complete the enclosed application and return it to us in the enclosed envelope.

Well, I particularly liked the "develoo/"; it occurred in the course of what was evidently, as well, a memo of recommendations concerning Swimming Pool Covers. But I thought, then, of privacy, of

thrillers, of secrets, personal and corporate; and that I, too, was about to become a prior user. So, without reading any further, I cleared the memory of all its remaining pages. And immediately, I thought of all that may have been there, and I felt a sense of loss. My typewriter, after all, had tried to speak to me; and I erased it.

At dinner, I said, Can we live this way; what do other people do. He said, It doesn't matter what other people do. I said, I know. You said, What matters now is this.

Here's another sort of thing that happens to and around me. There are five wild cats on our road, three black, one white, one orange. They attack Frank and Marilyn's tame cats, one grey, one calico. One night last spring, Marilyn looked out the window. The white cat was prowling on the hillside. Marilyn heard a flat, understated crack, saw the cat rise and then lie down. Frank had used his rifle, through the window of the upstairs bedroom. I have my own rifle; our whole neighborhood is armed. I would never use that rifle though, have in fact no ammunition. There are vandals here, but so far, though they've stolen weathervanes, smashed some headlights on neighbors' cars parked outside at night, and crushed, as delinquents even in my time used to crush, a lot of mailboxes, I have had no contact with them—except for one foil plate, with french fries and a half-eaten hero sandwich on it, which I found, early one morning, wedged between the screen door and the front door of my house. For some time, though, it has been clear to me that I will buy a handgun. I've known it, in a way, since the night Frank shot the cat.

In the same week Frank shot the cat, Marilyn organized a parade of three- and four-year-olds, on tricycles, on Main Street; Frank and Marilyn bought a hotdog stand on wheels, which they brought home attached to the bumper of Frank's car. It may not, to begin with, seem remarkable that the owner of a kindergarten should organize a parade of very small children on Main Street. But the occasion was Labor Day. The group right behind the tricycles was men on horseback; the group right in front was antique cars. Marilyn had

capacity, and on occasions of another sort risked my physical self. But this buying of a gun, this simple, in some ways quotidian purchase, is the most extreme, the worst, most extremest, I can't find the word for it, thing I've ever done.

One of the times he was on his island, and before she ever left, she wrote a story. He said, Kate, will I like it. She said, I don't think so. He said, I won't read it then, if you don't want me to, since it is not in your name.

Here's how it is with the old couple. It is his second marriage. He is a doctor. He married her when his first wife failed, as so many of those refugee wives failed, to make the transition with him across the abyss of culture and of war. But now here's how it is with the old couple, in their second marriage, for love. At bedtime, she likes to watch television, programs he especially despises. He cannot sleep with the TV on; but every night, in the course of the program, she goes to sleep. When he gets up, to turn off the set, she is furious. Either she insists that she was not asleep, and that she wants to watch, or she reproaches him for having switched the set off. You woke me up she says, with rage.

As a child, Jon was told by his parents to live by four maxims: do the best you can; never boast; never complain; and always think of those less well off than you are. Very sound precepts, all, moral. They only seemed designed to cut him off from any happiness whatever. He does the best he can, fair enough, the effort. If it succeeds, he should not make it known. If it fails, and fails by some injustice or in some manner painful to him, he should not complain about it. And lest he enjoy, even in private, his moment of success, or, in the other case, his private failure, he is to think at once of others. And not of fortunate others, but of others less fortunate than he. He is a truly good man, but the cost must have been high.

Is he gentle with the children, does he recognize the family, I asked the deputy sheriff from upstate, who said he worked mainly with German shepherds, on drug cases and bar fights, and that he

had one for a pet. Lady, he said, when he gets into the car at night, I tell you, he becomes a different dog.

My world, after all, has been, in a way, the newspaper, and all these people; and home, whatever home is, consists of sheriffs, neighbors, lawyers, doctors, ambassadors, editors, senators. Also, of course, come to think of it, now swamis. Last summer, when I broke my foot, and could not drive, on account of the brake and the clutch, Ben drove me from time to time. And we talked. When my foot was better, he drove me, in his own car, as a kind of present, to his ashram. When we got there, I thought, I cannot really say that I understand this, it does not speak to me really, but Ben does seem to have, look at him, rapt, chanting, though he is trained as an engineer, does seem to have a faculty for this spiritual matter; and these people are not Moonies; there is nothing sinister here; it seems gentle rather. On the drive back, Ben said, Kate you, who are always seeing doctors, I know you are skeptical, I was skeptical too, for years, but you who are always seeing doctors, why don't you take one class, just one at the ashram in New York? He gave me a ticket, which admits the bearer to one hatha yoga class. And one day, when there was, as there now always seems to be, this pending question of the surgery, I thought why not. So I called the ashram, and I reached a voice with so Bronx an intonation that I thought at first I had misdialed. But he gave me the schedule of the classes, and sounded so very kind, that at the end of our conversation I asked his name and whether I would see him there. He replied, Yes you will, and I am Vishnu. But then, but then, I never went.

In the matter of helplessness. "This is a final notice," the blue-and-white slip from the telephone company said. If I did not pay the amount below within five days, they would disconnect my phone. After that, if I paid the amount in full, there would be a service charge, to reconnect. As it happens, for once, I had my bank statements in order, and canceled checks to show that I had paid my phone bills every month. When I had called the business office, and been put, as one always is, several times, for long intervals, on hold, I