



**36-1** MATTHEW BARNEY, *Cremaster cycle*, installation at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2003.

Barney's vast multimedia installations of drawings, photographs, sculptures, and videos typify the relaxation at the opening of the 21st century of the traditional boundaries among artistic media.

# EUROPE AND AMERICA AFTER 1945

World War II, with the global devastation it unleashed on all dimensions of life—psychological, political, physical, and economic—set the stage for the second half of the 20th century. The dropping of atomic bombs by the United States on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 signaled a turning point not only in the war but in the geopolitical balance and the nature of international conflict as well. For the rest of the century, nuclear war became a very real threat. Indeed, the two nuclear superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, divided the post–World War II world into spheres of influence, and each regularly intervened politically, economically, and militarily wherever and whenever it considered its interests to be at stake.

Persistent conflict throughout the world in the later 20th century resulted in widespread disruption and dislocation. In 1947 the British left India, dividing the subcontinent into the new, still hostile nations of India and Pakistan. After a catastrophic war, Communists came to power in China in 1949. North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950 and fought a grim war with the United States and its allies that ended in 1953. The Soviet Union brutally suppressed uprisings in its subject nations—East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. The United States intervened in disputes in Central and South America. Almost as soon as many previously colonized nations of Africa—Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, the Sudan, Rwanda, and the Congo—won their independence, civil wars devastated them. In Indonesia civil conflict left more than 100,000 dead. Algeria expelled France in 1962 after the French waged a prolonged, vicious war with Algeria’s Muslim natives. After 15 years of bitter war in Southeast Asia, the United States suffered defeat in Vietnam. From 1979 to 1989 the Soviets unsuccessfully tried to occupy Afghanistan. Arab nations fought wars with Israel in 1967, 1973, and the early 1980s. The Palestinian conflict remains the subject of almost daily newspaper headlines. A revitalized Islam, which inspired a fundamentalist religious revolution in Iran, has encouraged “holy war” with the West, using a new weapon, international terrorism—most dramatically in the attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001. In response, the United States and allied Western nations launched invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Conflict and unrest continue to plague large areas of the globe today.

Upheaval has also characterized the cultural sphere in the decades since the end of World War II. In the United States, for example, various groups forcefully questioned the status quo. During the 1960s and 1970s, the struggle for civil rights for African Americans, for free speech on university campuses, and for disengagement from the Vietnam War led to a rebellion of the young, who took to the streets in often raucous demonstrations, with violent repercussions. The prolonged ferment produced a new system of values, a “youth culture,” expressed in the radical rejection not only of national policies but often also of the society generating them. Young Americans derided their elders’ lifestyles and adopted unconventional dress, manners, habits, and morals deliberately subversive of mainstream social standards. The youth era witnessed the sexual revolution, the widespread use and abuse of drugs, and the development of rock music, then an exclusively youthful art form. Young people “dropped out” of regulated society, embraced alternative belief systems, and rejected Western university curricula as irrelevant.

This counterculture had considerable societal impact and widespread influence beyond its political phase. The civil rights movement of the 1960s and later the women’s liberation movement of the 1970s reflected the spirit of rebellion, coupled with the rejection of racism and sexism. In keeping with the growing resistance to established authority, women systematically began to challenge the male-dominated culture, which they perceived as having limited their political power and economic opportunities for centuries. Feminists charged that the institutions of Western society, particularly the nuclear family headed by the patriarch, perpetuated male power and subordination of women. They further contended that monuments of Western culture—its arts and sciences as well as its political, social, and economic institutions—masked the realities of male power.

The central issue that fueled these rebellions and changes—from international political conflicts to the rise of feminism—was power. Increasingly, individuals and groups sought not just to uncover the dynamics of power, but to combat actively the inappropriate exercise of power or change the balance of power. For example, following patterns developed first in the civil rights movement and later in feminism, various ethnic groups and gays and lesbians all mounted challenges to discriminatory policies and attitudes. These groups fought for recognition, respect, and legal protection and battled discrimination with political action. In addition, the growing scrutiny in numerous academic fields—cultural studies, literary theory, and colonial and postcolonial studies—of the dynamics and exercise of power also contributed to the dialogue on these issues. As a result of this concern for the dynamics of power, identity (both individual and group) has emerged as a potent arena for discussion and action. Explorations into the politics of identity now aim to increase personal and public understanding of how self-identifications, along with imposed or inherited identities, affect lives.

As has been true since human beings first began to make sculptures and paintings and erect buildings, European and American art and architecture since 1945 have reflected the changing cultural world in which artists and architects live and work.

## PAINTING AND SCULPTURE, 1945 TO 1970

The end of World War II in 1945 left devastated cities, ruptured economies, and governments in chaos throughout Europe. These factors, coupled with the massive loss of life and the indelible horror of the Holocaust and of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, resulted in a pervasive sense of despair, disillusionment, and skepticism. Although

many groups (for example, the Futurists in Italy; see Chapter 35) had tried to find redemptive value in World War I, it was virtually impossible to do the same with World War II, coming as it did so soon after the war that was supposed to “end all wars.” Additionally, World War I was largely a European conflict that left roughly 10 million people dead, whereas World War II was a truly global catastrophe that claimed 35 million lives.

### Postwar Expressionism in Europe

The cynicism that emerged across Europe in the 1940s found voice in existentialism, a philosophy asserting the absurdity of human existence and the impossibility of achieving certitude. As existentialism gained widespread popularity, many adherents also promoted atheism and questioned the possibility of situating God within a systematic philosophy. Most scholars trace the roots of existentialism to the Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), but in the postwar period, the writings of French author Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) most clearly captured the existentialist spirit. According to Sartre, if God does not exist, then individuals must constantly struggle in isolation with the anguish of making decisions in a world without absolutes or traditional values. This spirit of pessimism and despair emerged frequently in European art of the immediate postwar period.



**36-2** ALBERTO GIACOMETTI, *Man Pointing* (no. 5 of 6), 1947. Bronze, 5' 10" × 3' 1" × 1' 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines (Nathan Emory Coffin Collection).

The writer Jean-Paul Sartre considered Giacometti’s thin and virtually featureless sculpted figures as the epitome of existentialist humanity—alienated, solitary, and lost in the world’s immensity.



1 ft.

**36-3** FRANCIS BACON, *Painting*, 1946. Oil and pastel on linen, 6' 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ "  $\times$  4' 4". Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Painted in the aftermath of World War II, this intentionally revolting image of a powerful figure presiding over a slaughter is Bacon's indictment of humanity and a reflection of war's butchery.



1 ft.

**36-4** JEAN DUBUFFET, *Vie Inquiète* (*Uneasy Life*), 1953. Oil on canvas, 4' 3"  $\times$  6' 4". Tate Gallery, London.

Dubuffet expressed a tortured vision of the world through thickly encrusted painted surfaces and crude images of the kind children and the insane produce. He called it "art brut"—untaught and coarse art.

A brutality or roughness appropriately expressing both the artist's state of mind and the larger cultural sensibility characterized the work of many European sculptors and painters.

**ALBERTO GIACOMETTI** The sculpture of Swiss artist ALBERTO GIACOMETTI (1901–1966) perhaps best expresses the spirit of existentialism. Although Giacometti never claimed he pursued existentialist ideas in his art, his works capture the essence of that philosophy. Indeed, Sartre, Giacometti's friend, saw the artist's figural sculptures as the epitome of existentialist humanity—alienated, solitary, and lost in the world's immensity. Giacometti's sculptures of the 1940s, such as *Man Pointing* (FIG. 36-2), are thin, virtually featureless figures with rough, agitated surfaces. Rather than conveying the solidity and mass of conventional bronze sculpture, these severely attenuated figures seem swallowed up by the space surrounding them, imparting a sense of isolation and fragility. Giacometti's sculptures are evocative and moving, speaking to the pervasive despair in the aftermath of world war.

**FRANCIS BACON** Created in the year after World War II ended, *Painting* (FIG. 36-3) by British artist FRANCIS BACON (1910–1992) is an indictment of humanity and a reflection of war's butchery. The painting is a compelling and revolting image of a powerful, stocky man with a gaping mouth and a vivid red stain on his upper lip, as if he were a carnivore devouring the raw meat sitting on the railing surrounding him. Bacon may have based his depiction of this central figure on news photos of similarly dressed European and American officials. The umbrella in particular recalls images of Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940), the wartime British prime minister who frequently appeared in photographs with an umbrella. Bacon added to the visceral impact of the painting by depicting the flayed carcass hanging behind the central figure as if it were a crucified human form. Although the specific sources for the imagery in *Painting* may not be entirely clear, the work is unmistakably "an attempt to remake the violence of reality itself," as Bacon often described his art, based on what he referred to as "the brutality of fact."<sup>1</sup>

**JEAN DUBUFFET** Although less specific, the works of French artist JEAN DUBUFFET (1901–1985) also express a tortured vision of the world through manipulated materials. In works such as *Vie*

*Inquiète* (*Uneasy Life*; FIG. 36-4), Dubuffet presented a scene incised into thickly encrusted, parched-looking surfaces. He first built up an *impasto* (a layer of thickly applied pigment) of plaster, glue, sand, asphalt, and other common materials. Over that he painted or incised crude images of the type produced by children, the insane, and graffiti scrawlers. Scribbles interspersed with the images heighten the impression of smeared and gashed surfaces of crumbling walls and worn pavements marked by random individuals.

Dubuffet believed the art of children, the mentally unbalanced, prisoners, and outcasts was more direct and genuine because those who created it did so unrestrained by conventional standards of art. He promoted “art brut”—untaught and coarse art.

### Abstract Expressionism

In the 1940s, the center of the Western art world shifted from Paris to New York because of the devastation World War II had inflicted across Europe and the resulting influx of émigré artists escaping to the United States. American artists picked up the European avant-garde’s energy, which movements such as Cubism and Dada had fostered, but in the postwar years, modernism increasingly became synonymous with a strict *formalism*—an emphasis on an artwork’s visual elements rather than its subject. The most important champion of New York formalist painting was the American art critic Clement Greenberg (1909–1994), who wielded considerable influence from the 1940s through the 1970s. Greenberg helped redefine the parameters of modernism by advocating the rejection of illusionism and the exploration of the properties of each artistic medium. So dominant was Greenberg that scholars often refer to the general modernist tenets during this period as Greenbergian formalism.

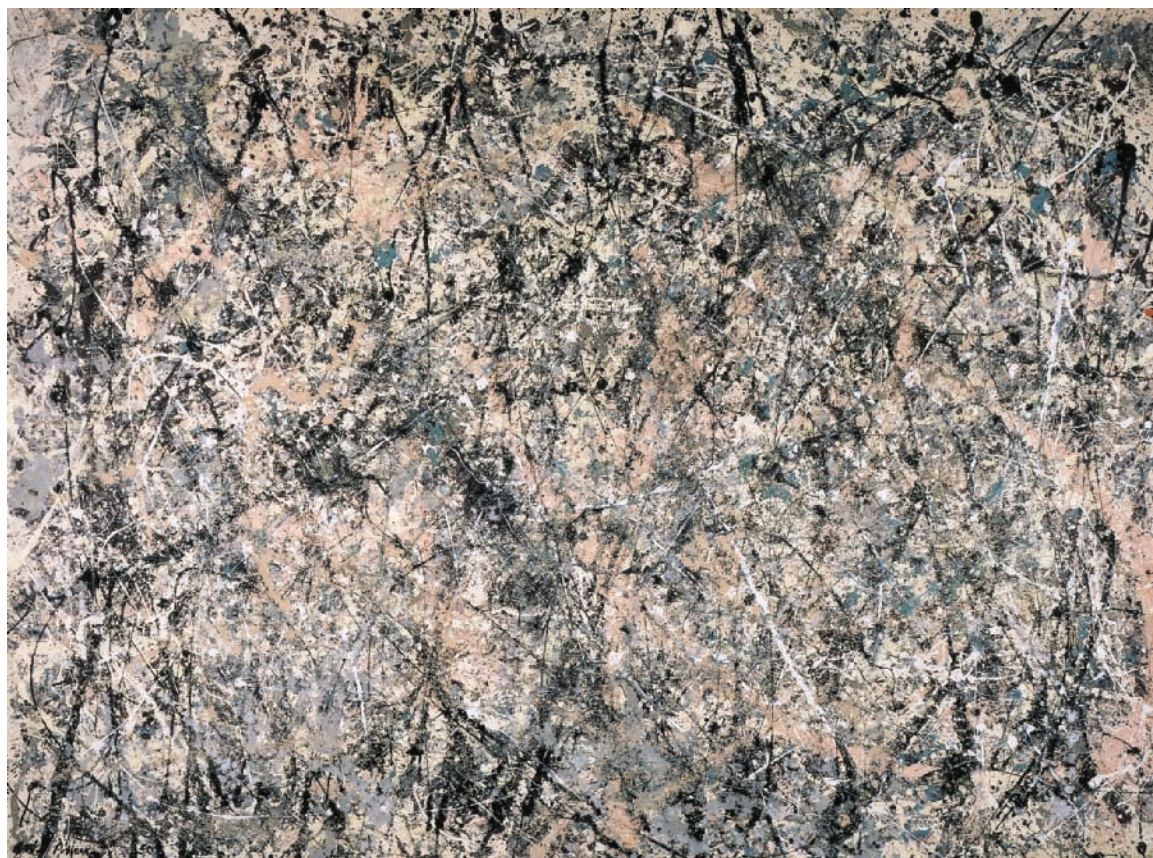
Although Greenberg modified his complex ideas about art over the years, he consistently expounded certain basic concepts. In particular, he promoted the idea of purity in art. “Purity in art consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, Greenberg believed artists should strive for a more explicit focus on the properties exclusive to each

medium—for example, two-dimensionality or flatness in painting, and three-dimensionality in sculpture.

It follows that a modernist work of art must try, in principle, to avoid communication with any order of experience not inherent in the most literally and essentially construed nature of its medium. Among other things, this means renouncing illusion and explicit subject matter. The arts are to achieve concreteness, “purity,” by dealing solely with their respective selves—that is, by becoming “abstract” or nonfigurative.<sup>3</sup>

*Abstract Expressionism*, the first major American avant-garde movement, emerged in New York in the 1940s. As the name suggests, the artists associated with the New York School of Abstract Expressionism produced paintings that are, for the most part, abstract but express the artist’s state of mind with the goal also of striking emotional chords in the viewer. The Abstract Expressionists turned inward to create, and the resulting works convey a rough spontaneity and palpable energy. The New York School painters wanted the viewer to grasp the content of their art intuitively, in a state free from structured thinking. The artist Mark Rothko (FIG. 36-9) eloquently wrote:

We assert man’s absolute emotions. We don’t need props or legends. We create images whose realities are self evident. Free ourselves from memory, association, nostalgia, legend, myth. Instead of making cathedrals out of Christ, man or life, we make it out of ourselves, out of our own feelings. The image we produce is understood by anyone who looks at it without nostalgic glasses of history.<sup>4</sup>



**36-5** JACKSON POLLOCK, *Number 1, 1950 (Lavender Mist)*, 1950. Oil, enamel, and aluminum paint on canvas, 7' 3" × 9' 10". National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund).

Pollock’s paintings emphasize the creative process. His mural-size canvases consist of rhythmic drips, splatters, and dribbles of paint that envelop viewers, drawing them into a lacy spider web.

## Jackson Pollock on Easel and Mural Painting

In two statements made in 1947, one as part of his application for a Guggenheim Fellowship and one in a published essay, Jackson Pollock explained the motivations for his new kind of “action painting” and described the manner in which he applied pigment to canvas (FIG. 36-6).

I intend to paint large movable pictures which will function between the easel and mural. . . .

I believe the easel picture to be a dying form, and the tendency of modern feeling is towards the wall picture or mural.\*

My painting does not come from the easel. I hardly ever stretch my canvas before painting. I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or the floor. I need the resistance of a hard surface. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be *in* the painting. This is akin to the method of the Indian sand painters of the West [see Chapter 32, page 861]. I continue to get further away from the usual painter’s tools such as easel, palette, brushes, etc. I prefer sticks, trowels, knives and dripping fluid paint or a heavy impasto with sand, broken glass and other foreign matter added. When I am *in* my painting, I’m not aware of what I’m doing. . . . [T]he painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. . . . The source of my painting is the unconscious.†

\* Quoted in Francis V. O’Connor, *Jackson Pollock* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967), 39.

† *Ibid.*, 39–40.

**36-6** HANS NAMUTH, Jackson Pollock painting in his studio in Springs, Long Island, New York, 1950. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson.

“Gestural abstraction” nicely describes Pollock’s working technique. Using sticks or brushes, he flung, poured, and dripped paint onto a section of canvas he simply unrolled across his studio floor.

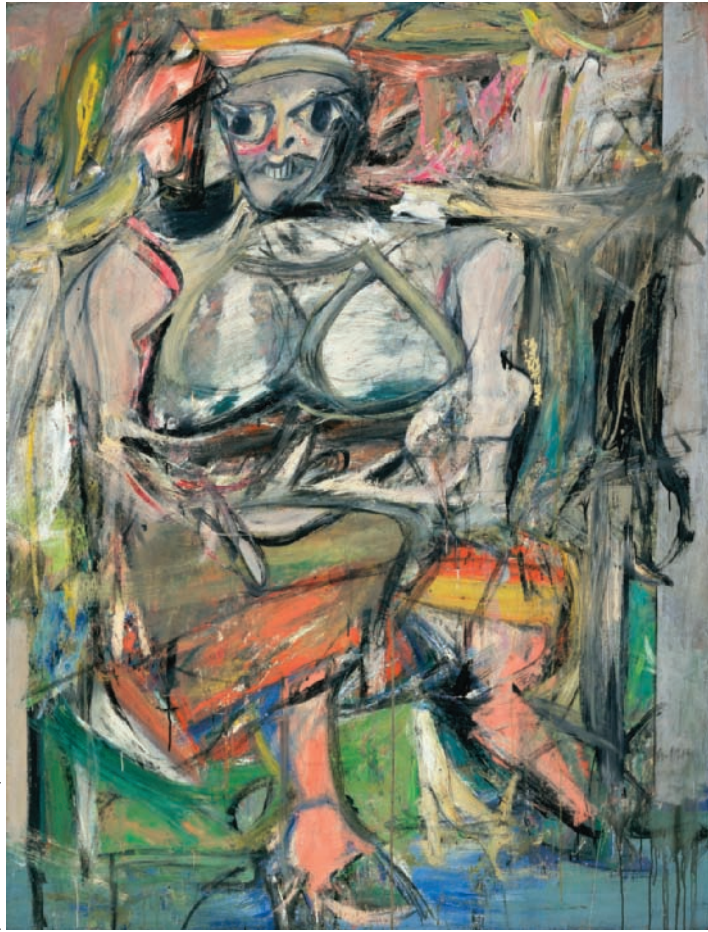


The Abstract Expressionist movement developed along two lines—*gestural abstraction* and *chromatic abstraction*. The gestural abstractionists relied on the expressiveness of energetically applied pigment. In contrast, the chromatic abstractionists focused on color’s emotional resonance.

**JACKSON POLLOCK** The artist whose work best exemplifies gestural abstraction is JACKSON POLLOCK (1912–1956), who developed his signature style in the mid-1940s. By 1950, Pollock had refined his technique and was producing large-scale abstract paintings such as *Number 1, 1950 (Lavender Mist)*; FIG. 36-5). These works consist of rhythmic drips, splatters, and dribbles of paint. The mural-sized fields of energetic skeins of pigment envelop viewers, drawing them into a lacy spider web. Using sticks or brushes, Pollock flung, poured, and dripped paint (not only traditional oil paints but aluminum paints and household enamels as well) onto a section of canvas he simply unrolled across his studio floor (FIG. 36-6). This working method earned Pollock the derisive nickname “Jack the Dripper.”

Responding to the image as it developed, he created art that was both spontaneous and choreographed. Pollock’s painting technique highlights a particularly avant-garde aspect of gestural abstraction—its emphasis on the creative process. Indeed, Pollock literally immersed himself in the painting during its creation.

Art historians have linked Pollock’s ideas about improvisation in the creative process to his interest in what psychiatrist Carl Jung called the collective unconscious. The improvisational nature of Pollock’s work and his reliance on the subconscious also have parallels in the “psychic automatism” of Surrealism and the work of Vasily Kandinsky (FIG. 35-7), whom critics described as an “abstract expressionist” as early as 1919. In addition to Pollock’s unique working methods and the expansive scale of his canvases, the lack of a well-defined compositional focus in his paintings significantly departed from conventional easel painting (see “Jackson Pollock on Easel and Mural Painting,” above). A towering figure in 20th-century art, Pollock tragically died in a car accident at age 44, cutting short the development of his innovative artistic vision.



1 ft.

**36-7** WILLEM DE KOONING, *Woman I*, 1950–1952. Oil on canvas, 6' 3 $\frac{7}{8}$ "  $\times$  4' 10". Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Although rooted in figuration, including pictures of female models on advertising billboards, de Kooning's *Woman I* displays the energetic application of pigment typical of gestural abstraction.

**WILLEM DE KOONING** Despite the public's skepticism about Pollock's art, other artists enthusiastically pursued similar avenues of expression. Dutch-born WILLEM DE KOONING (1904–1997) also developed a gestural abstractionist style. Even images such as *Woman I* (FIG. 36-7), although rooted in figuration, display the sweeping gestural brush strokes and energetic application of pigment typical of gestural abstraction. Out of the jumbled array of slashing lines and agitated patches of color appears a ferocious-looking woman with staring eyes and ponderous breasts. Her toothy smile, modeled on an ad for Camel cigarettes, becomes a grimace. Female models on advertising billboards partly inspired *Woman I*, one of a series of female images, but de Kooning's female forms also suggest fertility figures and a satiric inversion of the traditional image of Venus, goddess of love.

Process was important to de Kooning, as it was to Pollock. Continually working on *Woman I* for almost two years, de Kooning painted an image and then scraped it away the next day and began anew. His wife Elaine, also a painter, estimated that he painted approximately 200 scraped-away images of women on this canvas before settling on the final one.

In addition to this *Woman* series, de Kooning created nonrepresentational works dominated by huge swaths and splashes of pigment. His images suggest rawness and intensity. His dealer, Sidney Janis (1896–1989), confirmed this impression, recalling that de Kooning occasionally brought him paintings with ragged holes in them, the result of overly vigorous painting. Like Pollock, de Kooning was very much "in" his paintings. That kind of physical interaction between the painter and the canvas led the critic Harold Rosenberg (1906–1978) to describe the work of the New York School as *action painting*. In his influential 1952 article "The American Action Painters," Rosenberg described the attempts of Pollock, de Kooning, and others to get "inside the canvas."

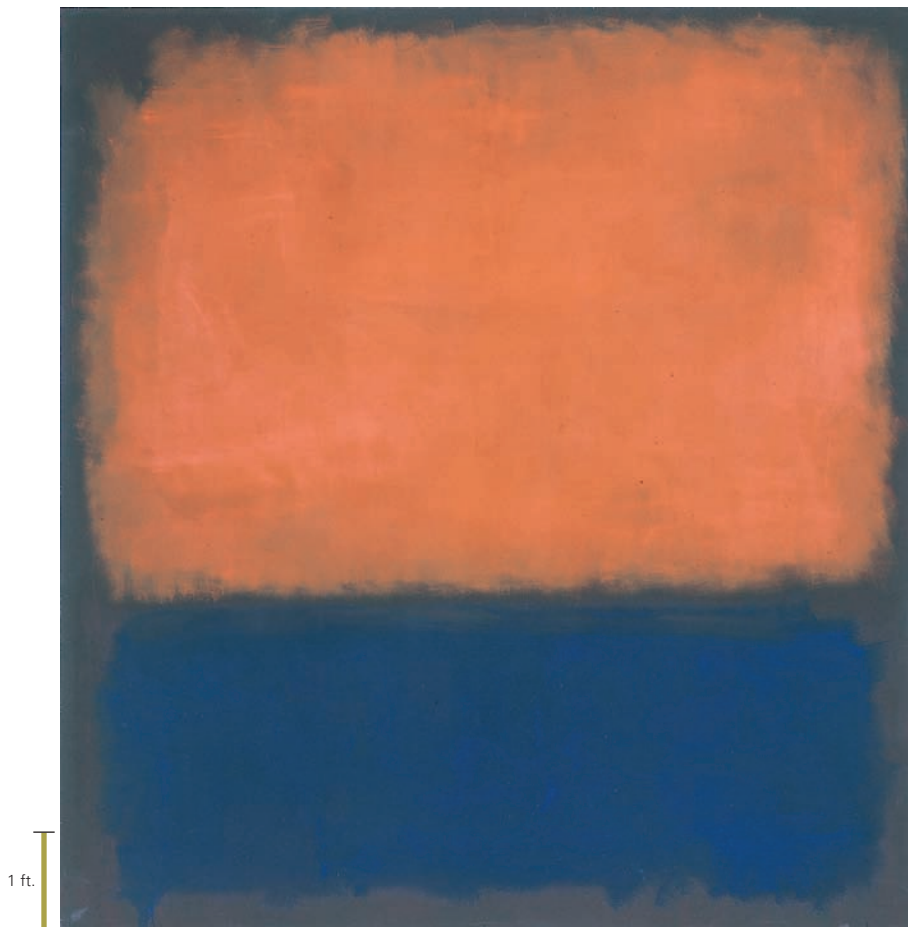
At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or "express" an



1 ft.

**36-8** BARNETT NEWMAN, *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, 1950–1951. Oil on canvas, 7' 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ "  $\times$  17' 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Museum of Modern Art, New York (gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller).

Newman's canvases consist of a single slightly modulated color field split by "zips" (narrow bands) running from one edge of the painting to the other, energizing the color field and giving it scale.



object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event. The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter.<sup>5</sup>

**BARNETT NEWMAN** In contrast to the aggressively energetic images of the gestural abstractionists, the work of the chromatic abstractionists exudes a quieter aesthetic, exemplified by the work of Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko. The emotional resonance of their works derives from their eloquent use of color. In his early paintings, BARNETT NEWMAN (1905–1970) presented organic abstractions inspired by his study of biology and his fascination with Native American art. He soon simplified his compositions so that each canvas, such as *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* (FIG. 36-8)—Latin, “sublime heroic man”—consists of a single slightly modulated color field split by narrow bands the artist called “zips,” which run from one edge of the painting to the other. As Newman explained it, “The streak was always going through an atmosphere; I kept trying to create a world around it.”<sup>6</sup> He did not intend the viewer to perceive the zips as specific entities, separate from the ground, but as accents energizing the field and giving it scale. By simplifying his compositions, Newman increased color’s capacity to communicate and to express his feelings about the tragic condition of modern life and the human struggle to survive. He claimed that “the artist’s problem . . . [is] the idea-complex that makes contact with mystery—of life, of men, of nature, of the hard black chaos that is death, or the grayer, softer chaos that is tragedy.”<sup>7</sup> Confronted by one of Newman’s monumental colored canvases, viewers truly feel as if they are in the presence of the epic.

**MARK ROTHKO** The work of MARK ROTHKO (1903–1970) also deals with universal themes. Born in Russia, Rothko moved with

**36-9** MARK ROTHKO, *No. 14*, 1960. Oil on canvas, 9' 6" × 8' 9". San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco (Helen Crocker Russell Fund Purchase).

Rothko’s chromatic abstractionist paintings—consisting of hazy rectangles of pure color hovering in front of a colored background—are compositionally simple but compelling visual experiences.

his family to the United States when he was 10. His early paintings were figural in orientation, but he soon arrived at the belief that references to anything specific in the physical world conflicted with the sublime idea of the universal, supernatural “spirit of myth,” which he saw as the core of meaning in art. In a statement cowritten with Newman and artist Adolph Gottlieb (1903–1974), Rothko expressed his beliefs about art:

We favor the simple expression of the complex thought. We are for the large shape because it has the impact of the unequivocal. . . . We assert that . . . only that subject matter is valid which is tragic and timeless. That is why we profess spiritual kinship with primitive and archaic art.<sup>8</sup>

Rothko’s paintings became compositionally simple, and he increasingly focused on color as the primary conveyor of meaning. In works such as *No. 14* (FIG. 36-9), Rothko created compelling visual experiences consisting of two or three large rectangles of pure color with hazy, brushy edges that seem to float on the canvas surface, hovering in front of a colored background. These paintings appear as shimmering veils of intensely luminous colors suspended in front of the canvases. Although the color juxtapositions are visually captivating, Rothko intended them as more than decorative. He saw color as a doorway to another reality, and insisted that color could express “basic human emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom. . . . The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them. And if you, as you say, are moved only by their color relationships, then you miss the point.”<sup>9</sup> Like the other Abstract Expressionists, Rothko produced highly evocative, moving paintings that relied on formal elements rather than specific representational content to elicit emotional responses in the viewer.

### Post-Painterly Abstraction

*Post-Painterly Abstraction*, another American art movement, developed out of Abstract Expressionism. Indeed, many of the artists associated with Post-Painterly Abstraction produced Abstract Expressionist work early in their careers. Yet Post-Painterly Abstraction, a term Clement Greenberg coined, manifests a radically different sensibility from Abstract Expressionism. Whereas Abstract Expressionism conveys a feeling of passion and visceral intensity, a cool, detached rationality emphasizing tighter pictorial control characterizes Post-Painterly Abstraction. Greenberg saw this art as contrasting with “painterly” art, characterized by loose, visible pigment application. Evidence of the artist’s hand, so prominent in gestural abstraction, is conspicuously absent in Post-Painterly Abstraction. Greenberg championed this art form because it seemed to embody his idea of purity in art.



**36-10** ELLSWORTH KELLY, *Red Blue Green*, 1963. Oil on canvas, 6' 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ "  $\times$  11' 3 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (gift of Dr. and Mrs. Jack M. Farris).

Hard-edge painting is one variant of Post-Painterly Abstraction. Kelly used razor-sharp edges and clearly delineated areas of color to distill painting to its essential two-dimensional elements.



**ELLSWORTH KELLY** Attempting to arrive at pure painting, the Post-Painterly Abstractionists distilled painting down to its essential elements, producing spare, elemental images. An example of one variant of Post-Painterly Abstraction, *hard-edge painting*, is *Red Blue Green* (FIG. 36-10) by ELLSWORTH KELLY (b. 1923). With its razor-sharp edges and clearly delineated shapes, this work is completely abstract and extremely simple compositionally. Further, the painting contains no suggestion of the illusion of depth—the color shapes appear resolutely two-dimensional.

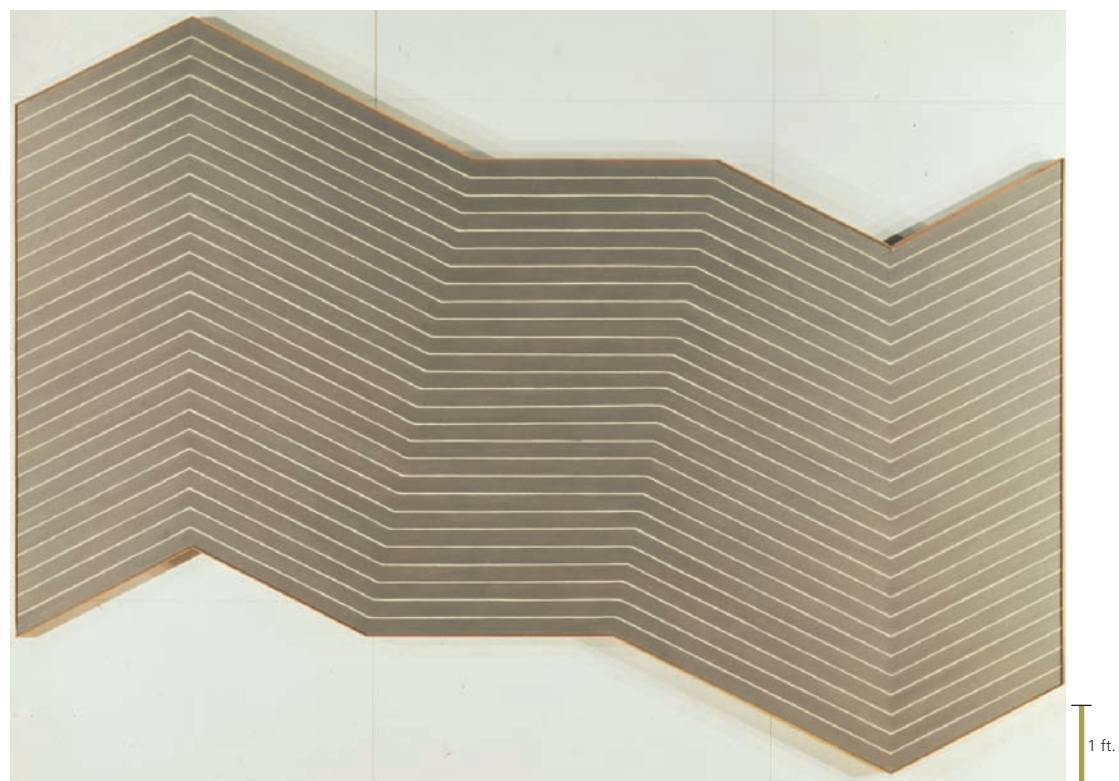
**FRANK STELLA** Another artist associated with the hard-edge painters of the 1960s is FRANK STELLA (b. 1936). In works such as *Mas o Menos (More or Less)* (FIG. 36-11), Stella eliminated many of

the variables associated with painting. His simplified images of thin, evenly spaced pinstripes on colored grounds have no central focus, no painterly or expressive elements, only limited surface modulation, and no tactile quality. Stella's systematic painting illustrates Greenberg's insistence on purity in art. The artist's famous comment on his work, "What you see is what you see," reinforces the notions that painters interested in producing advanced art must reduce their work to its essential elements and that the viewer must acknowledge that a painting is simply pigment on a flat surface.

**HELEN FRANKENTHALER** *Color-field painting*, another variant of Post-Painterly Abstraction, also emphasized painting's basic properties. However, rather than produce sharp, unmodulated

**36-11** FRANK STELLA, *Mas o Menos (More or Less)*, 1964. Metallic powder in acrylic emulsion on canvas, 9' 10"  $\times$  13' 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (purchase 1983 with participation of Scaler Foundation).

Stella tried to achieve purity in painting using evenly spaced pinstripes on colored grounds. His canvases have no central focus, no painterly or expressive elements, and no tactile quality.



## Helen Frankenthaler on Color-Field Painting

In 1965 the art critic Henry Geldzahler interviewed Helen Frankenthaler about her work as an abstract painter. In the following excerpt, Frankenthaler describes her approach to placing color on canvas (FIG. 36-12) and compares her method with the way earlier modernist artists used color in their paintings.

I will sometimes start a picture feeling “What will happen if I work with three blues and another color, and maybe more or less of the other color than the combined blues?” And very often midway through the picture I have to change the basis of the experience. . . .

When you first saw a Cubist or Impressionist picture there was a whole way of instructing the eye or the subconscious. Dabs of color had to stand for real things; it was an abstraction of a guitar or a hillside. The opposite is going on now. If you have bands of blue, green, and pink, the mind doesn’t think sky, grass and flesh. These are colors and the question is what are they doing with themselves and with each other. Sentiment and nuance are being squeezed out.\*

\* Henry Geldzahler, “Interview with Helen Frankenthaler,” *Artforum* 4, no. 2 (October 1965), 37–38.

**36-12** HELEN FRANKENTHALER, *The Bay*, 1963. Acrylic on canvas, 6' 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ " × 6' 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit.

Color-field painters like Frankenthaler poured paint onto unprimed canvas, allowing the pigments to soak into the fabric. Her works underscore that a painting is simply pigment on a flat surface.



shapes as the hard-edge artists had done, the color-field painters poured diluted paint onto unprimed canvas, allowing the pigments to soak in. It is hard to conceive of another painting method that results in such literal flatness. The images created, such as *The Bay* (FIG. 36-12) by HELEN FRANKENTHALER (b. 1928), appear spontaneous and almost accidental (see “Helen Frankenthaler on Color-Field

Painting,” above). These works differ from those of Rothko and Newman in that Frankenthaler subordinated the emotional component, so integral to Abstract Expressionism, to resolving formal problems.

**MORRIS LOUIS** Another artist who pursued color-field painting was MORRIS LOUIS (1912–1962). Clement Greenberg, an admirer of Frankenthaler’s paintings, took Louis to her studio, and there she introduced him to the possibilities presented by the staining technique. Louis used this method of pouring diluted paint onto the surface of unprimed canvas in several series of paintings. *Saraband* (FIG. 36-13) is one of the works in Louis’s *Veils* series. By holding up the canvas edges and pouring on diluted acrylic resin, Louis created billowy, fluid, transparent shapes that run down the length of the canvas. Like Frankenthaler, Louis reduced painting to the concrete fact of the paint-impregnated material.



**36-13** MORRIS LOUIS, *Saraband*, 1959. Acrylic resin on canvas, 8' 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ " × 12' 5". Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Louis created his color-field paintings by holding up the canvas edges and pouring diluted acrylic resin to produce billowy, fluid, transparent shapes that run down the length of the fabric.

## David Smith on Outdoor Sculpture

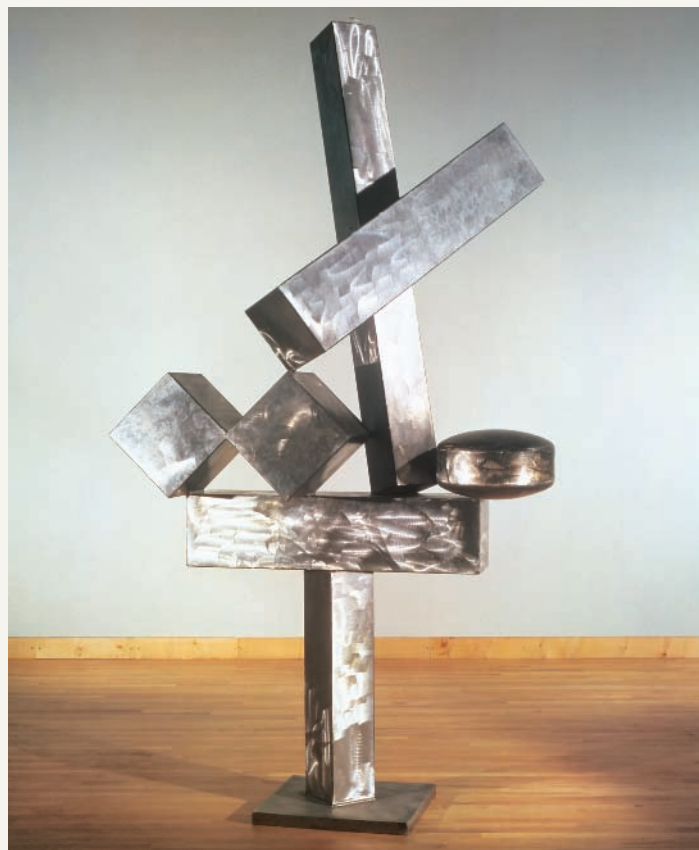
From ancient times, sculptors have frequently created statues for display in the open air, whether a portrait of a Roman emperor on horseback in a forum (FIG. 10-43, no. 6) or Michelangelo's *David* (FIG. 22-13) in Florence's Piazza della Signoria. But rarely have sculptors taken into consideration the effects of sunlight in the conception of their works. David Smith (FIG. 36-14) was an exception.

I like outdoor sculpture and the most practical thing for outdoor sculpture is stainless steel, and I make them and I polish them in such a way that on a dull day, they take on the dull blue, or the color of the sky in the late afternoon sun, the glow, golden like the rays, the colors of nature. And in a particular sense, I have used atmosphere in a reflective way on the surfaces. They are colored by the sky and the surroundings, the green or blue of water. Some are down by the water and some are by the mountains. They reflect the colors. They are designed for the outdoors.\*

\* Quoted in Cleve Gray, ed., *David Smith by David Smith* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968), 133.

**36-14** DAVID SMITH, *Cubi XIX*, 1964. Stainless steel, 9' 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ " × 4' 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " × 3' 4". Tate Gallery, London. Art © Estate of David Smith/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

David Smith designed his abstract metal sculptures of simple geometric forms to reflect the natural light and color of their outdoor settings, not the sterile illumination of a museum gallery.



**CLYFFORD STILL** Another American painter whose work art historians usually classify as Post-Painterly Abstraction was CLYFFORD STILL (1904–1980), a pioneering abstract painter who produced a large series of canvases titled simply with their dates, underscoring his rejection of the very notion that the purpose of art is to represent places, people, or objects. Nonetheless, Still's paintings remind many viewers of vast landscapes seen from the air. But the artist's canvases make no reference to any forms in nature. His paintings, for example, *1948-C* (FIG. I-1), are pure exercises in the expressive use of color, shape, and texture.

## Sculpture

Painters were not the only artists interested in Greenberg's formalist ideas. American sculptors also aimed for purity in their medium. While painters worked to emphasize flatness, sculptors, understandably, chose to focus on three-dimensionality as the unique characteristic and inherent limitation of the sculptural idiom.

**DAVID SMITH** American sculptor DAVID SMITH (1906–1965) produced metal sculptures that have affinities with the Abstract Expressionist movement in painting. Smith learned to weld in an automobile plant in 1925 and later applied to his art the technical expertise in handling metals he gained from that experience. In addition, working in large scale at the factories helped him visualize the possibilities for monumental metal sculpture. After experimenting with a variety of sculptural styles and materials, Smith created his *Cubi* series in the early 1960s. These works, for example *Cubi XIX* (FIG. 36-14), consist

of simple geometric forms—cubes, cylinders, and rectangular bars. Made of stainless steel sections piled atop one another and then welded together, these large-scale sculptures make a striking visual statement. Smith added gestural elements reminiscent of Abstract



**36-15** TONY SMITH, *Die*, 1962. Steel, 6' × 6' × 6'. Museum of Modern Art, New York (gift of Jane Smith in honor of Agnes Gund).

By rejecting illusionism and symbolism and reducing sculpture to basic geometric forms, Minimalist sculptors like Tony Smith emphasized their art's "objecthood" and concrete tangibility.

## Donald Judd on Sculpture and Industrial Materials

In a 1965 essay entitled “Specific Objects,” the Minimalist sculptor Donald Judd described the advantages of sculpture over painting and the attractions of using industrial materials for his works (FIG. 36-16).

Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism . . . one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art. The several limits of painting are no longer present. A work can be as powerful as it can be thought to be. Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface. . . . The use of three dimensions makes it possible to see all sorts of materials and colors. Most of [my] work involves new materials, either recent inventions or things not used before in art. Little was done until lately with the wide range of industrial products. . . . Materials vary greatly and are simply materials—formica, aluminum, cold-rolled steel, plexiglas, red and common brass, and so forth. They are specific. If they are used directly, they are more specific. Also, they are usually aggressive. There is an objectivity to the obdurate identity of a material. . . . The form of a work of art and its materials are closely related. In earlier work the structure and the imagery were executed in some neutral and homogeneous material.\*

\* Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959–1975* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 181–189.

**36-16** DONALD JUDD, *Untitled*, 1969. Brass and colored fluorescent Plexiglas on steel brackets, 10 units,  $6\frac{1}{8}'' \times 2' \times 2' 3''$  each, with 6'' intervals. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1972). Art © Judd Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Judd's Minimalist sculpture incorporates boxes fashioned from undisguised industrial materials. The artist used Plexiglas because its translucency gives the viewer access to the work's interior.



Expressionism by burnishing the metal with steel wool, producing swirling random-looking patterns that draw attention to the two-dimensionality of the sculptural surface. This treatment, which captures the light hitting the sculpture, activates the surface and imparts a texture to his pieces. Meant to be seen outdoors (see “David Smith on Outdoor Sculpture,” page 978), Smith's sculptures unfortunately lose much of their character in the sterile lighting of a museum.

**TONY SMITH** A predominantly sculptural movement that emerged in the 1960s among artists seeking Greenbergian purity of form was *Minimalism*. One leading Minimalist was TONY SMITH (1912–1980), who created simple volumetric sculptures such as *Die* (FIG. 36-15). Difficult to describe other than as three-dimensional objects, Minimalist artworks often lack identifiable subjects, colors, surface textures, and narrative elements. By rejecting illusionism and reducing sculpture to basic geometric forms, Minimalists emphatically stress their art's “objecthood” and concrete tangibility. In so doing, they reduce experience to its most fundamental level, preventing viewers from drawing on assumptions or preconceptions when dealing with the art before them.

**DONALD JUDD** Another Minimalist sculptor, DONALD JUDD (1928–1994), embraced a spare, universal aesthetic corresponding to

the core tenets of the movement. Judd's determination to arrive at a visual vocabulary that avoided deception or ambiguity propelled him away from representation and toward precise and simple sculpture. For Judd, a work's power derived from its character as a whole and from the specificity of its materials (see “Donald Judd on Sculpture and Industrial Materials,” above). *Untitled* (FIG. 36-16) presents basic geometric boxes constructed of brass and red Plexiglas, undisguised by paint or other materials. The artist did not intend the work to be metaphorical or symbolic but a straightforward declaration of sculpture's objecthood. Judd used Plexiglas because its translucency permits the viewer to access the interior, thereby rendering the sculpture both open and enclosed. This aspect of the design reflects Judd's desire to banish ambiguity or falseness from his works.

Interestingly, despite the ostensible connections between Minimalism and Greenbergian formalism, Greenberg did not embrace this direction in art. In his view,

Minimal Art remains too much a feat of ideation [the mental formation of ideas], and not enough anything else. Its idea remains an idea, something deduced instead of felt and discovered. The geometrical and modular simplicity may announce and signify the artistically furthest-out, but the fact that the signals are understood for

**36-17** LOUISE NEVELSON, *Tropical Garden II*, 1957–1959. Wood painted black, 5' 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  $\times$  10' 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  $\times$  1'. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

The monochromatic color scheme unifies the diverse sculpted forms and found objects in Nevelson's "walls" and creates a mysterious field of shapes and shadows that suggest magical environments.

what they want to mean betrays them artistically. There is hardly any aesthetic surprise in Minimal Art. . . . Aesthetic surprise hangs on forever—it is there in Raphael as it is in Pollock—and ideas alone cannot achieve it.<sup>10</sup>

**LOUISE NEVELSON** Although Minimalism was a dominant sculptural trend in the 1960s, many sculptors pursued other styles. Russian-born LOUISE NEVELSON (1899–1988) created sculpture that combines a sense of the architectural fragment with the power of Dada and Surrealist found objects to express her personal sense of life's underlying significance. Multiplicity of meaning was important to Nevelson. She sought "the in-between place. . . . The dawns and the dusks"<sup>11</sup>—the transitional realm between one state of being and another. Beginning in the late 1950s, she assembled sculptures of found wooden objects and forms, enclosing small sculptural compositions in boxes of varied sizes, and joined the boxes to one another to form "walls," which she then painted in a single hue—usually black, white, or gold. This monochromatic color scheme unifies the diverse parts of pieces such as *Tropical Garden II* (FIG. 36-17) and creates a mysterious field of shapes and shadows. The structures suggest magical environments resembling the treasured secret hideaways dimly remembered from childhood. Yet the boxy frames and the precision of the manufactured found objects create a rough geometric structure



that the eye roams over freely, lingering on some details. The parts of a Nevelson sculpture and their interrelation recall the *Merz* constructions of Kurt Schwitters (FIG. 35-30). The effect is also rather like viewing the side of an apartment building from a moving elevated train or like looking down on a city from the air.

**LOUISE BOURGEOIS** In contrast to the architectural nature of Nevelson's work, a sensuous organic quality recalling the evocative Biomorphic Surrealist forms of Joan Miró (FIG. 35-52) pervades the work of French-American artist LOUISE BOURGEOIS (b. 1911). *Cumul I* (FIG. 36-18) is a collection of round-headed units huddled, with their heads protruding, within a collective cloak dotted with holes. The units differ in size, and their position within the group lends a distinctive personality to each. Although the shapes remain abstract, they refer strongly to human bodies. Bourgeois uses a wide variety of materials in her works, including wood, plaster, latex, and plastics, in addition to alabaster, marble, and bronze. She exploits each material's qualities to suit the expressiveness of the piece.

In *Cumul I*, the alternating high gloss and matte finish of the marble increases the sensuous distinction between the group of swelling forms and the soft folds swaddling them. Like Barbara Hepworth (FIG. 35-58), Bourgeois connects her sculpture with the body's multiple relationships to landscape: "[My pieces] are anthropomorphic and they are landscape also, since our body could be considered from a topographical point of view, as a land with mounds and valleys and caves and holes."<sup>12</sup> However, Bourgeois's sculptures are more personal and more openly sexual than those of Hepworth. *Cumul I* represents perfectly the allusions Bourgeois seeks: "There has always been sexual suggestiveness in my work. Sometimes I am totally concerned with female shapes—characters of breasts like clouds—but often I merge the activity—phallic breasts, male and female, active and passive."<sup>13</sup>



**36-18** LOUISE BOURGEOIS, *Cumul I*, 1969. Marble, 1' 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ "  $\times$  4' 2"  $\times$  4'. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Art © Louise Bourgeois/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Bourgeois's sculptures consist of sensuous organic forms that recall the Biomorphic Surrealist forms of Miró (FIG. 35-52). Although the shapes remain abstract, they refer strongly to human figures.

**EVA HESSE** A Minimalist in the early part of her career, EVA HESSE (1936–1970) later moved away from the severity characterizing much of Minimalist art. She created sculptures that, although spare and simple, have a compelling presence. Using nontraditional sculptural materials such as fiberglass, cord, and latex, Hesse produced sculptures whose pure Minimalist forms appear to crumble,



**36-19** EVA HESSE, *Hang-Up*, 1965–1966. Acrylic on cloth over wood and steel, 6' × 7' × 6' 6". Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago (gift of Arthur Keating and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Morris by exchange).

Hesse created spare and simple sculptures with parts that extend into the room. She wanted her works to express the strangeness and absurdity that she considered the central conditions of modern life.

sag, and warp under the pressures of atmospheric force and gravity. Born Jewish in Hitler's Germany, the young Hesse hid with a Christian family when her parents and elder sister had to flee the Nazis. She did not reunite with them until the early 1940s, just before her parents divorced. Those extraordinary circumstances helped give her a lasting sense that the central conditions of modern life are strangeness and absurdity. Struggling to express these qualities in her art, she created informal sculptural arrangements with units often hung from the ceiling, propped against the walls, or spilled out along the floor. She said she wanted her pieces to be “non art, non connotative, non anthropomorphic, non geometric, non nothing, everything, but of another kind, vision, sort.”<sup>14</sup>

*Hang-Up* (FIG. 36-19) fulfills these requirements. The piece looks like a carefully made empty frame sprouting a strange feeler that extends into the room and doubles back to the frame. Hesse wrote that in this work, for the first time, her “idea of absurdity or extreme feeling came through. . . . [*Hang-Up*] has a kind of depth I don't always achieve and that is the kind of depth or soul or absurdity of life or meaning or feeling or intellect that I want to get.”<sup>15</sup> The sculpture possesses a disquieting and touching presence, suggesting the fragility and grandeur of life amid the pressures of the modern age. Hesse was herself a touching and fragile presence in the art world. She died of a brain tumor at age 34.

## Pop Art

Despite their differences, the Abstract Expressionists, Post-Painterly Abstractionists, and Minimalists all adopted an artistic vocabulary of resolute abstraction. Other artists, however, observing that the insular and introspective attitude of the avant-garde had alienated the

public, sought to harness the communicative power of art to reach a wide audience. However, they did not create reactionary or academic work. Their art still incorporated avant-garde elements, but their focus was not on the formalist issues characteristic of the modernist mindset.

The artists of the *Pop Art* movement reintroduced all of the devices the postwar avant-garde artists, in search of purity, had purged from their abstract and often reductive works. Thus, Pop artists revived the tools traditionally used to convey meaning in art, such as signs, symbols, metaphors, allusions, illusions, and figural imagery. They not only embraced representation but also produced an art firmly grounded in consumer culture and the mass media, thereby making it much more accessible and understandable to the average person. Indeed, the name “Pop Art” (credited to the British art critic Lawrence Alloway) is short for “popular art” and referred to the popular mass culture and familiar imagery of the contemporary urban environment. This was an art form rooted in the sensibilities and visual language of a late-20th-century mass audience.

**RICHARD HAMILTON** Art historians trace the roots of Pop Art to a group of young British artists, architects, and writers who formed the Independent Group at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in the early 1950s. They sought to initiate fresh thinking in art, in part by sharing their fascination with the aesthetics and content of such facets of popular culture as advertising, comic books, and movies. In 1956 an Independent Group member, RICHARD HAMILTON (b. 1922), made a small collage, *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* (FIG. 36-20), which exemplifies many of the attitudes of British Pop Art. Trained as an engineering draftsman, exhibition designer, and painter, Hamilton studied the way advertising shapes public attitudes. Long intrigued by



**36-20** RICHARD HAMILTON, *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* 1956. Collage, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " × 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Kunsthalle Tübingen, Tübingen.

The fantasy interior in Hamilton's collage reflects the values of modern consumer culture through figures and objects cut from glossy magazines. Toying with mass-media imagery typifies British Pop Art.



**36-21** JASPER JOHNS, *Flag*, 1954–1955, dated on reverse 1954. Encaustic, oil, and collage on fabric mounted on plywood, 3' 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ " × 5'  $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Museum of Modern Art, New York (gift of Philip Johnson in honor of Alfred H. Barr Jr.). Art © Jasper Johns/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

American Pop artist Jasper Johns wanted to draw attention to common objects that people view frequently but rarely scrutinize. He made several series of paintings of targets, flags, numbers, and alphabets.

Duchamp's ideas, Hamilton consistently combined elements of popular art and fine art, seeing both as belonging to the whole world of visual communication. He created *Just What Is It?* for the poster and catalogue of one section of an exhibition titled *This Is Tomorrow*, which included images from Hollywood cinema, science fiction, the mass media, and one reproduction of a van Gogh painting (to represent popular fine artworks).

The fantasy interior in Hamilton's collage reflects the values of modern consumer culture through figures and objects cut from glossy magazines. *Just What Is It?* includes references to mass media (the television, the theater marquee outside the window, the newspaper), advertising (Hoover vacuums, Ford cars, Armour hams, Tootsie Pops), and popular culture (the girlie magazine, body-builder Charles Atlas, romance comic books). Scholars have written much about the possible deep message of this piece, and few would deny the work's sardonic effect, whether or not the artist intended to make a pointed comment. Artworks of this sort stimulated the viewer's wide-ranging speculation about society's values, and this kind of intellectual toying with mass-media meaning and imagery typified Pop Art in England and Europe.

**JASPER JOHNS** Although Pop Art originated in England, the movement found its greatest articulation and success in the United States, in large part because the more fully matured American consumer culture provided a fertile environment in which the movement flourished through the 1960s. Indeed, Independent Group members claimed their inspiration came from Hollywood, Detroit, and New York's Madison Avenue, paying homage to America's predominance in the realms of mass media, mass production, and advertising. One of the artists pivotal to the early development of American Pop was JASPER JOHNS (b. 1930), who sought to draw attention to common objects in the world—what he called things “seen but not looked at.”<sup>16</sup> To this end, he created several series of paintings of targets, flags, numbers, and alphabets. For example, *Flag* (FIG. 36-21) depicts an object people view frequently but rarely scrutinize. The highly textured surface of the work is the result of Johns's use of *encaustic*, an ancient method of painting with liquid



**36-22** ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG, *Canyon*, 1959. Oil, pencil, paper, fabric, metal, cardboard box, printed paper, printed reproductions, photograph, wood, paint tube, and mirror on canvas, with oil on bald eagle, string, and pillow, 6' 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " × 5' 10" × 2'. Sonnabend Collection. Art © Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Rauschenberg's “combines” intersperse painted passages with sculptural elements. *Canyon* incorporates pigment on canvas with pieces of printed paper, photographs, a pillow, and a stuffed eagle.

wax and dissolved pigment (see “Encaustic Painting,” Chapter 10, page 275). First, the artist embedded a collage of newspaper scraps or photographs in wax. He then painted over them with the encaustic. Because the wax hardened quickly, Johns could work rapidly, and the translucency of the wax allows the viewer to see the layered painting process.

**ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG** Johns's friend ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG (b. 1925) began using mass-media images in his work in the 1950s. Rauschenberg set out to create works that would be open and indeterminate, and he began by making *combines*, which intersperse painted passages with sculptural elements. Combines are, in a sense, Rauschenberg's personal variation on *assemblages*, artworks constructed from already existing objects. At times, these combines seem to be sculptures with painting incorporated into certain sections. Others seem to be paintings with three-dimensional objects attached to the surface. In the 1950s, assemblages usually contained an array of art reproductions, magazine and newspaper clippings, and passages painted in an Abstract Expressionist style. In the early 1960s, Rauschenberg adopted the commercial medium of *silk-screen printing*, first in black and white and then in color, and began filling entire canvases with appropriated news images and anonymous photographs of city scenes.

*Canyon* (FIG. 36-22) is typical of Rauschenberg's combines. Pieces of printed paper and photographs cover parts of the canvas.

## Roy Lichtenstein on Pop Art

In 1963, Roy Lichtenstein was one of eight painters interviewed for a profile on Pop Art in *Art News*. G. R. Swenson posed the questions. Part of Lichtenstein's response follows.

[Pop Art is] the use of commercial art as a subject matter in painting . . . [Pop artists portray] what I think to be the most brazen and threatening characteristics of our culture, things we hate, but which are also so powerful in their impingement on us. . . I paint directly . . . [without] perspective or shading. It doesn't look like a painting of something, it looks like the thing itself. Instead of looking like a painting of a billboard . . . Pop Art seems to be the actual thing. It is an intensification, a stylistic intensification of the excitement which the subject matter has for me; but the style is . . . cool. One of the things a cartoon does is to express violent emotion and passion in a completely mechanized and removed style. To express this thing in a painterly style would dilute it. . . Everybody has called Pop Art "American" painting, but it's actually industrial painting. America was hit by industrialism and capitalism harder and sooner . . . I think the meaning of my work is that it's industrial, it's what all the world will soon become. Europe will be the same way, soon, so it won't be American; it will be universal.\*

\* Roy Lichtenstein quoted in G. R. Swenson, "What Is Pop Art? Interviews with Eight Painters," *Art News* 62, no. 7 (November 1963), 25, 64.



**36-23** ROY LICHTENSTEIN, *Hopeless*, 1963. Oil on canvas, 3' 8" × 3' 8". Kunstmuseum, Basel. © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein.

Comic books appealed to Lichtenstein because they were a mainstay of American popular culture, meant to be read and discarded. The Pop artist immortalized their images on large canvases.

Much of the unevenly painted surface consists of pigment roughly applied in a manner reminiscent of de Kooning's work (FIG. 36-7). A stuffed bald eagle attached to the lower part of the combine spreads its wings as if lifting off in flight toward the viewer. Completing the combine, a pillow dangles from a string attached to a wood stick below the eagle. The artist presented the work's components in a jumbled fashion. He tilted or turned some of the images sideways, and each overlays part of another image. The compositional confusion may resemble that of a Dada collage, but the parts of Rauschenberg's combines maintain their individuality more than those in, for example, a Schwitters piece (FIG. 35-30). The eye scans a Rauschenberg canvas much as it might survey the environment on a walk through a city. The various recognizable images and objects seem unrelated and defy a consistent reading, although Rauschenberg chose all the elements of his combines with specific meanings in mind. For example, Rauschenberg based *Canyon* on a Rembrandt painting of Jupiter in the form of an eagle carrying the boy Ganymede heavenward. The photo in the combine is a reference to the Greek boy, and the hanging pillow is a visual pun on his buttocks.

**ROY LICHTENSTEIN** As the Pop movement matured, the images became more concrete and tightly controlled. American artist ROY LICHTENSTEIN (1923–1997) turned his attention to commercial art and especially to the comic book as a mainstay of popular culture (see "Roy Lichtenstein on Pop Art," above). In paintings such as *Hopeless* (FIG. 36-23), Lichtenstein excerpted an image from a comic book, a form of entertainment meant to be read and discarded, and immortalized the image on a large canvas. Aside from that modification, Lichtenstein remained remarkably faithful to the original comic strip image. His subject was one of the melodramatic scenes common to popular romance comic books of the time. Lichtenstein also used the visual vocabulary of the comic strip, with its dark black outlines and unmodulated color areas, and retained the familiar square dimensions. Moreover, his printing technique, *benday dots*, called attention to the mass-produced derivation of the image. Named after its inventor, the newspaper printer Benjamin Day (1810–1889), the benday dot system involves the modulation of colors through the placement and size of colored dots. Lichtenstein thus transferred the visual shorthand language of the comic book to the realm of monumental painting.





**36-24** ANDY WARHOL, *Green Coca-Cola Bottles*, 1962. Oil on canvas, 6' 10½" × 4' 9". Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Warhol was the quintessential American Pop artist. Here, he selected an icon of mass-produced consumer culture and then multiplied it, reflecting Coke's omnipresence in American society.

**ANDY WARHOL** The quintessential American Pop artist was ANDY WARHOL (1928–1987). An early successful career as a commercial artist and illustrator grounded Warhol in the sensibility and visual rhetoric of advertising and the mass media, knowledge that proved useful for his Pop artworks. In paintings such as *Green Coca-Cola Bottles* (FIG. 36-24), Warhol selected an icon of mass-produced, consumer culture of the time. The reassuringly familiar curved Coke bottle especially appealed to Warhol:

What's great about this country is that America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you can know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke.<sup>17</sup>

As did other Pop artists, Warhol used a visual vocabulary and a printing technique that reinforced the image's connections to consumer culture. The repetition and redundancy of the Coke bottle reflect the omnipresence and dominance of this product in American society. The silk-screen technique allowed Warhol to print the image endlessly (although he varied each bottle slightly). So immersed was Warhol in a culture of mass production that he not only produced numerous canvases of the same image but also named his studio "the Factory."

Warhol often produced images of Hollywood celebrities, such as Marilyn Monroe. Like his other paintings, these works emphasize the commodity status of the subjects depicted. Warhol created *Marilyn Diptych* (FIG. 36-25) in the weeks following the movie star's suicide in August 1962, capitalizing on the media frenzy her death prompted. Warhol selected a Hollywood publicity photo, one that provides no insight into the real Norma Jean Baker (the actress's name before she assumed the persona of Marilyn Monroe). Rather, the viewer sees only a mask—the image the Hollywood myth machine generated. The garish colors and the flat application of paint contribute to that image's masklike quality. The repetition of Monroe's face reinforces her status as a consumer product on a par with Coke bottles, her glamorous, haunting visage seemingly confronting the viewer endlessly, as it did the American public in the aftermath of her death. The right half of this work, with its poor registration of pigment, suggests a sequence of film stills, a reference to the realm from which Monroe derived her fame.

Warhol's ascendance to the rank of celebrity artist underscored his remarkable and astute understanding of the dynamics and visual language of mass culture. He predicted



**36-25** ANDY WARHOL, *Marilyn Diptych*, 1962. Oil, acrylic, and silkscreen enamel on canvas, each panel 6' 8" × 4' 9". Tate Gallery, London.

Warhol's repetition of Monroe's face reinforced her status as a consumer product, her glamorous visage confronting the viewer endlessly, as it did the American public in the aftermath of her death.



**36-26** CLAES OLDENBURG, various works exhibited at the Green Gallery, New York, 1962.

Oldenburg's painted plaster and stuffed vinyl sculptures magnify familiar items of American consumer culture. The title of one of his shows, *The Store*, was a comment on art itself as a commodity.

that the age of mass media would enable everyone to become famous for 15 minutes. His own fame has lasted much longer.

**CLAES OLDENBURG** The Swedish-born Pop artist CLAES OLDENBURG (b. 1929) has produced sculptures that incisively comment on American consumer culture. His early works consisted of reliefs of food and clothing items. Oldenburg constructed these sculptures of plaster layered on chicken wire and muslin, painting them with cheap commercial house enamel. In later works, focused on the same subjects, he shifted to large-scale stuffed sculptures of sewn vinyl or canvas. Examples of both types of sculptures appear in the photograph (FIG. 36-26) of his one-person show at the Green Gallery in New York in 1962. Oldenburg had included many of the works in this exhibition in an earlier show he mounted titled *The Store*—an appropriate comment on the function of art as a commodity in a consumer society. Over the years, Oldenburg's sculpture has become increasingly monumental. In recent decades, he and his wife and collaborator, Dutch American Coosje van Bruggen (b. 1942), have become particularly well known for their mammoth outdoor sculptures of familiar, commonplace objects, such as cue balls, shuttlecocks, clothespins, and torn notebooks.

### Superrealism

Like the Pop artists, the artists associated with *Superrealism* sought a form of artistic communication that was more accessible to the public than the remote, unfamiliar visual language of the Abstract Expressionists, Post-Painterly Abstractionists, and Minimalists. The Superrealists expanded Pop's iconography in both painting and sculpture by making images in the late 1960s and 1970s involving scrupulous fidelity to optical fact. Because many Superrealists used photographs as sources for their imagery, art historians also refer to this postwar art movement as *Photorealism*.

**AUDREY FLACK** American artist AUDREY FLACK (b. 1931) was one of Superrealism's pioneers. Her paintings, such as *Marilyn* (FIG. 36-27), were not simply technical exercises in recording objects in

minute detail but were also conceptual inquiries into the nature of photography and the extent to which photography constructs an understanding of reality. Flack observed that "[photography is] my whole life, I studied art history, it was always photographs, I never saw the paintings, they were in Europe. . . . Look at TV and at magazines



**36-27** AUDREY FLACK, *Marilyn*, 1977. Oil over acrylic on canvas, 8' × 8'. University of Arizona Museum, Tucson (museum purchase with funds provided by the Edward J. Gallagher Jr. Memorial Fund).

Flack's pioneering Photorealist still lifes record objects with great optical fidelity. *Marilyn* alludes to Dutch vanitas paintings (FIG. 25-21) and incorporates multiple references to the transience of life.

## Chuck Close on Portrait Painting and Photography

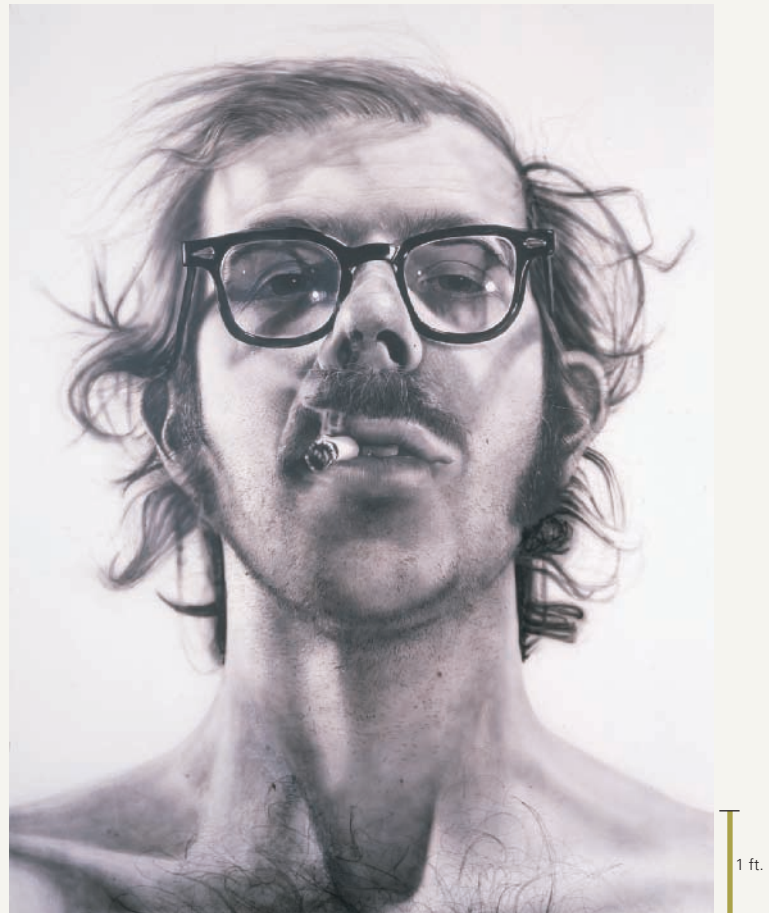
In a 1970 interview, the art critic Cindy Nemser asked Chuck Close about the scale of his huge portraits (FIG. 36-28) and the relationship of his paintings to the photographs that lie behind them. He answered in part:

The large scale allows me to deal with information that is overlooked in an eight-by-ten inch photograph . . . My large scale forces the viewer to focus on one area at a time. In that way he is made aware of the blurred areas that are seen with peripheral vision. Normally we never take those peripheral areas into account. When we focus on an area it is sharp. As we turn our attention to adjacent areas they sharpen up too. In my work, the blurred areas don't come into focus, but they are too large to be ignored. . . . In order to . . . make [my painted] information stack up with photographic information, I tried to purge my work of as much of the baggage of traditional portrait painting as I could. To avoid a painterly brush stroke and surface, I use some pretty devious means, such as razor blades, electric drills and airbrushes. I also work as thinly as possible and I don't use white paint as it tends to build up and become chalky and opaque. In fact, in a nine-by-seven foot picture, I only use a couple of tablespoons of black paint to cover the entire canvas.\*

\* Cindy Nemser, "Chuck Close: Interview with Cindy Nemser," *Artforum* 8, no. 5 (January 1970), 51–55.

**36-28** CHUCK CLOSE, *Big Self-Portrait*, 1967–1968. Acrylic on canvas, 8' 11" × 6' 11". Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (Art Center Acquisition Fund, 1969).

Close's goal was to translate photographic information into painted information. In his portraits, he deliberately avoided creative compositions, flattering lighting effects, and revealing facial expressions.



and reproductions, they're all influenced by photo-vision."<sup>18</sup> The photograph's formal qualities also intrigued her, and she used photographic techniques by first projecting an image in slide form onto the canvas. By next using an *airbrush* (a device that uses compressed air to spray paint, originally designed as a photo-retouching tool), Flack could duplicate the smooth gradations of tone and color found in photographs. Most of her paintings are still lifes that present the viewer with a collection of familiar objects painted with great optical fidelity. *Marilyn* is a still life that incorporates photographs of the actress's face. Flack's commentary on Monroe's tragic death differs from that in Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* (FIG. 36-25). Flack alludes to Dutch vanitas paintings (FIG. 25-21), and her still life includes multiple references to death. In addition to the black-and-white photographs of a youthful, smiling Monroe, fresh fruit, an hourglass, a burning candle, a watch, and a calendar all refer to the passage of time and the transience of life on earth.

**CHUCK CLOSE** Also usually considered a Superrealist is American artist CHUCK CLOSE (b. 1940), best known for his large-scale portraits, such as *Big Self-Portrait* (FIG. 36-28). However, Close felt his connection to the Photorealists was tenuous, because for him realism, rather than an end in itself, was the result of an intellectually rigorous, systematic approach to painting. He based his paintings of

the late 1960s and early 1970s on photographs, and his main goal was to translate photographic information into painted information. Because he aimed simply to record visual information about his subject's appearance, Close deliberately avoided creative compositions, flattering lighting effects, and revealing facial expressions. Not interested in providing great insight into the personalities of those portrayed, Close painted anonymous and generic people, mostly friends. By reducing the variables in his paintings (even their canvas size is a constant 9 by 7 feet), he could focus on employing his methodical presentations of faces, thereby encouraging the viewer to deal with the formal aspects of his works. Indeed, because of the large scale of Close paintings, careful scrutiny causes the images to dissolve into abstract patterns (see "Chuck Close on Portrait Painting and Photography," above).

**DUANE HANSON** Not surprisingly, many sculptors also were Superrealists, including DUANE HANSON (1925–1996), who perfected a casting technique that allowed him to create life-size figural sculptures that many viewers initially mistake for real people. Hanson first made plaster molds from live models and filled the molds with polyester resin. After the resin hardened, the artist removed the outer molds and cleaned, painted with an airbrush, and decorated the sculptures with wigs, clothes, and other accessories. These works,



**36-29** DUANE HANSON, *Supermarket Shopper*, 1970. Polyester resin and fiberglass polychromed in oil, with clothing, steel cart, and groceries, life-size. Nachfolgeinstitut, Neue Galerie, Sammlung Ludwig, Aachen. Art © Estate of Duane Hanson/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Hanson used molds from live models to create his Superrealistic life-size painted plaster sculptures. His aim was to capture the emptiness and loneliness of average Americans in familiar settings.

such as *Supermarket Shopper* (FIG. 36-29), depict stereotypical average Americans, striking chords with the public precisely because of their familiarity. Hanson explained his choice of imagery: “The subject matter that I like best deals with the familiar lower and middle-class American types of today. To me, the resignation, emptiness and loneliness of their existence captures the true reality of life for these people. . . . I want to achieve a certain tough realism which speaks of the fascinating idiosyncrasies of our time.”<sup>19</sup>

## PAINTING AND SCULPTURE SINCE 1970

The Pop artists and Superrealists were not the only artists to challenge modernist formalist doctrine. By the 1970s, the range of art produced in both traditional and new media in reaction to Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and other formalist movements had become so diverse that only a broad general term can describe the phenomenon: *postmodernism*. There is no agreement about the definition of postmodern art. Some scholars, such as Fredric Jameson, assert that a major characteristic of postmodernism is the erosion of the boundaries between high culture and popular culture—a separation Clement Greenberg and the modernists had staunchly defended. With the appearance of Pop Art, that separation became more difficult to maintain. For Jameson, the intersection of high and mass culture is, in fact, a defining feature of the new postmodernism. He attributed the emergence of postmodernism to “a new type of social life and a new economic order—what is often euphemistically called modernization, postindustrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism.”<sup>20</sup>

For many recent artists, postmodernism involves examining the process by which meaning is generated and the negotiation or dialogue that transpires between viewers and artworks. This kind of examination of the nature of art parallels the literary field of study known as critical theory. Critical theorists view art and architecture, as well as literature and the other humanities, as a culture’s intellectual products, or “constructs.” These constructs unconsciously suppress or conceal the true premises that inform the culture, primarily the values of those politically in control. Thus, cultural products function in an ideological capacity, obscuring, for example, racist or sexist attitudes. When revealed by analysis, the facts behind these constructs, according to critical theorists, contribute to a more substantial understanding of artworks, buildings, books, and the overall culture.

Many critical theorists use an analytical strategy called *deconstruction*, after a method developed in the 1960s and 1970s by French intellectuals, notably Michel Foucault (1926–1984) and Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). For those employing deconstruction, all cultural constructs are “texts.” Acknowledging the lack of fixed or uniform meanings in these texts, critical theorists accept a variety of interpretations as valid. Further, as cultural products, how texts signify and what they signify are entirely conventional. They can refer to nothing outside of themselves, only to other texts. Thus, no extratextual reality exists that people can reference. The enterprise of deconstruction is to reveal the contradictions and instabilities of these texts, or cultural language (written or visual).

With primarily political and social aims, deconstructive analysis has the ultimate goal of effecting political and social change. Accordingly, critical theorists who employ this approach seek to uncover—to deconstruct—the facts of power, privilege, and prejudice underlying the practices and institutions of any given culture. In the process, deconstruction reveals the precariousness of structures and systems, such as language and cultural practices, along with the assumptions underlying them. Yet because of the lack of fixed meaning in texts, many politically committed thinkers assert that deconstruction does not provide a sufficiently stable basis for dissent.

Critical theorists do not agree upon any philosophy or analytical method, because in principle they oppose firm definitions. They do share a healthy suspicion of all traditional truth claims and value standards, all hierarchical authority and institutions. For them, deconstruction means destabilizing established meanings, definitions, and interpretations while encouraging subjectivity and individual differences.

Certainly, one thing all postmodern artists have in common is a self-consciousness about their place in the historical continuum of art. Consequently, many of them resurrect artistic traditions to comment on and reinterpret those styles or idioms. However defined, postmodern art comprises a dizzying array of artworks in different media. Only a representative sample can be presented here.

### Neo-Expressionism

One of the first coherent movements to emerge during the postmodern era was *Neo-Expressionism*. This movement’s name reflects postmodern artists’ interest in reexamining earlier art production and connects this art to the powerful, intense works of the German Expressionists (see Chapter 35) and the Abstract Expressionists, among other artists.

**SUSAN ROTHENBERG** In the 1970s, SUSAN ROTHENBERG (b. 1945) produced a major series of large paintings with the horse as the central image. The horse theme resonates with history and metaphor—from the Parthenon frieze and Roman and Renaissance equestrian portraits to the paintings of German Expressionist Franz

**36-30** SUSAN ROTHENBERG, *Tattoo*, 1979. Acrylic paint on canvas, 5' 7" × 8' 7". Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (purchased with the aid of funds from Mr. and Mrs. Edmond R. Ruben, Mr. and Mrs. Julius E. Davis, the Art Center Acquisition Fund, and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1979).

Rothenberg's Neo-Expressionist paintings feature loose brushwork, agitated surfaces, and hazy, semiabstract forms. This work's title refers to the horse's head drawn within the outline of its leg.



Marc (FIG. 35-8). Like Marc, Rothenberg saw horses as metaphors for humanity: "The horse was a way of not doing people, yet it was a symbol of people, a self-portrait, really."<sup>21</sup> Rothenberg, however, distilled the image to a ghostly outline or hazy depiction that is more poetic than descriptive. As such, her works fall in the nebulous area between representation and abstraction. In paintings such as *Tattoo* (FIG. 36-30), the loose brushwork and agitated surface contribute to the expressiveness of the image and account for Rothenberg's cat-

egorization as a Neo-Expressionist. The title, *Tattoo*, refers to the horse's head drawn within the outline of its leg—"a tattoo or memory image," according to the artist.<sup>22</sup>

**JULIAN SCHNABEL** The work of another American artist, JULIAN SCHNABEL (b. 1951), forcefully restates the premises of Abstract Expressionism. When executing his artworks in the 1980s, however, Schnabel experimented widely with materials and sup-



**36-31** JULIAN SCHNABEL, *The Walk Home*, 1984–1985. Oil, plates, copper, bronze, fiberglass, and Bondo on wood, 9' 3" × 19' 4". Broad Art Foundation and the Pace Gallery, New York.

Schnabel's paintings recall the work of the gestural abstractionists, but he employs an amalgamation of media, bringing together painting, mosaic, and low-relief sculpture.



**36-32** ANSELM KIEFER, *Nigredo*, 1984. Oil paint on photosensitized fabric, acrylic emulsion, straw, shellac, relief paint on paper pulled from painted wood, 11' × 18'. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (gift of Friends of the Philadelphia Museum of Art).

Kiefer's paintings have thickly encrusted surfaces incorporating materials such as straw. Here, the German artist used perspective to pull the viewer into an incinerated landscape alluding to the Holocaust.

ports—from fragmented china plates bonded to wood, to paint on velvet and tarpaulin. He had a special interest in the physicality of the objects, and by attaching broken crockery, as in *The Walk Home* (FIG. 36-31), he found an extension of what paint could do. Superficially, the painting recalls the work of the gestural abstractionists—the spontaneous drips of Pollock (FIG. 36-5) and the energetic brush strokes of de Kooning (FIG. 36-7). The thick, mosaic-like texture, an amalgamation of media, brings together painting, mosaic, and low-relief sculpture. In effect, Schnabel reclaimed older media for his expressionistic method, which considerably amplifies his bold, distinctive statement.

**ANSELM KIEFER** Neo-Expressionism was by no means a solely American movement. German artist ANSELM KIEFER (b. 1945) has produced some of the most lyrical and engaging works of the contemporary period. Like Schnabel's, Kiefer's paintings, such as *Nigredo* (FIG. 36-32), are monumental in scale, recall Abstract Expressionist canvases, and draw the viewer to their textured surfaces, made more complex by the addition of materials such as straw and lead. It is not merely the impressive physicality of Kiefer's paintings that accounts for the impact of his work, however. His images function on a mythological or metaphorical level as well as on a historically specific one. Kiefer's works of the 1970s and 1980s often involve a reexamination of German history, particularly the painful Nazi era of 1933–1945, and evoke the feeling of despair. Kiefer believes that Germany's participation in World War II and the Holocaust left permanent scars on the souls of the German people and on the souls of all humanity.

*Nigredo* (“blackening”) pulls the viewer into an expansive landscape depicted using Renaissance perspectival principles. This landscape, however, is far from pastoral or carefully cultivated. Rather, it is bleak and charred. Although it makes no specific reference to the Holocaust, this incinerated landscape indirectly alludes to the horrors of that event. More generally, the blackness of the landscape may refer to the notion of alchemical change or transformation, a concept of great interest to Kiefer. Black is one of the four symbolic colors of the alchemist—a color that refers both to death and to the

molten, chaotic state of substances broken down by fire. The alchemist, however, focuses on the transformation of substances, and thus the emphasis on blackness is not absolute but can also be perceived as part of a process of renewal and redemption. Kiefer thus imbued his work with a deep symbolic meaning that, when combined with the intriguing visual quality of his parched, congealed surfaces, results in paintings of enduring power.

### Feminist Art

With the renewed interest in representation that the Pop artists and Surrealists introduced in the 1960s and 1970s, painters and sculptors once again began to embrace the persuasive powers of art to communicate with a wide audience. In recent decades, artists have investigated more insistently the dynamics of power and privilege, especially in relation to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation.

In the 1970s, the feminist movement focused public attention on the history of women and their place in society. In art, two women—Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro—largely spearheaded the American feminist art movement. Chicago and a group of students at California State University, Fresno, founded the Feminist Art Program, and Chicago and Schapiro coordinated it at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia. In 1972, as part of this program, teachers and students joined to create projects such as *Womanhouse*, an abandoned house in Los Angeles they completely converted into a suite of “environments,” each based on a different aspect of women's lives and fantasies.

**JUDY CHICAGO** In her own work in the 1970s, JUDY CHICAGO (Judy Cohen, b. 1939) wanted to educate viewers about women's role in history and the fine arts. She aimed to establish a respect for women and their art, to forge a new kind of art expressing women's experiences, and to find a way to make that art accessible to a large audience. Inspired early in her career by the work of Barbara Hepworth (FIG. 35-58), Georgia O'Keeffe (FIGS. 1-4 and 35-38), and Louise Nevelson (FIG. 36-17), Chicago developed a personal painting style that consciously included abstract organic vaginal images. In the early 1970s, Chicago began planning an ambitious piece, *The*

## ARTISTS ON ART

One of the acknowledged masterpieces of feminist art is Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (FIG. 36-33), which required a team of nearly 400 to create and assemble. In 1979, Chicago published a book explaining the genesis and symbolism of the work.

[By 1974] I had discarded [my original] idea of painting a hundred abstract portraits on plates, each paying tribute to a different historic female figure. . . . In my research I realized over and over again that women's achievements had been left out of history. . . . My new idea was to try to symbolize this. . . . [I thought] about putting the plates on a table with silver, glasses, napkins, and tablecloths, and over the next year and a half the concept of *The Dinner Party* slowly evolved. I began to think about the piece as a reinterpretation of the Last Supper from the point of view of women, who, throughout history, had prepared the meals and set the table. In my "Last Supper," however, the women would be the honored guests. Their representation in the form of plates set on the table would express the way women had been confined, and the piece would thus reflect both women's achievements and their oppression. . . . My goal with *The Dinner Party* was . . . to forge a new kind of art expressing women's experience. . . . [It] seemed appropriate to relate our history through

Judy Chicago on *The Dinner Party*

**36-33** JUDY CHICAGO, *The Dinner Party*, 1979. Multimedia, including ceramics and stitchery, 48' × 48' × 48'. Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn.

Chicago's *Dinner Party* honors 39 women from antiquity to 20th-century America. The triangular form and the materials—painted china and fabric—are traditionally associated with women.

art, particularly through techniques traditionally associated with women—china-painting and needlework.\*

\* Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party: A Symbol of Our Heritage* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1979) 11–12.

*Dinner Party* (FIG. 36-33), using craft techniques (such as china painting and needlework) traditionally practiced by women, to celebrate the achievements and contributions women made throughout history (see "Judy Chicago on *The Dinner Party*," above). She originally conceived the work as a feminist Last Supper for 13 "honored guests," as in the New Testament, but all women. There also are 13 women in a witches' coven, and Chicago's *Dinner Party* refers to witchcraft and the worship of the Mother Goddess. But because Chicago had uncovered so many worthy women in the course of her research, she expanded the number of guests threefold to 39 and placed them around a triangular table 48 feet long on each side. The triangular form refers to the ancient symbol for both woman and the Goddess. The notion of a dinner party also alludes to women's traditional role as homemakers.

*The Dinner Party* rests on a white tile floor inscribed with the names of 999 additional women of achievement to signify that the accomplishments of the 39 honored guests rest on a foundation other women laid. Among those with place settings at the table are O'Keeffe, the Egyptian pharaoh Hatshepsut (see "Hatshepsut," Chapter 3, page 68), the British writer Virginia Woolf, the Native American guide

Sacagawea, and the American suffragist Susan B. Anthony. Each woman's place has identical eating utensils and a goblet but a unique oversized porcelain plate and a long place mat or table runner covered with imagery that reflects significant facts about that woman's life and culture. The plates range from simple concave shapes with china-painted imagery to dishes whose sculptured three-dimensional designs almost seem to struggle to free themselves. The designs on each plate incorporate both butterfly and vulval motifs—the butterfly as the ancient symbol of liberation and the vulva as the symbol of female sexuality. Each table runner combines traditional needlework techniques, including needlepoint, embroidery, crochet, beading, patchwork, and appliqué. *The Dinner Party* is, however, more than the sum of its parts. It provides viewers with a powerful launching point for considering broad feminist concerns.

**MIRIAM SCHAPIRO** After enjoying a thriving career as a hard-edge painter in California in the late 1960s, MIRIAM SCHAPIRO (b. 1923) became fascinated with the hidden metaphors for womanhood she then saw in her abstract paintings. Intrigued by the materials



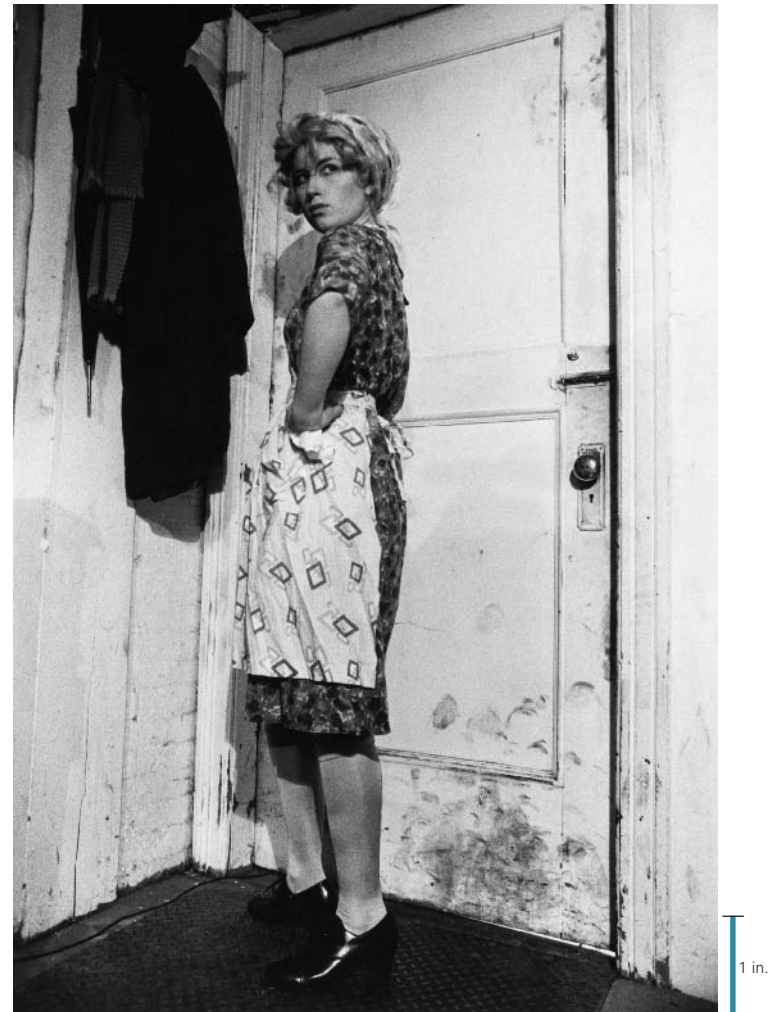
**36-34** MIRIAM SCHAPIRO, *Anatomy of a Kimono* (section), 1976. Fabric and acrylic on canvas, 6' 8" high. Collection of Bruno Bishofberger, Zurich.

Schapiro calls her huge sewn collages *femmagages* to make the point that women had been doing collages of fabric long before Picasso (FIG. 35-16). This femmage incorporates patterns from Japanese kimonos.

she had used to create a doll's house for her part in *Womanhouse*, in the 1970s Schapiro began to make huge sewn collages, assembled from fabrics, quilts, buttons, sequins, lace, and rickrack collected at antique shows. She called these works *femmagages* to make the point that women had been doing collages using these materials long before Pablo Picasso (FIG. 35-16) introduced them to the art world. *Anatomy of a Kimono* (FIG. 36-34) is one of a series of monumental femmagages based on the patterns of Japanese kimonos, fans, and robes. This vast composition repeats the kimono shape in a sumptuous array of fabric fragments.

**CINDY SHERMAN** Early attempts at dealing with feminist issues in art tended toward essentialism, emphasizing universal differences—either biological or experiential—between women and men. More recent discussions have gravitated toward the notion of gender as a socially constructed concept, and an extremely unstable one at that. Identity is multifaceted and changeable, making the discussion of feminist issues more challenging. Consideration of the many variables, however, results in a more complex understanding of gender roles.

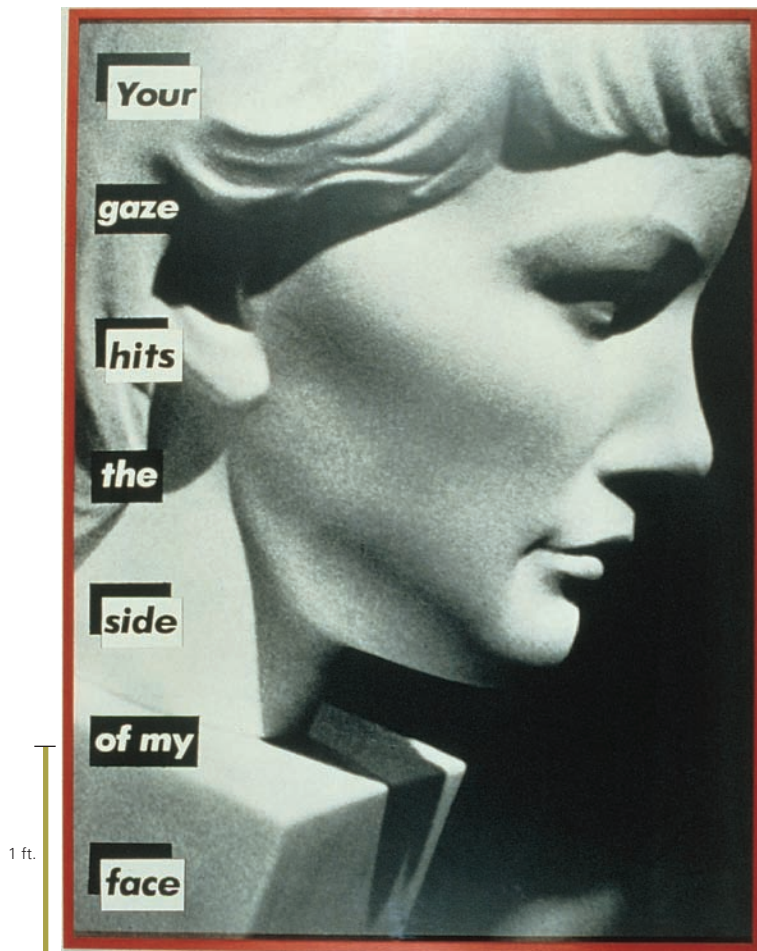
American artist CINDY SHERMAN (b. 1954) addresses in her work the way much of Western art presents female beauty for the enjoyment of the “male gaze,” a primary focus of contemporary feminist theory. Since 1977, Sherman has produced a series of more than 80 black-and-white photographs titled *Untitled Film Stills*. She got the idea for the series after examining soft-core pornography magazines and noting the stereotypical ways they depicted women. She decided to produce her own series of photographs, designing, acting in, directing, and photographing the works. In so doing, she took control of her own image and constructed her own identity, a primary feminist concern. In works from the series, such as *Untitled Film Still #35* (FIG. 36-35), Sherman appears, often in costume and wig, in a photograph that seems to be a film still. Most of the images in this series recall popular film genres but are sufficiently generic that the viewer cannot relate them to specific movies. Sherman often reveals the constructed nature of these images with the shutter release cable she holds in her hand to take the pictures. (The cord runs across the floor in #35.) Although the artist is still the object of the viewer's gaze in these images, the identity is one she alone chose to assume.



**36-35** CINDY SHERMAN, *Untitled Film Still #35*, 1979. Gelatin silverprint, 10" × 8". Private collection.

Sherman here assumed a role for one of a series of 80 photographs resembling film stills in which she addressed the way women have been presented in Western art for the enjoyment of the “male gaze.”





**36-36** BARBARA KRUGER, *Untitled (Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face)*, 1981. Photograph, red painted frame, 4' 7" × 3' 5". Courtesy Mary Boone Gallery, New York.

Kruger, like Sherman, has explored the male gaze in her art. Using the layout techniques of mass media, she constructed this word-and-photograph collage to challenge culturally constructed notions of gender.

**BARBARA KRUGER** Another artist who has examined the male gaze and the culturally constructed notion of gender in her art is BARBARA KRUGER (b. 1945). Kruger's work explores the strategies and techniques of contemporary mass media and draws on her early training as a graphic designer who contributed to *Mademoiselle* magazine. *Untitled (Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face)*; FIG. 36-36) incorporates layout techniques the mass media use to sell consumer goods. Although Kruger favored the reassuringly familiar format and look of advertising, her goal was to subvert the typical use of such imagery. Rather, she aimed to expose the deceptiveness of the media messages the viewer complacently absorbs. Kruger wanted to undermine the myths—particularly those about women—the media constantly reinforce. Her huge (often 4 by 6 feet) word-and-photograph collages challenge the cultural attitudes embedded in commercial advertising.

In *Your Gaze*, Kruger overlaid a photograph of a classically beautiful sculpted head of a woman with a vertical row of text composed of eight words. The words cannot be taken in with a single glance, and reading them is a staccato exercise, with an overlaid cumulative quality that delays understanding and intensifies the meaning (rather like reading a series of roadside billboards from a speeding car). Kruger's use of text in her work is significant. Many cultural theorists have asserted that language is one of the most powerful vehicles for internalizing stereotypes and conditioned roles.



**36-37** ANA MENDIETA, *Flowers on Body*, 1973. Color photograph of earth/body work with flowers, executed at El Yagul, Mexico. Courtesy of the Estate of Ana Mendieta and Galerie Lelong, New York.

In this earth/body sculpture, Mendieta appears covered with flowers in a womblike cavity to address issues of birth and death as well as the human connection to the earth.

**ANA MENDIETA** Cuban-born artist ANA MENDIETA (1948–1985), like Sherman, used her body as a component in her artworks. Although gender issues concerned her, Mendieta's art also dealt with issues of spirituality and cultural heritage. The artist's best-known series, *Silueta (Silhouettes)*, consists of approximately 200 earth/body works completed between 1973 and 1980. These works represented Mendieta's attempt to carry on, as she described, "a dialogue between the landscape and the female body (based on my own silhouette)."<sup>23</sup>

*Flowers on Body* (FIG. 36-37) is a documentary photograph of the first of the earth/body sculptures in the *Silueta* series. In this work, Mendieta appears covered with flowers in an earthen, womblike cavity. Executed at El Yagul, a Mexican archaeological site, the work speaks to the issues of birth and death, the female experience of childbirth, and the human connection to the earth. Objects and locations from nature play an important role in Mendieta's art. She explained the centrality of this connection to nature:

I believe this has been a direct result of my having been torn from my homeland during my adolescence. I am overwhelmed by the



**36-38** HANNAH WILKE, *S.O.S.—Starification Object Series*, 1974. Ten black-and-white photographs with 15 chewing-gum sculptures in Plexiglas cases mounted on ragboard, from a series originally made for *S.O.S. Mastication Box* and used in an exhibition-performance at the Clocktower, January 1, 1975, 3' 5" × 5' 8". Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York. Art © Marsie, Emanuelle, Damon and Andrew Scharlatt/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

In this photographic series, Wilke posed topless decorated with chewing-gum sculptures of vulvas that allude to female pleasure but also to pain, because they resemble scars.

feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source. Through my earth/body sculptures I become one with the earth.<sup>24</sup>

Beyond their sensual, moving presence, Mendieta's works also generate a palpable spiritual force. In longing for her homeland, she sought the cultural understanding and acceptance of the spiritual powers inherent in nature that modern Western societies often seem to reject in favor of scientific and technological developments. Mendieta's art is lyrical and passionate and operates at the intersection of cultural, spiritual, physical, and feminist concerns.

**HANNAH WILKE** Like Mendieta, HANNAH WILKE (1940–1993) used her own nude body as her artistic material. In her 1974–1982 series *S.O.S.—Starification Object Series* (FIG. 36-38), Wilke's images of herself trigger readings that are simultaneously metaphorical and real, stereotypical and unique, erotic and disconcerting, and that deal with both pleasure and pain. In these 10 black-and-white photographs documenting a performance, Wilke appears topless in a variety of poses, some seductive and others more confrontational. In each, pieces of chewed gum shaped into small vulvas decorate her body. While these tiny vaginal sculptures allude to female pleasure, they also appear as scars, suggesting pain. Ultimately, Wilke hoped that women would “take control of and have pride in the sensuality of their own bodies and create a sexuality in their own terms, without deferring to concepts degenerated by culture.”<sup>25</sup>

**GUERRILLA GIRLS** Some feminist artists have taken the world of the woman artist as their subject, rather than women in society at large. The New York-based GUERRILLA GIRLS, formed in 1984, bill themselves as the “conscience of the art world.” This group sees its duty as calling attention to injustice in the art world, especially what it perceives as the sexist and racist orientation of the major art institutions. The women who are members of the Guerrilla Girls have chosen to remain anonymous. To protect their identities, they wear

gorilla masks in public. The Guerrilla Girls employ guerrilla tactics by demonstrating in public, putting on performances, and placing posters and flyers in public locations. This distribution network expands the impact of their messages. One poster that reflects the Guerrilla Girls' agenda facetiously lists “the advantages of being a woman artist” (FIG. 36-39). In fact, the list itemizes the numerous obstacles women artists face in the contemporary art world. The Guerrilla Girls hope their publicizing of these obstacles will inspire improvements in the situation for women artists.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN ARTIST:

Working without the pressure of success  
 Not having to be in shows with men  
 Having an escape from the art world in your 4 free-lance jobs  
 Knowing your career might pick up after you're eighty  
 Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labeled feminine  
 Not being stuck in a tenured teaching position  
 Seeing your ideas live on in the work of others  
 Having the opportunity to choose between career and motherhood  
 Not having to choke on those big cigars or paint in Italian suits  
 Having more time to work when your mate dumps you for someone younger  
 Being included in revised versions of art history  
 Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius  
 Getting your picture in the art magazines wearing a gorilla suit

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

**36-39** GUERRILLA GIRLS, *The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist*, 1988. Offset print, 17" × 22". Collection of the artists.

The anonymous Guerrilla Girls wear gorilla masks in public performances and produce posters in which they call attention to injustice in the art world, especially what they perceive as sexist or racist treatment.

## Other Social and Political Art

Feminist issues are by no means the only social and political concerns that contemporary artists have addressed in their work. Race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation are among the other pressing issues that have given rise to important artworks during the past few decades.

**KIKI SMITH** American sculptor KIKI SMITH (b. 1954) has explored the question of who controls the human body, an interest that grew out of her training as an emergency medical service technician in New York City. Smith, however, also wants to reveal the socially constructed nature of the body, and she encourages the viewer to consider how external forces shape people's perceptions of their bodies. In works such as *Untitled* (FIG. 36-40), the artist dramatically departed from conventional representations of the body, both in art and in the media. She suspended two life-size wax figures, one male and one female, both nude, from metal stands. Smith marked each of the sculptures with long white drips—body

fluids running from the woman's breasts and down the man's leg. She commented:

Most of the functions of the body are hidden . . . from society. . . [W]e separate our bodies from our lives. But, when people are dying, they are losing control of their bodies. That loss of function can seem humiliating and frightening. But, on the other hand, you can look at it as a kind of liberation of the body. It seems like a nice metaphor—a way to think about the social—that people lose control despite the many agendas of different ideologies in society, which are trying to control the body(ies) . . . medicine, religion, law, etc. Just thinking about control—who has control of the body? . . . Does the mind have control of the body? Does the social?<sup>26</sup>

**FAITH RINGGOLD** Other artists, reflecting their own identities and backgrounds, have used their art to address issues associated with African American women. Inspired by the civil rights movement, FAITH RINGGOLD (b. 1930) produced numerous works in the 1960s that provided incisive commentary on the realities of racial prejudice. She increasingly incorporated references to gender as well and, in the 1970s, turned to fabric as the predominant material in her art. Using fabric enabled her to make more pointed reference to the domestic sphere, traditionally associated with women, and to collaborate with her mother, Willi Posey, a fashion designer. After her mother's death in 1981, Ringgold created *Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?* (FIG. 36-41), a quilt composed of dyed, painted, and pieced fabric. A moving tribute to her mother, this work combines the personal and the political. The quilt includes a narrative—the witty story of the family of Aunt Jemima, most familiar as the stereotypical black “mamma” but here a successful African American businesswoman. Ringgold conveyed this



**36-40** KIKI SMITH, *Untitled*, 1990. Beeswax and microcrystalline wax figures on metal stands, female figure installed height 6' 1½"; male figure 6' 4 15/16". Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (purchased with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee).

Asking “who controls the body?” Kiki Smith sculpted two life-size wax figures of a nude man and woman with body fluids running from the woman's breasts and down the man's leg.



**36-41** FAITH RINGGOLD, *Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?* 1983. Acrylic on canvas with fabric borders, quilted, 7' 6" × 6' 8". Private collection.

In this quilt, a medium associated with women, Ringgold presented a tribute to her mother that also addresses African American culture and the struggles of women to overcome oppression.



**36-42** LORNA SIMPSON, *Stereo Styles*, 1988. 10 black-and-white Polaroid prints and 10 engraved plastic plaques, 5' 4" × 9' 8" overall. Private collection.

In *Stereo Styles*, Simpson presents photographs of African American hairstyles as racial symbols associated with personality traits. She also comments on those coiffures as fashion commodities.

narrative using both text (written in black dialect) and embroidered portraits interspersed with traditional patterned squares. This work, while resonating with autobiographical references, also speaks to the larger issues of the history of African American culture and the struggles of women to overcome oppression.

**LORNA SIMPSON** The issues of racism and sexism are also central to the work of LORNA SIMPSON (b. 1960). Simpson has spent much of her career producing photographs that explore feminist and African American strategies to reveal and subvert conventional representations of gender and race. Like Sherman (FIG. 36-35), she deals with the issue of “the gaze,” trying to counteract the process of objectification to which both women and African Americans are subject. In *Stereo Styles* (FIG. 36-42), a series of Polaroid photographs and engravings, Simpson focuses on African American hairstyles, often used to symbolize the entire race. Hair is a physical code tied to issues of social status and position. Kobena Mercer, who has studied the cultural importance of hair, observed that “Hair is never a straightforward biological ‘fact’ because it is almost always groomed, . . . cut, . . . and generally ‘worked upon’ by human hands. Such practices socialize hair, making it the medium of significant ‘statements’ about self and society.”<sup>27</sup> On the issue of race, Mercer argued, “where race structures social relations of power, hair—as visible as skin color, but also the most tangible sign of racial difference—takes on another forcefully symbolic dimension.”<sup>28</sup> In *Stereo Styles*, Simpson also commented on the appropriation of African-derived hairstyles as a fashion commodity, and the personality traits listed correlate with specific hairstyles.

**MELVIN EDWARDS** American MELVIN EDWARDS (b. 1937) also has sought to reveal a history of collective oppression through his art. One of Edwards’s major sculptural series focused on the metaphor of lynching to provoke thought about the legacy of racism. This *Lynch Fragment* series encompassed more than 150 welded-steel sculptures produced in the years after 1963. Lynching

as an artistic theme prompts an immediate and visceral response, conjuring chilling and gruesome images from the past. Edwards sought to extend this emotional resonance further in his art. He constructed the series’ relatively small welded sculptures, such as *Tambo* (FIG. 36-43), from found metal objects—for example, chains, hooks, hammers, spikes, knife blades, and handcuffs. Although Edwards often intertwined or welded together the individual metal



**36-43** MELVIN EDWARDS, *Tambo*, 1993. Welded steel, 2' 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ " × 2' 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

Edwards’s welded sculptures of chains, spikes, knife blades, and other found objects allude to the lynching of African Americans and the continuing struggle for civil rights and an end to racism.

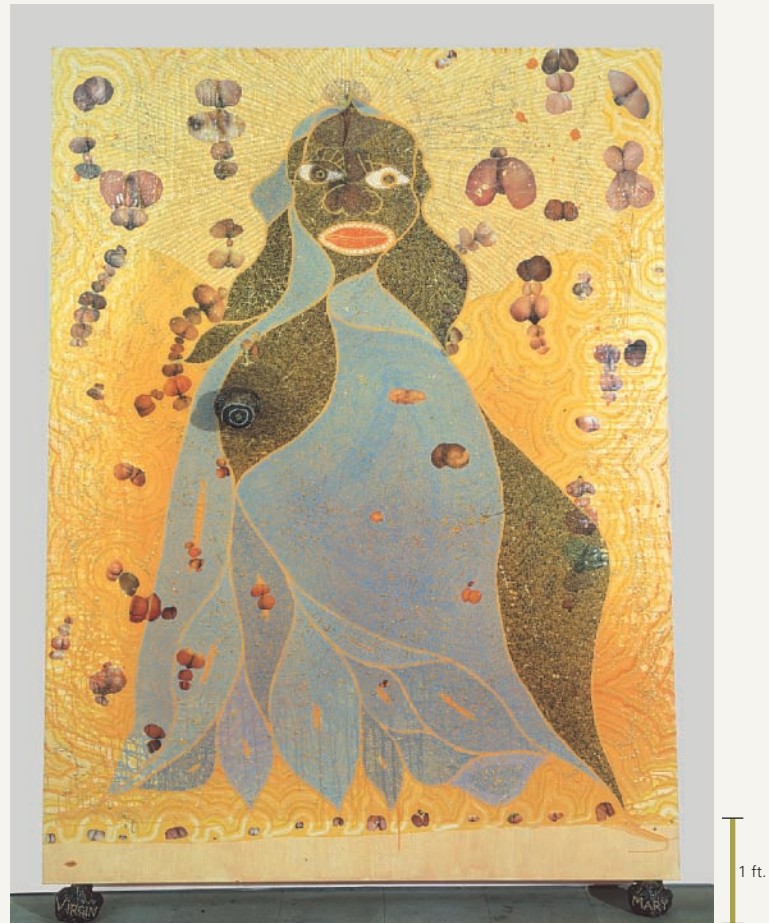
## Public Funding of Controversial Art

Although art can be beautiful and uplifting, throughout history art has also challenged and offended. Since the early 1980s, a number of heated controversies about art have surfaced in the United States. There have been many calls to remove the “offensive” works from public view (see “Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc*,” page 1016) and, in reaction, accusations of censorship. The central questions in all cases have been whether there are limits to what art can appropriately be exhibited, and whether governmental authorities have the right to monitor and pass judgment on creative endeavors. A related question is whether the acceptability of a work should be a criterion in determining the public funding of art.

Two exhibits in 1989 placed the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), a government agency charged with distributing federal funds to support the arts, squarely in the middle of this debate. One of the exhibitions, devoted to recipients of the Awards for the Visual Arts (AVA), took place at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in North Carolina. Among the award winners was Andres Serrano, whose *Piss Christ*, a photograph of a crucifix submerged in urine, sparked an uproar. Responding to this artwork, Reverend Donald Wildmon, an evangelical minister from Mississippi and head of the American Family Association, expressed outrage that such work was in an exhibition funded by the NEA and the Equitable Life Assurance Society (a sponsor of the AVA). He demanded that the work be removed and launched a letter-writing campaign that led Equitable Life to cancel its sponsorship of the awards. To Wildmon and other staunch conservatives, this exhibition, along with the *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment* show, served as evidence of cultural depravity and immorality, which they insisted should not be funded by government agencies such as the NEA. Mapplethorpe was a photographer well known for his elegant, spare photographs of flowers and vegetables as well as his erotic, homosexually oriented images. As a result of media furor over *The Perfect Moment*, the director of the Corcoran Museum of Art canceled the scheduled exhibition of this traveling show. But the director of the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati decided to mount the show. The government indicted him on charges of obscenity, but a jury acquitted him six months later.

These controversies intensified public criticism of the NEA and its funding practices. The next year, the head of the NEA, John Frohnmayer, vetoed grants for four lesbian, gay, or feminist performance artists—Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller—who became known as the “NEA Four.” Infuriated by what they perceived as overt censorship, the artists filed suit, eventually settling the case and winning reinstatement of their grants. Congress responded by dramatically reducing the NEA’s budget, and the agency no longer awards grants or fellowships to individual artists.

Controversies have also erupted on the municipal level. In 1999, Rudolph Giuliani, then mayor of New York, joined a number of individuals and groups protesting the inclusion of several artworks in the exhibition *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collec-*



**36-44** CHRIS OFILI, *The Holy Virgin Mary*, 1996. Paper collage, oil paint, glitter, polyester resin, map pins, elephant dung on linen, 7' 11" × 5' 11 $\frac{5}{16}$ ". Saatchi Collection, London.

Ofili, a British-born Catholic of Nigerian descent, represented the Virgin Mary with African elephant dung on one breast and surrounded by genitalia and buttocks. The painting produced a public outcry.

tion at the Brooklyn Museum. Chris Ofili’s *The Holy Virgin Mary* (FIG. 36-44), a collage of Mary incorporating cutouts from pornographic magazines and shellacked clumps of elephant dung, became the flashpoint for public furor. Denouncing the show as “sick stuff,” the mayor threatened to cut off all city subsidies to the museum.

Art that seeks to unsettle and challenge is critical to the cultural, political, and psychological life of a society. The regularity with which such art raises controversy suggests that it operates at the intersection of two competing principles: free speech and artistic expression on the one hand and a reluctance to impose images upon an audience that finds them repugnant or offensive on the other. What these controversies do demonstrate, beyond doubt, is the enduring power of art.

components so as to diminish immediate identifiability, the sculptures still retain a haunting connection to the overall theme. These works refer to a historical act that evokes a collective memory of oppression, but they also speak to the continuing struggle for civil rights and an end to racism. While growing up in Los Angeles, Ed-

wards experienced racial conflict firsthand. Among the metal objects incorporated into his *Lynch Fragments* sculptures are items he found in the streets in the aftermath of the Watts riots in 1965. The inclusion of these found objects imbued his disquieting, haunting works with an even greater intensity.



**36-45** DAVID HAMMONS, *Public Enemy*, installation at Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1991. Photographs, balloons, sandbags, guns, and other mixed media.

Hammons intended this multimedia installation, with Theodore Roosevelt flanked by an African American and a Native American as servants, to reveal the racism embedded in America's cultural heritage.

**CHRIS OFILI** Another contemporary artist who has explored his ethnic and racial heritage in his art is CHRIS OFILI (b. 1968). One theme Ofili has treated is religion, interpreted through the eyes of a British-born Catholic of Nigerian descent. Ofili's *The Holy Virgin Mary* (FIG. 36-44) depicts Mary in a manner that departs radically from conventional Renaissance representations. Ofili's work presents the Virgin in simplified form, and she appears to float in an indeterminate space. The artist employed brightly colored pigments, applied to the canvas in multiple layers of beadlike dots (inspired by images from ancient caves in Zimbabwe). Surrounding the Virgin are tiny images of genitalia and buttocks cut from pornographic magazines, which, to the artist, parallel the putti that often surround Mary in Renaissance paintings. Another reference to Ofili's African heritage surfaces in the clumps of elephant dung—one attached to the Virgin's breast, and two more on which the canvas rests, serving as supports. The dung allowed Ofili to incorporate Africa into his work in a literal way. Still, he wants the viewer to move beyond the cultural associations of the materials and see those materials in new ways.

Not surprisingly, *The Holy Virgin Mary* has elicited strong reactions. Its inclusion in *Sensation* at the Brooklyn Museum in 1999 prompted indignant demands for cancellation of the show and countercharges of censorship (see "Public Funding of Controversial Art," page 996).

**DAVID HAMMONS** Nurturing viewer introspection is the driving force behind the art of DAVID HAMMONS (b. 1943). In his *installations* (artworks creating an artistic environment in a room or gallery), he combines sharp social commentary with beguiling sensory elements to push viewers to confront racism in American society. He created *Public Enemy* (FIG. 36-45) for an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1991. Hammons enticed viewers to interact with the installation by scattering fragrant autumn leaves on the floor and positioning helium-filled balloons

throughout the gallery. The leaves crunched underfoot, and the dangling strings of the balloons gently brushed spectators walking around the installation. Once drawn into the environment, viewers encountered the central element in *Public Enemy*—large black-and-white photographs of a public monument depicting President Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) triumphantly seated on a horse, flanked by an African American man and a Native American man, both appearing in the role of servants. Around the edge of the installation, circling the photographs of the monument, were piles of sandbags with both real and toy guns propped on top, aimed at the statue. By selecting evocative found objects and presenting them in a dynamic manner that encouraged viewer interaction, Hammons attracted an audience and then revealed the racism embedded in received cultural heritage. In this way, he prompted reexamination of American values and cultural emblems.

**JAUNE QUICK-TO-SEE SMITH** Another contemporary artist who has explored the politics of identity is JAUNE QUICK-TO-SEE SMITH (b. 1940), a Native American artist descended from the Shoshone, the Salish, and the Cree tribes and raised on the Flatrock Reservation in Montana. Quick-to-See Smith's native heritage has always informed her art, and her concern about the invisibility of Native American artists has led her to organize exhibitions of their art. Yet she has acknowledged a wide range of influences, including "pictogram forms from Europe, the Amur [the river between Russia and China], the Americas; color from beadwork, parfleches [hide cases], the landscape; paint application from Cobra art, New York expressionism, primitive art; composition from Kandinsky, Klee or Byzantine art."<sup>29</sup> She has even compared her use of tribal images to that of the Abstract Expressionists.

Despite the myriad references and visual material in Quick-to-See Smith's art, her work displays coherence and power, and, like many other artists who have explored issues associated with identity, she

**36-46** JAUNE QUICK-TO-SEE SMITH, *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)*, 1992. Oil and mixed media on canvas, 5' × 14' 2". Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk.

Quick-to-See Smith's mixed-media canvases are full of references to her Native American identity. Some of the elements refer to the controversy surrounding sports teams that have American Indian names.



challenges stereotypes and unacknowledged assumptions. *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)* (FIG. 36-46) is a large-scale painting with collage elements and attached objects, reminiscent of a Rauschenberg combine (FIG. 36-22). The painting's central image, a canoe, appears in an expansive field painted in loose Abstract Expressionist fashion and covered with clippings from Native American newspapers. Above the painting, as if hung from a clothesline, is an array of objects. These include Native American artifacts, such as beaded belts and feather headdresses, and contemporary sports memorabilia from teams with American Indian-derived names—the Cleveland Indians, Atlanta Braves, and Washington Redskins. The inclusion of these contemporary objects immediately recalls the vocal opposition to these names and to acts such as the Braves' "tomahawk chop." Like Edwards, Quick-to-See Smith uses the past to comment on the present.

**LEON GOLUB** In his paintings, American artist LEON GOLUB (1922–2004) expressed a brutal vision of contemporary life through a sophisticated reading of the news media's raw data. His best-known work deals with violent events of recent decades—the narratives people have learned to extract from news photos of anonymous characters participating in atrocious street violence, terrorism, and

torture. Paintings in Golub's *Assassins* and *Mercenaries* series suggest not specific stories but a condition of being. As the artist said,

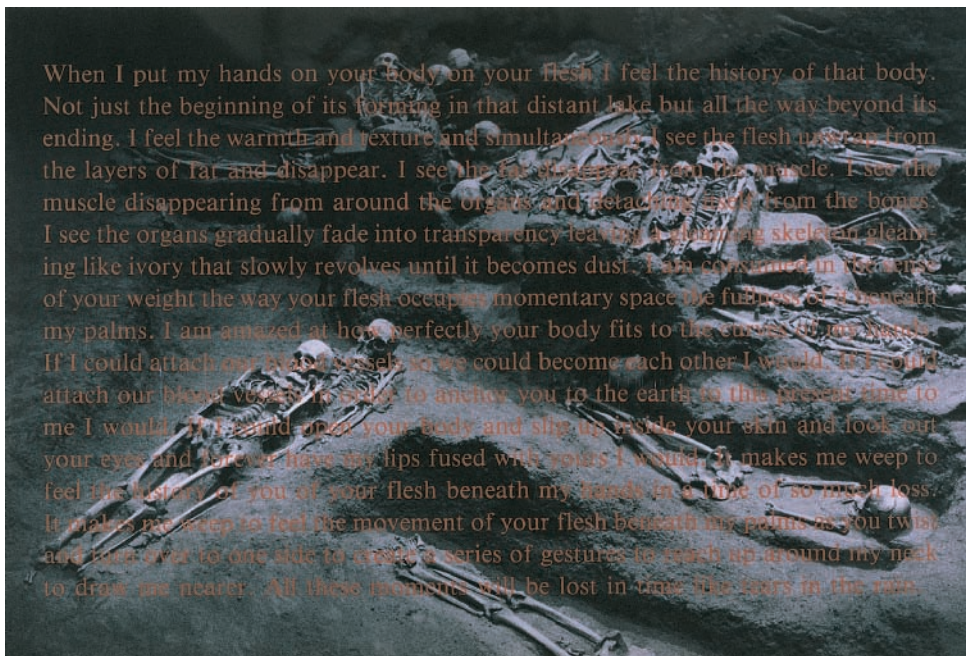
Through media we are under constant, invasive bombardment of images—from all over—and we often have to take evasive action to avoid discomforting recognitions. . . . The work [of art] should have an edge, veering between what is visually and cognitively acceptable and what might stretch these limits as we encounter or try to visualize the real products of the uses of power.<sup>30</sup>

*Mercenaries IV* (FIG. 36-47), a huge canvas, represents a mysterious tableau of five tough freelance military professionals willing to fight, for a price, for any political cause. The three clustering at the right side of the canvas react with tense physical gestures to something one of the two other mercenaries standing at the far left is saying. The dark uniforms and skin tones of the four black fighters flatten their figures and make them stand out against the searing dark red background. The slightly modulated background seems to push their forms forward up against the picture plane and becomes an echoing void in the space between the two groups. Golub painted the mercenaries so that the viewer's eye is level with the menacing figures' knees. He placed the men so close to the front plane of the

**36-47** LEON GOLUB, *Mercenaries IV*, 1980. Acrylic on linen, 10' × 19' 2". Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts. Art © Leon Golub/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

The violence of contemporary life is the subject of Golub's huge paintings. Here, five mercenaries loom over the viewer, instilling a feeling of peril. The rough textures reinforce the raw imagery.





When I put my hands on your body on your flesh I feel the history of that body. Not just the beginning of its forming in that distant lake but all the way beyond its ending. I feel the warmth and texture and simultaneously I see the flesh unravel from the layers of fat and disappear. I see the fat sloughing from the muscle. I see the muscle disappearing from around the organs and detaching itself from the bones. I see the organs gradually fade into transparency leaving a gleaming skeletal gleaming like ivory that slowly revolves until it becomes dust. I am constrained in the curve of your weight the way your flesh occupies momentary space the fullness of it beneath my palms. I am amazed at how perfectly your body fits to the curves of my hands. If I could attach our blood vessels to each other we could become each other I would. If I could attach our blood vessels to each other to anchor you to the earth to this present time to me I would. If I could open your body and slip up inside your skin and look out your eyes and know how my lips fused with yours I would. It makes me weep to feel the history of you of your flesh beneath my hands in a time of so much loss. It makes me weep to feel the movement of your flesh beneath my palms as you twist and turn over to one side to create a series of gestures to reach up around my neck to draw me nearer. All these measures will be lost in time like tears in the rain.

**36-48** DAVID WOJNAROWICZ, “*When I put my hands on your body*,” 1990. Gelatin-silver print and silk-screened text on museum board, 2' 2" × 3' 2". Private collection.

In this disturbing yet eloquent print, Wojnarowicz overlaid typed commentary on a photograph of skeletal remains. He movingly communicated his feelings about watching a loved one die of AIDS.

1 ft.

work that the lower edge of the painting cuts off their feet, thereby trapping the viewer in the painting's compressed space. Golub emphasized both the scarred light tones of the white mercenary's skin and the weapons. Modeled with shadow and gleaming highlights, the guns contrast with the harshly scraped, flattened surfaces of the figures. The rawness of the canvas reinforces the rawness of the imagery. Golub often dissolved certain areas with solvent after applying pigment and scraped off applied paint with, among other tools, a meat cleaver. The feeling of peril confronts viewers mercilessly. They become one with all the victims caught in today's political battles.

**DAVID WOJNAROWICZ** As a gay activist and as someone who had lost many friends to AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), DAVID WOJNAROWICZ (1955–1992) created disturbing yet eloquent works about the tragedy of this disease. (Wojnarowicz himself died of AIDS.) In “*When I put my hands on your body*” (FIG. 36-48), he overlaid a photograph of a pile of skeletal remains with evenly spaced typed commentary that communicated his feelings about watching a loved one dying of AIDS. Wojnarowicz movingly described the effects of AIDS on the human body and soul. He juxtaposed text with imagery, which, like the works of Barbara Kruger (FIG. 36-36) and Lorna Simpson (FIG. 36-42), paralleled the use of both words and images in advertising. The public's familiarity with this format ensured greater receptivity to the artist's message.

**KRZYSZTOF WODICZKO** When working in Canada in 1980, Polish-born artist KRZYSZTOF WODICZKO (b. 1943) developed artworks involving outdoor slide images. He projected photographs on specific buildings to expose how civic buildings embody, legitimize, and perpetuate power. When Wodiczko moved to New York City in 1983, the pervasive homelessness troubled him, and he resolved to use his art to publicize this problem. In 1987 he produced *The Homeless Projection* (FIG. 36-49) as part of a New Year's celebration in Boston. The artist projected images of homeless people on all four sides of the Soldiers and Sailors Civil War Memorial on the Boston Common. In these photos, plastic bags filled with their few possessions flanked the people depicted. At the top of the monument, Wodiczko projected a local condominium construction site, which helped viewers make a connection between urban development and homelessness.



**36-49** KRZYSZTOF WODICZKO, *The Homeless Projection*, 1986. Outdoor slide projection at the Soldiers and Sailors Civil War Memorial, Boston.

To publicize their plight, Wodiczko projected on the walls of a monument on the Boston Common images of homeless people and their plastic bags filled with their few possessions.





**36-50** MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ, *80 Backs*, 1976–1980. Burlap and resin, each 2' 3" high. Museum of Modern Art, Dallas.

Polish fiber artist Abakanowicz explored the stoic, everyday toughness of the human spirit in this group of nearly identical sculptures that serve as symbols of distinctive individuals lost in the crowd.

**MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ** The stoic, everyday toughness of the human spirit has been the subject of Polish fiber artist MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ (b. 1930). A leader in the recent exploration in sculpture of the expressive powers of weaving techniques, Abakanowicz gained fame with experimental freestanding pieces in both abstract and figural modes. For Abakanowicz, fiber materials are deeply symbolic:

I see fiber as the basic element constructing the organic world on our planet, as the greatest mystery of our environment. It is from fiber that all living organisms are built—the tissues of plants and ourselves. . . . Fabric is our covering and our attire. Made with our hands, it is a record of our souls.<sup>31</sup>

To all of her work, Abakanowicz brought the experiences of her early life as a member of an aristocratic family disturbed by the dislocations of World War II and its aftermath. Initially attracted to weaving as a medium that would adapt well to the small studio space she had available, Abakanowicz gradually developed huge abstract hangings she called Abakans that suggest organic spaces as well as giant pieces of clothing. She returned to a smaller scale with works based on human forms—*Heads*, *Seated Figures*, and *Backs*—multiplying each type for exhibition in groups as symbols for the individual in society lost in the crowd yet retaining some distinctiveness. This impression is especially powerful in an installation of *80 Backs* (FIG. 36-50). Abakanowicz made each piece by pressing layers of natural organic fibers into a plaster mold. Every sculpture depicts the slumping shoulders, back, and arms of a figure of indeterminate sex and rests legless directly on the floor. The repeated pose of the figures in *80 Backs* suggests meditation, submission, and anticipation. Although made from a single mold, the figures achieve a touch-



**36-51** JEFF KOONS, *Pink Panther*, 1988. Porcelain, 3' 5" × 1' 8½" × 1' 7". Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (Gerald S. Elliot Collection).

In the 1980s Koons created sculptures that highlight everything wrong with contemporary American consumer culture. In this work, he intertwined a centerfold nude and a cartoon character.

ing sense of individuality because each assumed a slightly different posture as the material dried and because the artist imprinted a different pattern of fiber texture on each.

**JEFF KOONS** While many contemporary artists have pursued personally meaningful agendas in their art, others have addressed society-wide concerns, for example, postmodern commodity culture. American JEFF KOONS (b. 1955), who was a commodities broker before turning to art, first became prominent in the art world for a series of works in the early 1980s that involved exhibiting common purchased objects such as vacuum cleaners. Clearly following in the footsteps of artists such as Marcel Duchamp (FIG. 35-27) and Andy Warhol (FIG. 36-24), Koons made no attempt to manipulate or alter the objects. More recently, he has produced porcelain sculptures, such as *Pink Panther* (FIG. 36-51), in which he continued his immersion in contemporary mass culture by intertwining a magazine centerfold nude with a famous cartoon character. Koons reinforced the trite and kitschy nature of this imagery by titling the exhibition of which this work was a part *The Banality Show*. Some art critics have argued that Koons and his work instruct viewers because both



**36-52** ROBERT ARNESON, *California Artist*, 1982. Glazed stoneware, 5' 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ "  $\times$  2' 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  $\times$  1' 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco (gift of the Modern Art Council). Art © Estate of Robert Arneson/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Underscoring the importance of art critics in the contemporary art world, Arneson produced this self-portrait incorporating all the stereotypes a *New York Times* critic attributed to California artists.

artist and work serve as the most visible symbols of everything that is wrong with contemporary American society. Whether or not this is true, Koons's prominence in the art world indicates that he, like Warhol before him, has developed an acute understanding of the dynamics of consumer culture.

**ROBERT ARNESON** During his career, ROBERT ARNESON (1930–1992) developed a body of work of predominantly figural ceramic sculpture, often satirical or amusing and sometimes biting. In 1981 the influential *New York Times* art critic Hilton Kramer (b. 1928) published a review of an exhibition that included a scathing assessment of the artist's work. Arneson, who spent his life in a small town north of San Francisco, created *California Artist* (FIG. 36-52) as a direct response to Kramer, particularly to the critic's derogatory comments on the provincialism of California art. This ceramic sculpture, a half-length self-portrait, incorporates all of the stereotypes Kramer perpetuated. The artist placed the top half of his likeness on a pedestal littered with beer bottles, cigarette butts, and marijuana plants. Arneson appears clad only in a denim jacket and sunglasses, looking very defiant with his arms crossed. Of course, by creating an artwork that responded directly to Kramer's comments, Arneson validated the importance of art critics in the contemporary art world.

**MARK TANSEY** This kind of interaction between artists and critics also underscores the self-consciousness on the part of contemporary artists about their place in the continuum of art history. For many postmodern artists, referencing the past is much more than incorporating elements from earlier works and styles in their own art. It involves a critique of or commentary on fundamental art historical premises. In short, their art is about making art.

In his humorous *A Short History of Modernist Painting* (FIG. 36-53), American artist MARK TANSEY (b. 1949) provides viewers with a tongue-in-cheek summary of the various approaches to painting artists have embraced over the years. Tansey presents a sequence of three images, each visualizing a way of looking at art. At the far left, a glass window encapsulates the Renaissance ideal of viewing art as though one were looking through a window. In the

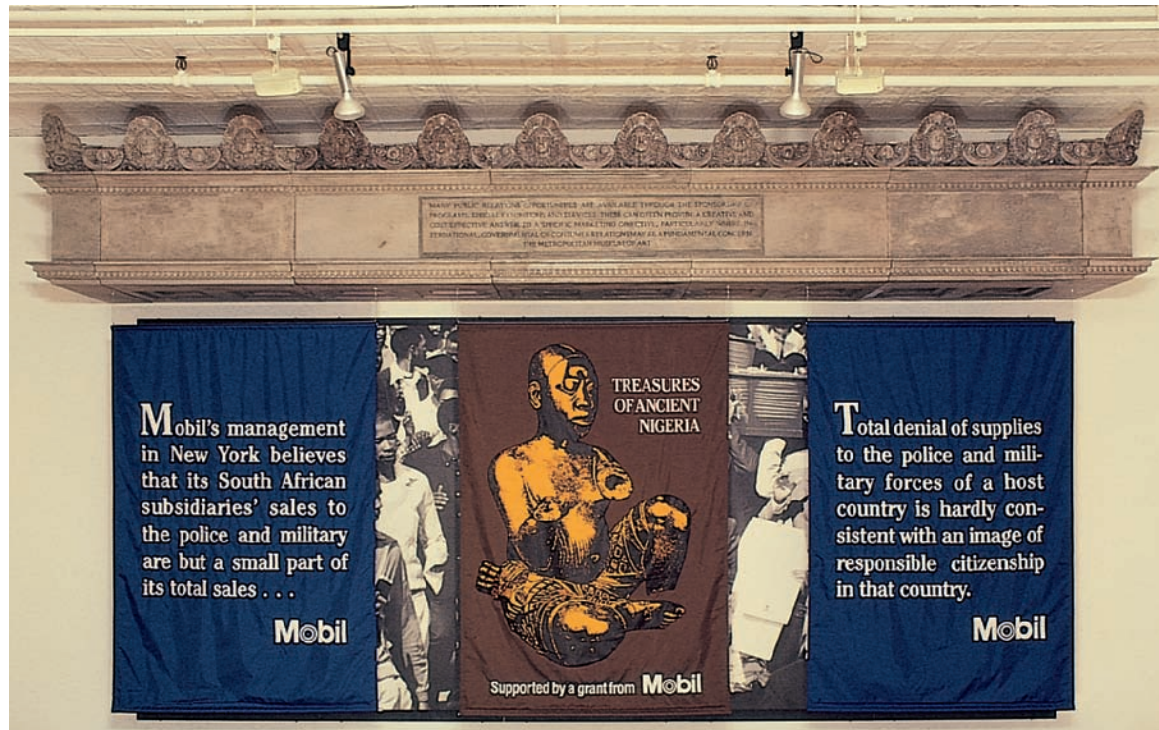


**36-53** MARK TANSEY, *A Short History of Modernist Painting*, 1982. Oil on canvas, three panels, each 4' 10"  $\times$  3' 4". Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, New York.

Tansey's tripartite history of painting includes the Renaissance window onto the world, the modernist insistence on a painting as a flat surface, and postmodern artists' reflections on their place in art history.

**36-54 HANS HAACKE, *MetroMobiltan*, 1985.** Fiberglass construction, three banners, and photomural, 11' 8" × 20' × 5'. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

*MetroMobiltan* focuses attention on the connections between political and economic conditions in South Africa and the conflicted politics of corporate patronage of art exhibitions.



center image, a man pushing his head against a solid wall represents the thesis central to much of modernist formalism—that the painting should be acknowledged as an object in its own right. In the image on the right, Tansey summarizes the postmodern approach to art with a chicken pondering its reflection in the mirror. The chicken's action reveals postmodern artists' reflections on their place in the art historical continuum.

**HANS HAACKE** Along with a conscious reappraisal of the processes of art historical validation, postmodern artists have turned to assessing art institutions, such as museums and galleries, and their role in validating art. Many artists have also scrutinized the discriminatory policies and politics of these cultural institutions. German artist HANS HAACKE (b. 1936) has focused his attention on the politics of art museums and how acquisition and exhibition policies affect the public's understanding of art history. The specificity of his works, based on substantial research, makes them stinging indictments of the institutions whose practices he critiques. In *MetroMobiltan* (FIG. 36-54), Haacke illustrated the connection between the realm of art (more specifically, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York) and the “real” world of political and economic interests. *MetroMobiltan* is a large sculptural work that includes a photomural of a funeral for South African black people. This photomural serves as the backdrop for a banner for the 1980 Mobil Oil–sponsored Metropolitan Museum show *Treasures of Ancient Nigeria*. In 1980, Mobil was a principal U.S. investor in South Africa, and Haacke's work suggests that one of the driving forces behind Mobil's sponsorship of this exhibition was the fact that Nigeria was one of the richest oil-producing countries in Africa. In 1981 the public pressured Mobil's board of directors to stop providing oil to the white South African military and police. Printed on the blue banners hanging on either side of *MetroMobiltan* is the official corporate response refusing to comply with this demand. Haacke set the entire tableau in a fiberglass replica of the Metropolitan Museum's entablature. By bringing together these disparate visual and textual elements that make reference to the mu-

seum, Mobil Oil, and Africa, the artist forced viewers to think about the connections among multinational corporations, political and economic conditions in South Africa, and the conflicted politics of corporate patronage of art exhibitions, thereby undermining the public's view that cultural institutions are exempt from political and economic concerns.

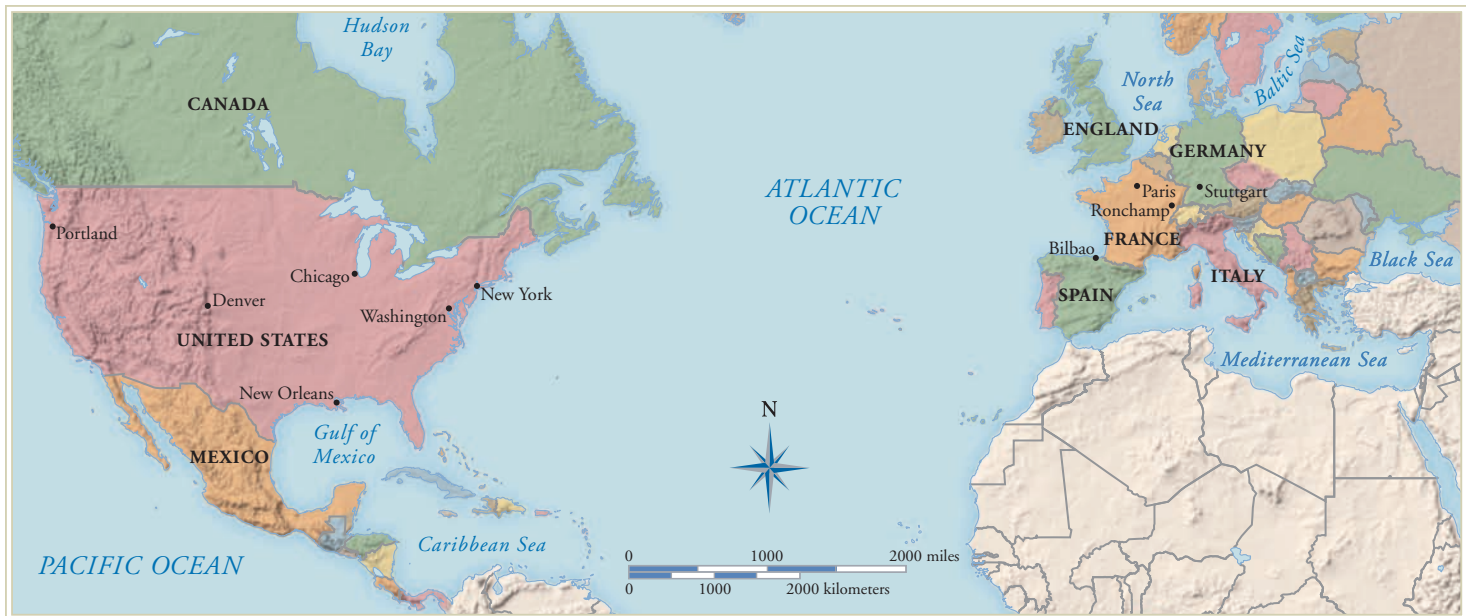
## ARCHITECTURE AND SITE-SPECIFIC ART

Some of the leading architects of the first half of the 20th century, most notably Frank Lloyd Wright (FIGS. 35-77 to 35-79), Le Corbusier (FIG. 35-75), and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (FIG. 35-74), concluded their long and productive careers in the postwar period. At the same time, younger architects rose to international prominence, some working in the modernist idiom but others taking architectural design in new directions, including postmodernism and Deconstructivism. Still, one common denominator exists in the diversity of contemporary architectural design: the breaking down of national boundaries, with major architects pursuing projects on several continents (MAP 36-1), often simultaneously.

### Modernism

In parallel with the progressive movement toward formal abstraction in painting and sculpture in the decades following World War II, modernist architects became increasingly concerned with a formalism that stressed simplicity. They articulated this in buildings that retained intriguing organic sculptural qualities, as well as in buildings that adhered to a more rigid geometry.

**FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT** The last great building Frank Lloyd Wright designed was the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (FIG. 36-55), built in New York City between 1943 and 1959. Using rein-



**MAP 36-1** Modernist and postmodernist architecture in Europe and America.

forced concrete almost as a sculptor might use resilient clay, Wright, who often described his architecture as “organic,” designed a structure inspired by the spiral of a snail’s shell. Wright had introduced curves and circles into some of his plans in the 1930s, and, as the architectural historian Peter Blake noted, “The spiral was the next logical step; it is the circle brought into the third and fourth dimensions.”<sup>32</sup> Inside the building (FIGS. 36-1 and 36-85), the shape of the shell expands toward the top, and a winding interior ramp spirals to

connect the gallery bays. A skylight strip embedded in the museum’s outer wall provides illumination to the ramp, which visitors can stroll up (or down, if they first take an elevator to the top of the building), viewing the artworks displayed along the gently sloping pathway. Thick walls and the solid organic shape give the building, outside and inside, the sense of turning in on itself, and the long interior viewing area opening onto a 90-foot central well of space creates a sheltered environment, secure from the bustling city outside.



**36-55** FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1943–1959.

Using reinforced concrete almost as a sculptor might use resilient clay, Wright designed a snail-shaped museum with a winding interior ramp for the display of artworks along its gently inclined path (FIGS. 36-1 and 36-85).

**36-56** LE CORBUSIER, Notre-Dame-du-Haut, Ronchamp, France, 1950–1955.

The organic forms of Le Corbusier's mountaintop chapel present a fusion of architecture and sculpture. The architect based the shapes on praying hands, a dove's wings, and a ship's prow.



**LE CORBUSIER** Compared with his pristine geometric design for Villa Savoye (FIG. 35-75), the organic forms of Le Corbusier's Notre-Dame-du-Haut (FIG. 36-56) come as a startling surprise. Completed in 1955 at Ronchamp, France, the chapel attests to the boundless creativity of this great architect. A fusion of architecture and sculpture, the small chapel, which replaced a building destroyed in World War II, occupies a pilgrimage site in the Vosges Mountains. The monumental impression of Notre-Dame-du-Haut seen from afar is somewhat deceptive. Although one massive exterior wall contains a pulpit facing a spacious outdoor area for large-scale open-air services on holy days, the interior (FIG. 36-57) holds at most 200 people. The intimate scale, stark and heavy walls, and mysterious illumination (jewel tones cast from the deeply recessed stained-glass windows) give this space an aura reminiscent of a sacred cave or a medieval monastery.

Notre-Dame-du-Haut's structure may look free-form to the untrained eye, but Le Corbusier based it, like the medieval cathedral, on an underlying mathematical system. The builders formed the fabric from a frame of steel and metal mesh, which they sprayed with concrete and painted white, except for two interior private chapel niches with colored walls and the roof, which Le Corbusier wished to have darken naturally with the passage of time. The roof appears to float freely above the sanctuary, intensifying the quality of mystery in the interior space. In reality, a series of nearly invisible blocks holds up the roof. The mystery of the roof's means of support recalls the reaction to Hagia Sophia's miraculously floating dome (FIG. 12-4) a millennium and a half before. Le Corbusier's preliminary sketches for the building indicate he linked the design with the shape of praying hands, with the wings of a dove (representing both peace and the Holy Spirit), and with the prow

of a ship (a reminder that the Latin word used for the main gathering place in Christian churches is *nave*, meaning "ship"). The artist envisioned that in these powerful sculptural solids and voids, human beings could find new values—new interpretations of their sacred beliefs and of their natural environments.

**EERO SAARINEN** Dramatic, sweeping, curvilinear rooflines are characteristic features of the buildings designed by Finnish-born architect EERO SAARINEN (1910–1961). One of his signature buildings of the late 1950s is the former Trans World Airlines terminal (FIG. 36-58) at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, which Saarinen based on the theme of motion. The terminal consists of two immense concrete shells split down the middle and slightly rotated, giving the building a fluid curved outline that fits its corner site. The shells immediately suggest expansive wings and flight. Saarinen also designed everything on the interior, including the furniture, ventilation ducts, and signboards, with this same curvilinear vocabulary in mind.

**36-57** LE CORBUSIER, interior of Notre-Dame-du-Haut, Ronchamp, France, 1950–1955.

Constructed of concrete sprayed on a frame of steel and metal mesh, the heavy walls of the Ronchamp chapel enclose an intimate and mysteriously lit interior that has the aura of a sacred cave.





**36-58** EERO SAARINEN, Trans World Airlines terminal (terminal 5), John F. Kennedy International Airport, New York, 1956–1962.

Saarinen based the design for this airline terminal on the theme of motion. The concrete-and-glass building's dramatic, sweeping, curvilinear rooflines appropriately suggest expansive wings and flight.

**JOERN UTZON** Saarinen was responsible for selecting the Danish architect JOERN UTZON (b. 1918) to build the Sydney Opera House (FIG. 36-59) in Australia. Utzon's design is a bold composition of organic forms on a colossal scale. Utzon worked briefly with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin (Wright's Wisconsin residence), and the style of the Sydney Opera House resonates distantly with the graceful curvature of Wright's Guggenheim Museum. Two clusters of immense concrete shells—the largest is 200 feet tall—rise from massive platforms and soar to delicate peaks. Recalling at first the ogival shapes of Gothic vaults, the shells also suggest both the buoyancy of seabird wings and the billowing sails of the tall ships that brought European settlers to Australia in the 18th and 19th centuries. These architectural metaphors are appropriate to the harbor surrounding Bennelong Point, whose bedrock foundations support the building. Utzon's matching of the structure with its site and atmosphere adds to the organic nature of the design.

Begun in 1959, completion of the opera house had to wait until 1972, primarily because Utzon's daring design required construc-

tion technology that had not yet been developed. Today the opera house is Sydney's defining symbol, a monument of civic pride that functions as the city's cultural center. In addition to the opera auditorium, the complex houses auxiliary halls and rooms for concerts, the performing arts, motion pictures, lectures, art exhibitions, and conventions.

**MIES VAN DER ROHE** Sculpturesque building design was not the only manifestation of postwar modernist architecture. From the mid-1950s through the 1970s, other architects created massive, sleek, and geometrically rigid buildings. They designed most of these structures following Bauhaus architect Mies van der Rohe's contention that "less is more." Many of these more "Minimalist" designs are powerful, heroic presences in the urban landscape that effectively symbolize the giant corporations that often inhabit them.

The "purest" example of these corporate skyscrapers is the mid-1950s rectilinear glass-and-bronze Seagram Building (FIG. 36-60) in Manhattan, designed by Mies van der Rohe and American architect



**36-59** JOERN UTZON, Sydney Opera House, Sydney, Australia, 1959–1972.

The two soaring clusters of concrete shells of Utzon's opera house on an immense platform in Sydney's harbor suggest both the buoyancy of seabird wings and the billowing sails of tall ships.



**36-60** LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE and PHILIP JOHNSON, Seagram Building, New York, 1956–1958.

Massive, sleek, and geometrically rigid, this modernist skyscraper has a bronze and glass skin that masks its concrete and steel frame. The giant corporate tower appears to rise from the pavement on stilts.

Philip Johnson (FIG. 36-64). By this time, the concrete-steel-and-glass towers pioneered by Louis Sullivan (FIGS. 31-40 and 31-41) and carried further by Mies van der Rohe (FIG. 35-74) had become a familiar sight in cities all over the world. Appealing in its structural logic and clarity, the style, easily imitated, quickly became the norm for postwar commercial high-rise buildings. The architects of the Seagram Building (FIG. 36-60) deliberately designed it as a thin shaft, leaving the front quarter of its midtown site as an open pedestrian plaza. The tower appears to rise from the pavement on stilts. Glass walls even surround the recessed lobby. The building's recessed structural elements make it appear to have a glass skin, interrupted only by the thin strips of bronze anchoring the windows. The bronze metal and the amber glass windows give the tower a richness found in few of its neighbors. Mies van der Rohe and Johnson carefully planned every detail of the Seagram Building, inside and out, to create an elegant whole. They even designed the interior and exterior lighting to make the edifice an impressive sight both day and night.

**SKIDMORE, OWINGS, AND MERRILL** The architectural firm SKIDMORE, OWINGS, AND MERRILL (SOM), perhaps the purest proponent of Miesian-inspired structures, designed a number of these simple rectilinear glass-sheathed buildings, and SOM's success indicates the popularity of this building type. By 1970 the company employed more than a thousand architects and had offices in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Portland, and Washington, D.C. In 1974 the firm completed the Sears Tower (FIG. 36-61), a mammoth corporate building in Chicago. Consisting of nine clustered shafts



**36-61** SKIDMORE, OWINGS AND MERRILL, Sears Tower, Chicago, 1974.

Consisting of nine black aluminum and smoked glass shafts soaring to 110 stories, the Sears Tower dominates Chicago's skyline. It was the tallest building in the world at the time of its erection.

soaring vertically, this 110-floor building houses more than 12,000 workers. Original plans called for 104 stories, but the architects acquiesced to Sears's insistence on making the building the tallest (measured to the structural top) in the world at the time. The tower's size, coupled with the black aluminum that sheathes it and the smoked glass, establish a dominant presence in a city of many corporate skyscrapers—exactly the image Sears executives wanted to project.

**MAYA YING LIN** Often classified as a work of Minimalist sculpture rather than architecture is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (FIG. 36-62) in Washington, D.C., designed in 1981 by MAYA YING LIN (b. 1960) when she was only 21. The austere, simple memorial, a V-shaped wall constructed of polished black granite panels, begins at ground level at each end and gradually ascends to a height of 10 feet at the center of the V. Each wing is 246 feet long. Lin set the wall into the landscape, enhancing visitors' awareness of descent as they walk along the wall toward the center. The names of the Vietnam War's

## Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial

**M**aya Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (FIG. 36-62) is, like Minimalist sculptures (FIGS. 36-15 and 36-16), an unadorned geometric form. Yet the monument, despite its serene simplicity, actively engages viewers in a psychological dialogue, rather than standing mute. This dialogue gives visitors the opportunity to explore their feelings about the Vietnam War and perhaps arrive at some sense of closure.

The history of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial provides dramatic testimony to this monument's power. In 1981 a jury of architects, sculptors, and landscape architects selected Lin's design in a blind competition for a memorial to be placed in Constitution Gardens in Washington, D.C. Conceivably, the jury not only found her design compelling but also thought its simplicity would be the least likely to provoke controversy. But when the jury made its selection public, heated debate ensued. Even the wall's color came under attack. One veteran charged that black is "the universal color of shame, sorrow and degradation in all races, all societies worldwide."\* But the sharpest protests concerned the form and siting of the monument. Because of the stark contrast between the massive white memorials (the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial) bracketing Lin's sunken wall, some people saw her Minimalist design as minimizing the Vietnam War and, by extension, the efforts of those who fought in the conflict. Lin herself, however, described the wall as follows:

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is not an object inserted into the earth but a work formed from the act of cutting open the earth and polishing the earth's surface—dematerializing the stone to pure surface, creating an interface between the world of the light and the quieter world beyond the names.†

Due to the vocal opposition, a compromise was necessary to ensure the memorial's completion. The Commission of Fine Arts, the federal group overseeing the project, commissioned an additional memorial from artist Frederick Hart (1943–1999) in 1983. This larger-than-life-size realistic bronze sculpture of three soldiers, armed and in uniform, now stands approximately 120 feet from Lin's wall. Several years later, a group of nurses, organized as the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project, gained approval for a sculpture honoring women's service in the Vietnam War. The seven-foot-tall bronze statue by Glenna Goodacre (b. 1939) depicts three female figures, one cradling a wounded soldier in her arms. Unveiled in 1993, the work occupies a site about 300 feet south of the Lin memorial.

Whether celebrated or condemned, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial generates dramatic responses. Commonly, visitors react very emotionally, even those who know none of the soldiers named on the monument. The polished granite surface prompts individual soul-searching—viewers see themselves reflected among the names. Many visitors leave mementos at the foot of the wall in memory of loved ones they lost in the Vietnam War or make rubbings from the incised names. Arguably, much of this memorial's power derives from its Minimalist simplicity. Like Minimalist sculpture, it does not dictate response and therefore successfully encourages personal exploration.

\* Elizabeth Hess, "A Tale of Two Memorials," *Art in America* 71, no. 4 (April 1983), 122.

† Excerpt from an unpublished 1995 lecture, quoted in Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 525.



**36-62** MAYA YING LIN, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C., 1981–1983.

Like Minimalist sculpture, Lin's memorial to the veterans of Vietnam is a simple geometric form. Its inscribed polished walls actively engage the viewer in a psychological dialogue about the war.



57,939 casualties (and those still missing) incised on the memorial's walls, in the order of their deaths, contribute to the monument's dramatic effect.

When Lin designed this pristinely simple monument, she gave a great deal of thought to the purpose of war memorials. She concluded that a memorial

should be honest about the reality of war and be for the people who gave their lives. . . . [I] didn't want a static object that people would just look at, but something they could relate to as on a journey, or passage, that would bring each to his own conclusions. . . . I wanted to work with the land and not dominate it. I had an impulse to cut open the earth . . . an initial violence that in time would heal. The grass would grow back, but the cut would remain.<sup>33</sup>

In light of the tragedy of the war, this unpretentious memorial's allusion to a wound and long-lasting scar contributes to its communicative ability (see "Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial," page 1007).

### Postmodernism

The restrictiveness of modernist architecture and the impersonality and sterility of many modernist structures eventually led to a rejection of modernism's authority in architecture. Along with the apparent lack of responsiveness to the unique character of the cities and neighborhoods in which modernist architects erected their buildings, these reactions ushered in postmodernism, one of the most dramatic developments in later-20th-century architecture as in contemporary painting and sculpture. Postmodernism in architecture is also not a unified style. It is a widespread cultural phenomenon that is far more encompassing and accepting than the more rigid confines of modernist practice. In contrast to the simplicity of modernist architecture, the terms most often invoked to describe postmodern architecture are pluralism, complexity, and eclecticism. Whereas the modernist program was reductive, the postmodern vocabulary of the 1970s and 1980s was expansive and inclusive.

Among the first to explore this new direction in architecture were Jane Jacobs (1916–2006) and Robert Venturi (FIG. 36-66). In

their influential books *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs, 1961) and *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (Venturi, 1966), Jacobs and Venturi argued that the uniformity and anonymity of modernist architecture (in particular, the corporate skyscrapers dominating many urban skylines) were unsuited to human social interaction and that diversity was the great advantage of urban life. Postmodern architects accepted, indeed embraced, the messy and chaotic nature of urban life.

When designing these varied buildings, many postmodern architects consciously selected past architectural elements or references and juxtaposed them with contemporary elements or fashioned them of high-tech materials, thereby creating a dialogue between past and present. Postmodern architecture incorporates not only traditional architectural references but references to mass culture and popular imagery as well. This was precisely the "complexity and contradiction" Venturi referred to in the title of his book.

**CHARLES MOORE** A clear example of the eclecticism and the dialogue between traditional and contemporary elements found in postmodern architecture is the Piazza d'Italia (FIG. 36-63) by American architect CHARLES MOORE (1925–1993). Designed in the late 1970s in New Orleans, the Piazza d'Italia is an open plaza dedicated to the city's Italian-American community. Appropriately, Moore selected elements relating specifically to Italian history, dating all the way back to ancient Roman culture.

Backed up against a contemporary high-rise and set off from urban traffic patterns, the Piazza d'Italia can be reached on foot from three sides through gateways of varied design. The approaches lead to an open circular area partially formed by short segments of colonnades arranged in staggered concentric arcs, which direct the eye to the focal point of the composition—an *exedra*. This recessed area on a raised platform serves as a *rostrum* (speaker's platform) during the annual festivities of Saint Joseph's Day. Moore inlaid the piazza's pavement with a map of Italy centered on Sicily, from which the majority of the city's Italian families originated. From there, the map's Italian "boot" moves in the direction of the steps that ascend the rostrum and correspond to the Alps.

#### 36-63 CHARLES MOORE, Piazza d'Italia, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1976–1980.

Moore's circular postmodern Italian plaza incorporates elements drawn from ancient Roman architecture with the instability of Mannerist designs and modern stainless-steel columns with neon collars.



## Philip Johnson on Postmodern Architecture

**P**hilip Johnson, who died in 2005 at age 98, had a distinguished career that spanned almost the entire 20th century, during which he transformed himself from a modernist closely associated with Mies van der Rohe (FIG. 36-60) into one of the leading postmodernists, whose AT&T Building (FIG. 36-64) in New York City remains an early icon of postmodernism. The following remarks illustrate Johnson's thoughts about his early "Miesian" style and about the incorporation of various historical styles in postmodernist buildings.

My eyes are set by the Miesian tradition . . . The continuity with my Miesian approach also shows through in my classicism. . . [But in] 1952, about the same time that my whole generation did, I became very restless. . . In the last decade there has been such a violent switch that it is almost embarrassing. But it isn't a switch, so much as a centrifugal splintering of architecture, to a degree that I don't think has been seen in the past few hundred years. Perfectly responsible architects build, even in one year, buildings that you cannot believe are done by the same person.\*

Structural honesty seems to me one of the bugaboos that we should free ourselves from very quickly. The Greeks with their marble columns imitating wood, and covering up the roofs inside! The Gothic designers with their wooden roofs above to protect their delicate vaulting. And Michelangelo, the greatest architect in history, with his Mannerist column! There is only one absolute today and this is change. There are no rules, surely no certainties in any of the arts. There is only the feeling of a wonderful freedom, of endless possibilities to investigate, of endless past years of historically great buildings to enjoy.†

\* Quoted in Paul Heyer, *Architects on Architecture: New Directions in America* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993), 285–286.

† *Ibid.*, 279.



**36-64 PHILIP JOHNSON and JOHN BURGEE (with SIMMONS ARCHITECTS), AT&T (now Sony) Building, New York, 1978–1984.**

In a startling shift of style, modernist Johnson (FIG. 36-60) designed this postmodernist skyscraper with more granite than glass and with a variation on a classical pediment as the crowning motif.

The piazza's most immediate historical reference is to the Roman forum (FIGS. 10-12 and 10-43). However, its circular form alludes to the ideal geometric figure of the Renaissance (FIG. 22-22). The irregular placement of the concentrically arranged colonnade fragments inserts a note of instability into the design reminiscent of Mannerism (FIG. 22-54). Illusionistic devices, such as the continuation of the piazza's pavement design (apparently through a building and out into the street), are Baroque in character (FIG. 24-4). Moore incorporated all of the classical orders—most with whimsical modifications. Nevertheless, challenging the piazza's historical character are modern features, such as the stainless-steel columns and capitals, neon collars around the column necks, and neon lights that frame various parts of the exedra.

In sum, Moore designed the Piazza d'Italia as a complex conglomeration of symbolic, historical, and geographic allusions—some overt and others obscure. Although the piazza's specific purpose was to honor the Italian community of New Orleans, its more general purpose was to revitalize an urban area by becoming a focal point and an architectural setting for the social activities of neighborhood residents. Unfortunately, the piazza suffered extensive damage during Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

**PHILIP JOHNSON** Even architects instrumental in the proliferation of the modernist idiom embraced postmodernism. Early in his career, PHILIP JOHNSON (1906–2005), for example, had been a leading proponent of modernism and worked with Mies van der Rohe on the design of the Seagram Building (FIG. 36-60). Johnson had even served as the director of the Department of Architecture at New York's Museum of Modern Art, the bastion of modernism, from 1930 to 1934 and from 1946 to 1954. Yet he made one of the most startling shifts of style in 20th-century architecture, eventually moving away from the severe geometric formalism exemplified by the Seagram Building to a classicizing transformation of it in his AT&T (American Telephone and Telegraph) Building (FIG. 36-64)—now the Sony Building—in New York City. Architect JOHN BURGEE (b. 1933) codesigned it with assistance from the firm SIMMONS ARCHITECTS. This structure was influential in turning architectural taste and practice away from modernism and toward postmodernism—from organic "concrete sculpture" and the rigid "glass box" to elaborate shapes, motifs, and silhouettes freely adapted from historical styles (see "Philip Johnson on Postmodernist Architecture," above).

The 660-foot-high slab of the AT&T Building is mostly granite. Johnson reduced the window space to some 30 percent of the building,

in contrast to modernist glass-sheathed skyscrapers. His design of its exterior elevation is classically tripartite, having an arcaded base and arched portal; a tall, shaftlike body segmented by slender *mullions* (vertical elements dividing a window); and a crowning pediment broken by an *orbiculum* (a disklike opening). The arrangement refers to the base, column, and entablature system of classical architecture (FIG. 5-14). More specifically, the pediment, indented by the circular space, resembles the crown of a typical 18th-century Chippendale high chest of drawers. It rises among the monotonously flat-topped glass towers of the New York skyline as an ironic rebuke to the rigid uniformity of modernist architecture.

**MICHAEL GRAVES** Philip Johnson at first endorsed, then disapproved of, a building that rode considerably farther on the wave of postmodernism than did his AT&T tower. The Portland Building (FIG. 36-65) by American architect MICHAEL GRAVES (b. 1934) reasserts the wall's horizontality against the verticality of the tall, fenestrated shaft. Graves favored the square's solidity and stability, making it the main body of his composition (echoed in the windows), which rests upon a wider base and carries a set-back penthouse crown. Narrow vertical windows tying together seven stories open two paired facades. These support capital-like large hoods on one pair of opposite facades and a frieze of stylized Baroque roundels tied by bands on the other pair. A huge painted keystone motif joins five upper levels on one facade pair, and painted surfaces further define the building's base, body, and penthouse levels.

The modernist purist surely would not welcome the ornamental wall, color painting, or symbolic reference. These features, taken together, raised an even greater storm of criticism than that which greeted the Sydney Opera House or the AT&T Building. Various critics denounced Graves's Portland Building as "an enlarged jukebox," an "oversized Christmas package," a "marzipan monstrosity," a "histrionic masquerade," and a kind of "pop surrealism." Yet others approvingly noted its classical references as constituting a "symbolic temple" and praised the building as a courageous architectural adventure. Whatever will be history's verdict, the Portland Building, like the AT&T tower, is an early marker of postmodernist innovation that borrowed from the lively, if more-or-less garish, language of pop culture. The night-lit dazzle of entertainment sites such as Las Vegas, and the carnival colors, costumes, and fantasy of theme park props, all lie behind the Portland Building design, which many critics regard as a vindication of architectural populism against the pretension of modernist elitism.



**36-65** MICHAEL GRAVES, Portland Building, Portland, 1980.

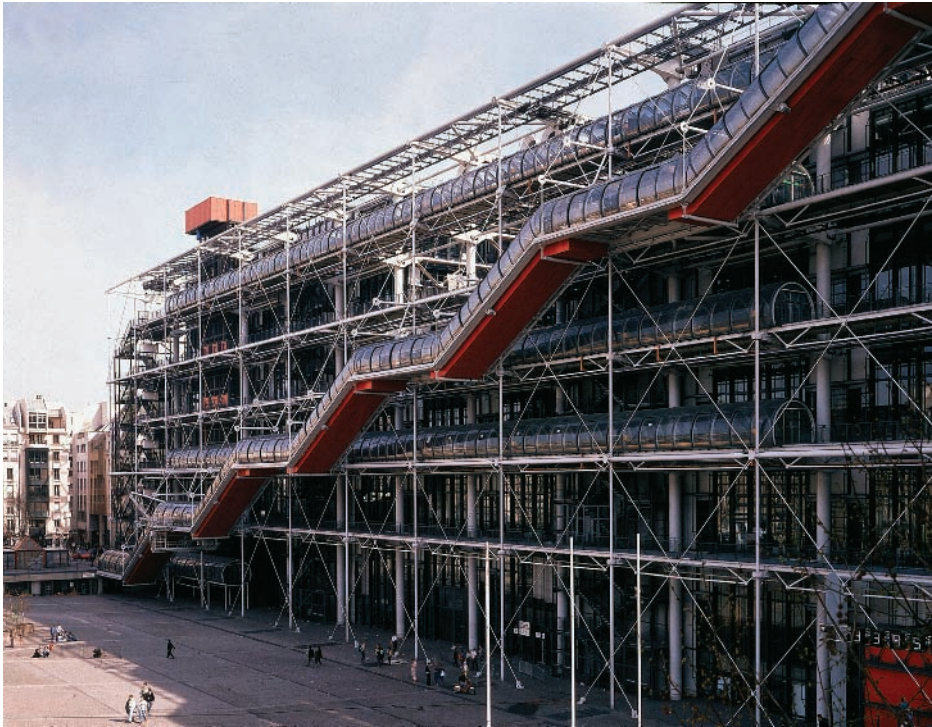
In this early example of postmodern architecture, Graves reasserted the horizontality and solidity of the wall. He drew attention to the mural surfaces through polychromy and ornamental motifs.

**ROBERT VENTURI** As a coauthor of *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972), ROBERT VENTURI (b. 1925) codified these ideas about populism and postmodernism, and in his designs for houses he adapted historical as well as contemporary styles to suit his symbolic and expressive purpose. A fundamental axiom of modernism is that a building's form must arise directly and logically from its function and structure. Against this rule, Venturi asserted that the form should be separate from function and structure and that decorative and symbolic forms of everyday life should enwrap the structural core. Thus, for a Delaware residence (FIG. 36-66) designed in 1978 with JOHN RAUCH (b. 1930) and DENISE SCOTT BROWN (b. 1931), Venturi respected the countryside setting and its 18th-century history by recalling the stone-based barnlike, low-profile farm dwellings with their shingled roofs and double-hung multipaned windows. He fronted the house with an amusingly cut-out and asymmetrical parody of a Neoclassical portico.

**36-66** ROBERT VENTURI, JOHN RAUCH, and DENISE SCOTT BROWN, house in eastern Delaware, 1978–1983.

Venturi asserted that form should be separate from function and structure. This rural home has the low profile of a farmhouse, but its facade is an asymmetrical parody of a Neoclassical portico.





**ROGERS AND PIANO** During their short-lived partnership, British architect RICHARD ROGERS (b. 1933) and Italian architect RENZO PIANO (b. 1937) used motifs and techniques from ordinary industrial buildings in their design for the Georges Pompidou National Center of Art and Culture in Paris, known popularly as the “Beaubourg” (FIG. 36-67). The architects fully exposed the anatomy of this six-level building, which is a kind of updated version of the Crystal Palace (FIG. 30-48), and made its “metabolism” visible. They color-coded pipes, ducts, tubes, and corridors according to function (red for the movement of people, green for water, blue for air-conditioning, and yellow for electricity), much as in a sophisticated factory.

Critics who deplore the Beaubourg’s vernacular qualities disparagingly refer to the complex as a “cultural supermarket” and point out that its exposed entrails require excessive maintenance to protect them from the elements. Nevertheless, the building has been popular



**36-67** RICHARD ROGERS and RENZO PIANO, Georges Pompidou National Center of Art and Culture (the “Beaubourg”), Paris, France, 1977.

The architects fully exposed the anatomy of this six-level building, as in the century-earlier Crystal Palace (FIG. 30-48), and color-coded the internal parts according to function, as in a factory.

with visitors since it opened. The flexible interior spaces and the colorful structural body provide a festive environment for the crowds flowing through the building and enjoying its art galleries, industrial design center, library, science and music centers, conference rooms, research and archival facilities, movie theaters, rest areas, and restaurant (which looks down and through the building to the terraces outside). The sloping plaza in front of the main entrance has become part of the local scene. Peddlers, street performers, Parisians, and tourists fill this square at almost all hours of the day and night. The kind of secular

activity that once occurred in the open spaces in front of cathedral entrances now takes place next to a center for culture and popular entertainment.

## Deconstructivism

In architecture, as in painting and sculpture, deconstruction as an analytical and design strategy emerged in the 1970s. Architectural *Deconstructivism* seeks to disorient the observer. To this end, Deconstructivist architects attempt to disrupt the conventional categories of architecture and to rupture the viewer’s expectations based on them. Destabilization plays a major role in Deconstructivist architecture. Disorder, dissonance, imbalance, asymmetry, unconformity, and irregularity replace their opposites—order, consistency, balance, symmetry, regularity, and clarity, as well as harmony, continuity, and completeness. The haphazardly presented volumes, masses, planes, borders, lighting, locations, directions, spatial relations, as well as the disguised structural facts, challenge the viewer’s assumptions about architectural form as it relates to function. According to Deconstructivist principles, the very absence of the stability of traditional categories of architecture in a structure announces a “deconstructed” building.

**GÜNTER BEHNISCH** Audacious in its dissolution of form, and well along on the path of deconstruction, is the Hysolar Institute (FIG. 36-68) at the University of Stuttgart, Germany. GÜNTER BEHNISCH (b. 1922)

**36-68** GÜNTER BEHNISCH, Hysolar Institute, University of Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany, 1987.

The roof, walls, and windows of this Deconstructivist structure seem to explode, avoiding any suggestion of clear, stable masses and frustrating the observer’s expectations of what a building should look like.

## Frank Gehry on Architectural Design and Materials

Frank Gehry has been designing buildings since the 1950s, but it was only in the 1970s that he began to break away from the rectilinearity of modernist architecture and develop the dramatic sculptural style seen in buildings like the Guggenheim Museum (FIGS. 36-69 and 36-70) in Bilbao. In 1999 the Deconstructivist architect reflected on his career and his many projects in a book titled *Gehry Talks*.

My early work was rectilinear because you take baby steps. I guess the work has become a kind of sculpture as architecture. . . . I'm a strict modernist in the sense of believing in purity, that you shouldn't decorate. And yet buildings need decoration, because they need scaling elements. They need to be human scale, in my opinion. They can't just be faceless things. That's how some modernism failed.\*

They teach materials and methods in architecture school, as a separate course. I'm a craftsman. . . . It seems to me that when you're doing architecture, you're building something out of something. There are social issues, there's context, and then there's how do you make the enclosure and what do you make it with? . . . I explored metal: how it dealt with the light . . . . It does beautiful things with light. . . . Flat was a fetish, and everybody was doing that. I found out that I could use metal if I didn't worry about it being flat; I could do it cheaper. It was intuitive. I just went with it. I liked it. Then when I



**36-69** FRANK GEHRY, Guggenheim Bilbao Museo, Bilbao, Spain, 1997.

Gehry's limestone-and-titanium Bilbao museum is an immensely dramatic building. Its disorder and seeming randomness of design epitomize Deconstructivist architectural principles.

saw it on the building, I loved it. . . . Bilbao . . . [is] titanium. . . . [I] prefer titanium because it's stronger; it's an element, a pure element, and it doesn't oxidize. It stays the same forever. They give a hundred-year guarantee!†

\* Milton Friedman, ed., *Gehry Talks: Architecture + Process*, rev. ed. (New York: Universe, 2002), 47–48.

† *Ibid.*, 44, 47.

designed it as part of a joint German–Saudi Arabian research project on the technology of solar energy. The architect intended to deny here the possibility of spatial enclosure altogether, and his apparently chaotic arrangement of the units defies easy analysis. The shapes of the Hysolar Institute's roof, walls, and windows seem to explode, avoiding any suggestion of clear, stable masses. Behnisch aggressively played with the whole concept of architecture and the viewer's relationship to it. The disordered architectural elements seem precarious and visually threaten to collapse, frustrating the observer's expectations of what a building should look like.

**FRANK GEHRY** The architect most closely identified with Deconstructivist architecture is the Canadian-born FRANK GEHRY (b. 1929). Trained in sculpture, and at different times a collaborator

with Donald Judd (FIG. 36-16) and Claes Oldenburg (FIG. 36-26), Gehry works up his designs by constructing models and then cutting them up and arranging them until he has a satisfying composition. Among Gehry's most notable projects is the Guggenheim Museum (FIG. 36-69) in Bilbao, Spain. The immensely dramatic building appears as a mass of asymmetrical and imbalanced forms, and the irregularity of the main masses—whose profiles change dramatically with every shift of a visitor's position—suggests a collapsed or collapsing aggregate of units. The scaled limestone- and titanium-clad exterior lends a space-age character to the building and highlights further the unique cluster effect of the many forms (see “Frank Gehry on Architectural Design and Materials,” above). A group of organic forms that Gehry refers to as a “metallic flower” tops the museum. In the center of the museum, an enormous glass-walled



**36-70** FRANK GEHRY, atrium of Guggenheim Bilbao Museo, Bilbao, Spain, 1997.

The glass-walled atrium of the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum soars to 165 feet in height. The asymmetrical and imbalanced screens and vaults flow into one another, creating a sense of disequilibrium.

atrium (FIG. 36-70) soars to 165 feet in height, serving as the focal point for the three levels of galleries radiating from it. The seemingly weightless screens, vaults, and volumes of the interior float and flow into one another, guided only by light and dark cues. Overall, the Guggenheim in Bilbao is a profoundly compelling structure. Its disorder, its seeming randomness of design, and the disequilibrium it prompts in viewers epitomize Deconstructivist principles.

**DANIEL LIBESKIND** Deconstructivist architecture remains very much in vogue today. One of the leading practitioners is Polish-born DANIEL LIBESKIND (b. 1946), whose studio is in Berlin, Germany, but who has, like other successful contemporary architects, erected buildings in several countries, including the United States. Libeskind achieved instant international fame with his design for the reconstructed World Trade Center complex in New York City. More recently, his 146,000-square-foot expansion of the Denver Art Museum (FIG. 36-71) created a sensation when it opened to the public in October 2006. Libeskind has stated that he drew his inspiration for the design from the jagged peaks of Colorado's Rocky Mountains, and the stone-and-titanium structure, despite its kinship with Gehry's Bilbao museum (FIG. 36-69), presents a striking contrast with that building's swelling curves. Tilted walls, asymmetrical shapes, and surprising sequences of spaces engender a sense of disorientation in visitors to the galleries, which, appropriately, house the museum's collection of modern and contemporary art.



**36-71** DANIEL LIBESKIND, Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado, 2006.

Inspired by the jagged peaks of the Rocky Mountains, Libeskind's expansion of the Denver Art Museum features tilted walls, asymmetrical shapes, and a disorienting sequence of spaces.

## Environmental and Site-Specific Art

Like Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial (FIG. 36-62), works of *Environmental Art*, sometimes called *earthworks*, exist at the intersection of architecture and sculpture. The Environmental Art movement emerged in the 1960s and included a wide range of artworks, most *site-specific* (created for only one location) and existing outdoors. Many artists associated with these sculptural projects also used natural or organic materials, including the land itself. It is no coincidence that this art form developed during a period of increased concern for the American environment. The ecology movement of the 1960s and 1970s aimed to publicize and combat escalating pollution, depletion of natural resources, and the dangers of toxic waste. The problems of public aesthetics (for example, litter, urban sprawl, and compromised scenic areas) were also at issue. Widespread concern about the environment led to the passage of the U.S. National Environmental Policy Act in 1969 and the creation of the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Environmental artists used their art to call attention to the landscape and, in so doing, were part of this national dialogue.

As an innovative art form that challenged traditional assumptions about art making and artistic models, Environmental Art clearly had an avant-garde, progressive dimension. But like Pop artists, Environmental artists insisted on moving art out of the rar-

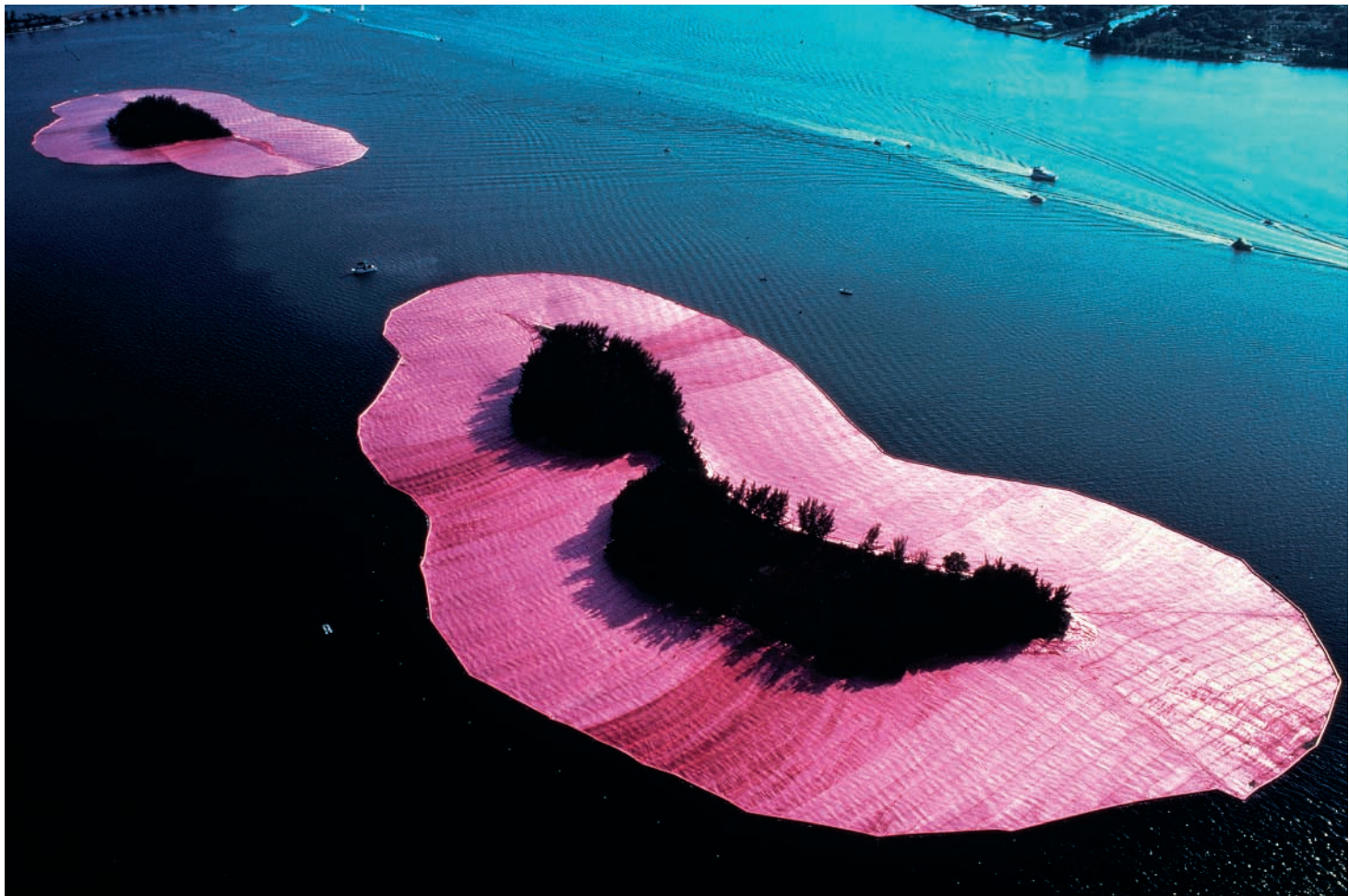
efied atmosphere of museums and galleries and into the public sphere. Most encouraged spectator interaction with their works. Ironically, the remote locations of many earthworks have limited public access.

**ROBERT SMITHSON** A leading American Environmental artist was ROBERT SMITHSON (1938–1973), who used industrial construction equipment to manipulate vast quantities of earth and rock on isolated sites. One of Smithson's best-known projects is *Spiral Jetty* (FIG. 36-72), a mammoth 1,500-foot-long coil of black basalt, limestone rocks, and earth that extends out into the Great Salt Lake in Utah. As he was driving by the lake one day, Smithson came across some abandoned mining equipment, left there by a company that had tried and failed to extract oil from the site. Smithson saw this as a testament to the enduring power of nature and to humankind's inability to conquer it. He decided to create an artwork in the lake that ultimately became a monumental spiral curving out from the shoreline and running 1,500 linear feet into the water. Smithson insisted on designing his work in response to the location itself. He wanted to avoid the arrogance of an artist merely imposing an unrelated concept on the site. The spiral idea grew from Smithson's first impression of the location. Then, while researching the Great Salt Lake, Smithson discovered that the molecular structure of the salt crystals coating the rocks at the water's edge was spiral in form.



**36-72** ROBERT SMITHSON, *Spiral Jetty*, Great Salt Lake, Utah, 1970. Art © Estate of Robert Smithson/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Smithson used industrial equipment to create Environmental artworks by manipulating earth and rock. *Spiral Jetty* is a mammoth coil of black basalt, limestone, and earth extending into the Great Salt Lake.



**36-73** CHRISTO and JEANNE-CLAUDE, *Surrounded Islands 1980–83*, Biscayne Bay, Miami, Florida, 1980–1983.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude created this Environmental artwork by surrounding 11 small islands with 6.5 million square feet of pink fabric. Characteristically, the work existed for only two weeks.

As I looked at the site, it reverberated out to the horizons only to suggest an immobile cyclone while flickering light made the entire landscape appear to quake. A dormant earthquake spread into the fluttering stillness, into a spinning sensation without movement. The site was a rotary that enclosed itself in an immense roundness. From that gyrating space emerged the possibility of the Spiral Jetty.<sup>34</sup>

Smithson not only recorded *Spiral Jetty* in photographs but also filmed its construction in a movie that describes the forms and life of the whole site. The photographs and film have become increasingly important references, because fluctuations in the Great Salt Lake's water level often place *Spiral Jetty* underwater.

**CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE** Like Smithson, CHRISTO and JEANNE-CLAUDE (both b. 1935) seek to intensify the viewer's awareness of the space and features of rural and urban sites. However, rather than physically alter the land itself, as Smithson often did, Christo and Jeanne-Claude prompt this awareness by temporarily modifying the landscape with cloth. Christo studied art in his native Bulgaria and in Vienna. After a move to Paris, he began to encase objects in clumsy wrappings, thereby appropriating bits of the real world into the mysterious world of the unopened package whose contents can be dimly seen in silhouette under the wrap.

Starting in 1961, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, husband and wife, began to collaborate on large-scale projects that normally deal with the environment itself. For example, in 1969 the couple wrapped a million square feet of Australian coast and in 1972 hung a vast curtain across a valley at Rifle Gap, Colorado. Their works of art require years of preparation and research and scores of meetings with local authorities and interested groups of local citizens. These temporary works are usually on view for only a few weeks.

*Surrounded Islands 1980–83* (FIG. 36-73), created in Biscayne Bay in Miami, Florida, for two weeks in May 1983, typifies Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work. For this project, they surrounded 11 small human-made islands in the bay (from a dredging project) with 6.5 million square feet of specially fabricated pink polypropylene floating fabric. This Environmental artwork required three years of preparation to obtain the necessary permits and to assemble the labor force and obtain the \$3.2 million needed to complete the project. The artists raised the money by selling preparatory drawings, collages, models, and works they created in the 1950s and 1960s. Huge crowds watched as crews removed accumulated trash from the 11 islands (to assure maximum contrast between their dark colors, the pink of the cloth, and the blue of the bay) and then unfurled the fabric "cocoon" to form magical floating "skirts" around each tiny bit of land. Despite the brevity of its existence, *Surrounded Islands 1980–83* lives on in the host of photographs, films, and books documenting the project.



## Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*

When Richard Serra installed *Tilted Arc* (FIG. 36-74) in the plaza in front of the Javits Federal Building in New York City in 1981, much of the public immediately responded with hostile criticism. Prompting the chorus of complaints was the uncompromising presence of a Minimalist sculpture bisecting the plaza. Many argued that *Tilted Arc* was ugly, that it attracted graffiti, that it interfered with the view across the plaza, and that it prevented using the plaza for performances or concerts. Due to the sustained barrage of protests and petitions demanding the removal of *Tilted Arc*, the GSA held a series of public hearings. Afterward, the agency decided to remove the sculpture despite its prior approval of Serra's maquette. This, understandably, infuriated Serra, who had a legally binding contract acknowledging the site-specific nature of *Tilted Arc*. "To remove the work is to destroy the work," the artist stated.\*

This episode raised intriguing issues about the nature of public art, including the public reception of experimental art, the artist's responsibilities and rights when executing public commissions, censorship in the arts, and the purpose of public art. If an artwork is on display in a public space outside the relatively private confines of a museum or gallery, do different guidelines apply? As one participant in the *Tilted Arc* saga asked, "Should an artist have the right to impose his values and taste on a public that now rejects his taste and values?"† One of the express functions of the historical avant-garde was to challenge convention by rejecting tradition and disrupting the complacency of the viewer. Will placing experimental art in a public place always cause controversy? From Serra's statements, it is clear he intended the sculpture to challenge the public.

Another issue *Tilted Arc* presented involved the rights of the artist, who in this case accused the GSA of censorship. Serra filed a lawsuit against the government for infringement of his First Amendment rights and insisted that "the artist's work must be uncensored, respected, and tolerated, although deemed abhorrent, or perceived as



**36-74** RICHARD SERRA, *Tilted Arc*, Jacob K. Javits Federal Plaza, New York City, 1981.

Serra intended his Minimalist *Tilted Arc* to alter the character of an existing public space. He succeeded but unleashed a storm of protest that caused the government to remove the work.

challenging, or experienced as threatening.”‡ Did removal of the work constitute censorship? A federal district court held that it did not.

Ultimately, who should decide what artworks are appropriate for the public arena? One artist argued, “we cannot have public art by plebiscite [popular vote].”§ But to avoid recurrences of the *Tilted Arc* controversy, the GSA changed its procedures and now solicits input from a wide range of civic and neighborhood groups before commissioning public artworks. Despite the removal of *Tilted Arc* (now languishing in storage), the sculpture maintains a powerful presence in all discussions of the aesthetics, politics, and dynamics of public art.

\* Grace Glueck, “What Part Should the Public Play in Choosing Public Art?” *New York Times*, February 3, 1985, 27.

† Calvin Tomkins, “The Art World: *Tilted Arc*,” *New Yorker*, May 20, 1985, 98.

‡ *Ibid.*, 98–99.

§ *Ibid.*, 98.

**RICHARD SERRA** Other artists have created site-specific works that are not set in nature but in the built environment. Their purpose is to focus attention on art's role in public spaces. One work that sparked national discussion about public art was *Tilted Arc* (FIG. 36-74) by American artist RICHARD SERRA (b. 1939). The General Services Administration (GSA), the federal agency responsible for, among other tasks, overseeing the selection and installation of artworks for government buildings, commissioned *Tilted Arc*. This enormous 120-foot-long, 12-foot-high curved wall of Cor-Ten steel bisected the plaza in front of the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building in

lower Manhattan. Serra situated the sculpture in a way that significantly altered the space of the open plaza and the traffic flow across the square. He intended *Tilted Arc* to “dislocate or alter the decorative function of the plaza and actively bring people into the sculpture's context.”<sup>35</sup>

By creating such a monumental presence in this large public space, Serra succeeded in forcing viewers to reconsider the plaza's physical space as a sculptural form—but only temporarily, because the public forced the sculpture to be removed (see “Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*,” above).

## PERFORMANCE AND CONCEPTUAL ART AND NEW MEDIA

Among the most significant developments in the art world after World War II has been the expansion of the range of works considered “art.” Some of the new types of artworks are the result of the invention of new media, such as computers and video cameras. But the new art forms also reflect avant-garde artists’ continued questioning of the status quo. For example, in keeping with the modernist critique of artistic principles, some artists, in a spirit reminiscent of Dada and Surrealism (see Chapter 35), developed the fourth dimension—time—as an integral element of their artwork. The term that art historians use to describe these temporal works is *Performance Art*.

### Performance Art

Performance artists replace traditional stationary artworks with movements, gestures, and sounds carried out before an audience, whose members may or may not participate in the performance. Generally, documentary photographs taken contemporaneously are the only evidence remaining after these performances. The informal and spontaneous events Performance artists initially staged anticipated the rebellion and youthful exuberance of the 1960s and at first pushed art outside the confines of mainstream art institutions (museums and galleries). Performance Art also served as an antidote to the affectation of most traditional art objects and challenged art’s function as a commodity. In the later 1960s, however, museums commissioned performances with increasing frequency, thereby neutralizing much of the subversiveness that characterized this new art form.

**JOHN CAGE** Many of the artists instrumental in the development of Performance Art were students or associates of the charismatic American teacher and composer John Cage (1912–1992). Cage encouraged his students at both the New School for Social Research in New York and Black Mountain College in North Carolina to link their art directly with life. He brought to music composition some of the ideas of Duchamp and of Eastern philosophy. Cage used methods such as chance to avoid the closed structures marking traditional music and, in his view, separating it from the unpredictable and multilayered qualities of daily existence. For example, the score for one of Cage’s piano compositions instructs the performer to appear, sit down at the piano, raise the keyboard cover to mark the beginning of the piece, remain motionless at the instrument for 4 minutes and 33 seconds, and then close the keyboard cover, rise, and bow to signal the end of the work. The “music” would be the unplanned sounds and noises (such as coughs and whispers) emanating from the audience during the “performance.”

**ALLAN KAPROW** One of Cage’s students in the 1950s was Allan Kaprow (b. 1927). Schooled in art history as well as music composition, Kaprow sought to explore the intersection of art and life. He believed, for example, that Jackson Pollock’s actions when producing a painting (FIG. 36-6) were more important than the finished painting. This led Kaprow to develop a type of event known as a *Happening*. He described a Happening as

an assemblage of events performed or perceived in more than one time and place. Its material environments may be constructed, taken over directly from what is available, or altered slightly: just as its activities may be invented or commonplace. A Happening, unlike a stage play, may occur at a supermarket, driving along a highway, under a pile of rags, and in a friend’s kitchen, either at once or sequentially. If sequentially, time may extend to more than a year.

The Happening is performed according to plan but without rehearsal, audience, or repetition. It is art but seems closer to life.<sup>36</sup>

Happenings were often participatory. One Happening consisted of a constructed setting with partitions on which viewers wrote phrases, while another involved spectators walking on a pile of tires. One of Kaprow’s first Happenings, titled *18 Happenings in Six Parts*, took place in 1959 at the Reuben Gallery in New York City. For the event, he divided the gallery space into three sections with translucent plastic sheets. Over the course of the 90-minute piece, performers, including Kaprow’s artist friends, bounced balls, read from placards, extended their arms like wings, and played records as slides and lights flashed on and off in programmed sequences.

**FLUXUS** Other Cage students interested in the composer’s search to find aesthetic potential in the nontraditional and commonplace formed the *Fluxus* group. Eventually expanding to include European and Japanese artists, this group’s performances were more theatrical than Happenings. To distinguish their performances from Happenings, the artists associated with Fluxus coined the term *Events* to describe their work. Events focused on single actions, such as turning a light on and off or watching falling snow—what Fluxus artist La Monte Young (b. 1935) called “the theater of the single event.”<sup>37</sup> The Events usually took place on a stage separating the performers from the audience but without costumes or added decor. Events were not spontaneous. They followed a compositional “score,” which, given the restricted nature of these performances, was short.

**KAZUO SHIRAGA** Some artists produced works that involved both painting and performance. Gutai Bijutsu Kyokai (Concrete Art Association), a group of 18 Japanese artists in Osaka, expanded the action of painting into the realm of performance—in a sense, taking Jackson Pollock’s painting methods into a public arena. Led by Jiro Yoshihara (1905–1972), Gutai, founded in 1954, devoted itself to art that combined Japanese traditional practices such as Zen (see “Zen Buddhism,” Chapter 28, page 736) with a renewed appreciation for materials. In the *Gutai Art Manifesto*, Yoshihara explained: “Gutai does not alter the material. Gutai imparts life to the material. . . . [T]he human spirit and the material shake hands with each other, but keep their distance.”<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, Gutai works, for example, *Making a Work with His Own Body* (FIG. 36-75), by KAZUO SHIRAGA



**36-75** KAZUO SHIRAGA, *Making a Work with His Own Body*, 1955. Mud.

The Performance artists of the Japanese Gutai Bijutsu Kyokai (Concrete Art Association) expanded action painting into the realm of performance. Shiraga used his body to “paint” with mud.

### Carolee Schneemann on Painting, Performance Art, and Art History

Carolee Schneemann (FIG. 36-76), one of the pioneering Performance artists of the 1960s, also produced works in other media. In notes she wrote in 1962–1963, Schneemann contrasted her Performance works with more traditional art forms.

Environments, happenings—concretions—are an extension of my painting-constructions which often have moving (motorized) sections. . . . [But, the] steady exploration and repeated viewing which the eye is required to make with my painting-constructions is reversed in the performance situation where the spectator is overwhelmed with changing recognitions, carried emotionally by a flux of evocative actions and led or held by the specified time sequence which marks the duration of a performance. In this way the audience is actually *visually* more *passive* than when confronting a . . . “still” work . . . . With paintings, constructions and sculptures the viewers are able to carry out repeated examinations of the work, to select and vary viewing positions (to walk with the eye), to touch surfaces and to freely indulge responses to areas of color and texture at their chosen speed.\*

Readers of this book will also take special interest in Schneemann’s 1975 essay entitled “Woman in the Year 2000,” in which she envisioned what introductory art history courses would be like at the beginning of the 21st century:

By the year 2000 [every] young woman will study Art Istory [sic] courses enriched by the inclusion, discovery, and re-evaluation of works by women artists: works (and lives) until recently buried away, willfully destroyed, [or] ignored.†

A comparison between this 13th edition of *Art through the Ages* and editions published in the 1960s and 1970s will immediately reveal the accuracy of Schneemann’s prediction.

\* Quoted in Bruce McPherson, ed., *More Than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Works and Selected Writings* (New Paltz, N.Y.: Documentext, 1979), 10–11.

† *Ibid.*, 198.



**36-76** CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN, *Meat Joy*, 1964. Performance at Judson Church, New York City.

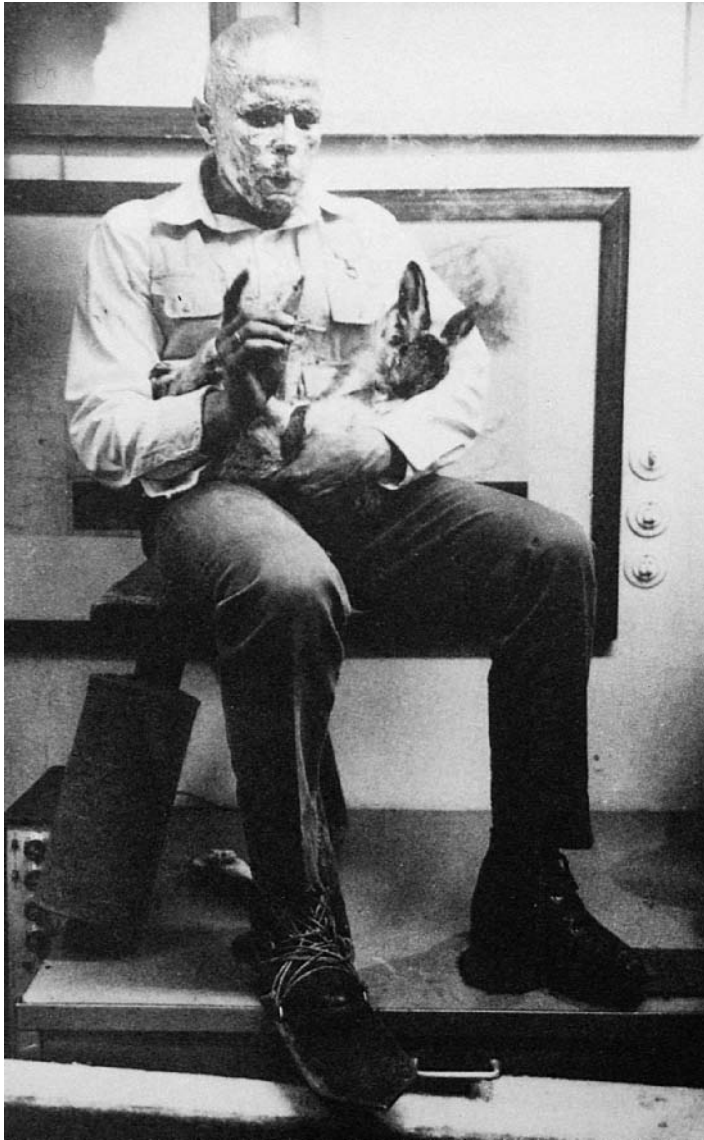
In her performances, Schneemann transformed the nature of Performance art by introducing a feminist dimension through the use of her body (often nude) to challenge traditional gender roles.

(b. 1924), involved such actions as throwing paint balls at blank canvases or wallowing in mud as a means of shaping it. In *Making a Work*, Shiraga used his body to “paint” with mud. The Gutai group dissolved upon Yoshihara’s death in 1972.

**CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN** Like Gutai, CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN (b. 1939) integrated painting and performance in her artworks (see “Carolee Schneemann on Painting, Performance Art, and Art History,” above). Her self-described “kinetic theater” radically transformed the nature of Performance Art by introducing a feminist dimension through the use of her body (often nude) to challenge “the psychic territorial power lines by which women were admitted to the Art Stud Club.”<sup>39</sup> In her 1964 performance *Meat Joy* (FIG. 36-76), Schneemann reveled in the taste, smell, and feel of raw sausages, chickens, and fish.

**JOSEPH BEUYS** The leftist politics of the Fluxus group in the early 1960s strongly influenced German artist JOSEPH BEUYS (1921–1986). Drawing on Happenings and Fluxus, Beuys created actions aimed at illuminating the condition of modern humanity. He wanted to make a new kind of sculptural object that would include “Thinking Forms: how we mould our thoughts or Spoken Forms: how we shape our thoughts into words or Social Sculpture: how we mould and shape the world in which we live.”<sup>40</sup>

Beuys’s commitment to artworks stimulating thought about art and life derived in part from his experiences as a pilot during World War II. After the enemy shot down his plane over the Crimea, nomadic Tatars nursed him back to health by swaddling his body in fat and felt to warm him. Fat and felt thus symbolized healing and regeneration to Beuys, and he incorporated these materials into many of his sculptures and actions, such as *How to Explain Pictures to a*



**36-77** JOSEPH BEUYS, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, 1965. Performance at the Schmela Gallery, Düsseldorf.

In this one-person event, Beuys coated his head with honey and gold leaf. Assuming the role of a shaman, he used stylized actions to evoke a sense of mystery and sacred ritual.

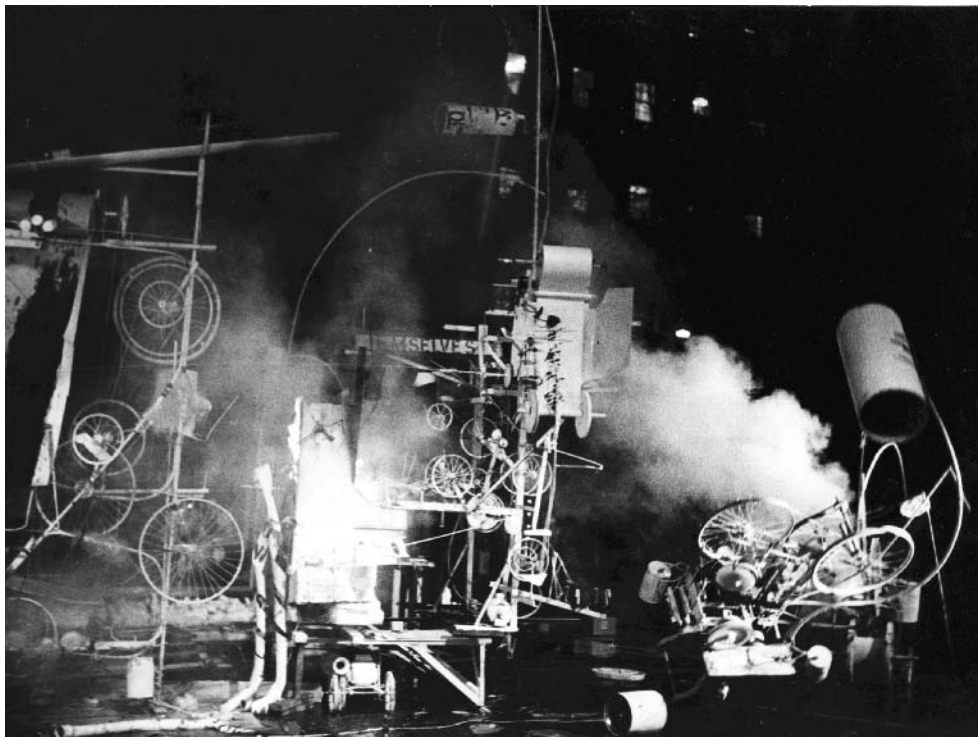
*Dead Hare* (FIG. 36-77). This one-person event consisted of stylized actions evoking a sense of mystery and sacred ritual. Beuys appeared in a room hung with his drawings, cradling a dead hare to which he spoke softly. Beuys coated his head with honey covered with gold leaf, creating a shimmering mask. In this manner, he took on the role of the shaman, an individual with special spiritual powers. As a shaman, Beuys believed he was acting to help revolutionize human thought so that each human being could become a truly free and creative person.

**JEAN TINGUELY** The paradoxical notion of destruction as an act of creation surfaces in a number of kinetic artworks, most notably in the sculpture of JEAN TINGUELY (1925–1991). Trained as a painter in his native Switzerland, Tinguely gravitated to motion sculpture. In the 1950s, he made a series of *metamatics*, motor-driven devices that produced instant abstract paintings. He programmed these metamatics electronically to act with an antimechanical unpredictability when viewers inserted felt-tipped marking pens into a pincer and pressed a button to initiate the pen's motion across a small sheet of paper clipped to an "easel." Viewers could use different-colored markers in succession and could stop and start the device to achieve some degree of control over the final image. These operations created a series of small works resembling Abstract Expressionist paintings.

In 1960, Tinguely expanded the scale of his work with a kinetic piece designed to "perform" and then destroy itself in the sculpture garden of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. He created *Homage to New York* (FIG. 36-78) with the aid of engineer Billy Klüver (1927–2004), who helped him scrounge wheels and other moving objects from a dump near Manhattan. The completed structure,

painted white for visibility against the dark night sky, included a player piano modified into a metamatic painting machine, a weather balloon that inflated during the performance, vials of colored smoke, and a host of gears, pulleys, wheels, and other found machine parts.

This work premiered (and instantly self-destructed) on March 17, 1960, with New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, an array of distinguished guests, and three television crews in attendance. Once



**36-78** JEAN TINGUELY, *Homage to New York*, 1960, just prior to its self-destruction in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Tinguely produced motor-driven devices programmed to make instant abstract paintings. To explore the notion of destruction as an act of creation, he designed this one to perform and then destroy itself.

Tinguely turned on the machine, smoke poured from its interior and the piano caught fire. Various parts of the machine broke off and rambled away, while one of the metamatics tried but failed to produce an abstract painting. Finally, Tinguely summoned a firefighter to extinguish the blaze and ensure the demise of *Homage to New York* with his ax. Like the artist's other kinetic sculptures, *Homage to New York* recalls the satiric Dadaist spirit and the droll import of Klee's *Twittering Machine* (FIG. 35-53). But Tinguely deliberately made the wacky behavior of *Homage to New York* more playful and more endearing. Having been given a freedom of eccentric behavior unprecedented in the mechanical world, Tinguely's creations often seemed to behave with the whimsical individuality of human actors.

### Conceptual Art

The relentless challenges to artistic convention fundamental to the historical avant-garde reached a logical conclusion with *Conceptual Art* in the late 1960s. Conceptual artists asserted that the "artfulness" of art lay in the artist's idea rather than in its final expression. These artists regarded the idea, or concept, as the defining component of the artwork. Indeed, some Conceptual artists eliminated the object altogether.

**JOSEPH KOSUTH** American artist JOSEPH KOSUTH (b. 1945) was a major proponent of Conceptual Art.

Like everyone else I inherited the idea of art as a set of *formal* problems. So when I began to re-think my ideas of art, I had to re-think that thinking process . . . [T]he radical shift was in changing the idea of art itself. . . . It meant you could have an art work which was that *idea* of an art work, and its formal components weren't important. I felt I had found a way to make art without formal components being confused for an expressionist composition. The expression was in the idea, not the form—the forms were only a device in the service of the idea.<sup>41</sup>

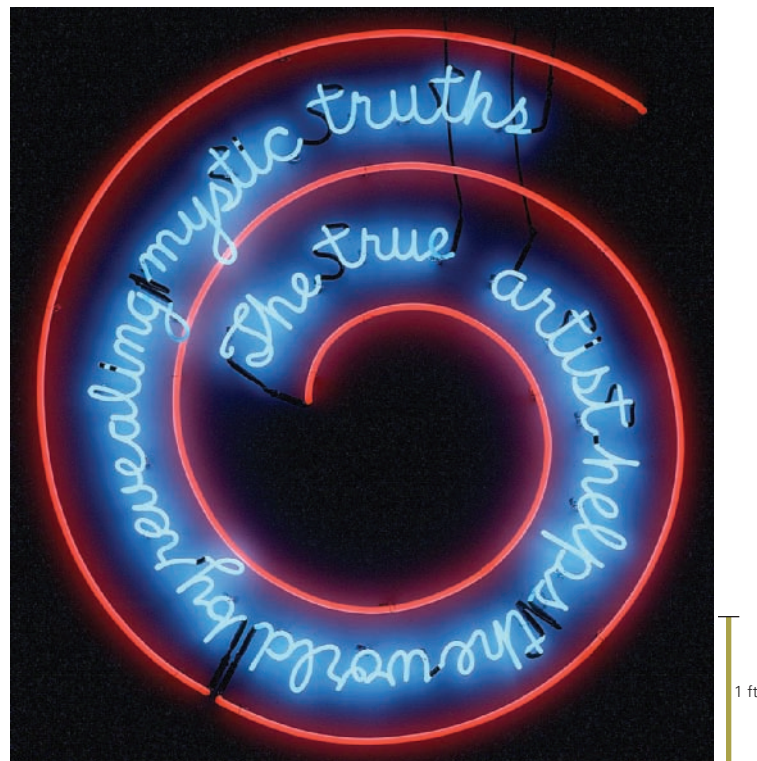


**36-79** JOSEPH KOSUTH, *One and Three Chairs*, 1965. Wooden folding chair, photographic copy of a chair, and photographic enlargement of a dictionary definition of a chair; chair, 2' 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ "  $\times$  1' 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ "  $\times$  1' 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ "; photo panel, 3'  $\times$  2'  $\frac{1}{8}$ "; text panel, 2'  $\times$  2'  $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Museum of Modern Art, New York (Larry Aldrich Foundation Fund).

Conceptual artists regard the concept as an artwork's defining component. To portray "chairness," Kosuth juxtaposed a chair, a photograph of the chair, and a dictionary definition of "chair."

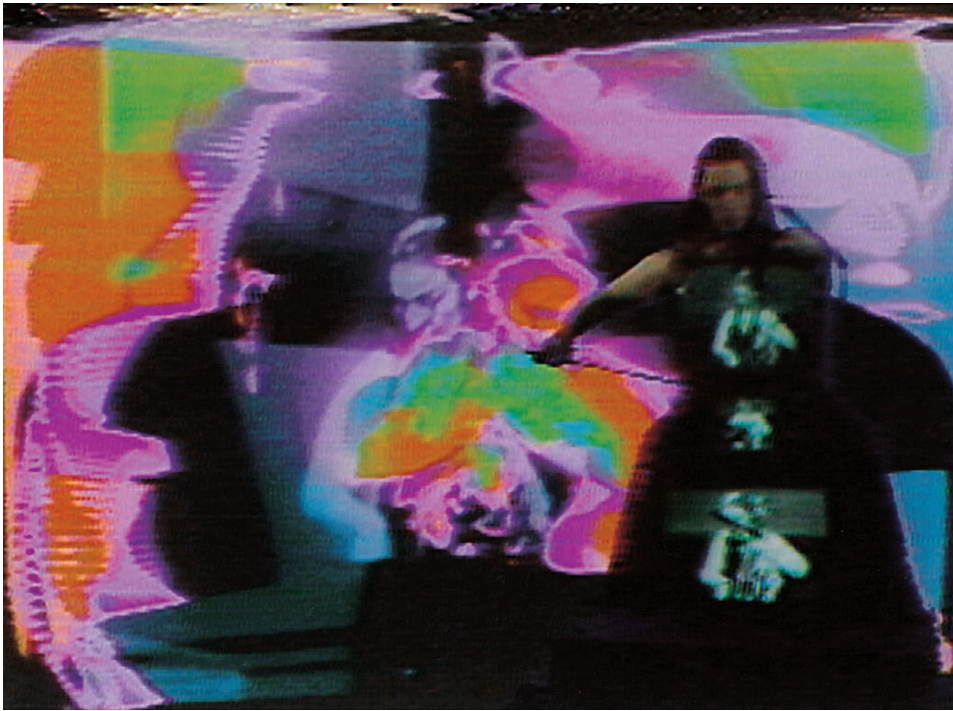
Kosuth's work operates at the intersection of language and vision, dealing with the relationship between the abstract and the concrete. For example, in *One and Three Chairs* (FIG. 36-79), Kosuth juxtaposed a real chair, a full-scale photograph of the chair, and an enlarged reproduction of a dictionary definition of the word "chair." By so doing, the Conceptual artist asked the viewer to ponder the notion of what constitutes "chairness."

**BRUCE NAUMAN** In the mid-1960s, BRUCE NAUMAN (b. 1941) made his artistic presence known when he abandoned painting and turned to object-making. Since then, his work has been amazingly varied. In addition to sculptural pieces constructed from different materials, including rubber, fiberglass, and cardboard, he has also produced photographs, films, videos, books, and large room installations, as well as Performance Art. Nauman's work of the 1960s intersected with that of the Conceptual artists, especially in terms of the philosophical exploration that was the foundation of much of his art, and in his interest in language and wordplay. *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths* (FIG. 36-80) was the first of Nauman's many neon sculptures. He selected neon because he wanted to find a medium that would be identified with a non-artistic function. Determined to discover a way to connect objects with words, he used the method outlined in *Philosophical Investigations*, in which the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) encouraged contradictory and nonsensical arguments. Nauman's neon sculpture spins out an emphatic assertion, but as Nauman explained, "It was kind of a test—like when you say something out loud to see if you believe it. . . . [I]t was on the one hand a totally silly idea and yet, on the other hand, I believed it."<sup>42</sup>



**36-80** BRUCE NAUMAN, *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths*, 1967. Neon with glass tubing suspension frame, 4' 11"  $\times$  4' 7"  $\times$  2". Private collection.

Nauman, like other Conceptual artists, explores his interest in language and wordplay in his art. He described this neon sculpture's emphatic assertion as "a totally silly idea," but one that he believed.



**36-81** NAM JUNE PAIK, Video still from *Global Groove*, 1973. Color videotape, sound, 30 minutes. Collection of the artist.

Korean-born video artist Paik's best-known work is a cascade of fragmented sequences of performances and commercials intended as a sample of the rich worldwide television menu of the future.

Other Conceptual artists pursued the notion that the idea is a work of art itself by creating works involving invisible materials, such as inert gases, radioactive isotopes, or radio waves. In each case, viewers must base their understanding of the artwork on what they know about the properties of these materials, rather than on any visible empirical data, and must depend on the artist's linguistic description of the work. Ultimately, the Conceptual artists challenged the very premises of artistic production, pushing art's boundaries to a point where no concrete definition of "art" is possible.

### New Media

During the past half century, many avant-garde artists have eagerly embraced new technologies in their attempt to find fresh avenues of artistic expression. Among the most popular new media are video recording and computer graphics.

**VIDEO** Initially, only commercial television studios possessed video equipment, but in the 1960s, with the development of relatively inexpensive portable video recorders and of electronic devices allowing manipulation of recorded video material, artists began to explore in earnest the expressive possibilities of this new technology. In its basic form, video recording involves a special motion-picture camera that captures visible images and translates them into electronic data that can be displayed on a video monitor or television screen. Video pictures resemble photographs in the amount of detail they contain, but, like computer graphics, a video image consists of a series of points of light on a grid, giving the impression of soft focus. Viewers looking at television or video art are not aware of the monitor's surface. Instead, fulfilling the Renaissance ideal, they concentrate on the image and look through the glass surface, as through a window, into the "space" beyond. Video images combine the optical realism of photography with the sense that the subjects move in real time in a deep space "inside" the monitor.

**NAM JUNE PAIK** When video introduced the possibility of manipulating subjects in real time, artists such as Korean-born NAM

JUNE PAIK (1932–2006) were eager to work with the medium. Inspired by the ideas of John Cage and after studying music performance, art history, and Eastern philosophy in Korea and Japan, Paik worked with electronic music in Germany in the late 1950s. In 1965, after relocating to New York City, Paik acquired the first inexpensive video recorder sold in Manhattan (the Sony Porta-Pak) and immediately recorded everything he saw out the window of his taxi on the return trip to his studio downtown. Experience acquired as artist-in-residence at television stations WGBH in Boston and WNET in New York allowed him to experiment with the most advanced broadcast video technology.

A grant permitted Paik to collaborate with the gifted Japanese engineer-inventor Shuya Abe in developing a video synthesizer. This instrument allows artists to manipulate and change the electronic video information in various ways, causing images or parts of images to stretch, shrink, change color, or break up. With the synthesizer, artists can also layer images, inset one image into another, or merge images from various cameras with those from video recorders to make a single visual kaleidoscopic "time-collage." This kind of compositional freedom permitted Paik to combine his interests in painting, music, Eastern philosophy, global politics for survival, humanized technology, and cybernetics. Paik called his video works "physical music" and said that his musical background enabled him to understand time better than could video artists trained in painting or sculpture.

Paik's best-known video work, *Global Groove* (FIG. 36-81), combines in quick succession fragmented sequences of female tap dancers, beat-generation poet Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997) reading his work, a performance by Fluxus artist and cellist Charlotte Moorman (1933–1991) using a man's back as her instrument, Pepsi commercials from Japanese television, Korean drummers, and a shot of the Living Theatre group performing a controversial piece called *Paradise Now*. Commissioned originally for broadcast over the United Nations satellite, the cascade of imagery in *Global Groove* gives viewers a glimpse of the rich worldwide television menu Paik predicted would be available in the future.



**36-82** ADRIAN PIPER, *Cornered*, 1988. Mixed-media installation of variable size; video monitor, table, and birth certificates. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

In this installation, Piper, a light-skinned African American, appeared on a video monitor, “cornered” behind an overturned table, and made provocative comments about overt racism and more subtle bigotry.

**ADRIAN PIPER** One video artist committed to using her art to effect social change—in particular, to combat pervasive racism—is ADRIAN PIPER (b. 1948). Appropriately, her art, such as the installation *Cornered* (FIG. 36-82), is provocative and confrontational. This piece included a video monitor placed behind an overturned table. Piper appeared on the video monitor, literally cornered behind the table, as she spoke to viewers. Her comments sprang from her experiences as a light-skinned African American woman and from her belief that although overt racism had diminished, subtle and equally damaging forms of bigotry were still rampant. “I’m black,” she announces on the 16-minute videotape. “Now let’s deal with this social fact and the fact of my stating it together. . . . If you feel that my letting people know that I’m not white is making an unnecessary fuss, you must feel that the right and proper course of action for me to take is to pass for white. Now this kind of thinking presupposes a belief that it’s inherently better to be identified as white,” she continues. The directness of Piper’s art forces viewers to examine their own behaviors and values.

**BILL VIOLA** For much of his artistic career, BILL VIOLA (b. 1951) has also explored the capabilities of digitized imagery, producing many video installations and single-channel works. Often focused on sensory perception, the pieces not only heighten viewer awareness of the senses but also suggest an exploration into the spiritual realm. Viola, an American, spent years seriously studying Buddhist, Christian, Sufi, and Zen mysticism. Because he fervently believes in art’s transformative power and in a spiritual view of human nature, Viola designs works encouraging spectator introspection. His recent video projects involve using techniques such as extreme slow motion, contrasts in scale, shifts in focus, mirrored reflections, staccato editing, and multiple or layered screens to achieve dramatic effects.

The power of Viola’s work is evident in *The Crossing* (FIG. 36-83), an installation piece involving two color video channels projected on 16-foot-high screens. The artist either shows the two projections on the front and back of the same screen or on two separate screens in the same installation. In these two companion videos, shown simultaneously on the two screens, a man surrounded

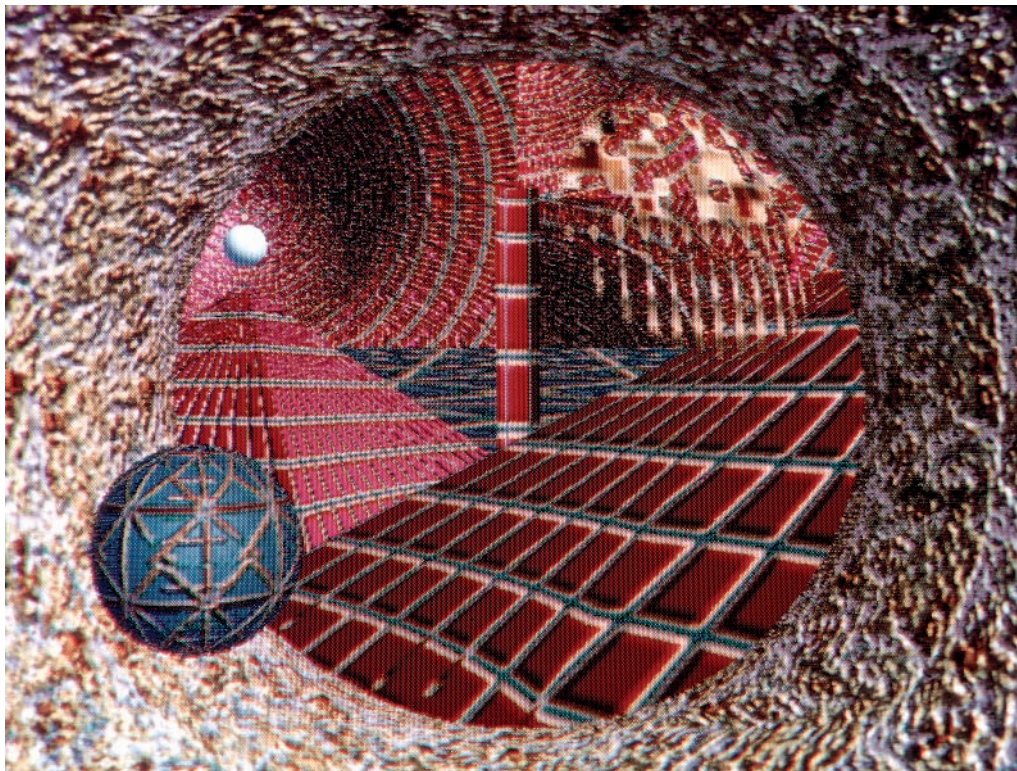


**36-83** BILL VIOLA, *The Crossing*, 1996. Video/sound installation with two channels of color video projection onto screens 16’ high. Private collection.

Viola’s video projects use extreme slow motion, contrasts in scale, shifts in focus, mirrored reflections, and staccato editing to create dramatic sensory experiences rooted in tangible reality.

in darkness appears, moving closer until he fills the screen. On one screen, drops of water fall from above onto the man’s head, while on the other screen, a small fire breaks out at the man’s feet. Over the next few minutes, the water and fire increase in intensity until the man disappears in a torrent of water on one screen (FIG. 36-83) and flames consume the man on the other screen. The deafening roar of a raging fire and a torrential downpour accompany these visual images. Eventually, everything subsides and fades into darkness. This installation’s elemental nature and its presentation in a dark space immerse viewers in a pure sensory experience very much rooted in tangible reality.

**COMPUTER GRAPHICS** Perhaps the most promising new medium for creating and manipulating illusionistic three-dimensional forms is computer graphics. This new medium uses light to make images and, like photography, can incorporate specially recorded camera images. Unlike video recording, computer graphic art allows artists to work with wholly invented forms, as painters can. Developed during the 1960s and 1970s, this technology opened up new possibilities for both abstract and figurative art. It involves electronic programs dividing the surface of the computer monitor’s cathode-ray tube into a grid of tiny boxes called “picture elements,” or *pixels*. Artists can electronically address pixels individually to create a design, much as knitting or weaving patterns have a grid matrix as a guide for making a design in fabric. Once created, parts of a com-



**36-84** DAVID EM, *Nora*, 1979. Computer-generated color photograph, 1' 5" × 1' 11". Private collection.

Unlike video recording, computer graphic art allows the creation of wholly invented forms, as in painting. Em builds fantastic digital images of imaginary landscapes out of tiny boxes called pixels.

Institute of Technology's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Em created brilliantly colored scenes of alien worlds using the laboratory's advanced computer graphics equipment. He also had access to software programs developed to create computer graphics simulations of NASA's missions in outer space. Creating images with the computer gave Em great flexibility in manipulating simple geometric shapes—shrinking or enlarging them, stretching or reversing them, repeating them, adding texture to their surfaces, and creating the

illusion of light and shadow. In images such as *Nora* (FIG. 36-84), Em created futuristic geometric versions of Surrealistic dreamscapes whose forms seem familiar and strange at the same time. The illusion of space in these works is immensely vivid and seductive. It almost seems possible to wander through the tubelike foreground "frame" and up the inclined foreground plane or to hop aboard the hovering globe at the lower left for a journey through the strange patterns and textures of this mysterious labyrinthine setting.

puter graphic design can be changed quickly through an electronic program, allowing artists to revise or duplicate shapes in the design and to manipulate at will the color, texture, size, number, and position of any desired detail. Computer graphics pictures appear in luminous color on the cathode-ray tube. The effect suggests a view into a vast world existing inside the tube.

**DAVID EM** One of the best-known artists working in this electronic painting mode, DAVID EM (b. 1952) uses what he terms "computer imaging" to fashion fantastic imaginary landscapes. These have an eerily believable existence within the "window" of the computer monitor. When he was artist-in-residence at the California

Illusion of light and shadow. In images such as *Nora* (FIG. 36-84), Em created futuristic geometric versions of Surrealistic dreamscapes whose forms seem familiar and strange at the same time. The illusion of space in these works is immensely vivid and seductive. It almost seems possible to wander through the tubelike foreground "frame" and up the inclined foreground plane or to hop aboard the hovering globe at the lower left for a journey through the strange patterns and textures of this mysterious labyrinthine setting.

**JENNY HOLZER** Another contemporary artist who has harnessed new technology for artistic purposes is JENNY HOLZER (b. 1950), who created several series of artworks using electronic signs, most involving light-emitting diode (LED) technology. In 1989, Holzer did a major installation at the Guggenheim Museum in New York that included elements from her previous series and consisted of a large continuous LED display spiraling around the museum's interior ramp (FIG. 36-85). Holzer's installation focused specifically on text, and she invented sayings with an authoritative tone for her LED displays. Statements included "Protect me from what I want," "Abuse of power comes as no



**36-85** JENNY HOLZER, *Untitled* (selections from *Truisms*, *Inflammatory Essays*, *The Living Series*, *The Survival Series*, *Under a Rock*, *Laments*, and *Child Text*), 1989. Extended helical tricolor LED electronic display signboard, 16' × 162' × 6'. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, December 1989–February 1990 (partial gift of the artist, 1989).

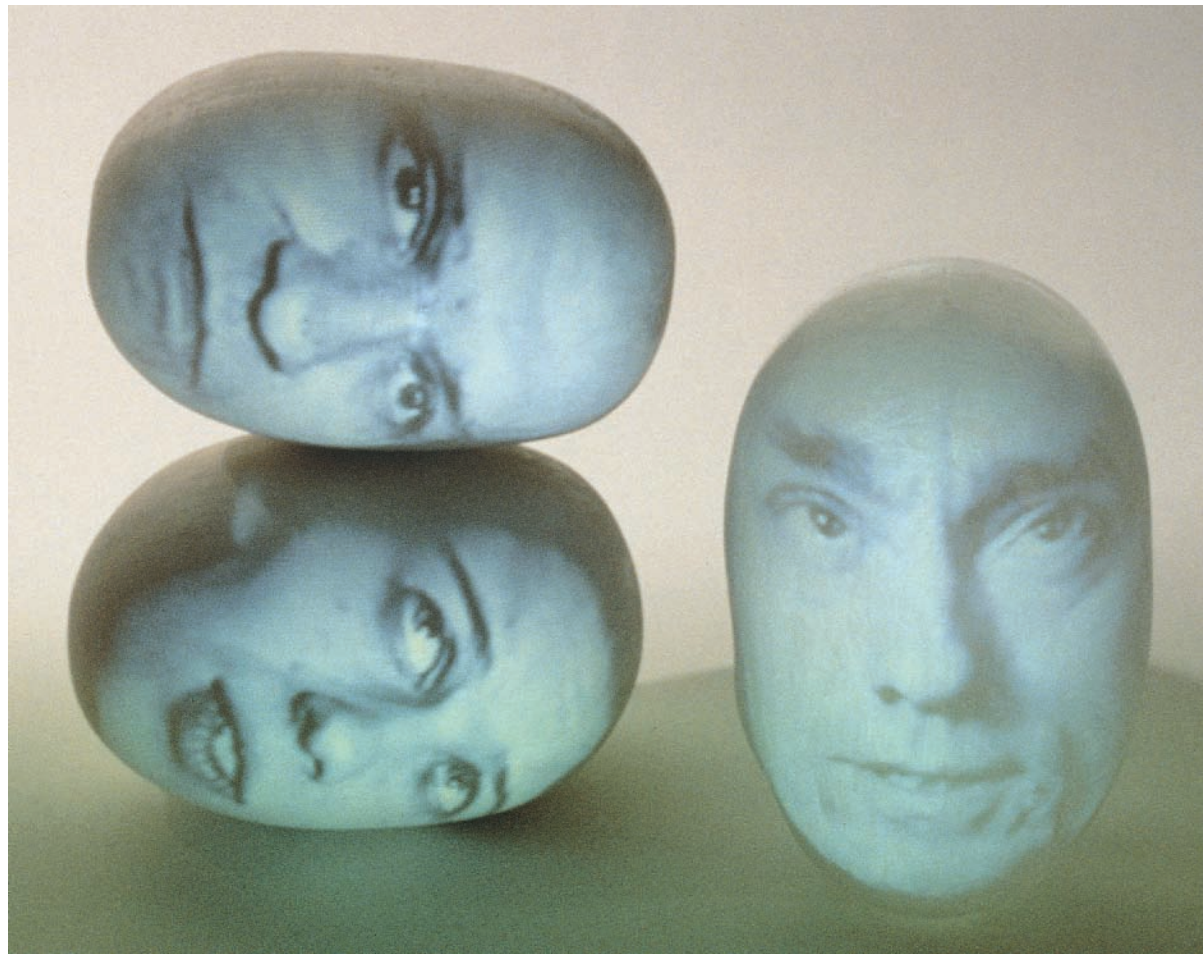
Holzer's 1989 installation consisted of electronic signs created using light-emitting diode (LED) technology. The continuous display of texts spiraled around the Guggenheim Museum's interior ramp.



**36-86**

**TONY OURSLER,**  
*Mansheshe*, 1997.  
 Ceramic, glass, video  
 player, videocassette,  
 CPJ-200 video  
 projector, sound,  
 11" × 7" × 8" each.  
 Private collection.

Video artist Oursler projects his digital images onto sculptural objects, insinuating them into the "real" world. Here, he projected talking heads onto egg-shaped forms suspended from poles.



surprise," and "Romantic love was invented to manipulate women." The statements, which people could read from a distance, were intentionally vague and, in some cases, contradictory.

**TONY OURSLER** While many artists present video and digital imagery to the audience on familiar flat screens, thus reproducing the format in which we most often come into contact with such images, TONY OURSLER (b. 1957) manipulates his images, projecting them onto sculptural objects. This has the effect of taking such images out of the digital world and insinuating them into the "real" world. Accompanied by sound tapes, Oursler's installations, such as *Mansheshe* (FIG. 36-86), not only engage but often challenge the viewer. In this example, Oursler projected talking heads onto egg-shaped forms suspended from poles. Because the projected images of people look directly at the viewer, the statements they make about religious beliefs, sexual identity, and interpersonal relationships cannot be easily dismissed.

**MATTHEW BARNEY** One of the major trends in the art world of the opening decade of the 21st century is the relaxation of the traditional boundaries between and among artistic media. In fact, many artists today are creating vast and complex multimedia installations combining new and traditional media. One of these artists is MATTHEW BARNEY (b. 1967). The 2003 installation (FIG. 36-1) of his epic *Cremaster* cycle (1994–2002) at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York typifies the expansive scale of many contemporary works. A multimedia extravaganza involving drawings, photographs, sculptures, videos, films, and performances (presented in videos), the

*Cremaster* cycle is a lengthy narrative that takes place in a self-enclosed universe Barney created. The title of the work refers to the cremaster muscle, which controls testicular contractions in response to external stimuli. Barney uses the development of this muscle in the embryonic process of sexual differentiation as the conceptual springboard for the entire *Cremaster* project, in which he explores the notion of creation in expansive and complicated ways. The cycle's narrative, revealed in the five 35-mm feature-length films and the artworks, makes reference to, among other things, a musical revue in Boise, Idaho (Barney's hometown), the life cycle of bees, the execution of convicted murderer Gary Gilmore, the construction of the Chrysler Building (FIG. 35-76), Celtic mythology, Masonic rituals, a motorcycle race, and a lyric opera set in late-19th-century Budapest. In the installation, Barney tied the artworks together conceptually by a five-channel video piece that is projected on screens hanging in the Guggenheim's rotunda. Immersion in Barney's constructed world is disorienting and overwhelming and has a force that competes with the immense scale and often frenzied pace of contemporary life.

No one knows what the next years and decades will bring, but given the expansive scope of postmodernism, it is likely that no single approach to or style of art will dominate. But new technologies will certainly continue to redefine what constitutes a "work of art." The universally expanding presence of computers, digital technology, and the Internet may well erode what few conceptual and geographical boundaries remain and make art and information about art available to virtually everyone, thereby creating a truly global artistic community.

## EUROPE AND AMERICA AFTER 1945

### PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

- The art of the second half of the 20th century reflects cultural upheaval: the rejection of traditional values, the civil rights and feminist movements, and the new consumer society.
- The first major postwar avant-garde art movement was Abstract Expressionism, which championed an artwork's formal elements rather than its subject. Gestural abstractionists, such as Pollock and de Kooning, sought expressiveness through energetically applied pigment. Chromatic abstractionists, such as Rothko, struck emotional chords through large areas of pure color.
- Post-Painterly Abstraction promoted a cool rationality in contrast to Abstract Expressionism's passion. Both hard-edge painters, such as Kelly and Stella, and color-field painters, such as Frankenthaler and Louis, pursued purity in art by emphasizing the flatness of pigment on canvas.
- Pop artists, such as Johns, Lichtenstein, and Warhol, turned away from abstraction to the representation of subjects grounded in popular culture—flags, comic strips, movie stars.
- Superrealists, such as Flack, Close, and Hanson—kindred spirits to Pop artists in many ways—created paintings and sculptures featuring scrupulous fidelity to optical fact.
- The leading sculptural movement was Minimalism. Tony Smith and Judd created artworks consisting of simple unadorned geometric shapes to underscore the “objecthood” of their sculptures.
- Much of the art since 1970 addresses pressing social issues. Leading feminist artists include Chicago, whose *Dinner Party* honors important women throughout history and features crafts traditionally associated with women; Sherman and Kruger, who explored the “male gaze” in their art; and Mendieta and Wilke, whose bodies are their subjects.
- Other artists explored race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. Ringgold and Simpson addressed issues important to African American women, Edwards civil rights themes, and Quick-to-See Smith Native American heritage. Wodiczko's art has documented the plight of the homeless. Wojnarowicz recorded the devastating effect of AIDS on the gay community.



Pollock, *Lavender Mist*, 1950



Warhol, *Marilyn Diptych*, 1962



Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 1979

### ARCHITECTURE AND SITE-SPECIFIC ART

- Some of the leading early-20th-century modernist architects were also active after 1945. Wright built the snail-shell Guggenheim Museum, Le Corbusier the sculpturesque Notre-Dame-du-Haut, and Mies van der Rohe the Minimalist Seagram skyscraper. Later modernists Saarinen and Utzon designed structures having dramatic curvilinear rooflines.
- In contrast to modernist architecture, postmodernist architecture is complex and eclectic and often incorporates references to historical styles. Among the best-known postmodern projects are Moore's Piazza d'Italia and Graves's Portland Building, both of which echo classical motifs.
- Deconstructivist architects seek to disorient the viewer with asymmetrical and irregular shapes. Among the most prominent practicing today are Gehry and Libeskind.
- Site-specific art exists at the intersection of architecture and sculpture and is sometimes temporary in nature, as was Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Surrounded Islands*.



Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, 1997

### PERFORMANCE AND CONCEPTUAL ART AND NEW MEDIA

- Among the most significant developments in the art world after World War II has been the expansion of the range of works considered “art.”
- Performance artists, notably Schneemann and Beuys, replace traditional stationary artworks with movements and sounds carried out before an audience. Their Performance Art often addresses the same social and political issues that contemporary painters and sculptors explore.
- Conceptual artists, including Kosuth and Nauman, believe that the “artfulness” of art is in the artist's idea, not in the work resulting from the idea.
- Paik, Piper, Viola, and others have embraced video recording technology to produce artworks that combine images and sounds, sometimes viewed on small monitors, other times on huge screens.
- Em, Holzer, Oursler, and Barney have explored computer graphics and other new media, often in vast and complex museum installations.



Oursler, *Mansheshe*, 1997