

LETTERS

from

31 ARTISTS

LETTERS FROM 31 ARTISTS

to the

ALBRIGHT-KNOX ART GALLERY

Edited by Ethel Moore



GALLERY NOTES

Volume XXXI, No. 2

and

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The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy

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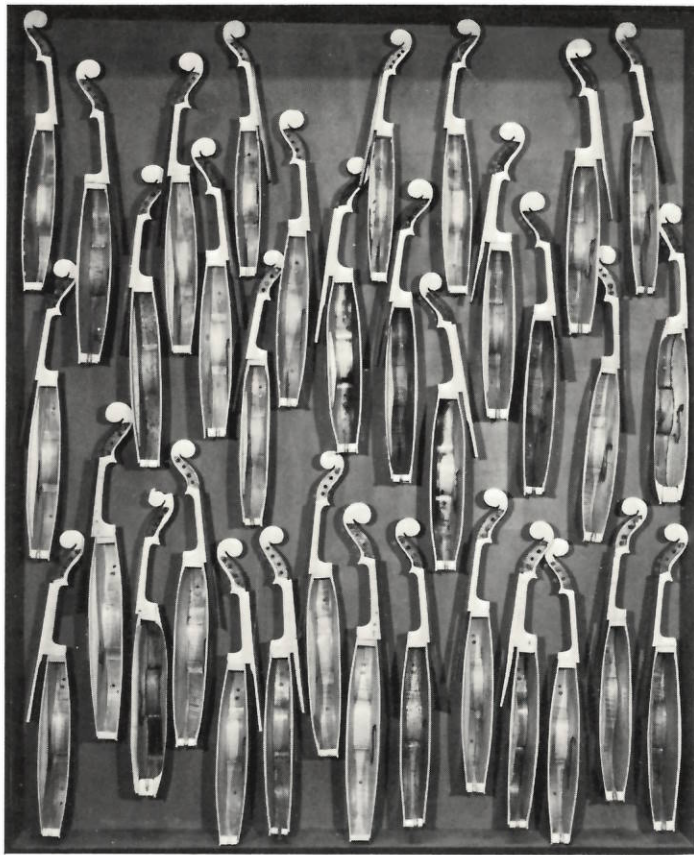
FOREWORD

The major emphasis of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery collection always has been on contemporary art and, at present, over one-half of the entire collection is the work of living artists. From time to time, we have received comments from artists on their paintings and sculpture, and a number of these have been published in *Gallery Notes*.

Recently we have begun to expand our efforts in this direction in order to add to our document files the uniquely valuable statements of the artists. The majority of those to whom we have written have responded and their letters have been of such particular interest that it has been difficult to make a selection for this issue of *Gallery Notes*. In choosing this particular group, we have attempted to strike a balance between painters and sculptors and between younger and older artists, but many of the decisions were necessarily arbitrary. However, we plan to continue publishing these comments by the artists which so frequently add another dimension to our understanding of their works.

I would like to express our appreciation to each of the artists who responded. Also, I would like to thank Mr. Robert M. Murdock, Gallery Curator, and Miss Ethel Moore, Editor of Publications, for their contributions to this issue.

Gordon M. Smith
Director
Albright-Knox Art Gallery



Toccata et Fugue, 1962
Arman (French, born 1929)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Sculpture of accumulations—
split violins
65" x 52¼" x 5½"

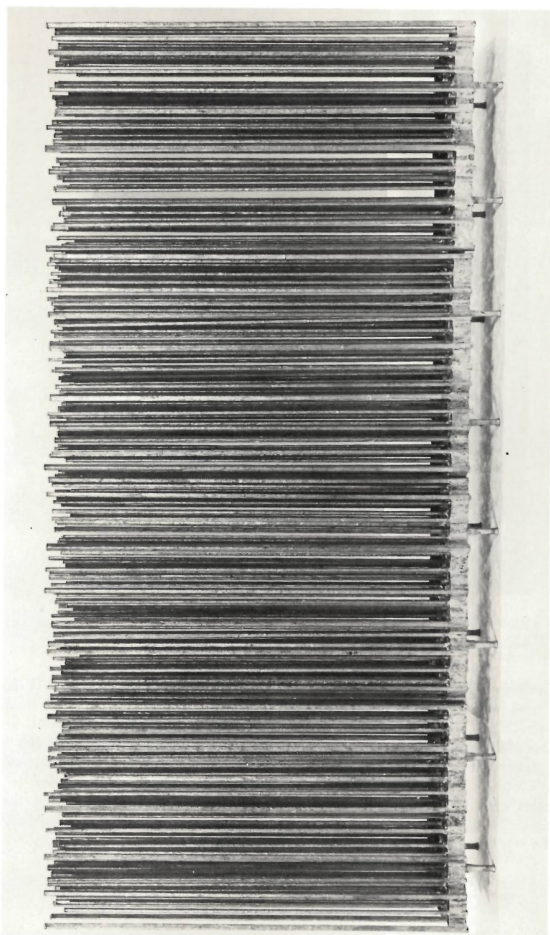
The execution of this piece includes the two basic and main statements of my work: accumulation and destruction and it was one of the first pieces in which these two statements were mixed.

My main expression is the use of objects (manufactured objects, used objects, unused objects, discarded objects . . .). Through the repetition and treatments not

usually applied to the object, it is changed and given other qualities.

In the work *Toccata et Fugue*, destruction is a limited one: slicing the object (violin) in two parts. Repetition changes further the object which ceased to be a violin partially when sliced and the cuts became linear parts of the composition.
October, 1968

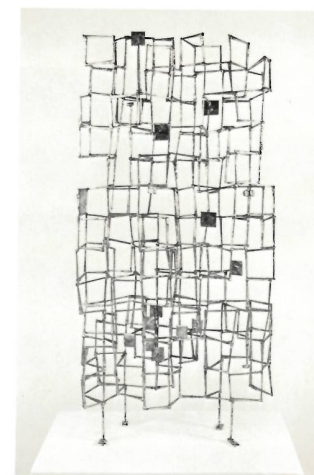
BERTOIA



Untitled sculptural screen, 1961
Harry Bertoia (American, born Italy 1915)
General Purchase Funds

Steel and brass
81" x 162" x 23 1/4"

BERTOIA



Untitled sculpture, 1953
Harry Bertoia
Bronze-coated iron
33" x 17" x 10"

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Bunshaft

The 33" x 17" x 10" [untitled sculpture] was done about 15 years ago. At that time, I was interested in a component unit, such as a nail, a washer, a square, etc. By repetitive use of said unit to gesture a duality, namely: endless variations contained in sameness. Four nails form a square or trapezoid with numerical relations and vast variations of juxtaposition. Another characteristic of interest then was a measure of transparency. A form that could be visually grasped in its totality from any point of view, but not easily remembered.

Much the same could be said about the 162 1/4" [sculptural screen]. In this case, the component is a square tube and is used in a vertically repeated, variable sequence again producing a degree of transparency. This one happens to be suggestive of a spectrum, but its appearance is in part due to the practical function called

for as it was meant to serve as a divider in the Garden Restaurant of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

What the two pieces have in common is a linear definition of spaces. The physical limits don't necessarily produce a complete form. Both, conceptually, could be thought of as fragments of something infinitely larger which would still be conceptually incomplete.

The 162 1/4" relates to my current work in its vertical linearity. Sound and motion have been further developed and have become, in one series of studies, the dominant quest.

Please be advised that when writing about work done fifteen years ago, the expressions might be more the result of later observations and not necessarily reflective of the mentality then active.
November, 1968

BROOKS



Gant, 1955
James Brooks (American, born 1906)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Oil on canvas
53 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 62 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Gant, 1955, was done at a time when I was moving from a more linear interweaving of many fine lines with occasional areas of solid color (applied by dripping and then squeegeeing color, then changing forms with a brush) into a denser surface.

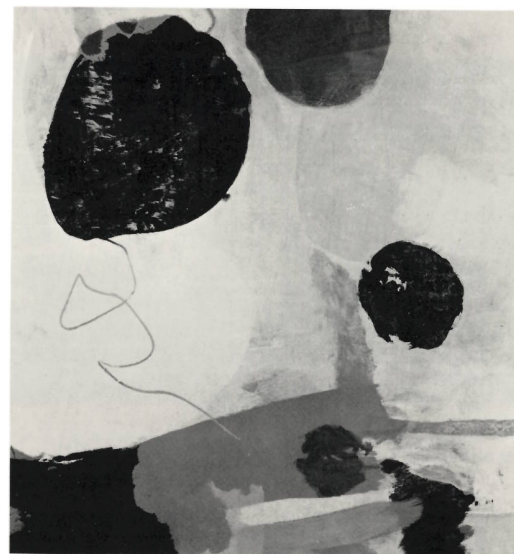
The paint is applied by now with brushes and heavier paint (earlier work from

1948-49 had been largely stained canvas) but the forms retain much of the curving undulation of previous work.

The staining of light color areas against the black masses has just recurred in several of my latest paintings and interests me very much.

July, 1968

BROOKS



Cooba, 1963
James Brooks (American, born 1906)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Oil on canvas
80" x 74"

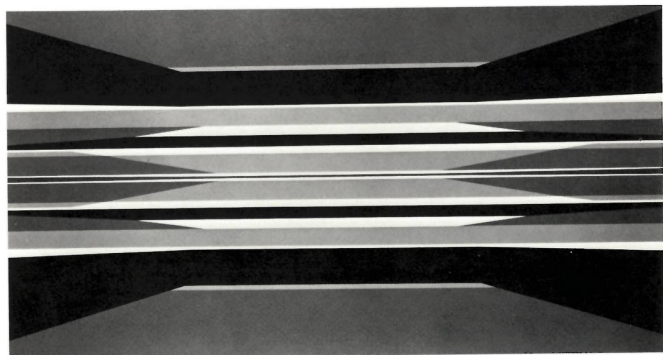
Cooba, 1963, is in oil, but has characteristics (blotting of areas, washes) that caused me to turn thereafter mostly to acrylic emulsion, a water medium that accomplishes these more readily.

Paintings at this time were occupied

with breaking through the linear continuum by isolating forms of a shape that would repel each other, then relating them to a slightly felt scaffolding and an irrational meandering line.

July, 1968

CELENTANO



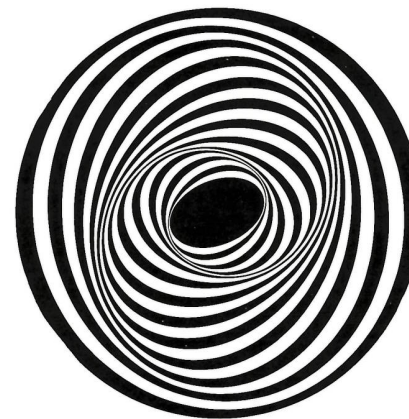
Untitled, 1964
Francis Celentano (American, born 1928)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Oil on canvas
52" x 96"

Untitled, 1964 — executed before *Lavender Creed*, 1964, which showed at The Museum of Modern Art *The Responsive Eye* show in 1965. Concerned with physiognomy — evocation of mood established by actual physical relationships of pictorial variables — carefully calculated, premeditated, and visually measured (intuitively). Forms both actual (two-dimen-

sional) and illusory (three-dimensional). No concern for ideal or purity — a simple intuitive development based on progressive changes through a series of sketches and possessing a specific and *unabstracted* physiognomy. A singular image evoking a particular presence in terms only of itself.
January, 1969

CELENTANO

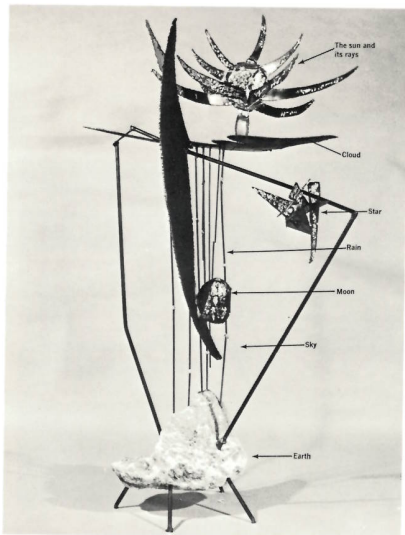


Kinetic Painting III, 1967
Francis Celentano (American, born 1928)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Lacquer on masonite, motorized
48" diameter

Kinetic Painting III — this work represents an initial attempt to fuse a two-dimensional image of progressive elliptical shapes with a calculated rate of movement. The result produces a number of visual impressions among which are a warped, undulating surface, both on the plane and in depth, and an experience of the work as

having extra visual character, thingness or being (a life of its own). As intended, the result produces a viable, physical presence in which the spectator responds more to the whole and less to elemental parts. A strange metamorphosis of means.
January, 1969



Sunrise, 1954-55
David Hare (American, born 1917)
Bronze and steel
76¼" x 76¼"
George Cary Fund

Sunrise was one of a series done in 1954 and 1955. They consisted of approximately fifteen sculptures. At the time I was living in Cannes in the south of France, the Mediterranean in front, the Alps Maritimes behind. The series is all of the sea and sun, the mountains and sun, the rain and the sky.

However, I feel the surroundings to have been of very little importance, except in the sense that they were there, as they would have been in one sense or another in any situation.

Because of weight and solidity, sculpture is perhaps more real, stronger than painting. Stronger in the sense of the actual object over which one can trip, a thing which takes up space, which is (there).

This seeming strength is inherent in the object itself, because it is an object. On the other hand, painting is illusion, a window — a thin layer of pigment pulled into the shapes of other things. Because of

this illusionary character, painting can express with ease and lightness much which in sculpture is expressed with a turgid heaviness not adapted to their characters — for example, heat, wind, air, water, the flashing of leaves, the bending of grass — it is not the leaves and grass which one sees, but the wind. If one paints leaves in the wind, it is the wind which is painted — one's awareness of the leaves comes with the wind. If one sculpts leaves in the wind — it is the leaves which one sculpts — one is aware of the wind because of the leaves. In a metaphysical sense, painting can only describe body in terms of the spirit, while sculpture can only describe spirit in terms of body. The fact that the meaning of both may be the same is, as far as I can see, of no importance. It is the opposition of phantasy described in terms of reality — painting; and reality described in terms of phantasy — sculpture, which interested me at

the time.

The idea of trying to make sculptures with landscape as their subject appealed to me partly because a large proportion of landscape material is not actual in the sense of being solid; there is cold, heat, rain, air, water, light, etc., all things better expressed in paint than in solid form. Sculpture classically dealt with volume. To break away from such a conception by refusing to use volume would be an act with little reason, except that of doing something different. To do so by using landscape as a subject seemed more legitimate, since a landscape itself has no volume, or to be more accurate, it is not so much made up of a series of volumes as it is only a fraction of some larger volume. Another point of interest was the question of perspective. A landscape as seen by the eye only takes on reality because of perspective. Depth is primarily recognized by the variation in size of a familiar object. A sculptural landscape arranged according to the laws of perspective could be seen only from one side, the front. From the back it would become two-dimensional, from the side it would be a disorganized mess. A landscape without perspective becomes abstract.

Very well then, make it abstract but keep the attributes of a landscape strongly in it somewhere. Why? Because the success of an abstraction depends, as does most plastic art, on an organization of form and area. I hoped these works would contain such organization, but the main point was not this. It was first to make a sculpture from a subject which seemed highly unlikely as sculptural material, the interest in this being the difficulty of the problem and also its newness. Second, to make a work of art which would be almost completely abstract, but each of whose components would represent some attribute of a landscape. That is to say, the piece could be seen as abstract or as figurative, and one hoped that these oppositions would flicker back and forth, somewhat like visual A-C current. In such a case one would turn the body into spirit while at the same time turning the spirit into body. And somewhere, as the work

flipped from idea to thing and thing to idea, would exist that peculiar and intensely human thing, a work of art.

After these pieces were shown as a group, I came across a review which read, if I remember, "I can't see why Hare is known for his imagination, since these works are exactly what the titles say. In *Summer Storm* he has made clouds in steel and rain drops in steel, the work shows no imagination whatsoever." In a way it seemed to me the reviewer was quite right, and yet he had missed the point. I never quite decided if the missing was a lack in me or in him.

You ask what relation do these landscapes, made in 1954-1955 have to my present work. Actually they have quite a lot. For many years there have been attempts to paint sculpture and to make paintings three-dimensional, attempts usually resulting in colored sculpture or impasto paintings which destroy both sculpture and painting without producing anything else. However, the fact that artists continue to attempt to solve this situation seems to lend a validity to such effort. To better accomplish it, I have given up sculpture and have been painting for the last three years. I want to produce work which is part painting and part sculpture; work which will consist literally of a combination, that is, some parts painted on canvas or glass, some parts sculpted in metal or stone and done in such a way that it will be difficult to tell which is illusion and which actual; which is spirit and which body. To this end I have for the last three years been painting. I know a little about sculpture and less about painting; one must be brought to the same level as the other before there can be any real possibility of combination. I have no wish to make bumps sticking out of canvases, nor colored areas applied over forms. I want the work to be like the torso of a man on that of a horse, a centaur. Like feathers sheltering coals, a Phoenix. Close and interchangeable, like body and spirit — the human being.

Anyway, it's an idea, one which interests me — and it is something to do. August, 1968

HARTIGAN



New England, October, 1957
Grace Hartigan (American, born 1922)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Oil on canvas
68 1/4" x 83"

It's been over ten years since I painted *New England, October* and those years have been filled with change, not only for me and the "art world" but for America and all the rest of the world. I recently saw this painting in your exhibition at the National Gallery and, to be frank, it seemed as though someone else had painted it. I am so differently involved in my work now. I'm reminded of T. S. Eliot's "That was in another country and besides the wench is dead."

So I must try to think back to that time. I believe I was interested in how to present an inner emotional state, in abstraction but related to nature. I painted *New England, October* in East Hampton, after

an autumn trip to Maine. I was especially moved by Castine, the yellows of the trees in the rain, the glimpses of white colonial doorways. I think I am being objective when I say I think the color in the painting is quite beautiful.

I have always hesitated to discuss the formal ideas in my work, feeling that those should be quite apparent to the observer. But I will mention that I was (and still am in another way) interested in my kind of an "all over" painting. At that time I used thrusting planes against more organic forms. Also apparent is that none of these forms had any reference to the look of the visual world.
July, 1968

HELION

size and proportions, and dreamed of making a show of them, like sorts of portraits of "Abstract Beings." One is in the Boston Museum (*Figure Rose*); three are in the collection of Joseph Cantor, Carmel, Indiana. Some are in English or French collections. They were never exhibited together. I still dream of it.



Composition (Standing Figure), 1935
Jean Helion (French, born 1904)
Oil on canvas
51 1/4" x 35"

Room of Contemporary Art Fund

During my ten years of constructive abstraction, I kept a sort of working diary where I can find indications that may interest you.

In 1934 and 1935, I painted several large compositions (about 1.45 m by 2 m) lengthwise, such as *Equilibrium 1934* in the Guggenheim Museum, New York, and the *Ile de France* in the Tate Gallery. From the first to the second is an evolution where elements, first dissociated, gather and combine to form "figures." Abstract figures, of course, deriving from nothing else than basic plastic elements.

These figures became for me units, beings, that I kept on developing and associating in new ways. Some figures had an upright character such as yours. I painted nine or eleven of these, about the same

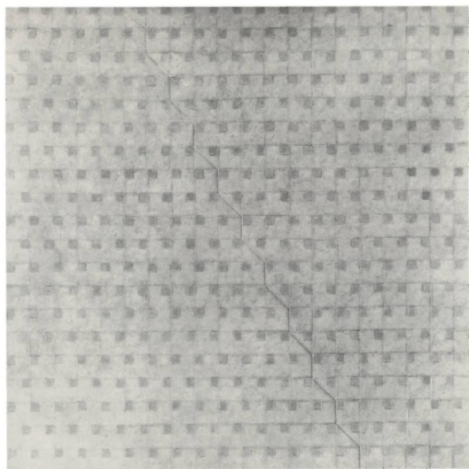


But some of these entered almost as they were, my larger compositions. Yours entered this composition above indicated, bought in 1935 by Walter P. Chrysler, and that is now in a New York collection . . .

You can recognize, at the left, the function it plays. Looking at it again, I see that your picture is indeed a post-development of the element in the left of the larger composition. But no doubt that they are connected.

All my evolution has been of that type: from single, to several; simple to complex; and back towards simple and single. My so-called figurative compositions develop precisely the same way. For I have not gone back to figuration, but reached a new figuration proposed, provoked by my very important (to me) constructive years.

Your picture was begun in September, 1935, and completed in November, 1935. Exhibited in a one-man exhibition organized by Marcel Duchamp at the Putzel Gallery in Hollywood in 1937. Exhibited in Paris in May, 1936, at a group show at Pierre Loeb Gallery; exhibited at Art of This Century (Peggy Guggenheim) in New York City in 1943, at the one-man show she held after my escape from Germany. Finally I sold it to Paul Rosenberg in 1944, who sold it to your museum.
September, 1968



Permanence, 1961
Gottfried Honegger (Swiss, born 1917)
Oil on cardboard
59" x 59"
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

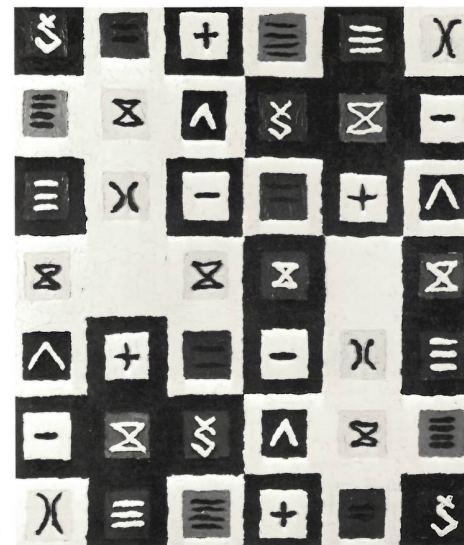
I developed my present picture-structures from Cubism. The basic conception of my present work came into existence in the years 1958-60, the years when I lived in New York. This was also the time in which my cubistic, illusionistic perception of space was transformed into a concrete way of looking. The year 1961 — the year your picture *Permanence* was executed — is of significance because at that time I built for the first time, mathematics (that is, numerical sequences) into my compositions. This method of work has itself developed so far, up to the present time, inasmuch as I now try to program my reliefs in plastics.

Geometrical forms, logical conceptions and numbers are today the basic material of my working method. Furthermore, I am interested in overcoming standardized elements, repetitions and norms. These appear to be questions for me which are

also of significance in connection with our architecture and industrial production. All these legible and provable composition experiments serve the search for an adequate order appropriate for our time. These principles may, however, not be obvious, but may only be sensed as harmony. I do not even refrain from using the word "beautiful."

The application of color and the monochromy of my pictures should put the process of thinking into the background. The manual treatment of the relief makes it possible for the light to supplement, coincidentally, the strict order of my work. The form stands for the measurable, but the color stands for the immeasurable.

Minimal form and color hues shall activate the individual imagination of the spectator.
November, 1968



The Great Mystery II, 1960
Alfred Jensen (American, born 1903)
Oil on canvas
50" x 42"
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

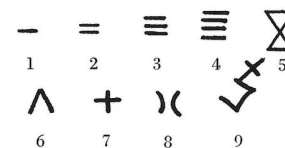
I am as ever today as I was in 1960 concerned with resolving the squaring of the square by numbers.

The nine concrete integers must be able to all of them square in themselves. The ancient men so well knew this truth; while modern men are lost in the use of abstracting numbers per se.

The visual impact of the number in their squaring is ignored in our time and therefore form and color cannot find a place nor an environment to affirm itself.

The Great Mystery II is a magic attempt to unite the Lo Shu diagram with the Ho Thu diagram. The numbers 1-2-3-4-5-

6-7-8-9 are represented as Shang oracle-bone forms (14th to 11th centuries) and these later read:



I hope this short notice will give a key with its help to read my picture.
July 1968

KITAJ



Walter Lippmann, 1966
Ronald B. Kitaj (American, born 1932)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Oil on canvas
72" x 84"

Let me say at once that *Walter Lippmann* is just about my favorite among the very few pictures I've made which I care for at all. I'm writing from Creeley's place out here in New Mexico and maybe the desert isn't the best place to try and reconstruct those peculiar conditions of picture-making . . . what Robert Lowell termed . . . "the calling's tricky, specialized, unpopular possibilities" (talking about poetry).

The picture was painted in England, at my home at that time in Dulwich/London.

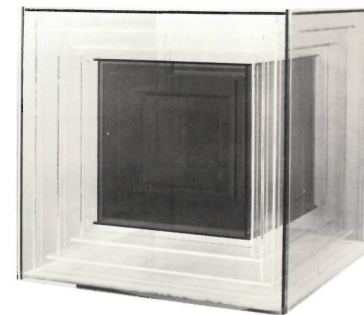
What is and was important was to connect *often* over the weeks and months with those fugitive passions which occasion themselves and pattern themselves at the centers of one's interest . . . There is no, or very little question of, *ultimate* meanings, as, I think, issues of meaning are far less clear than is often supposed, even in simple, abstract art. I wish this could be less the case, or, better yet — I would like to develop into a switch-hitter and divide my time among the very complex, the very fresh and simple, the clearer meaning, the very difficult . . . and more . . . but maybe we haven't come upon that

ripe time yet. So, for now — while I wouldn't call this picture a difficult picture, it would seem to be a complex one.

. . . Fugitive passions then . . . collected and suggested . . . does anyone remember *The Constant Nymph?* and Robert Donat, in costume, was a source or factor for the man holding a drink . . . Girl confronts stranger at lamplight and Grand Hotel and all that, ebbs into more obscene twilight than any painter could have imagined . . . and no one did. Lippman has watched all through more than the two large shooting wars and he may as well stand in at stage right, name misspelled . . . elegant voyeur . . . as if the explainer or whatever he was in *Our Town* wrote for the Paris edition of the *New York Herald-Tribune*. The picture might have been called "The Vitality of Fresh Disorder." That's Blackmur's phrase . . . and he goes on to say: "Each time we look at a set of things together, but do not count them, the sum of the impression will be different, though the received and accountable — order remains the same."

July, 1968

LAMIS



Construction #31-II, 1965
Leroy Lamis (American, born 1925)
Plastic
12" x 12-3/16" x 12 1/2"
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

In order to understand my sculpture, it is important to realize that as long ago as 1954 I was experimenting with motorized lens, prisms, and cracked glass; these works were shown to The Museum of Modern Art and other galleries and ignored. At that time, I was living in New York and I left to start teaching sculpture in Iowa where I continued my experiments in light and incorporated direct metal welding and steel I-beams. Toward the end of a five-year period I realized that the sculpture I wanted to create must be free of motors and electrical gadgetry. I then did my first experiments in plastic — late '58, '59.

I moved to Indiana in 1961 and it is here that the first cubes were born — October, 1962. Each of the first three were of a different basic construction. Up to the present moment, September, 1968, I have produced 152 variations of my first idea. Yours was the thirty-first and my third twelve-inch cube. It was my second

sculpture using blue, yellow, green combination.

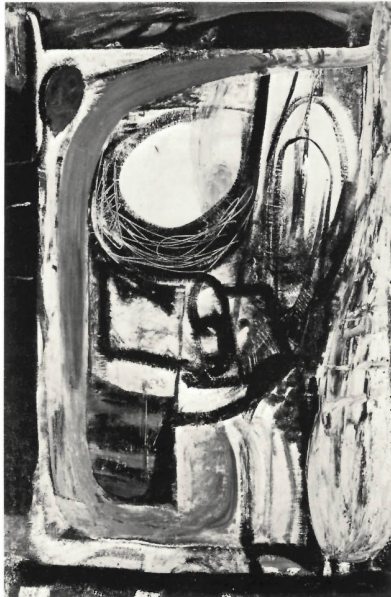
Construction #31 was my first piece of sculpture purchased by a major museum. So this in itself is fixed in my memory. Needless to say how terribly sad I was when informed of the unfortunate accident which occurred during your *Festival* exhibition in 1965.* As it was two years later when I rebuilt it, I made a slight modification which allowed more light to pass through. (The change consisted of substituting two six-inch yellow planes for two dark green ones.)

Regarding my work, I feel I am totally responsible for every piece I have created from the glint in my eye, through conception and final birth. Nobody lays a finger mark on it except me. I am starting to develop the second of the remaining two ideas, but when you do it yourself it takes time, time, time.

September, 1968

*Mr. Lamis refers to the fact that a visitor to the *Art Today* exhibition at the Gallery, part of the *Buffalo Festival of the Arts Today*, 1965, inadvertently upset the pedestal on which *Construction #31* had been installed and the sculpture was broken beyond repair. Mr. Lamis kindly replaced the original with *Construction #31-II*. —EDITOR

LANYON



Lulworth, 1956
Peter Lanyon (British, 1918-64)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

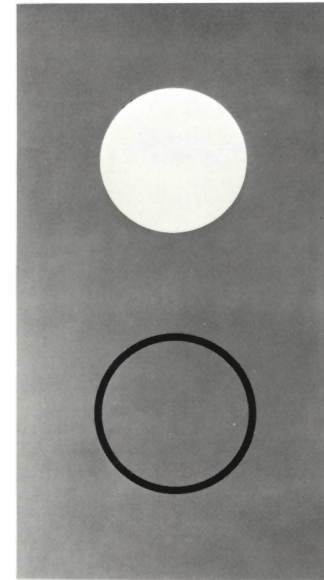
Oil on canvas
72" x 47"

Most of my paintings are not as complicated at this . . . [this] is a landscape of *Lulworth*, a small port on the Dorset coast. Here the rock is not granite as in Cornwall, but soft chalk in which one finds hard rounded flints. I've painted not only the

shape of the cove itself and the shape of the beach, but also two lovers standing up hugging one another waiting to have their photographs taken by a rather old-fashioned photographer who's on the left hand side of the picture.*

*The description of *Lulworth* is an excerpt from a recording made for The Arts Council of Great Britain which was supplied by Mrs. Sheila Lanyon, the artist's widow.—Editor

LIBERMAN



Iota III, 1961
Alexander Liberman
(American, born Russia 1912)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Oil on canvas
80" x 45"

I was interested in forcing the spectator to mentally experience the dimension of space through a logical brain process. I expected that through the mind's need to assemble and identify identical parts, the spectator would discover the relationship between the white disc and the black circle and perform a mental somersault in space — thus from a flat image a deeper space than the one created by illusionistic means

could be experienced.

The proportion of the canvas and the chosen colors aimed at ennobling the experience and setting it in the realms of passion and spiritual elevation. I feel that I have continued in my recent work to be involved — with ascension and elevations — hoping through a work of art to transcend the human condition.
April, 1969

LIPCHITZ

Sailor, 1914
Jacques Lipchitz (French, born Lithuania 1891)
Bronze, 3/7
30" x 12" x 9"

Room of Contemporary Art Fund

I have conceived this sculpture in Majorca while spending my vacation in 1914 before the war. As a matter of fact, the first World War caught me there.

We were living, a colony of artists, in Calle de St. Vicente where only three houses were in existence at that time belonging to a few families of fishermen. Those fishermen were mostly smugglers of tobacco, and the Spanish government had a man there permanently to observe them.

During my time there was a sailor by the name of Llampá, a man from Valencia, as I recall it. The fishermen-smugglers somehow put a girl to his attention in order to distract him from their activities, a kind of *Carmen* situation, and the sailor was all the time courting the girl, dancing and playing the guitar.

I made many drawings of him with the idea to make a sculpture and as soon [as] I came to Madrid (I made the trip back to Paris by lack of money very slowly), I made the sculpture which I brought to Paris by the end of the year where I finished it.

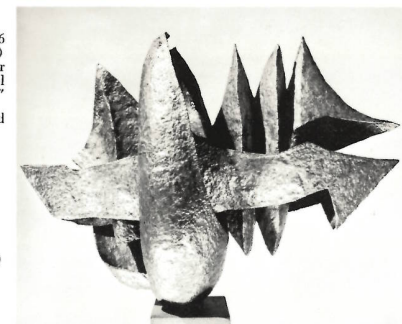
August, 1968



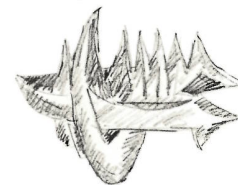
LIPTON

Sea King, 1956
Seymour Lipton (American, born 1903)
Nickel silver
over monel metal
3½" x 4¼" x 20"
A. Conger Goodyear Fund

(Below)
Drawing for *Sea King*, 1955
Seymour Lipton (American, born 1903)
Crayon, 8½" x 11"
Gift of Terese and Alvin S. Lane
Foundation, Incorporated



In the Albright-Knox Art Gallery publication called *Gallery Notes* (Vol. XXIV, No. 2, Summer 1961) Albert Elsen says that *Sea-King* was not the result of a series of drawings. This is true, but there was one drawing in addition to the model.



The sculpture is a horizontal thrust with angular counterforms emerging up and down. Asymmetric balance was achieved by resting the object on a rounded shape. The sculptural drawing suggested a sea monster, therefore the name.

I have always felt a work of art has an independent existence, somewhat as any object in nature. But since a work of sculpture casually emerges from human experience and since experience can never be completely severed from the surrounding reality, I have always consciously sought to maintain the nexus between the final object and its origins in depth, within the forms themselves. Metaphorical suggestion emerges from the sculptural object

as an aspect of its inherent meaning and existence. Also, such configurative notions as interior-exterior, and contained and enveloping forms further suggest life-dynamics. These and other formal solutions are part and parcel of my belief that art is a plastic parallel of life. The anatomy and physiology of sculptural forms must be for me the wherewithal for a soul, a presence which I must feel viscerally. Forms per se are still-born decoration if they are not driven, energized, imbued with a sense of living passion, lived experience in a world of reality.

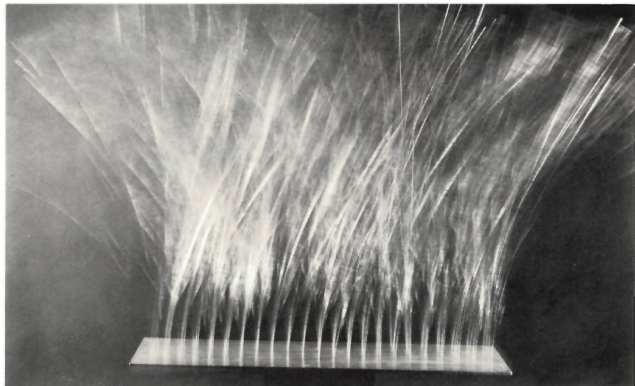
Today, part of the vast reality a man can experience is contemporary technology entering into the web of existence, physically, morally and philosophically.

Sea-King is essentially animal and bontanic in origin. Before the *Sea-King* was made, and more intensively since, technological forms have entered into fusion with living forms in my work.

The machine, physics and what they imply in extension of man's arm and mind toward extinction or for adventure and peace are deep in today's experience. They enter into a presence that I feel. Each work is a piece of life in progress as things happen for me.

Man, animal, the machine with man as the center make up the fountainhead of my sculpture.

July, 1968



Grass, 1965
 Len Lye (American, born New Zealand, 1901)
 Gift of the Howard Wise Gallery

Stainless steel and wood,
 motorized and programmed
 36" x 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Grass came about without any preconceived ideas about its imagery. It came from watching a single rod swaying and then doubling up to emphasize the accelerating stroke of its oscillation. It was the "lurch" part of the sway I liked. It should be timed to slow music, a suitable tempo is given by Miles Davis doing *These Foolish Things*, but I prefer something in similar tempo in the Satie style.

As for the empathic feeling I have for

the "lurch" motion in *Grass*, I have currently developed it into a concept for a 300-foot bending stem on which there is a continuously horizontal two-acre platform. The stem slowly oscillates some 300 feet from side to side. The platform is reached by elevators inside the stem. The platform would serve as a refreshment area and viewing point.

September, 1968



In the Forest (Dans la Forêt), 1944
 Andre Masson (French, born 1896)
 Tempera, oil, and sand on canvas
 25" x 15"

Room of Contemporary Art Fund

The forms and colors suggest the *animal* and *vegetable* world. Their amalgam signified for me life in the forest without the human element. (By the way, an American author who at that moment gave me great pleasure was Thoreau with his *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, and I myself was living in very wooded country in Connecticut.)

Animal life was persistent in that latter part of my American period, while at my arrival it was rather the secret world of plants: germination. *Dans la Forêt* is somewhat a synthesis of these two elements.

In technique, as in many of my paintings of that period, the style is complex: use of three different materials — tempera, oil and sand, mixed together.

I believe I could say with assurance that my life in America (1941-44) was for me *central* from an artistic standpoint. Although I think of myself as always developing, it was certainly in the United States that I affirmed or aimed at certain lyric and technical *constants* from which I feel I have rarely departed since.

August, 1968

MOTHERWELL



Elegy to the Spanish Republic #34, 1953-54
Robert Motherwell (American 1915)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Oil on canvas
80" x 100"

#34 is certainly one of the half dozen most realized of the *Spanish Elegy Series*, though saying this reminds me that when it was first exhibited Hans Hofmann told me that it was a great picture, but five or ten per cent unfinished. I knew what he meant, that it could have had a more "finished" aspect, but I chose to stop at the moment that I thought the expression of feeling was wholly complete, and I do not regret it.

It differs from many of the elegies in having more color in it (relatively speaking), though there are some even more colorful ones in the 1960's.

It has a very strong mural quality, I think, which doubtless in part comes from my working in 1950 on a projected mural for Walter Gropius and in 1951 making a mural for a synagogue in New Jersey. Both murals were relatively abstract, like most of my work, and the second one I painted

with watercolor brushes, to avoid a certain poster-like quality that broad, flat painting is subject to, and I think there's a carry-over of that brushing technique into #34, which many previous and subsequent variations lack.

... At this moment I can think of nothing more to say about this picture that would not lead me into a discussion of the whole series, which has continued to the present, along with many other single works, and series of variations on various themes. Just this year I exhibited a new *Elegy* in the International Invitational Show at the Italian Pavilion at the 34th Venice Biennale and I am working on one in my studio presently, which will be #108. But now, as always, the *Elegies* represent a tiny, if highly important fraction of my work.

October, 1968

NIIZUMA



Ancient Song, 1966
Minoru Niizuma (Japanese, born 1930)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

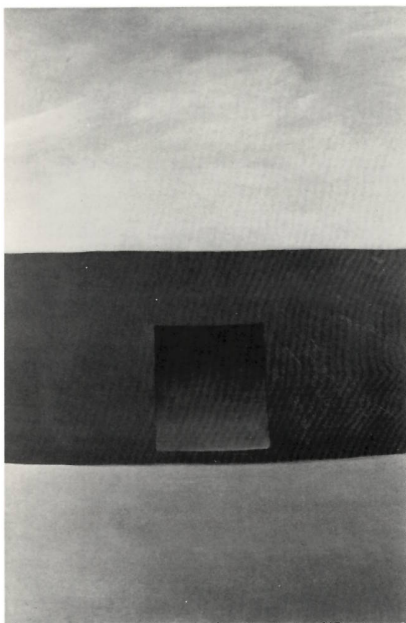
Marble
37" x 21" x 7"

In making this piece, I always had the feeling of harmony — the harmony of nature and the harmony of man with nature. To emphasize the harmony I have always made a contrast between the rhythms and highly polished surfaces of

the work and the surfaces which I have made rough and crude. This symbolizes to me the duality of nature, its beauty and its cruelty, and also, the duality of man.

October, 1968

O'KEEFE



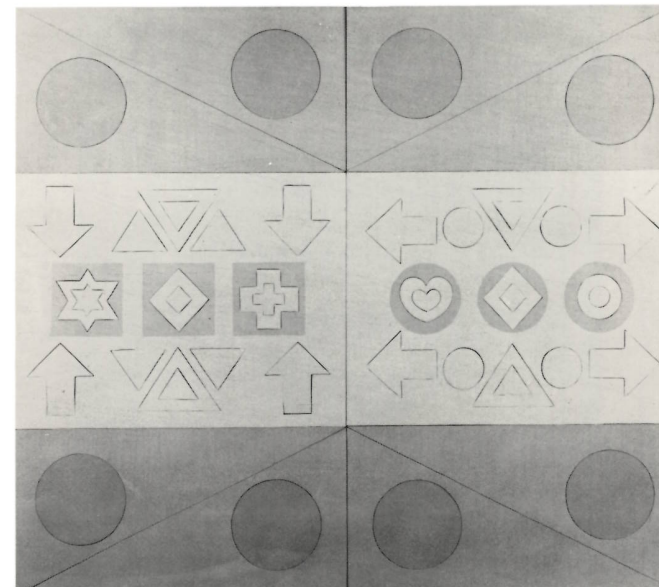
Green Patio Door, 1955
Georgia O'Keeffe (American, born 1887)
Oil on canvas
30" x 20"
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

In 1929, I saw an old broken-down house with a walled garden. It was a large pig pen. The house had a patio with that green door in a long wall on one side. The walled garden and the long wall with the green door made me decide that it

was going to be my house. It took me ten years to get the place, but I finally got it from the church and now I live in it.

I have painted the door many times.
October, 1968

ORTMAN



Aton, 1964
George Ortman (American, born 1926)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Oil on masonite and wood
84" x 96"

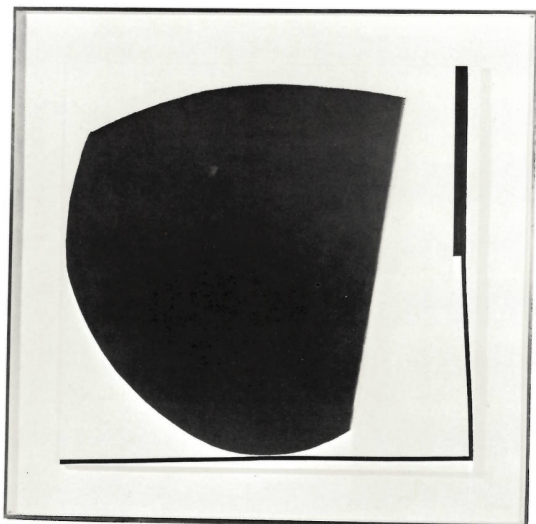
About *Aton*: it was completed in December, 1963 and was first exhibited at Howard Wise Gallery in the spring of 1964. Also, in the exhibit were three imitations. I felt *Aton* was a very clean and complete work, summing up many ideas in construction I had been working on since 1949. Thinking back, I feel now that my satisfaction with *Aton* led me to experiment with new directions, the imitations, more freedom with materials and now to working with the shapes (symbols) as the picture plane.

Aton is the Egyptian sun god. [The work] is composed of symbols (angular, aggressive) on the left expressing the masculine idea, and on the right symbols (curved, soft) expressing the feminine idea. The colors (yellow and white) express light and the sun.

I think that's about all I would like to say about the work with words, but I would like to say that *Aton* is to me an important realization of an idea and has opened many doors.

July, 1968

PASMORE



Abstract in Red, No. 3, 1960
Victor Pasmore (British, born 1908)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Oil on plywood
76¼" x 76¼"

Abstract in Red, No. 3 is one of many elementary manifestations in terms of pure painting aimed at the solution of two problems:

1. To develop unique forms and images from rationalized basic premises.
2. To transcend the boundaries and dimensions of the finite picture-plane by means of expanding effects and ambiguous images.

In this case, the problem was tackled by bringing abruptly into contact with each other at certain points, two radically different formal processes: a rational topological relationship, on the one hand, and a spontaneous linear movement, on the other.

The problem of the picture-plane has

long seemed to me the crucial issue in the ultimate development of pure painting because its finite flatness comes into conflict with normal visual experience. To measure up to this, the pure painter must ultimately either give up the surface format and turn to some form of three-dimensional sculpture or construction, or he must get "beyond dimension" altogether.

However, to get beyond dimension in terms of strictly dimensional material poses a paradox which, in reality, can only be solved in subjective terms; that is to say, by stimulating the imagination. To do this within the terms of surface-bound painting has been and still is my problem.
July, 1968

PENALBA



Chrysalide, 1961
Alicia Penalba (French, born Argentina 1918)
Charles Clifton Fund
Bronze
16¼" x 30¾" x 18¾"

In 1959, the architects of the new Business University of St. Gallen, in Switzerland (Neue Handels-Hochschule für Wirtschafts-und Sozial-wissenschaften, St. Gallen) came to propose that I do a sculpture destined for the entrance of a building which they had projected, and where works of art would be integrated into the architecture since the beginning of the project. In this spirit, this sculpture would break out of a sort of niche, on the parapet of the large exterior staircase, at the foot of the main building, as a sort of lion or sphinx (much as one sees frequently in classical architecture). In discussing with them and in informing myself of the terrain around the building under construction, I had the idea of a more original conception which would give a more interesting counterpoint to the architecture; a series of a dozen sculptures which, extending on a sloping lawn the length of the staircase, would make a liaison between the park and the building. At their request, I made two models, the first of

which was according to their initial project and the second according to my own. It was the second which was chosen, and I completed the project in 1963. Having kept the sketch of the first project in my studio, I developed it between times in 1960 to result in 1961 in the sculpture *Chrysalide* now in your collections.

The name came to me since its spirit marks a very pronounced change in comparison to my preceding works (which had developed in static fashion in a vertical direction and finally horizontal.) In this sculpture in particular I tended toward a more airy conception, volumes plunging into space in several directions, voids cutting cleanly between the planes and opening more liberally to the light. I thus gave the name *Chrysalide* to this sculpture which marks a liberation from old forms and laws of weight which has accentuated my work since then.

Thus, in the most simple fashion possible, is the story of *Chrysalide*.
December, 1968

PEPPER



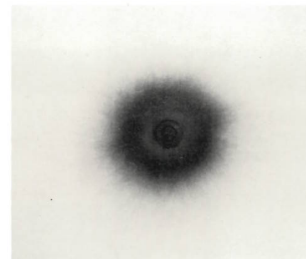
Zig-Zag, 1967 Stainless steel, baked enamel (unique)
Beverly Pepper (American, born 1924) 74 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 59"

Gift of Seymour H. Knox

The *Zig-Zag* sculpture was made out of rolled steel plate, cut, bent, welded and assembled into an open-box form. When viewed head-on, it appears to be square, yet becomes trapezoid or parallelogram when viewed from the side. The attempt was to enclose space and give weight to the empty volumes, at the same time projecting the first element, cantilevering it in such a way as to make the viewer feel a movement — that something is about to happen. The polished mirror surface has two distinct uses: one is to envelop the environment so that in a certain light the sculpture appears to absorb the landscape

or the landscape absorbs the sculpture. At the same time, in another light it gives the steel a magic quality, seemingly weightless, yet frames the baked color. Use of color in *Zig-Zag* is not to underscore color but rather to deny color — to emphasize the steel. Essentially, this is a Constructivist sculpture where volume and mass are negated and engineering is part of the primary concept. The essential attempt was to have a continuity between the work and the environment, the environment and the work . . . the sequence unimportant but a sense of change and permutation essential.
March, 1969

PIENE



Any Fire Flower, 1964
Otto Piene (German, born 1928)
Oil on canvas
30" x 40"

Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Any Fire Flower was painted in Philadelphia in October, 1964. I came to the U.S.A. for the first time as a Visiting Professor for the fall term at the Graduate School of Fine Arts of the University of Pennsylvania. While I was teaching a second year graduate painting class, I was also working in a studio that the school provided for me in the old Furness Building.

This building housed the University of Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art, too. In this I.C.A., a comprehensive *Zero* show (30 artists) — organized mainly by Heinz Mack in Duesseldorf and myself in Philadelphia — was mounted (October 30-December 11, 1964). Nearly concurrent with this show, a separate three-man show at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York opened a week later — *Group Zero, Heinz Mack - Otto Piene - Gunther Uecker* (November 12-December 5, 1964).

During the time I worked in the Furness studio, I painted about eight big, medium-sized, and small (down to 32" x 40") paintings on canvas and about eight very small paintings on canvas on cardboard. All of them were smoke paintings or fire

**Any Fire Flower* is one of the red paintings. —EDITOR

paintings or both on red, black or white painted canvases. Nearly all the red (three)* and white (three) ones are in private or public collections now while the black ones (two) soon "died" from damage because of their delicate black surfaces.

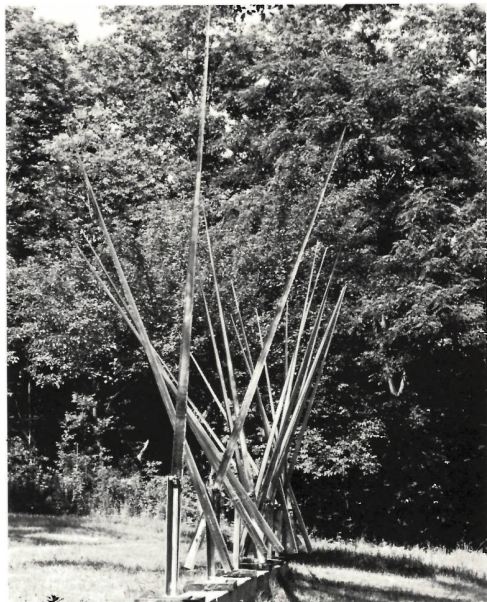
Any Fire Flower went from the studio directly to the Howard Wise Gallery where it was bought for the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. All paintings mentioned above were painted with American materials that were new to me (except the paint, Windsor & Newton oil, which is English and which I had used in Germany). I liked the excellent range of canvases while I was not particularly impressed by the thin brown soot that American candles produced.

Any Fire Flower is related to a series of *Black Suns* which I painted with soot from bundles of candles directed at prepared canvases suspended horizontally over my head and with liquids (mainly fixatives) to fix the soot on the canvas in many layers or similar liquids — inflammable ones — that after ignition burnt on the canvas briefly while flowing on it.

The first *Black Suns* originated in 1961, after I had already been working with smoke on canvas and paper for about two years. While the work with smoke provided something like negatives to my work with light itself as a medium, the *Black Suns* and many other paintings I did between 1959 and 1965 can be regarded as retina after-images or negative images of the sun; they can also be regarded as metaphors for any expanding, vibrating, pulsating volume or force. Current microphotography shows that they closely resemble pictures of human eggs in the state of fertilization.

Looking now at *Any Fire Flower* and similar paintings and gouaches I did between 1959 and 1967, it occurs to me that they can also be understood as designs for what has been one of my chief concerns in recent years — flying sculptures, art in the sky.
November, 1968

RICKEY



Peristyle: One Line — Six Lines (6 pieces)

The kinetic sculpture *Five Lines* was one element among six which made up my *Peristyle I*. This was made in the fall and winter, 1963-64, and was shown in the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston in March, 1964, in a one-man exhibition of my work.

The sculpture comprised groups of vertical "lines" (actually tapered needles of stainless steel 8' long) increasing in number from one to six, mounted on hard knife-edge bearings so that they swung in the wind across the long axis of the work, making a kind of kinetic fence of increasing density.

The lines are hollow, the section an equilateral triangle made of 8' long strips of stainless steel welded together. The counter weights are lead.

The sculpture was originally designed only for indoor installation. But *Five Lines* was modified in 1968 by strengthening the bearings and adding a spring shock absorber so that it could be placed outside.

The other five elements of *Peristyle I* are distributed as follows:

- One:* destroyed
- Two:* private collection, Chicago
- Three:* private collection, Milwaukee
- Four:* Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
- Six:* private collection, Dallas

* * *

Since I was concentrating more and more on "movement" itself I wanted to simplify the elements which moved. The lines have been an attempt to reduce the design to essentials. The line was tapered

RICKEY

to allow for a counterweight and fulcrum near one end, with the remainder of the line (usually about 5/6) sweeping in a wide, slow arc.

I was aware of the precedent of a tapered line in engraving and pen strokes. I often thought of my moving lines as a finite, but indeterminate, drawing in space.

The combination of such lines permits great variety and I began to explore some of them, from a simple horizontal to clusters too numerous to be readily counted, e.g., *N Lines Vertical*, *N Lines Horizontal*. I also made some rather systematic groupings. One of these was *Variations on a Theme of Two-Vertical* (nine variations), which I have intended to follow with a horizontal set and a diagonal set, the whole making a simple composition in three parts. Another was more austere — six groups of vertical lines, from a simple one to a cluster of six, set in a single row with the lines swinging across the axis. The title of *Peristyle* is from a loose association with surviving rows of Greek columns.

Peristyle was intended to be a simple composition to be held intact. However, the possibilities of exhibiting it, entire, were few and it was shown piecemeal in various places in the United States and Europe, which resulted in its being acquired piecemeal.

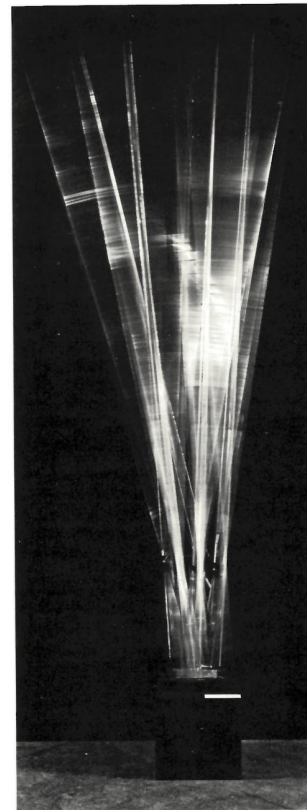
I then made a second version with blades ten feet long (on knife edge bearings) which I have kept, and a third (on ball bearings) for Morton May in St. Louis. A small indoor version, with blades three feet long, on knife edges, belongs to the Corcoran Gallery in Washington.

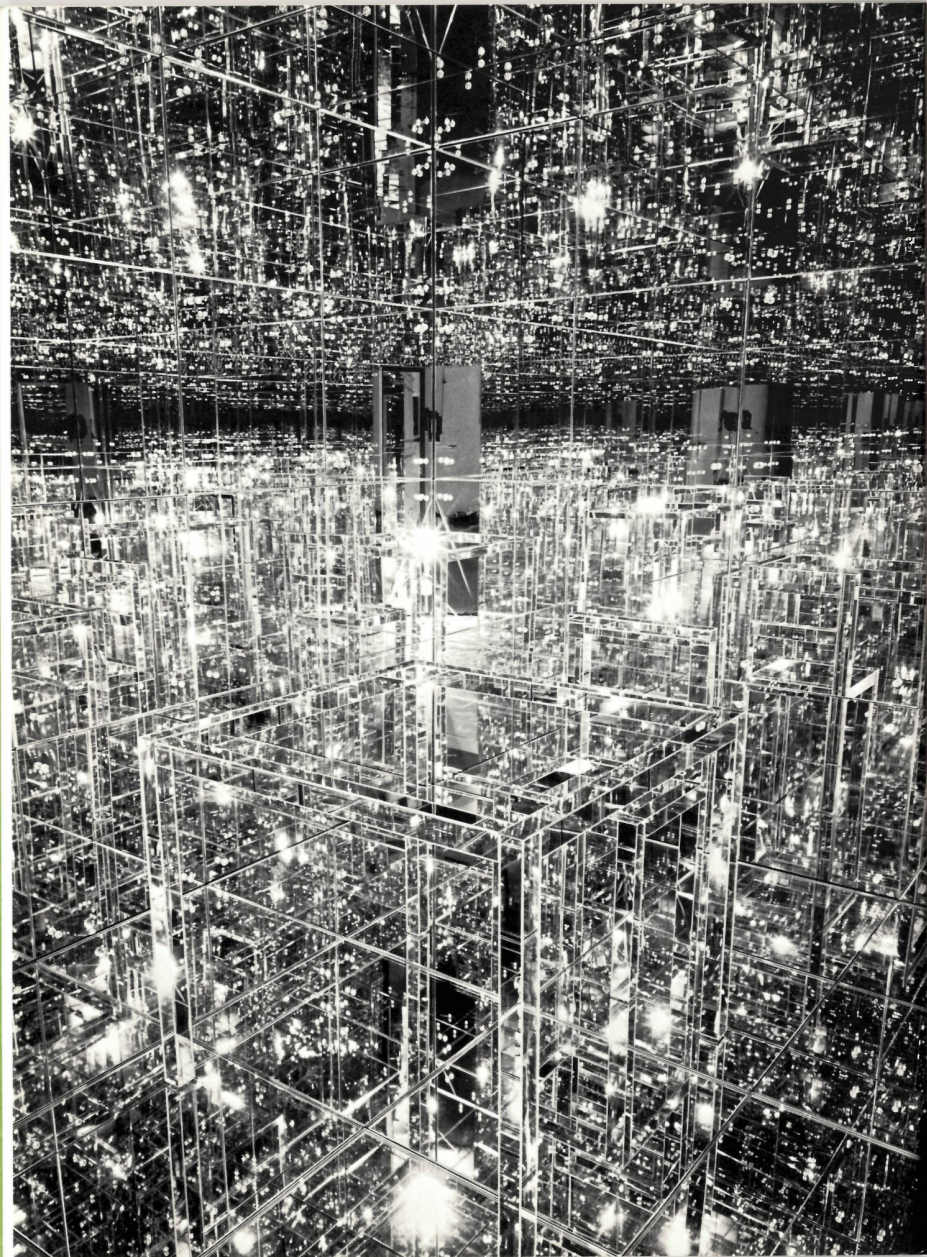
I have not exhausted the possibilities of these lines nor am I likely to. But a line contains the possibility of a plane, which is a line moved sideways. I have been working more and more during the last two years with moving surfaces balanced on knife edges or ball bearings. Surfaces bound and define space, so it is natural to use them to suggest or enclose volumes. I have made cubes, tetrahedra, and other forms, with moving planes as their surfaces.

December, 1968

Peristyle: Five Lines (in motion) 1963-64
George Rickey (American, born 1907)
Stainless steel
100" x 10" x 13"

A. Conger Goodyear Fund





Mirrored Room, 1966
 Lucas Samaras (Greek, born 1936)
 Mirrors 8' x 8' x 10'
 Gift of Seymour H. Knox

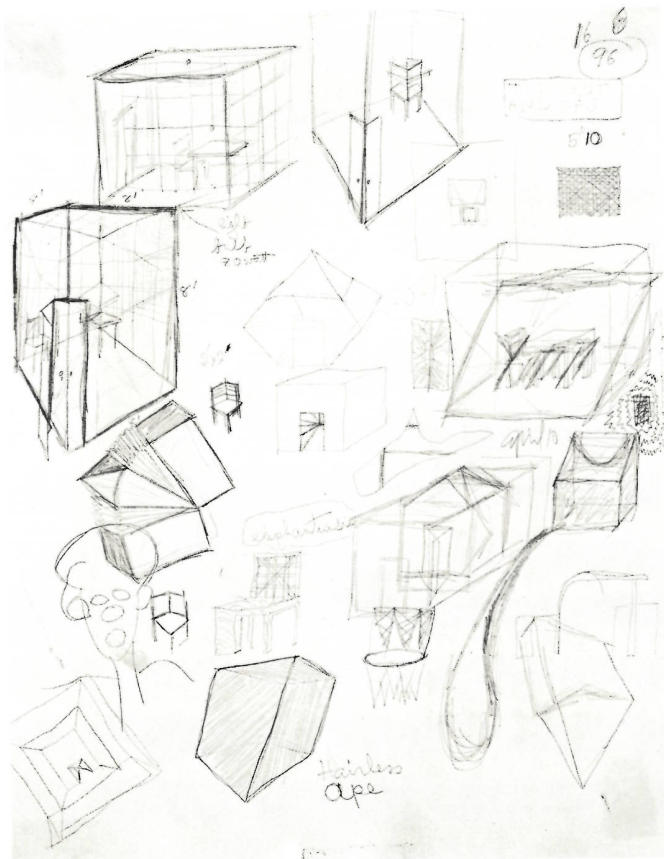
Room No. 2, the *Mirrored Room*, at your Gallery was built at the Pace Gallery from my plans in 1966, but conceptually it is a little older. The idea for a completely mirror-covered cube room occurred to me around 1963 when I incorporated the idea in a short story, *Killman*. The reason I used a cube rather than any other geometric shape was to minimize the number of planes that would reflect the space enclosed within them but still give a convincing illusion of perpendicular extension in every direction. It wasn't until 1965, however, that I began thinking about the possibility of actualizing in three dimensions this particular idea, and when I joined the Pace Gallery after the dissolution of the Green Gallery, the fabrication of a mirror room with a table and chair was going to be a reality. The mirror room which is in a way a box (I had covered the inside of two boxes with mirror in 1960-61 but had also glued down tacks on the mirror partly to produce a pattern, partly to transform mirror into something else, and I also thought about the possibility of covering a box inside and outside with mirror but didn't do anything about it) is a continuation of the idea of enlargement or gigantism. I was primarily dealing with small carryable works and it wasn't until 1964 when I did the bedroom at the Green Gallery that I entered the territory of largeness. Also, since that bedroom had been a real, autobiographical room, I was searching for an idea to create some other kind of room, an abstract, geometric or theoretical room. As it developed, the *Mirrored Room* was such a thing. I included a table and chair, two important objects that can be found in a room, as a three-dimensional drawing you might say, a skeleton, a sculp-

SAMARAS

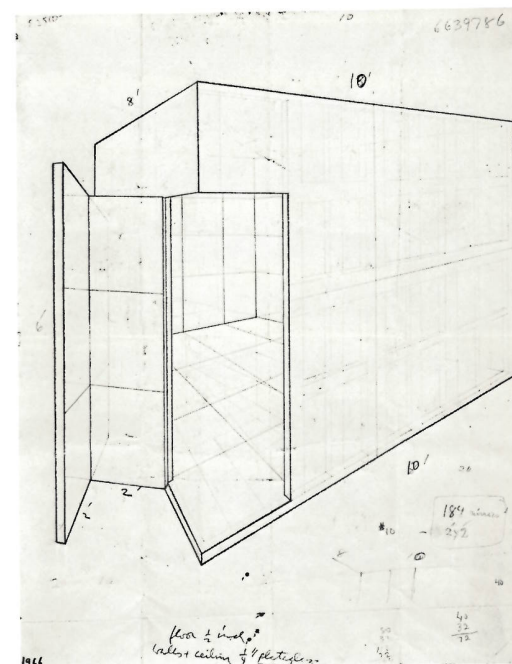
tural outline. A table and chair for someone to sit down and imagine or think or discover. In terms of my other work, mirror as a surface is related to silver paint and tin foil that I was using in the late '50's.

When I re-begin to think about mirror, what it means and why I use it, I invariably have to dig into memories of childhood. Around my family, mirror had connotations of devilry and vanity but those were impositions, religious psychological rejections, thin ineffective screens. They did not deal with the reality, the individuality of the mirror. More importantly, the mirror was used to inspect portions of one's body identity. And it was also used as an aid in the physical mimicry of adults and the opposite sex. Sometimes one's image in the mirror became an audience but most of the time it was a source of perplexion[sic]. And when I used it to direct a beam of sunlight into a passing girl's eyes, it became a weapon of shock. The countless places where reflection occurred in nature or around the house was simply another indication of its pervasive intruding importance.

Mirror or reflection was one of the "elements" like fire and water that one had to somehow unravel. Like the wonder of complicated organisms beneath a person's skin or the slow understanding about the structure of the sky, mirror is one of those continuously illogical, perplexing phenomena. It reflects the environment, the space in which it exists and as man is part of that environment, it also reflects him. I would like to allude to numerous but vague references about mirror rooms in fairy tales and myths and also its use in medieval and renaissance palaces, the mention of which always stimulated amazement but the reality of which established mirror as just another element together with chandeliers, gilded mouldings, satinous [sic] drapery, super-waxed floors, etc. It was not used totally. Also its use in magic shows, the use of a "liquid" mirror by Cocteau in *Blood of a Poet*, also the distorting, deforming mirrors outside the old laff-movie house on Forty-second Street and countless movies with partly mirrored



Preliminary drawings for *Mirrored Room*



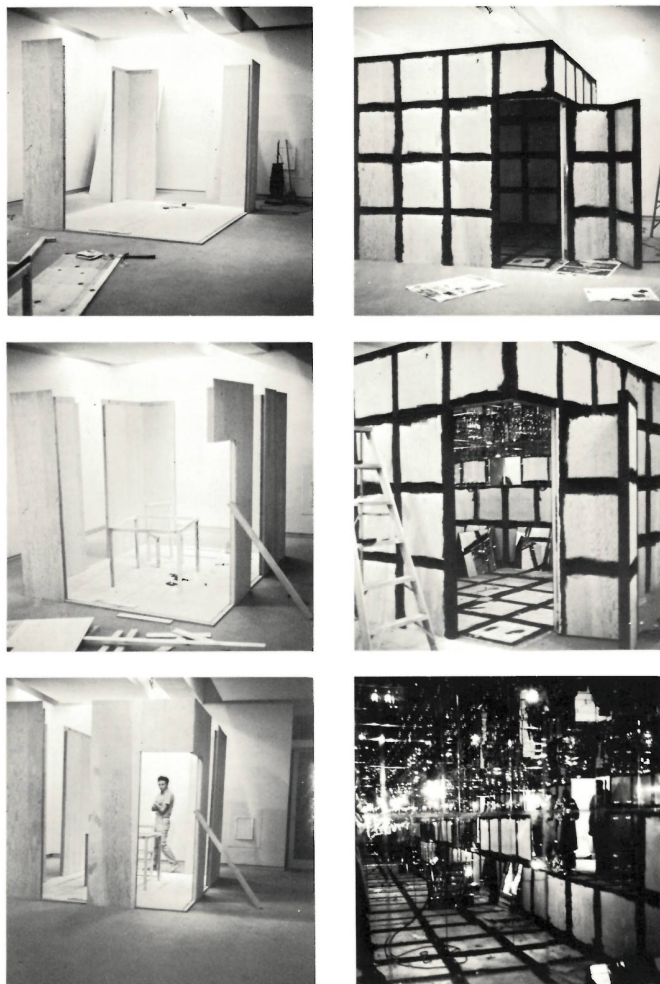
Scale drawing for *Mirrored Room*

mazes. As for the artists who have used mirror in their art, they either used it in small quantities that made it a small part of their work or else when they used it to totally cover the inside or outside of their work, they did it at a time after I developed my plans and so I did not have a chance to learn anything from them.

When I use mirror I envelop the internal surfaces of the structure or room and the multiplication of the light that enters through the door together with the light reflections on the edges of the mirror panels as well as the glass rosettes reflect themselves and in the process yield an il-

lusive but convincing depth, width and breadth of limitable yet vast extension, create a space, an environment, a fantasy, a world of artificiality, a complicated panorama. Something I had hints about but never actually say before. Being imbedded in this huge crystalline structure that has no top, bottom or sides, this feeling of suspension, this feeling of polite claustrophobia or acrophobia, this feeling of fakery or loneliness seems complex, associatively enveloping and valid to me as a work of art, wonder, sensuality, pessimistic theory and partial invisibility.
July, 1969

SAMARAS



Construction of *Mirrored Room*

STANKIEWICZ



Our Lady of All Protections, 1958
 Richard Stankiewicz (American, born 1922) Iron and steel
 52" high
 Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Concerning *Our Lady of All Protections*, there is not much to say. It was made in my usual (at that time) manner of putting together machine components and steel material to make a figurative idea in the discipline of a composition. It was not especially significant, being fairly typical of that period of my work. Behind it lies the fact of my being influenced early and

strongly by institutional religion and then later throwing it over as a ridiculous anomaly made of comical and tragic nonsense. So *Our Lady* is a light joke on Mariolatry, miracles, superstition, and hypocritical power in churches. It is whimsical and I shouldn't try to read it too closely or solemnly.
 August, 1968

SUTHERLAND



Thorn Trees, 1945
Graham Sutherland (British, born 1903)
Oil on cardboard 42 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Room of Contemporary Art Fund

I am now in a position to give you a certain amount of information with regard to your picture *Thorn Trees* of 1945, illustrated No. 79 in Douglas Cooper's book on my work.*

This was the fourth variation on the same subject, the first two being very similar to No. 80 (Cooper), also entitled *Thorn Trees*, and the fourth being No. 81 *Thorn Trees* now owned by the British Council. They were all done about the time when I was engaged upon painting a crucifixion for Northampton church and I have given various statements notably in *Eight European Artists* by Felix H. Mann and I think in the catalogue for my retrospective exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1953.

I was, in connection with Northampton, thinking about making studies of a crown of thorns for the figure, and therefore had been observing closely the formation of real thorns. In Pembrokeshire where I was staying, the thorns are very convoluted and tortured and I began to see that these might form a basis of pictures in their own right, and without any connection with the crucifixion. The thorn heads which resulted were done in Wales with

this idea in mind and also the actual studies for your picture were made in Wales. The study and the isolation of the trees was conceived in a stretch of abandoned land just outside this village which had a range of small stunted thorn trees which I was able to relate more easily to a sense of space.

Looking back, I suppose it would be easy to rationalize these paintings as a kind of form of open sculpture. Certainly I felt that the limit and directions taken by the individual thorns did create a hollow space which fascinated me and still does. When the "vein" appeared to become simply decorative, I abandoned the theme but it did reappear in 1954 and again comparatively recently so I suppose the fascination for this subject has not entirely left me.

I do not think that there is anything else that I can say except, perhaps, that whilst most people have read into these pictures the idea that they are a kind of illustrative crucifixion with religious overtones, this is quite false and, in fact, this question was not in my thoughts at all. *September, 1968*

**The Work of Graham Sutherland*, Text by Douglas Cooper, London, Lund Humphries, 1961.
***Eight European Artists*, edited by Hans F. S. Bauman (pseudonym Felix H. Mann), New York, British Book Centre, 1954.

TWORKOV



East Barrier, 1960
Jack Tworkov (American, born 1900)
Gift of Seymour H. Knox

Oil on canvas
91 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 80 $\frac{3}{8}$ "

East Barrier, 1960, is one of a series of paintings all called *Barriers*. It is especially related to a painting in Mr. Donald Blinken's collection in New York called *West Barrier*. The two paintings are approximately the same dimensions and were at one point considered a pair. The earliest of the series belongs to Mrs. Gates Lloyd of Philadelphia. Another — the largest in the series called *Barrier Series #4* is in the collection of the University of Wisconsin Museum in Madison. All of the *Barrier* series stressed large, looming, perhaps threatening masses entering the canvas usually from the top and side. These masses or formations avoided hard outlines and were the result of an accumulation of rather long strokes, which served as a basic structural element akin to the dot in a Seurat painting. The color in these

paintings was more tonal, more naturalistic and tended towards the monochromatic.

The *Barrier* series as well as the new paintings which I have been engaged in since about 1965 derive from some dense and rather moody pencil and charcoal drawings which I began making as far back as 1954. I believe that the rather black conté drawings of Seurat had some influence on me. I came to appreciate these drawings not as sketches for paintings, but for the quality of monochromatic grey and black and for the role stroke played in building up masses. I conceived the desire to carry over these qualities into the material and scale of paintings. My recent paintings go much further in approaching this point of view. *July, 1968*

WOTRUBA



Seated Figure, 1959
Fritz Wotruba (Austrian, born 1907)
Limestone
39¾" x 27¾" x 19½"

Charles Clifton, Edmund Hayes and
Sherman S. Jewett Funds

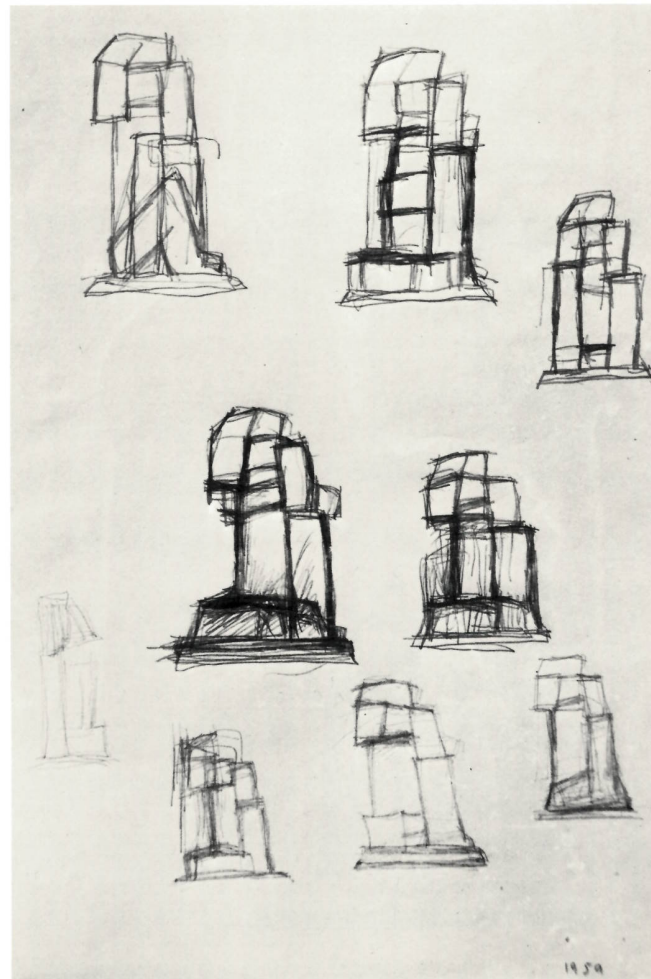


Knieende Figur, 1960
Museum am Ostwall Dortmund

I am glad that you value this figure which is an important step in my work.

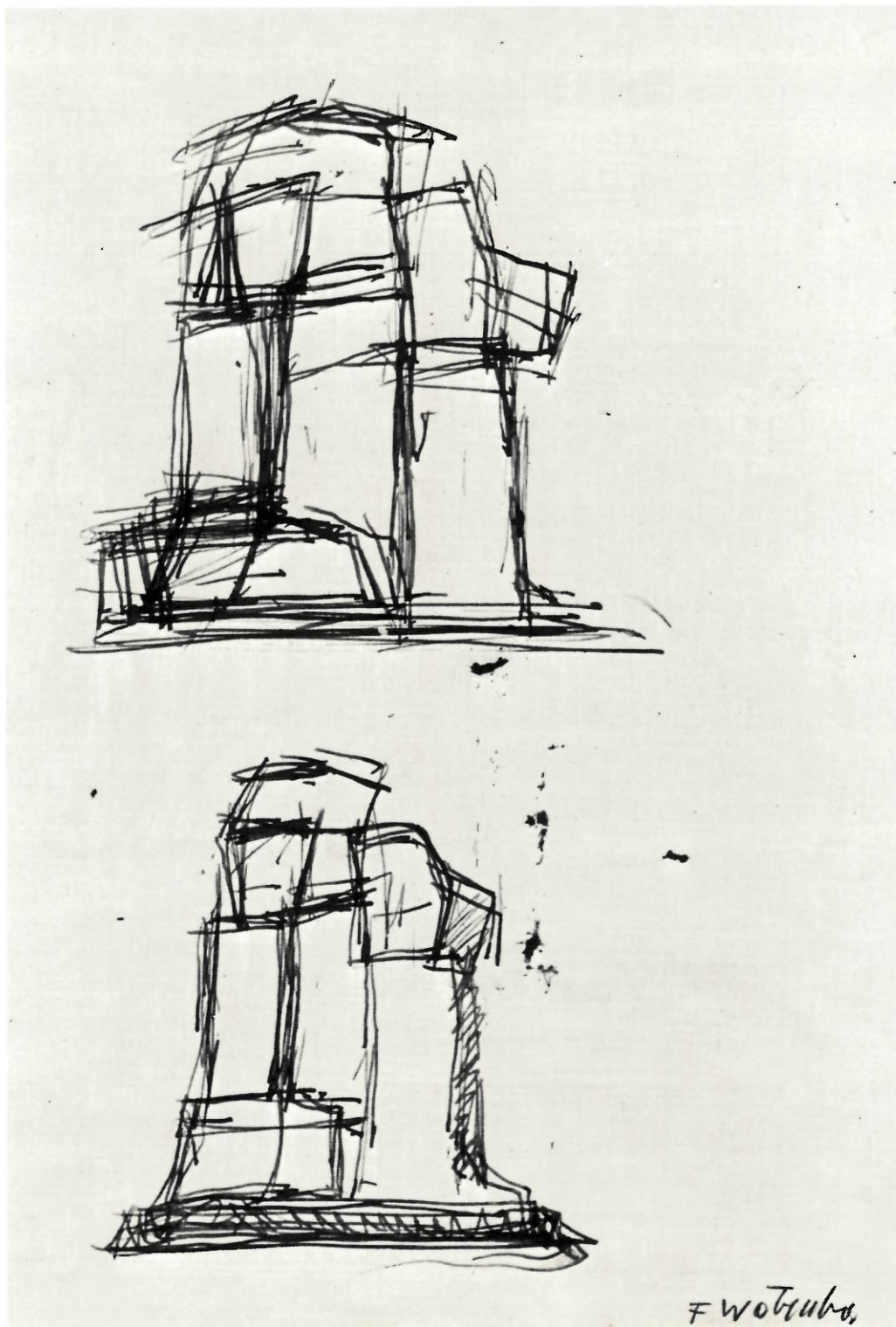
It is difficult to reconstruct the stages of my work. This stone figure arose after the large relief for the Brussels World's Fair, 1959, and is the forerunner of the large kneeling figure in the Dortmund Museum. At that time, I was interested in the compact resolution of a sculpture — no cleavage, no holes — which in all architecture still governs the organization of a figure. A problem which always recurs with me, since it is a persistent one. From there, it is naturally not far to absolute architecture — I have now made this step quite logically following my work for the Berlin Opera; while I am now building a cloister and a church.
August, 1968

WOTRUBA



Preliminary sketches for *Seated Figure*

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Preliminary sketches for *Seated Figure*