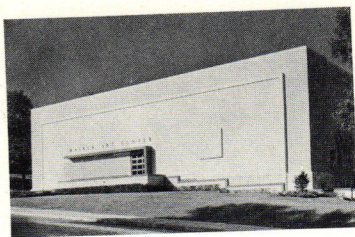


WALKER ART CENTER, MINNEAPOLIS 1954

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DESIGN QUARTERLY



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# DESIGN QUARTERLY

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Guest Editor:

BELLE KRASNE

Associates:

SIDNEY SIMON

RUTH A. BUSINGER

ERIC SUTHERLAND *photography*

JOHN SUTHERLAND *design*

HARLEY JENSEN *production assistant*

*Design Quarterly, formerly Everyday Art Quarterly, is indexed in Art Index. Subscription price \$2.00 per year, single copies 50¢. Design Quarterly is published four times a year by the Walker Art Center, 1710 Lyndale Avenue South, Minneapolis 3, Minnesota. H. H. ARNASON, Director*  
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*Note: The editor wishes to thank the following for their co-operation in supplying photographs for this issue: Pierre Matisse Gallery, Rose Fried Gallery, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Art News, the Museum of Modern Art, Sidney Janis Gallery, Bertha Schaefer Gallery, Egan Gallery, Stable Gallery, New Gallery and Detroit Institute of Arts.*

MEG TORBERT, editor of the *Design Quarterly*, will be on leave of absence until next September. As a result the present and the next issue of the *Quarterly* will be in the hands of a guest editor. We are most fortunate in having as guest editor for this issue Miss Belle Krasne, formerly editor of the *Art Digest*. Miss Krasne has departed from the tradition of the *Quarterly* in producing an experimental issue devoted to painting, sculpture, and architecture, with articles by a particularly distinguished group of critics and artists. In succeeding issues the *Quarterly* will return to its predominant emphasis on various aspects of design.—H. H. Arnason

# INDIVIDUALITY

## AND STYLE

**Robert Goldwater** discusses conflicting points of view in the modern attitude toward the pattern of artistic creation.

Twentieth-century taste would like to have its cake and eat it too. It seeks the satisfaction of two antithetical esthetic goals. Diversity, originality, freshness and individual expression — we look for all these; we expect the artist to be entirely true to himself, and we admit and cultivate a wide variety of styles as the fruit of this freedom. And yet we also believe that our time, no less than others, has, not styles, but a style, a consistent and far-reaching style that is its own, and we look for a real unity behind a surface multiplicity. These two expectations are constantly getting in each other's way.

In this connection the success of André Malraux's concept of the silent voices gathered in the "museum without walls" is something to ponder. To be sure his eloquence, his conviction and his learning have a good deal to do with it. Only rarely is there a critic of the visual arts who is so inside his subject without pedantry, for whom painting and sculpture are a vital part of his existence, rather than mere adornments; and it is equally uncommon to find a historian who writes as he breathes. All this is infectious, and we are prouder of ourselves as we feel the contagion spreading and become willing victims of this unrelenting passion for fine and vigorous sensation.

Besides, the "museum without walls" seems an ideal realizable in practical terms, and this is always attractive. It is somehow intriguing to make use of one of the pervasive mechanical devices of the 20th century—photography—which by its very spread and facility has become the

common man's art, to achieve an ideal that surpasses the limited views of the high cultures of the past and offers the whole of art, past and present, near and far, for our enjoyment.

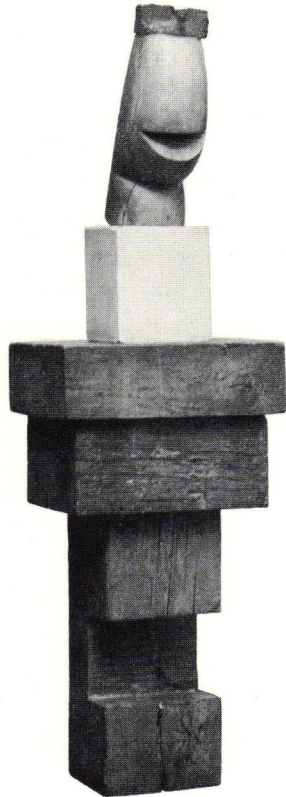
Inherent in the concept, too, is a logical extension of a process that has already largely taken place in our museums: the plucking of the work from its context. Museums have, it is true, tried to counterbalance this tendency by cultural grouping and historical sequence, but usually with only limited success. On the other hand, the intensification of this tendency in the museum without walls, which puts its emphasis on individual rather than period style, leads directly to the drastic solution of the conflict between our love of styles and our desire for style. Malraux in effect simply cuts the gordian knot and proposes that we ignore history, that we apply to the art of the past the approach inherent

in the art of the present, and consider each work on its own terms. We, who have been so conscious of history, are to forget its existence and come to each work directly, to ignore development, continuity and setting, and allow all art to speak to us as if it had been created yesterday.

Now what is it that we ask for in contemporary art; what are the bases of our judgment? I would say there are two, or rather two aspects of one: originality and authenticity. We require that the work be the product of a unique personality, that it be different from other works of art and that it be the author's own. Our first demand is that from it proceed what Marcel Duchamp has called an "esthetic echo"; our emphasis is not on the recognizable, but on the new.

This attitude, if not unique in modern times, has at least been greatly emphasized; but have we applied it

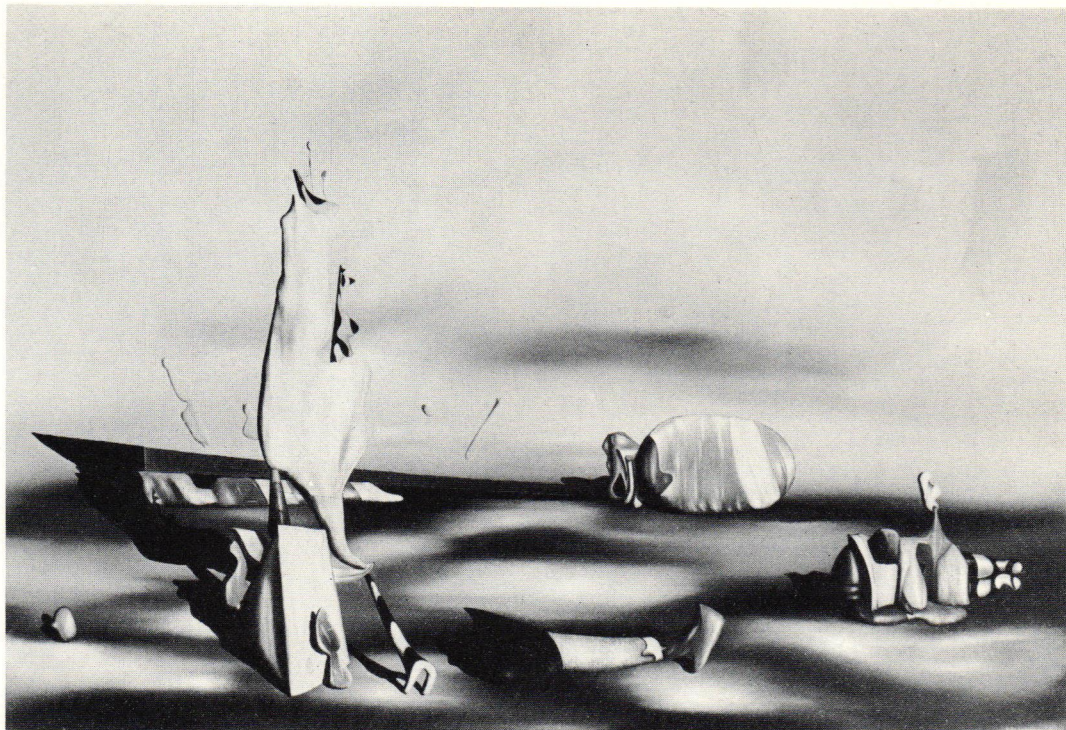
**constantin brancusi:** *The Chief*, 1925



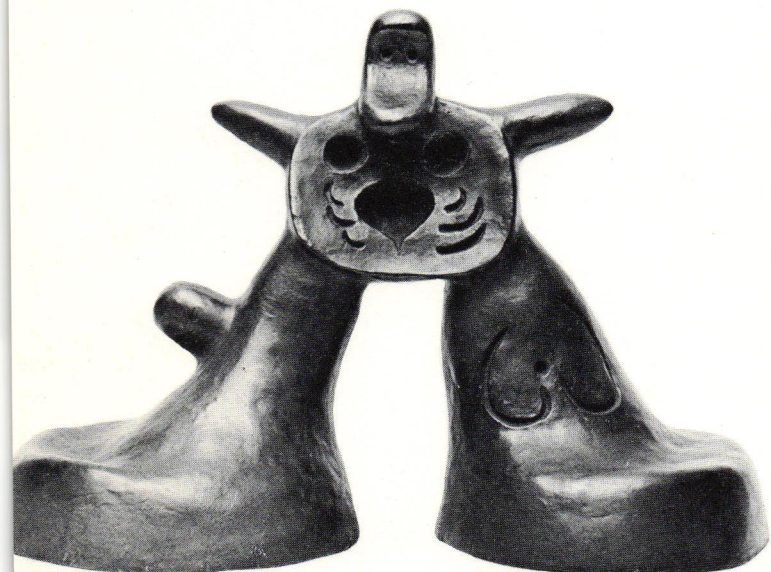
**alberto giacometti:** *Man Crossing a Square on a Sunny Morning*, 1950



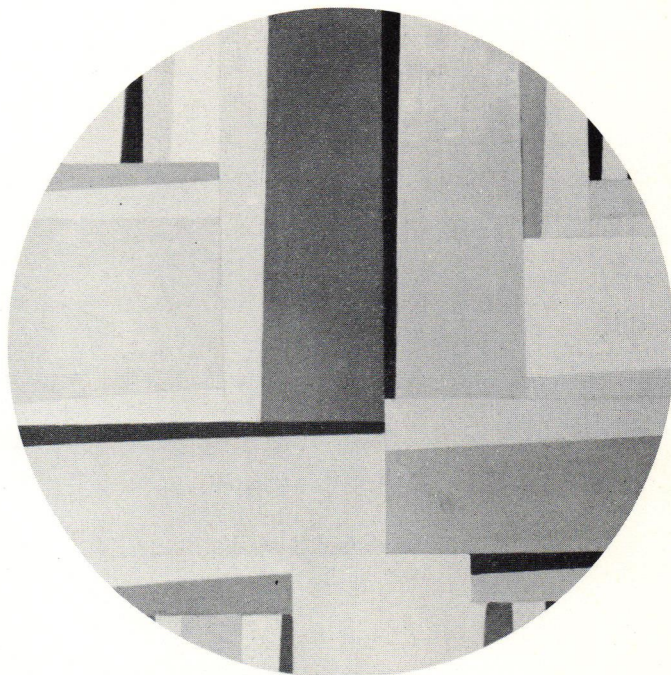
**yves tanguy:** *Vin miel et huile*, 1942



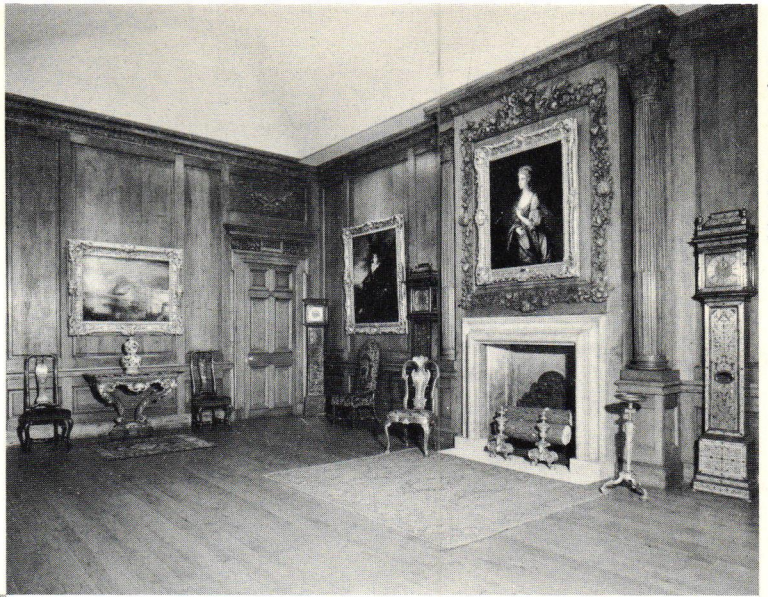
**joán miró:** *Composition*, 1950



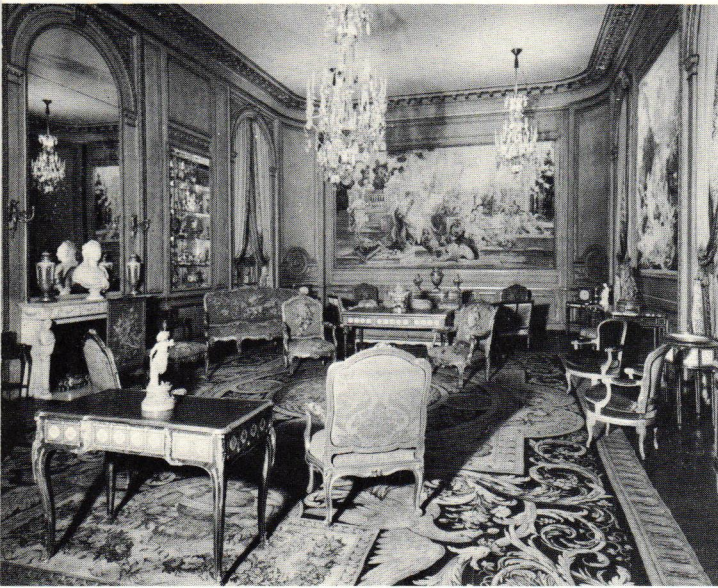
**fritz glarner:** *Relational Painting, Tondo #28*, 1953



Room from Sutton Scarsdale, Derbyshire, England, 1724



philadelphia museum of art



philadelphia museum of art

Louis XVI Reception Room

**géricault:** *Frightened Horse*



detroit institute of arts

**ingres:** Study for *La Source*



equally to all art? When we consider any period of the past, it appears obvious that it has a style, that not only its painters, but its sculptors, its architects, its designers and craftsmen all worked in a recognizable and connected manner, the sum of whose qualities represents the style of the time. The art of the 18th century is a particularly evident example, and that Boucher, Fragonard and Tiepolo are all working with the same elements, are all clearly "rococo," we not only accept but expect and approve.

One of the axioms of our understanding of the whole history of art is that art expresses its time, and that it does so through the style of its period. We begin by defining that style, be it renaissance, baroque or rococo, and then go on to try to describe how, and if possible to explain why, certain artists seem to be exceptional, whether it is that they transcend their period by genius or fall short of it through lack of talent. We somehow feel that every period not only *does* have its own peculiar and characteristic style, but that it *should* have it. (If we are unable to find one we call the period "transitional.") Once we know what it is, we have been granted a kind of standard of judgment external to ourselves, a perspective which removes the individual work from a too immediate impingement upon our emotions into a framework of understanding. It is true that this is largely a circular argument, for the evidence of a period's character is in great part derived precisely from the same monuments which we measure against that character. But this usually does not disturb us. Having lost the ancients' belief in a standard of absolute beauty, we have substituted for it a belief in a series of styles, incommensurable with each other, yet each somehow possessing an ideal form which infuses the work of all its practitioners. It is as if, aware that in recognizing history (but denying artistic "progress"), we had accepted the fact of constant change, but had agreed to compromise with the old idea of unchanging beauty by deciding to arrest the course of

history at certain opportune ideal moments, and thus provide ourselves with a series of ideal images for the single one we have reluctantly relinquished.

When we come to our own age in this state of mind, our perspective changes, and we are torn between the two poles of our attitude. We have, after all, admitted constant historical change; and seen close up, the details of flux loom larger, and it is harder to arrest the movement at any given point. At what date shall the modern era begin? Change is now seen to be continuous, and all moments, even if not equally decisive, are inescapable members of the series. Thus if art is to respond to history, and history is diverse and shifting, so must art itself be. But at the same time we sense that our epoch has its own character, and we should like an art which will not only be sensitive to that character, but furnish us with its organized image. Besides, we feel that our period, like any other, ought, for the sake of its own dignity, have an art that is its single central expression.

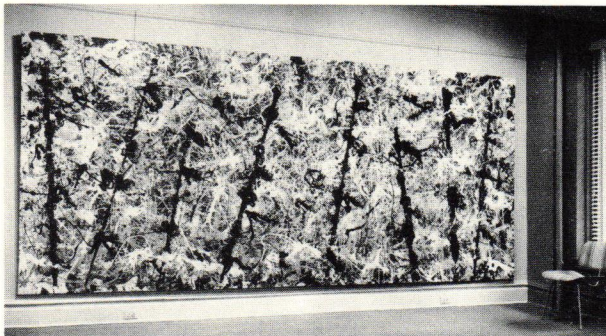
The admission of changing esthetic goals is usually associated with the romantics. In their time, too, was introduced an obviously connected ideal, the uniqueness and authenticity of the work of art, which we have inherited and expanded. We expect the work to be the sole product of the artist, a direct reflection of his personal way of looking at the world. Each artist, we feel, must start anew; his paramount task (almost our definition of an artist) being, as the romantics said, to preserve the freshness of his childish vision. He is not supposed to be a follower, nor to work "in a style," since this would imply the borrowing of a vision not his own. We have even introduced the concept of constant change within the artist's own life, so that not only is he not permitted to repeat the achievement of others, he is not even supposed to repeat himself.

All this is admittedly an ideal. It is at variance with a certain natural inclination to prefer the framework of the familiar to the new experience. Although the

*The She-Wolf*, 1943



**jackson pollock**



*Blue Poles*, 1952

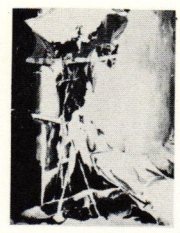
artist is supposed to renew himself, collectors still have a tendency to prefer his last decade's manner to his most recent, and to admire in one painter a style they have really learned to like (or simply to admit to familiarity) through studying the work of another. But though it is an ideal, it has given us the tremendous diversity of styles, the great changes with short spans that mark the art of our period; and artists and collectors, with some difficulty, have tried to live up to it.

On the other hand, we like unity, and much as we may be willing to admit and, in principle, to admire diversity, we should like to have diversity as a single unifying principle, to be able to apply it equally to the art of the past and of the present. Thus it is a comfort to be able to emphasize (as Malraux has done) that the essence of both lies not in their historical expressivity, but in the individuality, the uniqueness, the personality of each artist. The basis of style, then, lies not in the period, but in the man. In stressing this we have freed ourselves from the duality of the romantic inheritance which permeates our attitude to our own art, and so are permitted to enjoy each separate expression in full measure. Variety and the sense of history — both were exalted by the romantics; but in the long run one limits the other. If, rightly or wrongly, we free ourselves of the compulsion (it is almost a moral compulsion) of a constant historical consciousness, and no longer worry about what is "really" the art of our time, or what it should be, then the search for the style of the 20th century need no longer haunt us as we examine and enjoy the immense diversity of its various styles.

*Robert Goldwater, formerly editor of the Magazine of Art, is a professor of art history at Queens College. An authority on late 19th-century and 20th-century art, he has contributed to numerous publications including the Burlington Magazine, the Art Bulletin, the College Art Journal and Perspectives. His books include "Artists on Art," co-edited with Marco Treves.*



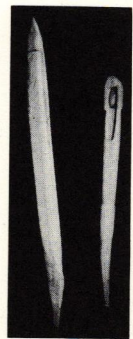
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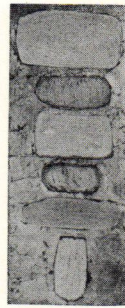
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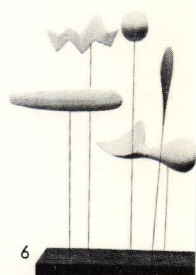
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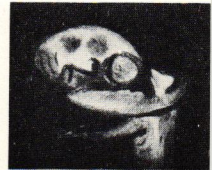
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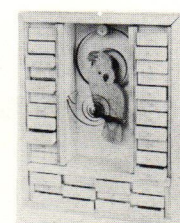
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- reuben nakian
- balcomb greene
- john graham
- louise bourgeois
- jim forsberg
- sidney geist
- harold paris
- trajan
- joseph cornell
- rrado di marca-relli

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- Venus, 1954
- Apparition, 1951
- Cave Canem, 1953
- Figures, 1950
- Tower Tablet, 1951
- Aerial Construction, 1950
- St. John, 1953
- Sand Hog, 1942
- Object, ca. 1949
- Painting, 1952

## ARTISTS IN THE MARGIN

For over 20 years, Joseph Cornell has been quietly working and exhibiting. His little boxes — unique and precious constructions — are not widely known, but are admired by all who have seen them. They are, as Cornell himself has said, “really in the margin of art.” The margin of art is outside the mainstream — but it is where the new impulses arise as movements stiffen into academies. And it is where the 10 artists presented on the following pages do their work. Unassuming, unassimilable, they pursue their private aims. This is not a survey of lost, neglected or undiscovered talent, but a personal selection from among those artists who have found — and persisted in exploring — personal directions outside the “movements” of modern art. The notes accompanying the illustrations are, for the most part, based on conversations with the artists. — Belle Krasne



*Olympia*, 1951



*Balcomb Greene was born in Niagara Falls, N. Y., in 1904. Though he had no formal training in art, in other respects his education has been extensive: he studied at four universities, Syracuse, Columbia, New York and Vienna. His earliest exhibition was held at the J. B. Neumann Gallery in New York. Since then, he has had three shows at the Bertha Schaefer Gallery. Currently he teaches four months of the year at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, Pa., and lives during the rest of the year at Montauk, Long Island.*

*Man Standing*, 1953

BALCOMB GREENE

A couple of times, in print, I've been called erudite because of some years of graduate work in various subjects, and while I'm far from erudite, it's true that in my professional ambitions (and preparations for same) I moved through philosophy, psychology, English lit, creative writing and there must be a few other things. I now teach mainly interrelationships of the arts, and have to keep passably abreast of music, theater, architecture, painting, etc. — which isn't easy, but receives little straining. Have an idea that the painter's climate, in which he grows, can very well be a consciousness of the whole world. Also his early training. Also not so damned much technical training in art, for this he can, with moderate inventiveness, work out for himself. And if he hasn't the inventive spirit, he's sunk anyway.

I've curiously little disposition to analyze my own work, or, for that matter, to predict direction or formulate an ideal of direction. Oh, to be sure, I've become warmed up lately by humanism as a sort of ideal. No reason at all why one who detests people generally, and with nice particular venom at times, shouldn't really, in his art, be making the big humanist contribution. Plenty of cases around of artists who get all soft and bleary-eyed when talking about people — just plain folks — and yet, in their art, malign man with the most putrid sorts of sentimentality. Plenty of such cases.

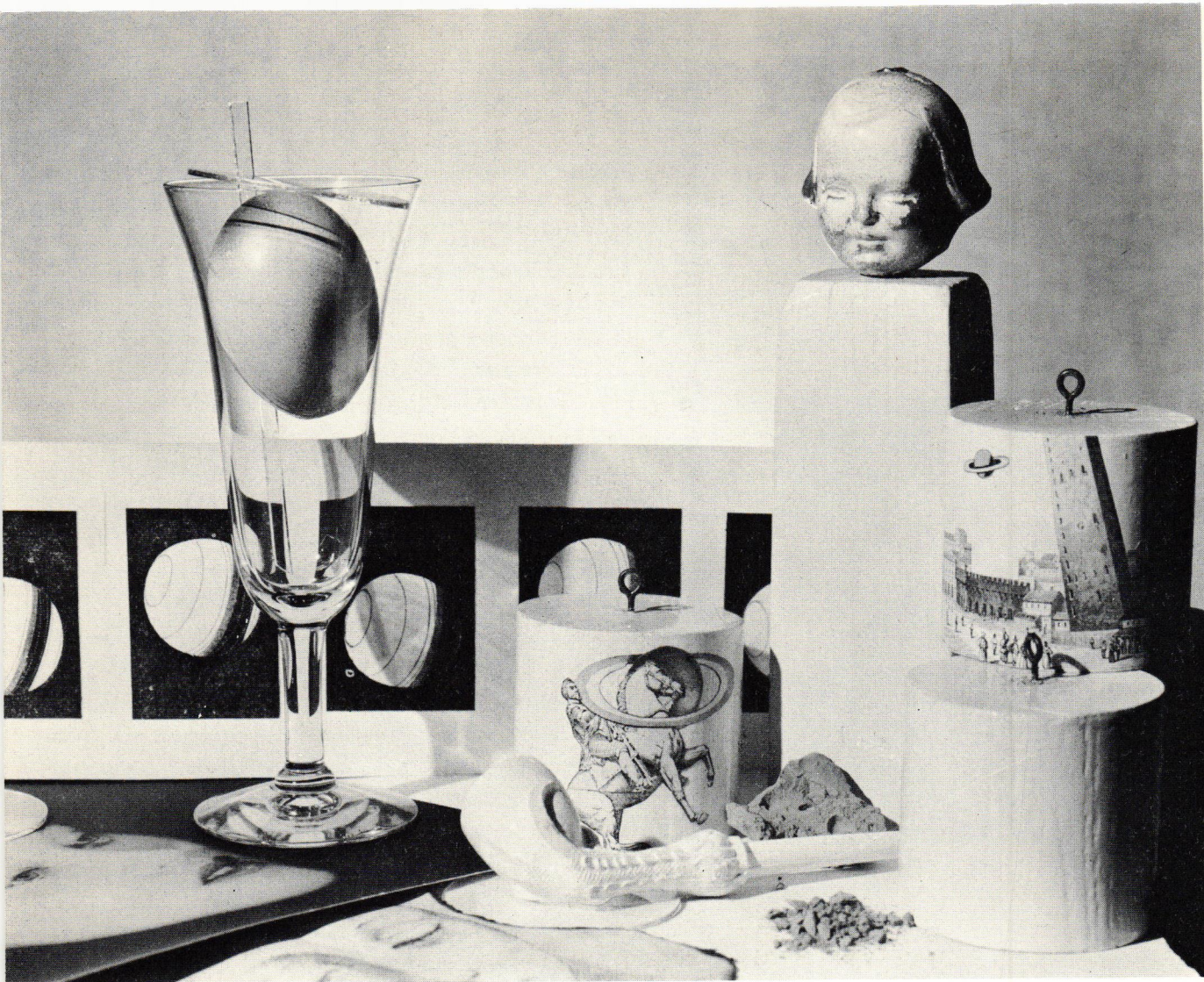
Visually, my interest seems to be centered in people, especially with their clothes off; the ocean, in all moods (it is on the edge of the ocean that I live eight months of the year), and architecture, structural things.

I am interested, of course, in light — and in shadow. But the mystery in light which fades and hides seems to have certain advantages over shadow which is soft. When elements of my work become soft through fading, it seems that I usually throw other elements into sharpness and hardness. The crisp edge.

I wish my work to be erotic more than sensuous, and I wish sometime to get what I mean fully clear to myself. I don't want it sensuous in the sense of juicy and curvey, and I think my figures may move constantly in the shadow of some kind of wonderful sinfulness, about which the perceiving mind will speculate — but never, of course, clearly. As, for that matter, mine does.

What I see appearing in my work is the figure, the human figure, usually naked. More naked even than obviously a figure. Further characterization, I'm afraid, will amount to a boasting of my humanism. But a love for mankind isn't a thing to seek; it's a thing that comes pressing in upon you despite the stupidity, veniality and ugliness of man today.

I work for people, but people of the future whom other men are busy helping to create. To create one's public is the only safe way.

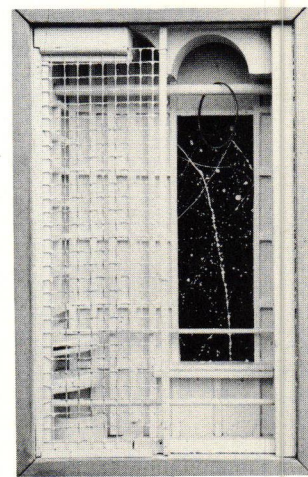


*For Johannes Kepler, ca. 1934*

*Joseph Cornell, who was born in New England about 1900, has been living in Flushing, N. Y., for the past 20-odd years. In 1931, he did the catalogue for a surrealist show held at the Julien Levy Gallery, and in the following years he was one of the few Americans to show with and be admired by the surrealists. He has had one-man shows at the Julien Levy, Peggy Guggenheim, Pierre Matisse, Hugo and Egan galleries. In addition to making constructions in boxes, he has done experimental work in cinema and graphic design. Although he is a unique figure on the American scene, he is an elusive person even to his closest friends.*

*From Night Song Series, ca. 1952*

*Cockatoo, 1949*



## JOSEPH CORNELL

People speak of art as "creative expression," but to me expression is one thing, being creative is something else. To be creative is to build something, to put order into something. I can't think of art except in these terms.

To take the visual, phenomenal world and translate it does not interest me. But I *am* interested in building from an idea; I *am* interested in inventing an object, in building a fantasy, constructing a tower of forms which are invested with implied weight, the spaces and tensions between them becoming part of the building.

The conscious effort in my work is to go from the abstract to the concrete, from the idea (abstract) to the object (concrete). Art, by this definition, presents to the spectator an experience he would not have had elsewhere, though perhaps it corresponds to a notion he might have had.

One day in 1948, I happened to be building a wall with large field stones. As I was handling them, setting them in place, it occurred to me that you could make things with stones, or with the forms of stones. I was impressed by a sense of weight and permanence in them. This experience was the impetus for all of my subsequent work. It led to the development of an idea which is most important to my work, the idea of precariously balanced forms, the feeling that there could be movement in the work and that the slightest little disturbance would upset the total order.

Of course, I love Stonehenge, though I didn't know too much about it when I began to work in this way. But the forms I saw while visiting there in 1950 — two uprights supporting a lintel, a series of three — became, for me, identified with the idea of the Trinity. I'm interested, you see, in whatever metaphysical meaning these things might have; I'm interested in the idea that with such a stone, a form, one can create an image (object) in a world (the canvas) unaffected by the conditions of the "real" world.

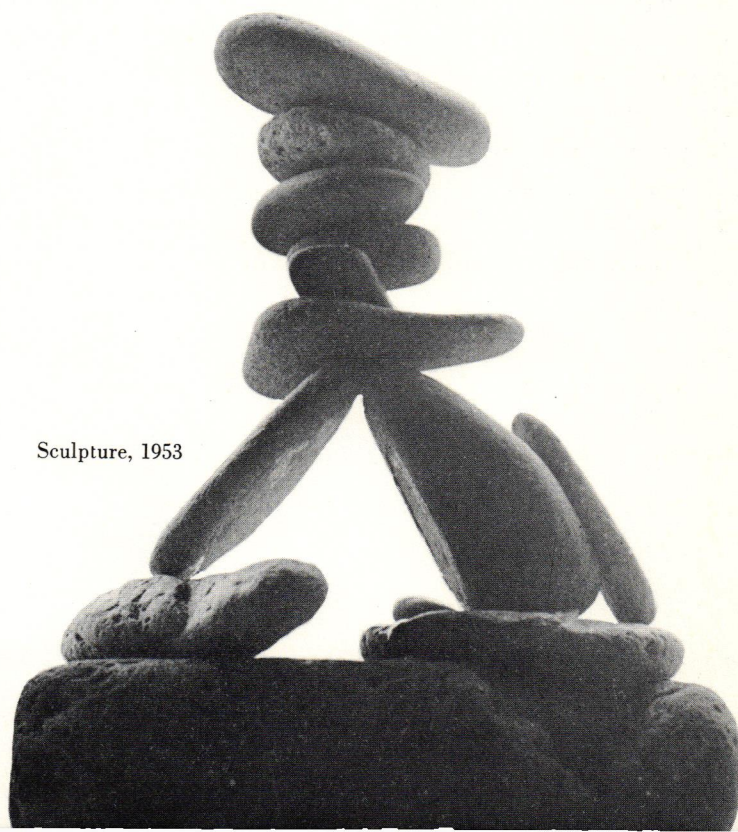
I think you could say, very simply, that I regard my paintings as still-lives, arrangements of forms.



Composition Ten, 1951

*Jim Forsberg was born in Sauk Centre, Minn., in 1919. Before leaving Minnesota, he studied with Alexander Masley and Cameron Booth. The latter, along with Vaclav Vytlacil and Will Barnet, were his instructors at the Art Students League in New York. He also studied briefly with Hans Hofmann. Since he began working 10 years ago, he has had five one-man shows, three of them (including his 1954 show) at the New Gallery in New York. His most experimental work has been done in the print field. Recently he has developed an interest in sculpture. He is now living in New York.*

## JIM FORSBERG



Sculpture, 1953

REUBEN NAKIAN



Sculpture is a horrible problem. It looks simple, but to get craftsmanship, knowledge and taste, it takes 50 years. When someone asks me to see a young sculptor's show, I ask how old he is. If he's over 50, I go to see it. You can't know anything about sculpture if you're younger.

So much has already been done in art. You can't make statues of David, you can't make Rodins today. It's passé. Rodin is corny. He's not corny himself, but it's corny to do him now. We're more sophisticated. Now the only thing that counts is a thing of the highest order. I'd like to see art like El Greco and Titian added to Picasso. The goal for art, I think, is to be very sophisticated and at the same time like the old masters.

It's even harder in sculpture. You can't use color. You can't put a tree in the background. I tried using color for a while, but they didn't like it. So now I paint my things black. Sculpture in black is always noble. A nice black is a grand thing.

I hate this age. We have no great people knocking at our doors and asking to come in and see what we're doing. It's very cold here. So you have to train yourself to ignore it. An artist should be alone, but he also should be with civilized people.

I'm like a lone wolf. I'm isolated. I stay away from the art world. After 50 years of working, I don't even think about art or theories of art. I've solved everything I want to solve for myself; I work instinctively now. I just sit down and fight. I make something; I think it's good; the next day I look at it and tear it up. That's

the way it goes.

What's most exciting in life? *That's* what a sculptor should do. What you like, you should do.

My whole damned thing is that today I just use the female. That's my God. That's the whole thing with me. I wouldn't care to make a man. I could, but I don't want to. That's how it was in the old days, too—the Greeks, they made men when they had commissions to do them. If it was a commission, I could

make a Crucifixion, but no one comes around, so I do what I like. And I like everything about woman — her beauty, her form, her quality. I suppose all men do. But I look at women and see so much in them; there's a contact, a feeling. I can sense things. Aside from this, they're so sculptural — the hair, the breasts.

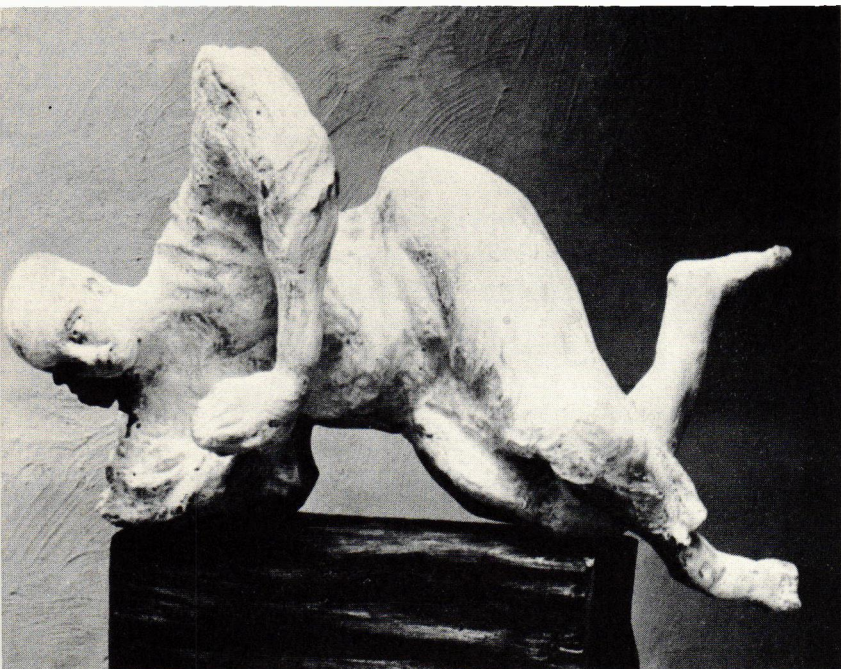
My ideas are jumbled. I love every art. I love cave art and I love Watteau. There isn't anything in the fine arts that I don't love if it's good.

Art comes down to taste and aristocracy. Van Gogh, he was an aristocrat of the mind, of the taste. And that's why Picasso's so great. Anyone can draw or model. But you have to have taste to know exactly where to put a line or a color.

*Reuben Nakian was born in College Point, Long Island, in 1897. In 1915, with the intention of becoming a painter, he attended night sketch classes at the Lincoln Arcade Building in New York. The following year, rebuffed by several painters, he went into the studio of Paul Manship. During the next four years, both he and Gaston Lachaise worked for Manship, and after they left, in 1920, they shared a studio for two or three years. A fellowship took Nakian abroad in 1931, but after visiting Paris and Sorrento, he "got lonesome and came home." After his first shows in the old Downtown Gallery, and a retrospective exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D. C., he did not exhibit for about 15 years till he began showing again in 1949 at the Egan Gallery. A resident of Greenwich Village for 30 years, he recently moved with his family to Stamford, Conn.*

*Europa and the Bull, 1951*





*The Fallen Angel, 1944*

TRAJAN

*Helen of Troy, 1949*



*Light Eagle, 1930*



I am trying to do fine art; I feel that this country is ready for it.

I am interested in the themes that artists have always worked with — the spiritual qualities that exist in life: majesty and grace, loveliness, strength, power, freshness, vigor and natural abundance. The themes of my work are spiritual to me, not mythological. Venus is love, the idea of love.

*Helen of Troy* — she was a girl I saw in the park. She was quite beautiful, but I felt that she was tied to material things instead of living for herself, for the spirit that was in her.

I did the little [Manfred] Schwarz kid because I saw David in him.

*Saint George* I saw on a beach, eating the sand with a spoon. He sat right next to the water and while he was sitting there a big wave came and covered him completely. When the water receded, there he was, just the way he was before, with a wonderful expression on his face.

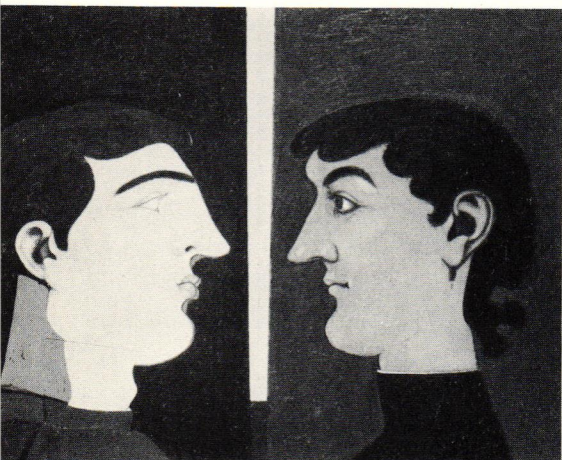
In human beings I always look for the Christ quality.

For me a work of art is really a revelation. It comes all at once, as an inspiration. You see something very beautiful, harmonious, and it expresses something like good over evil; you want to do it; you find a theme. In this way, I see things in human beings, in animals, in movements. *The Birth of Venus*, for example, came out of two bags of cement lying next to each other. The horses, I did after I looked at clouds. But even when I see the harmony so perfectly, I work for years and years on the piece; and then I'm not satisfied. No matter how little a piece is, it takes me almost a year to do.

I do a painting first, to get the color of the sculpture. Then I work with cements, mixed cements — it's a special medium I have — doing different things as the theme develops, changing it as I work on it. I paint the piece with watercolor at every stage. Sculpture was always painted — the Chinese painted it, the Greeks painted it, the Egyptians painted it. To me, when the material shows, it becomes obnoxious.

I had to study the figure for years — years of academic work. A sculptor is nothing without this knowledge.

*Trajan was born in Syulafehervar, Hungary, in 1887. He came to New York in 1908. Shortly thereafter he began his studies in sculpture with Alben Polachek at the Chicago Art Institute School. He later studied painting with Charles Hawthorne in Provincetown. In New York, he studied sculpture with John Gregory and Elie Nadelman at the Beaux Arts Institute and with Alexander Calder, Sr., at the Art Students League. Though active as a sculptor for 42 years, he has had only one one-man show: at the Valentine (Dudensing) Gallery in 1944. He was represented by Dudensing, however, from 1930 to 1946. He is now living in New York.*



*Umbrian Landscape*, 1950

*Donna Ferita*, 1944



To me, what's important in art is noble subject matter, in the first place, and then knowledge of craft — that's very difficult. Always, in the past, great artists and writers chose great subjects — mythological heroes, princes, saints, popes — not because they were better, but because when you read about them or saw them, they gave you a sense of energy.

In painting, I use things from the outside world, and certain things from the outside world stimulate me; but generally I work from the imagination and memory because I have a great facility for doing things from nature, and I have to restrain myself. To restrain yourself is the great art. To have a box full of colors and use only two — that's masterful.

What are the themes of my work? In the first place astrology. Astrology is the basis of all knowledge. We're all ruled by the stars.

I also paint women, dangerous women, mystical women. Cross-eyed women? Yes, it's a charming thing for women to be a little cross-eyed; it indicates modesty, a certain confusion, a little perplexity. And similarity is very boring. If my women appear more than a *little* cross-eyed, that's because in art you transpose things, you magnify. That's the part of art — to intensify.

For me, there are certain important elements in art. I have ideas about great severity, purity, a certain relentless rhythm that accepts no excuses.

*Rhythm*: the whole world is built in rhythm. (You know, I took first place in an international waltz contest in Paris three years ago.)

*Weight distribution*: it is necessary to balance a form that projects with one that recedes, a concave with a convex; one must reduce the equation to zero.

*Outline*: things exist in the world by their profile only, and profiles are subject to the laws of cascading form. Sometimes I use mechanical instruments; the important thing is to make the outlines sing.

I think austerity is very important, and so is balance. If you are too precise, the work becomes commercial. If you are too imprecise, that's not good either. The important thing is to find the correct balance.

To perfect. I like to perfect, perfect, perfect. And if you have no apprentices, that's very difficult.

My preferences among artists? I would say that for painting, Raphael is the greatest (I know more about Raphael than anyone else, and I say there are only two real Raphaels in the world — *Tommaso Inghirami* and *La Donna Gravida* in Florence). For composition, Paolo Uccello. For metaphysics, it's Leonardo. And, of course, for pure power, Cimabue is the greatest.

I consider the goal of life to be integral knowledge. The wisdom of life is to be above good and evil, to be in the frozen zone. But to achieve the goal is like scaling a mountain peak. The last 10 inches of the climb are the hardest. There you are beset by dragons, visions, vertigo. And yet, if you fail to get to the very top, all your effort is worth nothing.

*John Graham was born in Kiev, Russia, in 1888, and spent most of his early life in Moscow and St. Petersburg where he was trained as a doctor of laws — "of all laws" — and as a statesman and cavalryman. After arriving in New York 35 years ago, he started to paint, first studying with John Sloan at the Art Students League. Later he studied at the Grande Chaumière in Paris and elsewhere in Europe. One of the pioneer American abstract painters, he worked for several years in close association with Arshile Gorky and Willem DeKooning. His first show was held at the Dudensing Brothers Gallery. Later he had shows at the Rose Fried and the Betty Parsons galleries and, most recently, at the Stable Gallery. He is now living in South Hampton, Long Island.*

*Louise Bourgeois was born in Paris in 1911. There she studied with Roger Bissière and Fernand Léger after taking her preliminary training at the Grande Chaumière and the Beaux Arts. Since her arrival in this country in 1938, she has had six solo shows, the first of which was held in 1945. Three others — in 1949, '50 and '53 — were held at the Peridot Gallery. During 1953, she was also given an exhibition at the Allan Frumkin Gallery in Chicago. She is a resident of New York.*

## LOUISE BOURGEOIS



An artist's words are always to be taken cautiously. The finished work is often a stranger to, and sometimes very much at odds with what the artist felt, or wished to express when he began. At best the artist does what he can, rather than what he wants to do. After the battle is over and the damage faced up to, the result may be surprisingly dull — but sometimes it is surprisingly interesting. The mountain brought forth a mouse, but the bee will create a miracle of beauty and order. Asked to enlighten us on their creative process, both would be embarrassed, and probably uninterested. The artist who discusses the so-called meaning of his work is usually describing a literary side-issue. The core of his original impulse is to be found, if at all, in the work itself.

Just the same, the artist must say what he feels:

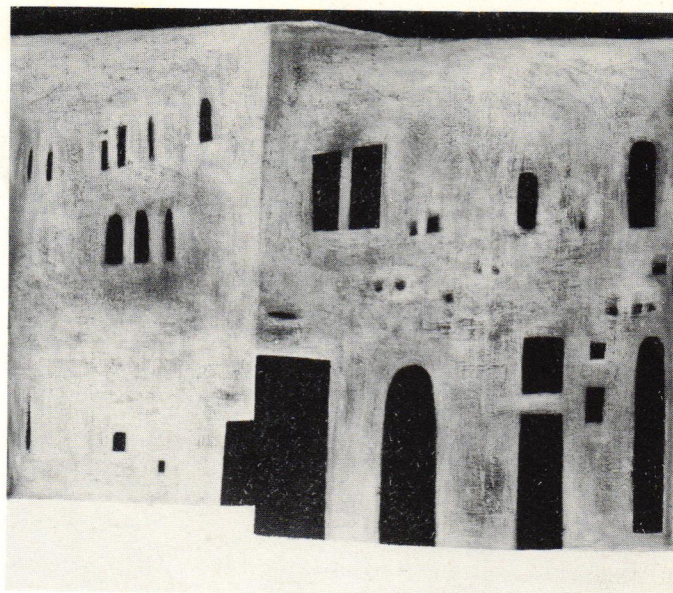
My work grows from the duel between the isolated individual and the shared awareness of the group. At first I made single figures without any freedom at all; blind houses without any openings, any relation to the outside world. Later, tiny windows started to appear. And then I began to develop an interest in the relationship between two figures. The figures of this phase are turned in on themselves, but they try to be together even though they may not succeed in reaching each other.

Gradually the relations between the figures I made became freer and more subtle, and now I see my works as groups of objects relating to each other. Although ultimately each can and does stand alone, the figures can be grouped in various ways and fashions, and each time the tension of their relations makes for a different formal arrangement. For this reason the figures are placed in the ground the way people would place themselves in the street to talk to each other. And this is why they grow from a single point — a minimum base of immobility which suggests an always possible change.

In my most recent work these relations become clearer and more intimate. Now the single work has its own complex of parts, each of which is similar, yet different from the others. But there is still the feeling with which I began — the drama of one among many.

The look of my figures is abstract, and to the spectator they may not appear to be figures at all. They are the expression, in abstract terms, of emotions and states of awareness. Eighteenth-century painters made “conversation pieces;” my sculptures might be called “confrontation pieces.”

*Corrado di Marca-Relli was born in Boston in 1913 and spent his childhood in Europe. His interest in painting began before he returned to the United States at the age of 14, but although he took random instruction from private teachers in Italy, he is by-and-large a self-taught artist. His first one-man show was held at the Niveau Gallery in 1948. Since then, he has had four one-man shows: at the Niveau again in 1949; at the Cortile Gallery in Rome in 1950, at the New Gallery in 1951, and at the Stable Gallery in 1953. He has lived in New York since 1927, though currently he divides his time between New York and East Hampton, Long Island, where he makes his home.*



Painting, 1952

## CORRADO DI MARCA-RELLI

I have always been interested in a kind of stillness, silence, quiet, but in the metaphysical aspects of painting rather than the surreal. I jockey between provocative subject matter and provocative space. I feel that somewhere between the two the answer lies.

My work proceeds from the imagination, in the sense of imagination as a form of retentive memory. If I were in front of nature when I painted a picture, I would fall apart. I would see too much. It would only confuse me. I want, rather, to paint scenes from memory; one remembers just the essentials without details. At first it was very difficult to do this, but I found, through a mental struggle, that I could shut my eyes and see what I wanted to paint. You know, I like to travel very much, and now I find that my mind is getting to be like a camera.

When I paint a building or a figure, I don't really paint a building or a figure; I paint an association. I want the particular feeling of order and static quietness. I see the subject in a depressed state; a painting only works for me when it arrives at that state. The buildings, the figures — they're all a little in an eerie light, in a world of non-reality. But that seems natural for me. I don't seek it out.

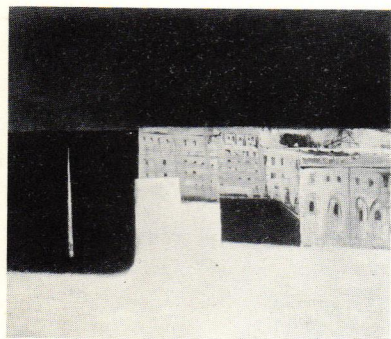
Around 1950, I began to do non-figurative work. Later on, I felt the need to reapproach the visible world. If I start with the abstract concept, having no figurative imagery, what happens is that I can create a sense of exciting relationships, but the total image becomes something naturalistic; it assumes another imagery — flame, leopard spots, etc. But if I start off with subject matter, my challenge is to find its abstraction on the canvas; it has to be translated; I can control it down to the hairline, and at least I know what I'm working with. If the statement ends at the right place, I think the spectator is forced to look at it in a certain way.

A year ago, I did some paintings of buildings. I had removed color from them—in the sense, that is, of working with color as form. I became more interested in light, volumes of light. The collages on which I am now working are an outgrowth of these "light" paintings. The white became much more the force, pushing out the blacks. I was working with heavier whites all the time to get a cleaner edge. And then I found it easier to just use collage, areas of primed canvas.

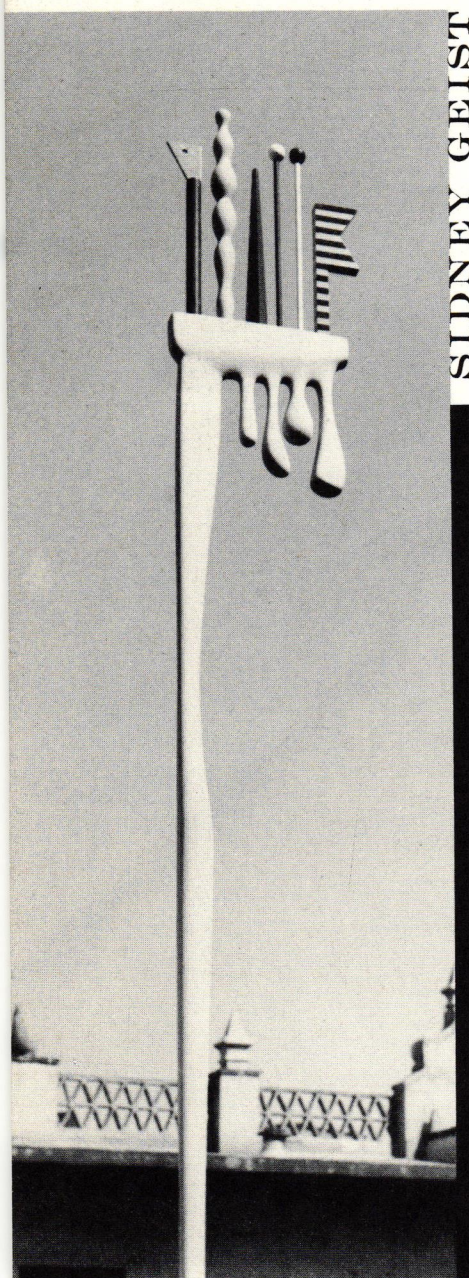
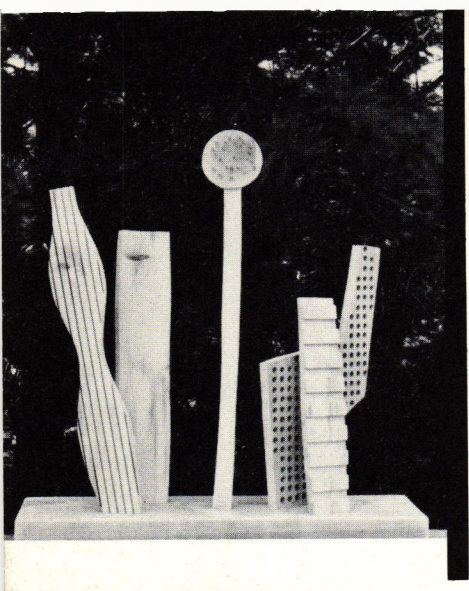
I feel, today, as if I'm coming out of a long, dark tunnel. I realize now that it's a mistake for me to try to avoid the image. No matter what I've done, I've always felt compelled to return to it.



Collage on Canvas, 1953



Painting, 1952



SIDNEY GEIST

Standard #2, 1951

The only way I can explain the tendency I have to make tall sculpture in a narrow depth is by a certain constriction of feeling in myself — a lessening of optimism or a restriction of enthusiasm. I have the feeling that there's no place or need for solid sculpture down below and that maybe these things are better off a little higher up where there's more room. I don't mean for them to gesticulate, to take up much space. Standing up against the sky, taking up the space of a man, their clear profiles can be grasped at a glance, without the need to move around them. They probably represent a shrinking from the social-political scene, as though they were not wanted there, as though the energy couldn't be summoned to make things in depth, so that the only place they can go is up.

Paint? Why not? I like colored things.

I have no theories of a special space. My sculpture occupies the same space I occupy. I make real, physical things, but every shape and space has metaphorical physical meaning. We naturally attach symbolism to real things, to every relation to the earth, to objects and to man.

I have no theory of form; I make the forms I need. Nor am I interested in material. I use wood because I can manipulate it. To me, there's something which I call architecture that's in a category superior to material and notions of form. I like to think there is some ideal sense of architecture, but it is probably the architecture of the human mind, and, in the end, of my mind.

I learn from everything, from natural forms, from man-made forms, and from what I think are the principles of form in a most abstract way. But I think sculpture is a man-made creation, not a reflection of natural forms or a found-object, but a conscious human construction, and expression of human will.

My things don't represent anything, but they have themes. I call some of them *Standards* because they look like flags. The theme of *Standard #2* is a world, of *Standard #3*, is a family.

It's mysterious. You go back and forth. Certain shapes begin to appear to me, and then I become their observer, like anybody else. Knowing the habit of my mind, I can then interpret them. And I must: to go into the difficult labor of making these sculptures, these shapes, I have to impose an interesting enough, binding enough, logic on them. And so, eventually I create a myth, a logic, a consistency for myself which becomes a core of energy that eventually produces the piece. The logic is the same in each instance in the sense that I have the same mind all the time; still, I like to try to change. To do an idea once is enough for me; twice is certainly plenty.

*Sidney Geist was born in Paterson, N. J., in 1914. On and off between 1933 and 1937 he was apprentice to Paul Fiene in Woodstock, N. Y., and later he studied with William Zorach and José de Creeft at the Art Students League and with Ossip Zadkine in Paris. While in Paris, he showed at the Salon de Mai and the Salon de la Jeune Sculpture; he had his first one-man show there in 1950 at Galerie 8. In 1951 he showed at Hacker Gallery in New York and then spent 18 months in Mexico, working and exhibiting. He lives in New York.*



I am concerned with the forces of good and evil that exist not only in man but in myself. I believe that there is a mysterious life force; I feel that I am part of this and I wish to reflect it in my work. I am concerned with man from a very personal point of view in that I feel — well, I feel his anguish of living very much, and his aspirations, his desire to rise above the ordinary and commonplace. If the people in my work seem to be in pain or anguish, it is, I guess, because I see that people do suffer — and I guess that I do too.

I'm not a religious person, but I've often thought about religion, and I find beauty in the concepts of religion. To me, the idea of a man dying for his fellow men — the theme of the Crucifixion — is one of the most beautiful things imaginable. I know that there's a religious feeling in my work, and this mystical feeling — a strangeness, an alien quality, an antagonism — so much of our society, so much of me — mirrors a conflict that I know exists, a sort of conflict between my own subconscious and conscious.

Much of the symbolism in my work comes out of my dreams — and then I find that it doesn't. For example, I think I've dreamt something and I make a drawing of it, and later I meet it in the street and I realize that it was there all the time. Very often, too, writers have an influence on me. (You know, I'm a fantastic reader. I can knock off three books in a day.) As you read, you bring up a picture of what you read. A writer, though he's dealing with words, paints pictures, and often I'm influenced by the pictures a writer paints. Of the poets, I love Lorca and much of Spender, and Rilke and Blake. I have a great love of men like Poe. And I like the contemporaries who deal in the supernatural — for instance a man I just came across, John Collier. I like Henri Michaux, a French writer, a poet. Gogol, "Dead Souls." Kafka, "The Penal Colony" — that machine! I have sketches of it!

I'm trying to fight out in my work now a problem that has always troubled mystics: the image becomes all-powerful. The classic artist is more interested in the art, the form, the composition. But most mystics — Redon, Blake, Munch — have been concerned with the image. If the mystic did deal with more painterly problems, I think his work would gain significance — and be better, too.

Not being part of the mainstream? It is, certainly, very difficult. It hurts to be left out, to be misunderstood. It hurts very much. After my last show I felt so depressed that I couldn't work at all for three weeks. But that will never happen to me again. I've decided that all I'll ever have will be a small audience — that in all of this, there will be people who understand.



*Repentant Judge, 1953*

## HAROLD PARIS

*Harold Paris was born in Edgemere, Long Island, in 1925. His career in painting began about 12 years ago. Though he has had no formal education in art, he has read extensively in the technical literature of art. His first one-man show was held in 1951 at the Argent Gallery in New York. Since then he has had four one-man shows: at the Philadelphia Art Alliance (1951), the Village Art Center (1952), the Wittenborn One-Wall Gallery (1952) and Galerie Moderne (1954). His achievements are notably in the field of experimental printmaking. He is now living in New York.*



*Conclave, 1953*

mies van der rohe: *German Pavilion, Barcelona International Exposition, 1929*

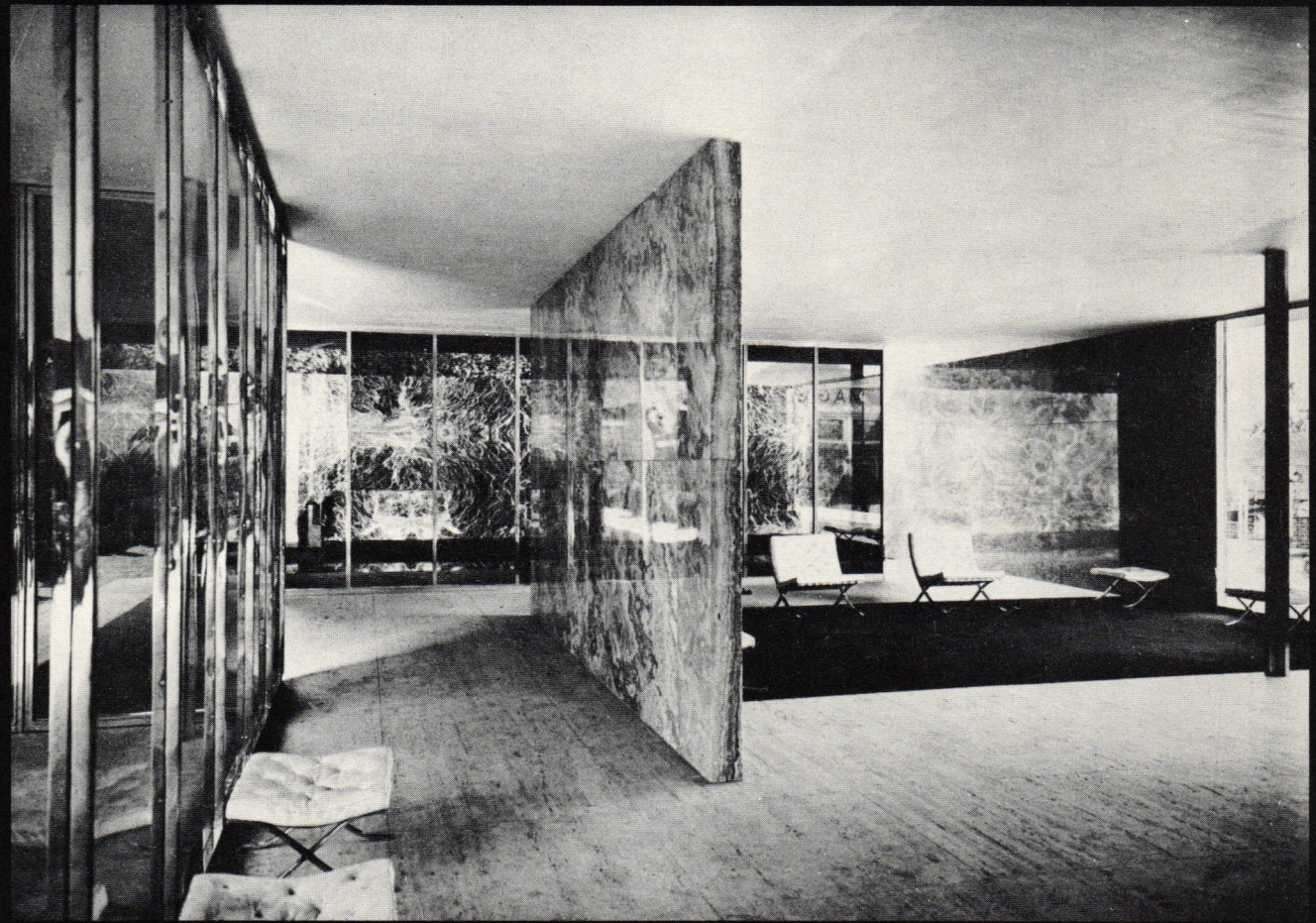


photo courtesy of museum of modern art

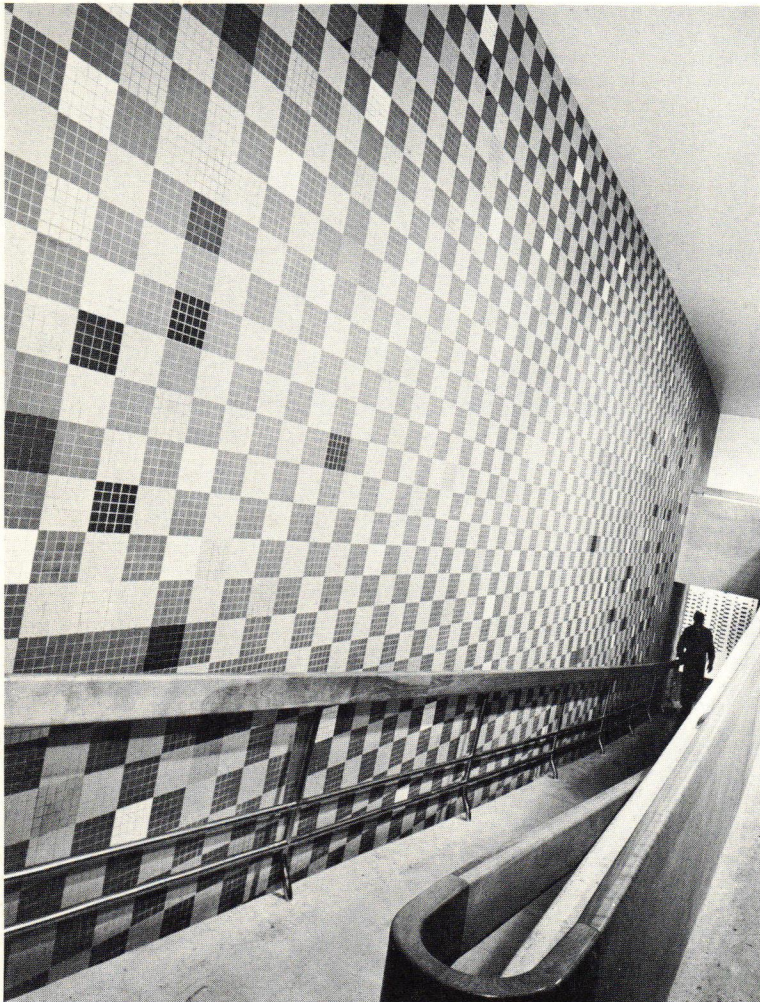
## ARCHITECTURE:

## PLAIN OR FANCY?

*Some disturbing questions and answers on  
the issue of collaboration between  
contemporary architects, painters and sculptors by*

**PETER BLAKE**

**herbert bayer:** *Tile wall at the Harvard Graduate Center, Cambridge, Mass. In cooperation with The Architects Collaborative.*



robert damora

I cannot think of any architects working today who are seriously opposed, in principle, to collaboration with painters and sculptors. I am sure there are no painters or sculptors opposed to collaboration with architects. Why, then, is there no collaboration worth speaking of, and why are there so few signs of possible collaboration in the future?

Before we find out whether or not there can or should be such collaboration, and whether or not it is either possible or desirable, we should agree on a few basic points. Some of these points may be debatable, but I would rather not debate them at the moment. I think we have to assume a few things — for the present, at least — if we hope to get anywhere at all. So here we go:

1. Most major buildings in the United States are put up for no other reason than that they represent a more profitable investment than comparable stocks and bonds. Since we live in a free economy which seems to be working reasonably well, I have no quarrel with that. But any architect or other artist who pretends that these buildings are “Works of Art” or that there is any place in these buildings for “Works of Art” (except for advertising purposes) is fooling himself and the public. If and when the market for these buildings becomes so bad that the investor has to protect the value of his investment by using “Art” — well, then he just possibly *might*, but the chances are that he has been tipped off in advance and put his money into something else instead.

In other words: the only buildings under discussion are public buildings, college buildings, religious buildings, etc. Houses are not a subject for collaboration, in most cases. This narrows down our field to a tiny fraction of the structures erected in the United States every year.

2. It seems to me that the easel painting or the little-sculpture-for-the-mantelpiece are outside the scope of this discussion also. Every architect would prefer to be consulted on where these things should go and what they should be like, but he rarely is. In any event, this is hardly a field for collaboration.

3. We might as well admit that most painting, most sculpture and most architecture today is pretty bad. The only reason for mentioning that fact is that it probably accounts for 95 per cent of all failures in attempted collaboration. But in the following discussion we will assume that all contemporary art and architecture is exquisite.

Perhaps the simplest way of getting at the root of the problem is to use the question-and-answer method:

*Q: Why don't modern architects collaborate with painters and sculptors?*



**gyorgy kepes:** *Enamel and steel fascia for the facade of the Fitchburg Youth Library, Fitchburg, Mass. In cooperation with Karl Koch, architect.*

A: For two reasons: (1) because the client, having paid for his plumbing and air-conditioning, has no money left over to pay for “unnecessary” painting or sculpture. (2) Because many architects feel that they cannot depend upon painters or sculptors. As a result they have trouble persuading their clients to use other artists even while the clients are still solvent.

*Q: Are not painting and sculpture more “necessary” to a building than plumbing and air-conditioning?*

A: In some cases I think — yes. But most people don’t agree, except, perhaps, so far as religious structures are concerned, since it is considered good for the spirit to suffer in churches and synagogues. However, even in religious buildings the trend is toward air-conditioning and away from art.

*Q: And why do so many architects feel that they cannot depend upon contemporary painters and sculptors?*

A: Again there are several reasons: (1) Because contemporary painters and sculptors have a vastly exaggerated opinion of the importance of their work. In the past, painting and sculpture were often considered a part of architecture — a functional building element fabricated by artists (instead of masons or plasterers) and clearly specified by the architect. The result, as we know, was often very good. (2) Because many architects feel that

other artists really have no understanding of the problems of contemporary architecture. (3) Because many architects are uncertain in their own minds about the place of painting and sculpture in their own work.

*Q: Let’s take these points one by one. First: why do many architects think that painters and sculptors have an exaggerated notion of the importance of their own work?*

A: An architect might answer this way — architecture is the creation of an environment, consisting of innumerable elements, all closely related and interdependent. Air-conditioning might be one; spatial excitement another; painting a third. These elements must be manipulated, played off against each other, balanced for maximum effect. This, essentially, is what an architect will try to do. Since our environment is becoming increasingly complex — we keep discovering new factors, new materials, and so on,— this controlling role becomes more and more important. Without it there would be (and is) chaos.

Many architects today feel that painters and sculptors are unwilling to contribute to this total environment, that they are unwilling to produce building elements or fabricate wall surfaces. And that, if asked to do so, they are more likely to come up with a highly individual “statement” — a manifesto — rather than with an object that will fit, naturally, gracefully and modestly into the build-

ing organism. I do not feel that it is asking too much: after all, there was a remarkable willingness, on the part of Renaissance painters and sculptors, to work within the clearly specified limitations of the architectural scheme. And there are some fine recent examples: take Herbert Bayer's tile wall for the Harvard Graduate Center by Gropius and his associates, and Josef Albers' brick wall in the same building. These may not be great works of art, and they might look dreadful in a frame on a gallery wall. But as architectural elements they are successful.

There are other examples: Harry Bertioia, the sculptor, has made a screen, a semi-transparent space divider for Eero Saarinen's General Motors Center near Detroit. Again, not a manifesto, not a "statement," but a fine contribution to the architectural whole. Just as fine as Gyorgy Kepes' enameled, rigidized steel facia for Carl Koch's library in Massachusetts. And just as much an indispensable, essential building element.

I think we might as well face the unpleasant fact and admit that this kind of collaboration is rare today and may be rarer tomorrow. One of the principal reasons we find so many examples of complete collaboration during the Renaissance is, very simply, that the Renaissance was an autocratic period. The architect (or his mentor) was the absolute master. In a relatively free society this becomes impossible. And so, perhaps, true collaboration becomes impossible also, unless you find painters and sculptors of sufficient modesty to submit, voluntarily, to the discipline of the job.

Frankly, I cannot get very excited over this particular quest. Anarchy and self-assertive competition probably have no place in architectural order. But they do have a place in painting and sculpture. One of the real contributions any artist can make to his time is to dramatize absolute freedom. I hope he will not stop merely for collaboration's sake.

*Q: What are these problems of contemporary architecture that painters and sculptors supposedly do not understand?*

A: To the extent that modern architecture started as a revolt against eclecticism, its practitioners believed that it was necessary to return to, and to emphasize, the organic qualities of building materials — textures, colors, patterns of masonry, the tense strength of steel, the "grain" of certain types of plaster and concrete.

Thus the stone wall became an abstract mosaic of inherent integrity, the marble slab became an abstract mural, and so on. To superimpose a painting, especially one conceived as an easel painting, upon such walls is, to many architects, synonymous with hanging a small picture over a larger one: the small picture knocks a hole into the large one where no hole was ever intended; it breaks up the proportions of this mural, its patterns and its textures.

Second is the question of scale: few painters seem able to understand the scale of a space while it is still in the blueprint stage — or its relationship to other spaces, to the source of light, etc. Some do not even understand this when they see the finished building.

This problem of scale is serious in modern architecture because a modern building tends to be extremely plain — "pure" or "austere"—and its surfaces and fixtures do not offer many points of reference to whose size and shape the onlooker can establish any sort of relationship. Hence the scale of a modern space is particularly hard to establish, and the responsibility of painters and sculptors in this connection could be important.

Finally, of course, modern architects are wary of having their structure — the bones of the building — compromised by decoration applied afterwards. While many architects do not necessarily express structure, they suspect painters and sculptors of plotting to cover it up beyond any possible recognition.

*Q: Yet architects do not seem to know very clearly what (if any) the place of painting and sculpture could be in a modern building.*

A: I can only speak for myself, as I have done so far, and I would say this: the chief thing that differentiates the modern building from the building of 100 years ago is its structure. Today's buildings are supported on a very few points, a few strong, slim columns spaced far apart. Yesterday's buildings were largely supported on walls, built to enclose relatively small cubicles.

The point-supported building made possible the open plan, the flowing, interlocking spaces. It made possible the glass skin around the contained space — an outer wall that supported nothing and was virtually invisible.

The kind of painting and sculpture required by these new spatial concepts must be different from that of the past.

The painting might be a free-standing wall, a wall that looks non-structural (for that is what it is) and that seems to be a space-modulator, a sieve for the air to travel through, rather than a barrier that cuts off and encloses. I think that some of Jackson Pollock's large murals have that quality, and Harry Bertioia's screen, mentioned above, has it too. These architectural elements may be "only decoration" — but they are as much a part of a modern space as the illusionist landscape between pilasters was part of a Renaissance hall.

Perhaps the architect hopes to control too much. But having struggled for an entirely new concept of space — space in transition, as it were — he is understandably reluctant to surrender his achievement.

The work of sculptors in establishing some focus of attention, some point of reference in a neutral space, can similarly help to underline the architectural intention. Again I think the sculpture should be free-standing, non-

supporting — a campanile in a piazza that helps the on-looker to orient himself at all times.

*Q: But what about sculpture as a functional building element?*

*A: The finest example I know is the fabulous roof on Le Corbusier's apartment building in Marseilles. This roof structure happens to consist of a gym, some exhaust stacks, a nursery school, and so on. These elements might have been arranged in any number of prosaic ways. But Le Corbusier, a great sculptor as well as a great architect, shaped them into one of the finest works of contemporary sculpture. I doubt very much that anyone except, perhaps, Lipchitz, could have done better.*

*Why? Probably because of the complete isolation in which artists work today. Le Corbusier is a rare exception — an architect who is also a painter, sculptor, poet and writer. But where else would you find an architect who might entrust a part of his building to a sculptor — or a sculptor who could be so trusted?*

*Q: What can be done to bring about this willingness on everybody's part to submit to the discipline of the job, to bring about this mutual confidence?*

*A: I suppose that the easy answer is — expose painters, sculptors and architects to each other. Combat the lack of culture in each. And I am sure this would not be a bad idea. In other words, let's have another club, another favorite bar, another symposium. (No, not another symposium.)*

*But I do not really believe it. I believe there may be a few successes — that one-time-in-a-million when the right architect and the right painter and the right sculptor find each other, and one of these three is sufficiently convincing to dominate the scene. And that they then find the right client and the right building and the right budget at the right time.*

*Or there will be a few examples, such as the Gropius-Bayer-Albers success, of men who worked together for more than 30 years and finally found a common denominator (a common culture).*

*But I have a feeling that, in all likelihood, because we live in a free society (and so long as we do) each of us will impulsively revolt against this essential "discipline of the job" — each will be determined to make his own statement, each determined to defend his manifesto against all who might compromise it.*

*And, in an age cursed with conformism, I find this idea more attractive than most.*

*Peter Blake, associate editor of Architectural Forum, was curator of architecture and design at the Museum of Modern art from 1948 to 1950. He is the author of a monograph on Marcel Breuer.*



**Corbusier:** Rooftop of Marseilles Apartment House, 1950.

**Albers:** Brick wall at the Harvard Graduate Center, Cambridge, Mass. In cooperation with The Architects Collaborative.

