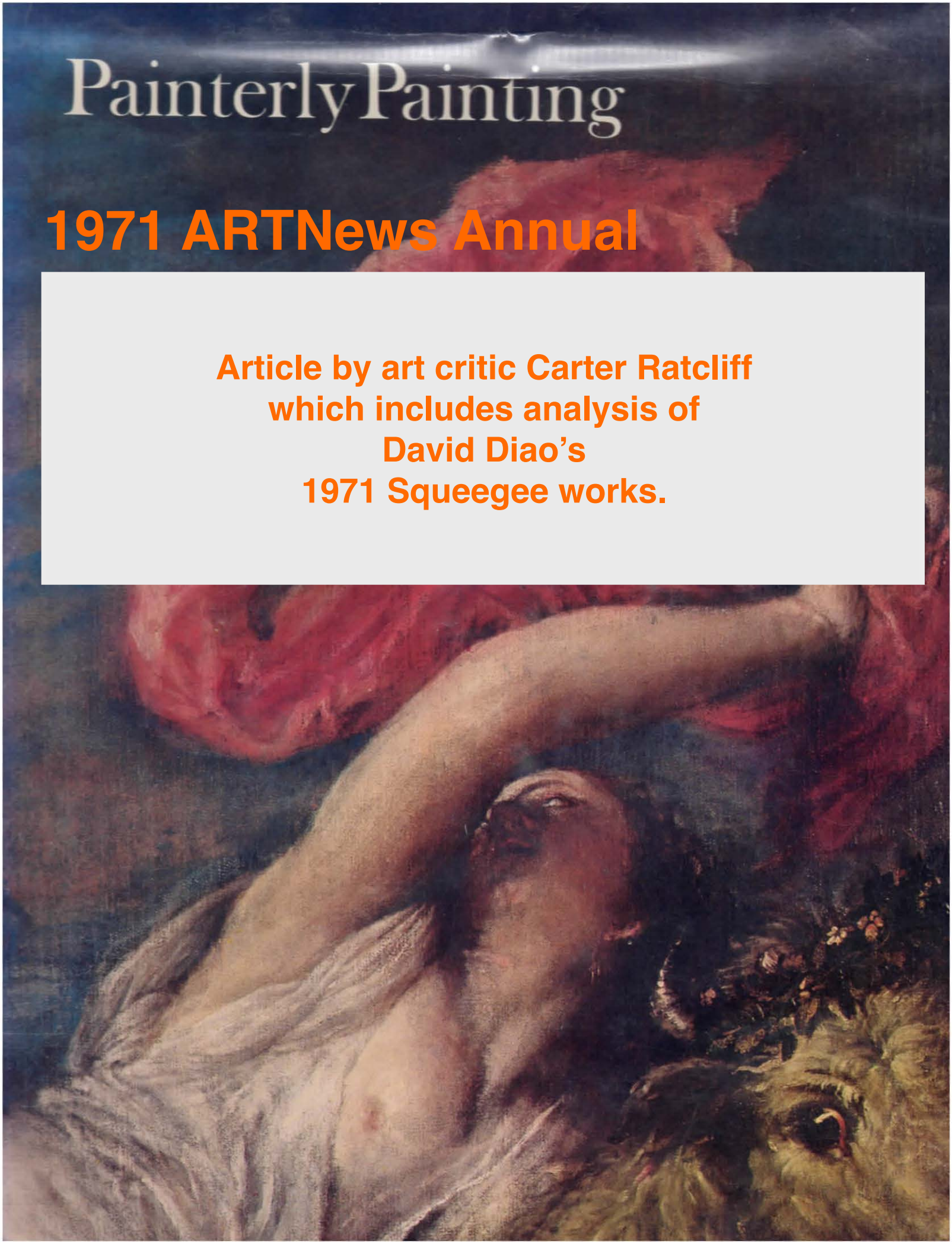


# 1971 ARTNews Annual

**Article by art critic Carter Ratcliff which includes analysis of David Diao's 1971 Squeegee works.**

Art News Annual XXXVII

# Painterly Painting

Edited by Thomas B. Hess and John Ashbery

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Left: Air, matter, space, light defined in the strokes of a painterly style: Detail of Velazquez' *hili p IV of Spain in Brown and Silver*, ca 1630 National Gallery, London.

Cover: Titian's famous late work, *The Rape of uropa* (detail), 1562, in the series of mythological fables he painted for Philip II. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Boston.

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By Carter Ratcliff

# Painterly . Painted

**The new "painterly" abstraction is found lost in the painted**

Carter Ratcliff ont ributes frequently to art magazines here and abroad. He is also a poet and a publisher of little magazines such as *Seaplane* and *Cicada*.

# Painterly vs. Painted

From the late '30s until 1947, Jackson Pollock's paintings grew more "painterly"; that is, his brushwork became eavier , more energetic, messier. But ainterliness as received a recise formal definition from Heinrich Wölfflin: it is a "surrender to mere visible appearance"; it merges objects, reducing "the appearance of the world [to] a shifting semblance." Painterliness takes on its full definition in opposition to linearity: the painterly is "the depreciation of line."[1] The painterly and the linear define a range of formal possibilities whose limits they give with their symmetrical opposition.

Wölfflin expands the opposition *painterly/linear* to *recession/plane, open/closed, unity/multiplicity* and *clear/unclear.*[2] These "five pairs of concepts...involve each other...we ould call them five different views of the same things."[3] The expanded versions of the *painterly/linear* opposition apply well enough to Pollock's early work. A way of establishing is ainterliness is to point out that it makes is images unclear (in comparison, say, with the images in the aintings e made in 1934-35 under the influence of Thomas Hart Benton); that is canvases are unified rather than built up from a harmony of clearly delineated elements; that these unified compositions are better characterized as open than as losed. The *recession/plane* opposition doesn't apply very well here, but one can say that until 1947 Pollock worked within the tradition given its formal description by Wölfflin's "pairs of concepts." This is not to endorse the specific form of Wölfflin's descriptive apparatus; it is to suggest that, however much refinement it has required since it appeared, it is based on a correct intuition of the way possibilities have traditionally resented themselves to Western artists, from the early Renaissance through the modern eriod.

Pollock always spoke as if his entire career were enclosed by this range of ossib ilities. He said in an interview in 1950 that "modern art," which he took himself to be representing, is "part of a long tradition dating back with Cézanne, up through the Cubists, the os t-Cubists, to the painting being done today."[4] By placing himself in this way, Pollock implicitly accepted Wölfflin's "pairs of concepts," but after 1947 they no longer applied to his work. Pollock rejected them, along with the tradition to which they refer. To understand the meaning of this rejection will require a closer look at Wölfflin's method.

Heavy brushwork, but "painted ather than painterly": Robert Ryman, ntitled, 1970, oil on fiberglass, about actual size.

Wölfflin attempts to be neutral in applying is descriptive apparatus: "it is not a difference of quality if the Baroque departed from the ideals of the age of Dürer and Raphael, but, as we said, a different attitude toward the world." However, in describing the transformation from one pole of an opposition to the other, e betrays himself. The painterly is a "depreciation" of the linear; in the development from plane to recession, the plane is "discounted"; the relatively open Baroque has its own form of closure, but Renaissance design "may be taken as *the* form of losed composition"; Renaissance multiplicity shows "harmony," Baroque unity follows from the "subordination" of discrete ictorial elements; the Renaissance "ideal of erfect clarity" was "voluntarily sacrificed" by the Baroque.[5] For Wölfflin the Renaissance is the ideal—it is good—and the Baroque is a falling away from the ideal—it is, in effect, bad. His oppositions can thus be expanded: *Renaissance=linear=good/bad=painterly=Baroque.*

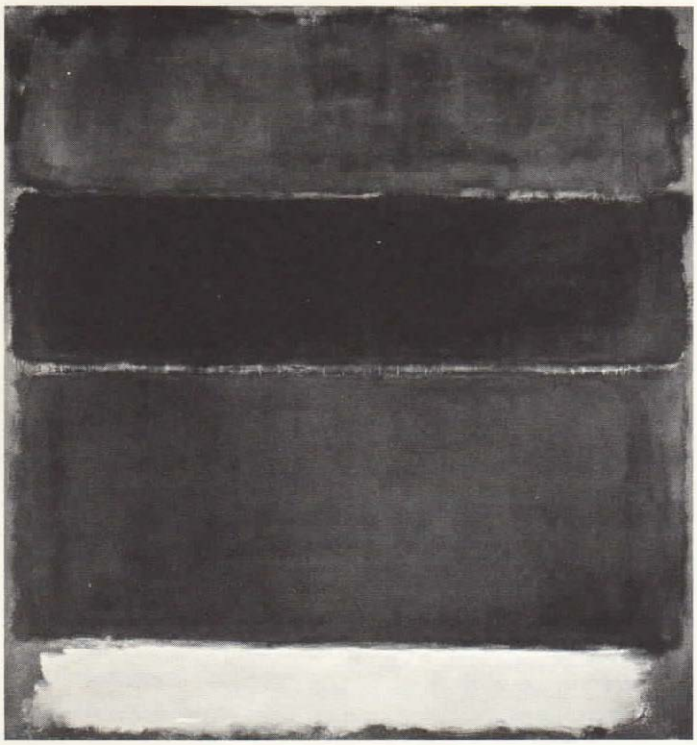
*Painterly/linear* is a local derivation of *bad/good.* To follow this transformation one must obviously leave the realm of formal description. One leaves it in another way by noting that Wölfflin's last transformation of *painterly/linear,* that is, *unclear/clear,* recurs in rationalist il osophy. The distinction between what is onceptually clear and what is not is crucial to Descartes' attempt to establish "the ultimate lasses of real things." In the course of his argument, *clear/unclear* is transformed into *true/untrue.*[6] Elsewhere, Descartes' version of the ontological argument for God's existence transforms *clear=true/untrue=unclear* into *being/non-being.*[7]

These transformations have a similarity to those employed in structural linguistics and anthropology. Lévi-Strauss' analysis of the mythology of North and South American Indians allows im to arrange his findings in structures based on oppositions of which "each is a function of all the others." Each pair of opposed terms *(male/female, sun/moon)* is capable of transformations of the kind found in Wölfflin *(painterly/linear=unclear/clear)* so that "potentially at least, the system is closed."[8] Without speculating on the appropriateness of applying these structures to non-Western ultures, and without insisting on the word structure in what follows, I want to suggest that when

these binary oppositions are considered in all their implications—when they are considered for the full range of transformations of which they are capable—they reveal a vast, enclosed "architecture" of moral, religious and esthetic meanings.

Wölfflin's oppositions give a local version of this architecture. In its function as an enclosure, it finds an equally local metaphor for itself in the edges of the traditionally composed canvas. This metaphor is so fundamental to the meaning of Western painting that it is very seldom mentioned,[9] but it is implied in theories of compositional beauty, for composition must always place its elements in reference to the edge. When Pollock abandoned the enclosed, architectural space he naturally abandoned the traditional metaphor for it; that is, after he began his drip paintings Pollock no longer granted the edge its traditional value. This put him in a space—pictorial and cultural—where meaning is not in the elaboration of a pre-existing range of possibilities, but in the survival of individual intention against the absence of those possibilities. Their absence is also the absence of the oppositional mode. In leaving architectural space, Pollock exchanged the painterly for the *painted.*

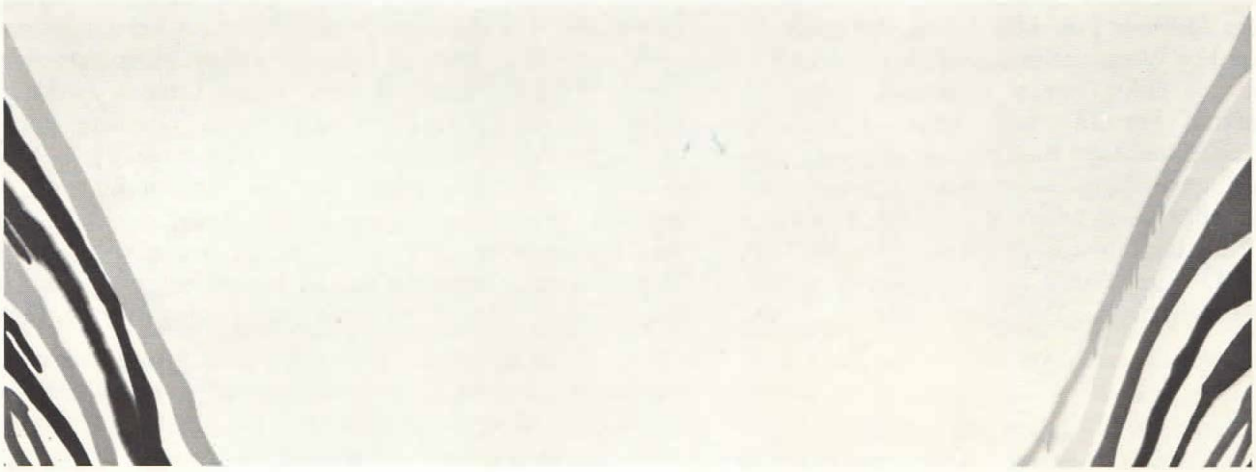
His first drip paintings didn't make it immediately clear that Wölfflin's "pairs of concepts" were no longer applicable. The paintings from 1947 to 1950 can be seen as extremes of linear abstraction. However, their "linearity" doesn't submit to the transformations which would place it—give it meaning—within the architectural space of traditional Western art and culture. Pollock's line has no representational or compositional intention so there are no external criteria by which to judge it clear or unclear. As for *open/closed* and *unity/multiplicity,* all four terms can be made to apply to these paintings—but none can be applied very convincingly. Nor does this "linearity" enforce a planar over a recessional reading of the paintings' space, which can be seen as chaotic, as a relief space built out slightly from the canvas, or a steady flow into an intricate mesh—as if



Mark Rothko: *Red-brown, lack, Green, Red,* 1962, 81 1/4 inches high. Marlborough gallery, New York.

Clyfford Still: *1964,* 1964, 9 feet high. Marlborough gallery.

Jackson Pollock: *ainting* 1948, 47 7 8 inches high (coll. Mrs. Lee Krasner Pollock). Pollock, Rothko and Still were among postwar American abstractionists to abandon architectural space.



Morris Louis, in his *Unfurled* paintings, created a vast, edgeless expanse: *eta u,* 1961, 102 inches high. Emmerich gallery, New York.

space were a fluid medium. In any case, ere's no point in looking at these works as ansformations of possibilities erived from the opposition *enaissance/Baroque.*

If the earliest ip paintings are superficially linear, en the stained and poured black enamel on raw canvas paintings of 1951 and he heavily spattered pictures of 1952 are superficially painterly—but it's more accurate to say at with slight changes in paint consistency and gesture Pollock was able to produce works *painted* in a variety of ways.

Pollock's evelopment after 1947 can be most easily escribed in the oppositional erms he left behind, but it would be a mistake o consider this evelopment only from a formal point of view. As I suggested above, Wölfflin's oppositions are erived versions of more fundamental •nes—*true/untrue, good/evil* and *clear/unclear* in its rationalist sense. The inclusiveness of e "space" efined by hese oppositions insures that they are abstractions of social values: at heir most ambigu ous hey become *individual/society* and *individual/culture* (it's ere at one could connect Wölfflin's oppositions o heir source in Hegelian rationalism). In leaving e architectural space, Pollock escaped the ambiguities of its ansformations, but in oing so e put himself in a space where he term *individual* finds no opposing erm against which to efine itself.

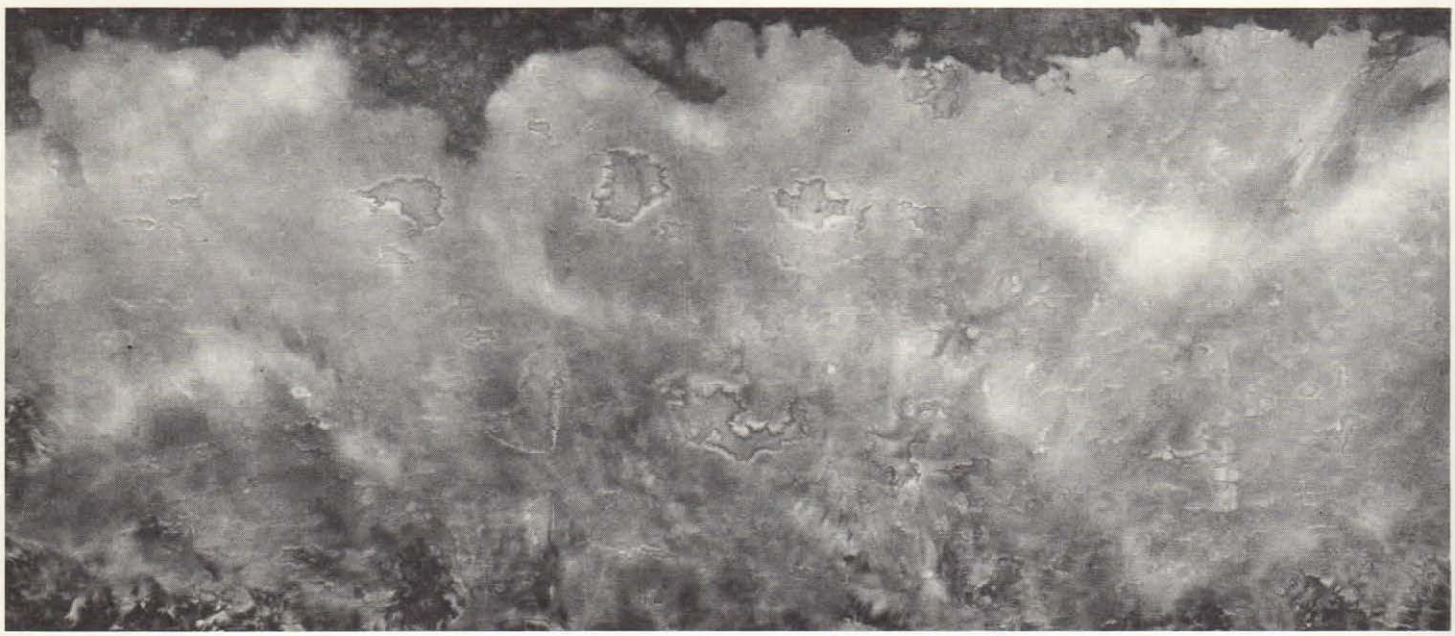
I ave concentrated on Pollock because is work most readily invites and rejects he *painterly/linear* opposition, but e was not the only postwar American abstractionist o abandon e architectural space for an "incoherent," unstructured space. Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still and Barnett Newman produced paintings hat on't epend for heir meaning on aditional uses of material, composition or e edge. These painters are

highly respected, but their influence has been limited, even where it has been claimed as fundamental. To reject the cultural space whose definition is founded in classical antiquity is an individual project. It not only doesn't attract followers, but, as we'll see below, doesn't permit them.

The classical space was rationalized in Renaissance perspective, a system which allows an enclosed space to radiate from fixed points along clearly defined lines. Previous linearity had defined figures and objects. The inventors of perspective gave these figures and objects a mathematically coherent pictorial architecture to inhabit. From ancient times until the present, standard theory has identified this coherence with beauty. However, *On the Sublime* (ca. 100 A.D.), the guide to rhetoric attributed to Longinus, suggests that great art is produced when this coherence is surpassed. Longinus provided arguments for the full range of esthetic opinion in eighteenth-century England. At one extreme, his notion of the exceptional work that culminates by transcending the rules upon which it is founded changes to a notion of individual genius which requires great art to be exceptional, unregulated and thoroughly individual, from its beginnings. This new theory of the sublime suggests a cultural space in which the artist is isolated from a society which can provide no audience with a coherent set of values by which to judge his work.

A painter in the new sublime must invent his own values and, turning to formal matters, his own techniques. Faced with a blank canvas that has no stability to its edges and no potential for a traditional beauty, the painter often invents his own "tradition" from his new technique which of course cannot be contained within the traditional formulations *painterly/linear, open/closed* and so on. An eighteenth-century example can be seen in Alexander Cozens' *A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape* (1785). Cozens would begin his landscapes with a random blot of ink. No coherent composition results from this method, even where Cozens works his blots into representational landscapes. The meaning of works produced this way can be seen formally in their lack of containing edges and in their ability to do without traditional composition—Cozens called this "the uncommon spirit" of paintings begun with a blot, which "is not a drawing, but an assemblage of accidental shapes." In addition to their formal innovations, these

An earlier William Pettet, soft and inflected by faint glitterings: Untitled, 1968, 92 inches high. Museum of Modern Art. New York.



Pettet's later Baroque style, gesture in the service of composition:
Untitled, 19 0, /2 inches high. Lannan Foundation collection, Palm Beach.

works provide the spectacle of an individual gesture which can find meaning only in its intensity—here a rather desperate reclamation of the representational—in the midst of a cultural space which is fundamentally unstructured.

For Longinus and others in the architectural space, "sublime" is a superlative, the word for the most elevated form of beauty. Outside that space it is not a term of approval. Formally, it designates a kind of pictorial space. More generally, it is the name of e cultural space inhabited by artists who have stepped outside the architecture defined by oppositions. One of the most important and most ambiguous of these oppositions is *audience/artist.* In abandoning the architectural space, the artist in the new sublime takes up he position of certain Romantics (Coleridge, Emerson) for whom the audience is not a well-defined set of cultivated people, but a vague, limitless presence, not necessarily human, and certainly not prepared by traditional education nor united by a shared sensibility.

The reaction to Pollock and other painters in the sublime was an attempt to reinstate traditional oppositions. The space defined by these oppositions is cultural before it is esthetic, and so it's not surprising that the first major reaction was not an art movement so much as a social movement, even a "sociology"—Pop Art. Its concerns were not the oppositions in the rarefied forms given to them by high culture, but a transformation of them which called into question ig culture itself: *machine made=low culture/high culture=hand painted* where *hand painted* means *hand painted and nothing more* so hat the transformation in this revised form is ironic—*low=good/bad=high.* This irony should not obscure the fact that Pop Art was an attempt to return meaning, or "dimensionality," to the social space traditionally occupied by "the artist" and left uninhabited by Pollock and the others.

The formalist reaction to Pollock was an attempt to reinstate the critical apparatus from which the *painterly/linear* opposition derived. This development was given its most elaborate form in the writings of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. They were reactionary, not because they employed Wölfflin's terminology, which has persisted in American and English art criticism ever since Roger Fry introduced it in 1926,[10] but because they reached past Wölfflin to Alois Riegl for his opposition *optical/tactile,* a prior form of Wölfflin's "pairs of concepts." By concentrating on Pollock's stained-in paintings and following their influence on a limited number of artists (Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland), the formalists attempted to make Pollock's career a source of he dialectical progression defined by—and efining—the architectural space. Their attempt required them to place Pollock's dripped and stained works at the optical pole in extreme opposition to Cubist, that is, tactile painting. This is a gross istortion.

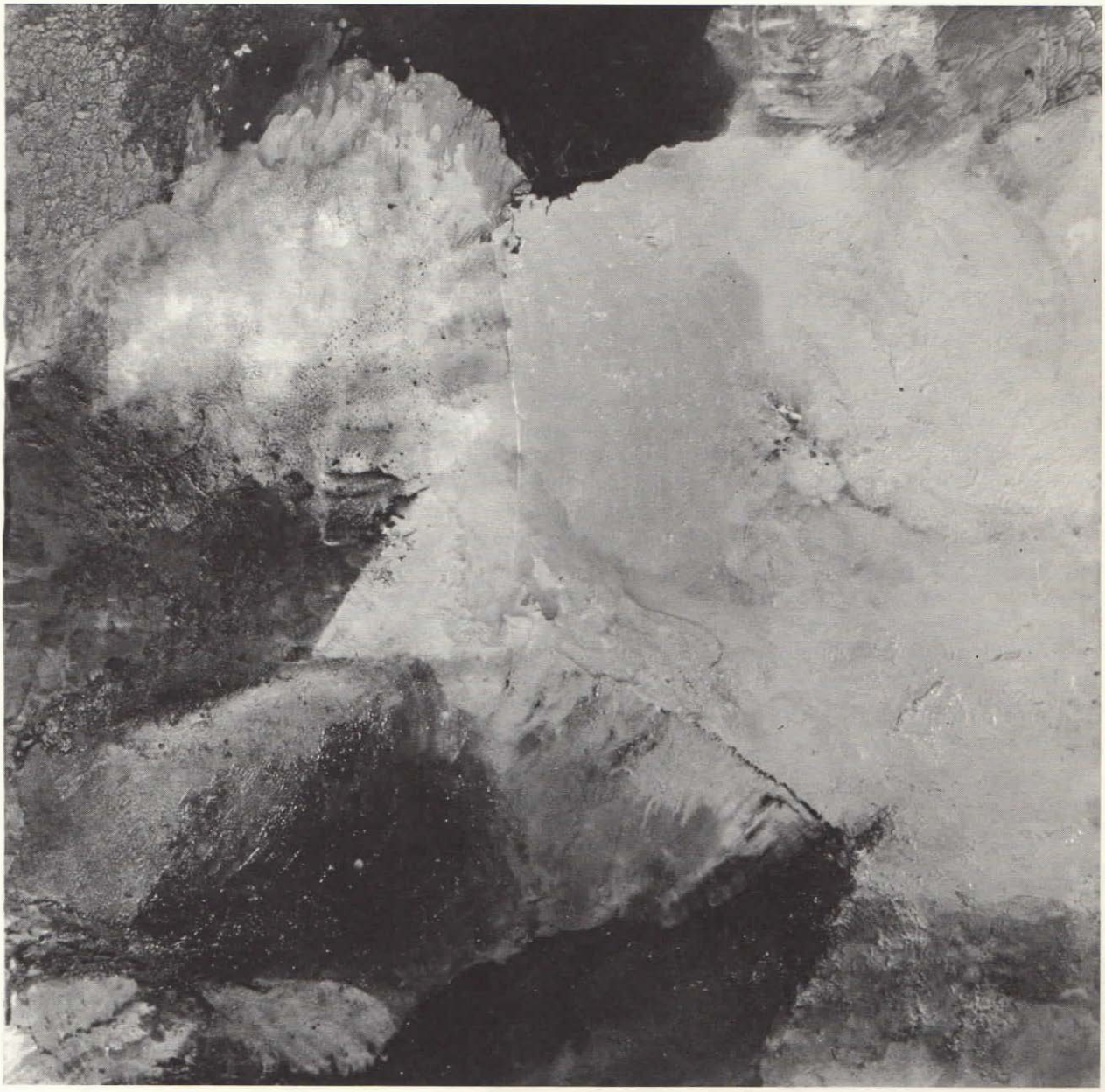
In formalist usage, the illusionary space of abstract painting is called "optical" if the eye, upon entering it, enjoys a "purely optical experience as against optical experience modified or revised by tactile associations."[11] This formulation fails to account for the experience of Pollock's painting. As one's eye enters his illusionary space, one enters into—reconstructs in imagination—the gesture with which he produced it. This gesture is obviously actile (it would be better to say

athletic), but it is optical as well—this space requires of the eye an active, non-contemplative engagement. It's not that visual and physical gesture—the optical and the tactile—are joined here. It's that Pollock's paintings arrive from a gestural unity prior to the opposition, or even the distinction, between tactile and optical. The eye, upon entering this space, is in inextricable—synesthetic[12]—conjunction with the rest of the body. This entry is not a personal inflection of a pre-existing structure—the architecture of the painting or of the culture which presents the painting with its possibilities. It is an attempt to match the intensity of Pollock's original gesture, that is, to find in a consciousness of its own isolation and contingency an intensity able o withstand the incoherence of the space from which it arrives. (This space is cultural for Pollock, cultural and pictorial for the viewer.)

The formalists elaborated their notion of the "optical" throughout the 1960s. They were joined by he anti-formalists, who inspired further transformations of the pairs of concepts originating with Wölfflin and Riegl. *Formal/anti-formal* became *decorative/non-decorative, illusionary/non-illusionary,* and so on.[13] These are interesting as examples of the reluctance to give up the assurances provided by the stability of he architectural space. A desperate form of this reluctance is found in Conceptual Art, which ries to hypostatize the traditional oppositions in concrete "art propositions."[14]

Pollock died in 1956; Rothko, Newman and Still continued to paint in the sublime space. Morris Louis entered it occasionally. His *Unfurled* paintings (1960-61), with their ribbons of color, create vast, edgeless space which cannot be enclosed within the *painterly/linear* opposition. Larry Poons's grid paintings

Painterly abstraction retaining architectural space:
Stephen Mueller's *Sky Blue Jeans*, 1969, 6 feet high.



Stephen Mueller: *China*, 197 0, 0 inches high. Feigen gallery, New York & Chicago.

(1961-68) are superficially architectural (Cubist), but they are geless as well. Their flick ring patterns of ots are contained by the ge of the canvas, but only in a literal—contingent—way, not structurally, for these paintings are not compositional and refore o not contain within mselves any meaningful limits: according o their own "logic" y could be xtended forever.

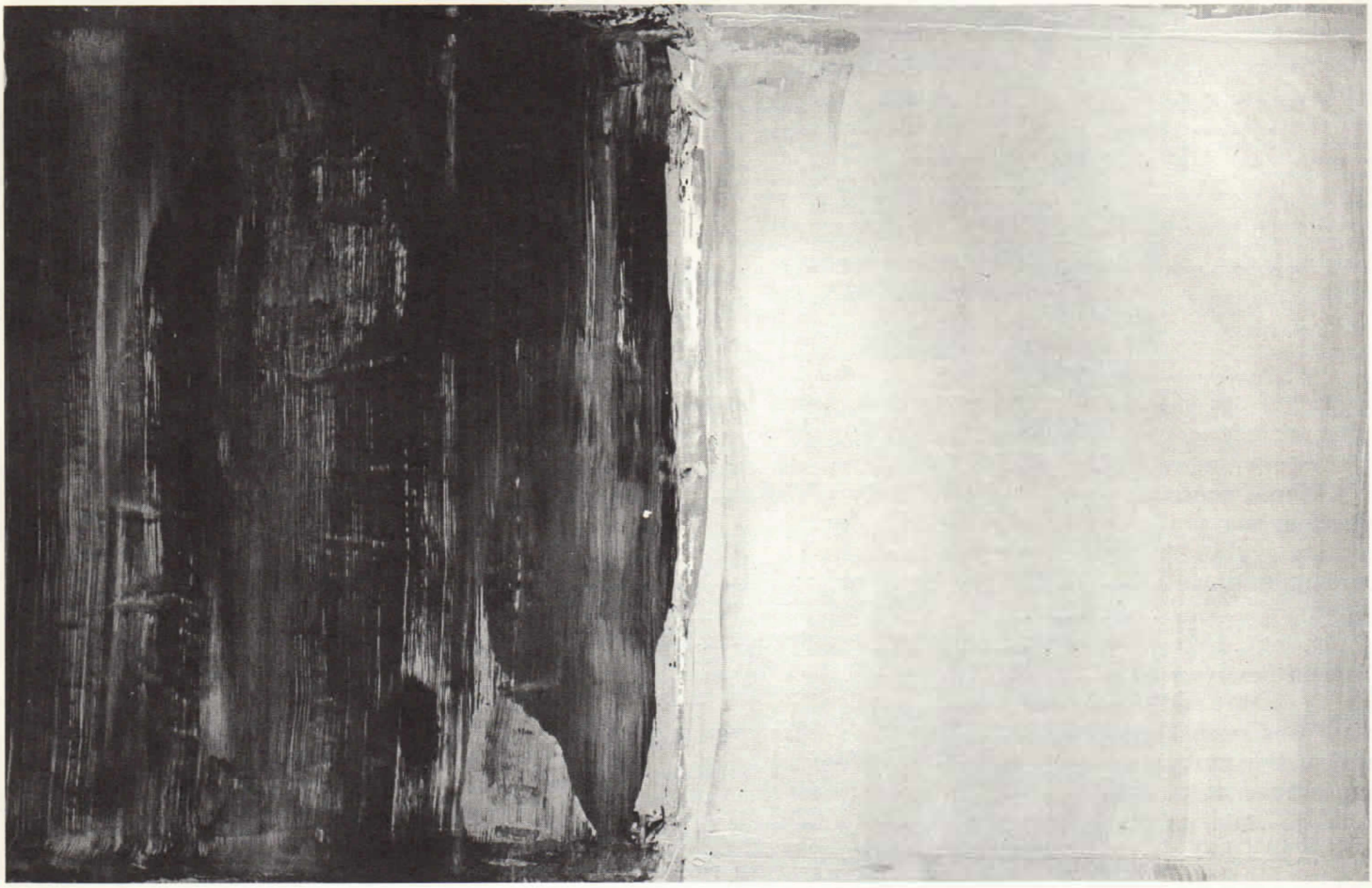
However, both Poons and Louis were assimilated by formalist analyses: their staining methods left canvas free of gesture and this made it asy o assume that their space was open only to ye, that Louis specially was guiding abstraction, well within architecture of oppositions, oward an ideal of "pu ely optical xperi nce" by reducing is concern to what is "unique to the nature of [the] medium."[15] We've seen, in looking at Pollock's rip paintings, that this reduction is misleading: perception is a synesthetic gesture from which an optical component cannot be xtracted. This is as true of one's xperience of paintings within architectural space as it is of those in sublime space. The ifference is at in sublime space unity of perception is aken into account in the course of a concern with individual meaning; it is not obscured by a ranscendentalizing concern which makes art an attempt o place individual (artist or viewer) in a finitive manner somewhere within a stable and pre-existing cultural space.

If is unity—and inexhaustible richness—is only implied in Poons's stained-in grid paintings, it was made xplicit in is *Night Journey* and other works of 1968-69. Here Poons gave up a stained-in flatness for p space of sublime. Depth appeared with is acceptance of igh-value contrast and in a vaguely

representational content—flurries of shape that hint at vast stretches of geography or sky. Sometimes the ontaining function of the edge is recalled, as when Poons divides the anvas more or less evenly with a vertical line, but the two "halves" rarely serve each other in establishing compositional balance. Poons refers to the edge of the canvas in order to suggest that it no longer has even the aint containing power that subsisted in his grids against their endlessness. With these heavily inflected paintings, Poons om pletely rejected the architectural space, or—to use the terms in which these problems offered themselves in the 1960s—he was no longer lacing himself according to the oppositions *optical/tact le* or *Impressionist/Cubist*.

This rejection is continued in Poons's series of heavily poured and caked paintings, first shown in 1969, but it is much more conscious in the paintings of Gary Bower and John Torreano. Each in his own way establishes a pattern—a grid or scattering of dots—then dissolves it in washes and overlays of color which open onto the sublime, edgeless space. Their patterns (which ave recently faded somewhat, especially in Torreano's work) only refer to Cubism; they are not linear in the traditional sense for they are not dissolved by the painterly—they're dissolved by the *painte*. Structure is painted away or intensely localized in a gesture whose meaning is that it belongs to an individual who refuses to be guided by a pre-existing architecture of meanings—one who, even after he invents an architecture of his own (a contingent pattern), is guided only by a consciousness

A David Diao wide-sc ape painting stretched or disjointed by division: *1971-A*, 1971, 90 1/2 inches igh. Paula Cooper gallery, New York.



In the isolation and reflexivity of painting in the sublime space, a new kind of gesture is another beginning: David Diao's single wide-scrape painting (untitled), 1971, 68 inches high. Dunkelman gallery, Toronto.

of his isolation in the sublime. His art is in turning this consciousness into a gesture effective against that isolation—for the sublime usually obliterates those who enter it.

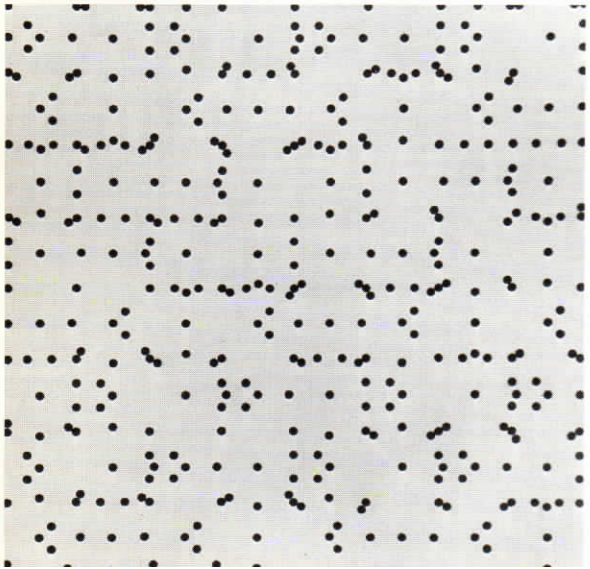
The paintings of Bower and Torreano are fully achieved though, to a superficial view, they might seem to occupy transitional positions in a development from compositional to sublime painting. This would be to impose a notion of coherent historical progress in a space that does not permit it. As soon as one leaves the architectural space with its dialectic of elaborations and transformations, one leaves as well its orderly flow of time. The possibilities for painting are not functions of each other in the sublime space and likewise painters there cannot be arranged in such oppositions as *Poussin/Rubens, Ingres/Delacroix, Symbolist/Neo-Impressionist, Constructivist/Surrealist,* etc. Influence can be only vaguely traced in the sublime because it is not coherent enough to permit a clear advance from one position to another. (A painter, say a "Lyrical Abstractionist," who imitates Pollock, does not thereby enter the sublime; he takes up a position in the architecture of oppositions defined in advance by formalist criticism of the '60s.)

The painter who has left the architectural space has only a tangential, ambiguous relationship to other painters who have done the same. This point can be made specific with a look at David Diao's painting. For several years Diao painted monochrome or two-color works whose stained-in paint is inflected by elegant scrapings. This creates an interest in the play of reflective against non-reflective surfaces. But rather than "against" one should say "in the vicinity of": these paintings are without composition—they are edgeless; they provide no framework within which a clear opposition can define itself. But if the surface will not be resolved into the opposition *reflective/non-reflective,* then there can be no opposition *surface/depth.* The depths of these paintings remain inexhaustibly ambiguous, as can be seen by comparing them to the depths in "similar" paintings.

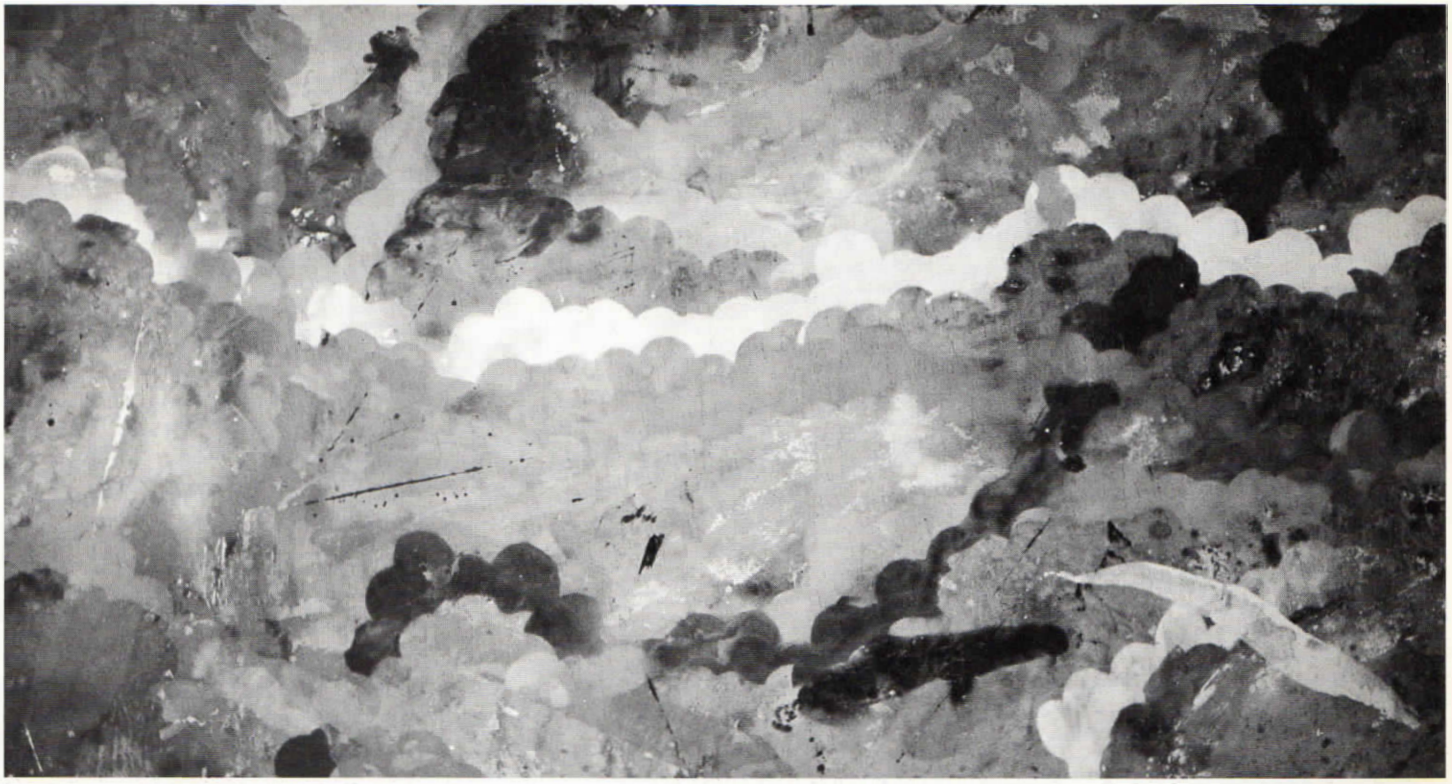
William Pettet's early works are soft, inflected only by faint unanticipated glitterings. In their context, Diao's scraped inflections seem very strong; they draw the depths of the painting "toward" them—the painting grows shallow. In the context of Ronnie Landfield's painting, Diao's depths reassert themselves; Landfield's high-keyed suppression, but not absence of, value contrast gives Diao's monochrome a slow, retreating

Diao

Early Poons, contained but structurally boundless: *Zorn's Lemma,* 1963, 7 1/2 feet high. Private coll.



Depth elicited by vague representational content: Larry Poons, untitled, 1968, 8 1/2 feet high. Woodward Foundation, Washington, D.C.



A unifying intensity in gesture vs. potential c aos in methods:
Jo n Seery's *Mingus,* 1970, 9 1/2 feet high. Emmeric gallery.

motion. eOne eis ecareied e"toward" ethe emonochrome e itself—toward e this easpect e of eDiao's epainting. e This e motion is speeded up in the context provided by John e Seery's intricate, fully occupied depths.

In the sublime, one's own e eve lopment becomes a e soue c e of unresolvable ambiguity. eDiao ehas recently exchanged his multitude of smae, elegant inflections for e one wide sceape over a eanvas p epa ed with layers of e color. These new works, especially the ones divided into e two equal parts, eshow that Diao's sublime, like Barnett e Newman's, is not an evasion of the edges of the canvas. Rather, it is a way of filling the canvas so that its literal shape is—to use Newman's word—"busted." This busting he eshape e of ethe ecanvas eis a edefeat efor etraditional e structure. It is often quite violent with Newman, more a case of stretching or disjointing in Diao's recent work. e

Far from elarifyine ehis earlier works (as, for example, Synthetic Cubism helped to clarify Analytic Cubism), e Diao's new paintine serender them more ambiguous. eHis single gesture is both more and less unified—both more and eless erandom—than ehis earlier emultiple e estures. There is a superficial resemblance between the two ways of inflecting the surface—they are both scrapings—but they are not transformations of each other. There is intensitye in the new inf ection because it is not derived; it e oesn 't refer eto ea emodel of (dialec ical) eprogress already established—it's enot ea econtinuation, it's a be-e ginning. eThe individual's success against the contingency and incoherence of the sublime espace is in a reflex-e iveness e which e turns ethe eindivieua l's eshare of ethat e contingency eback eupon e i mself ein ethe form of self-e consciousness. For this to be a fuel share of contingency, e each gesture must be a beginning.

Architectural space rejected in heavily poured and caked work:
Poons's *Dangerous B,* 1969. Coll. Richard Weisman, New York.

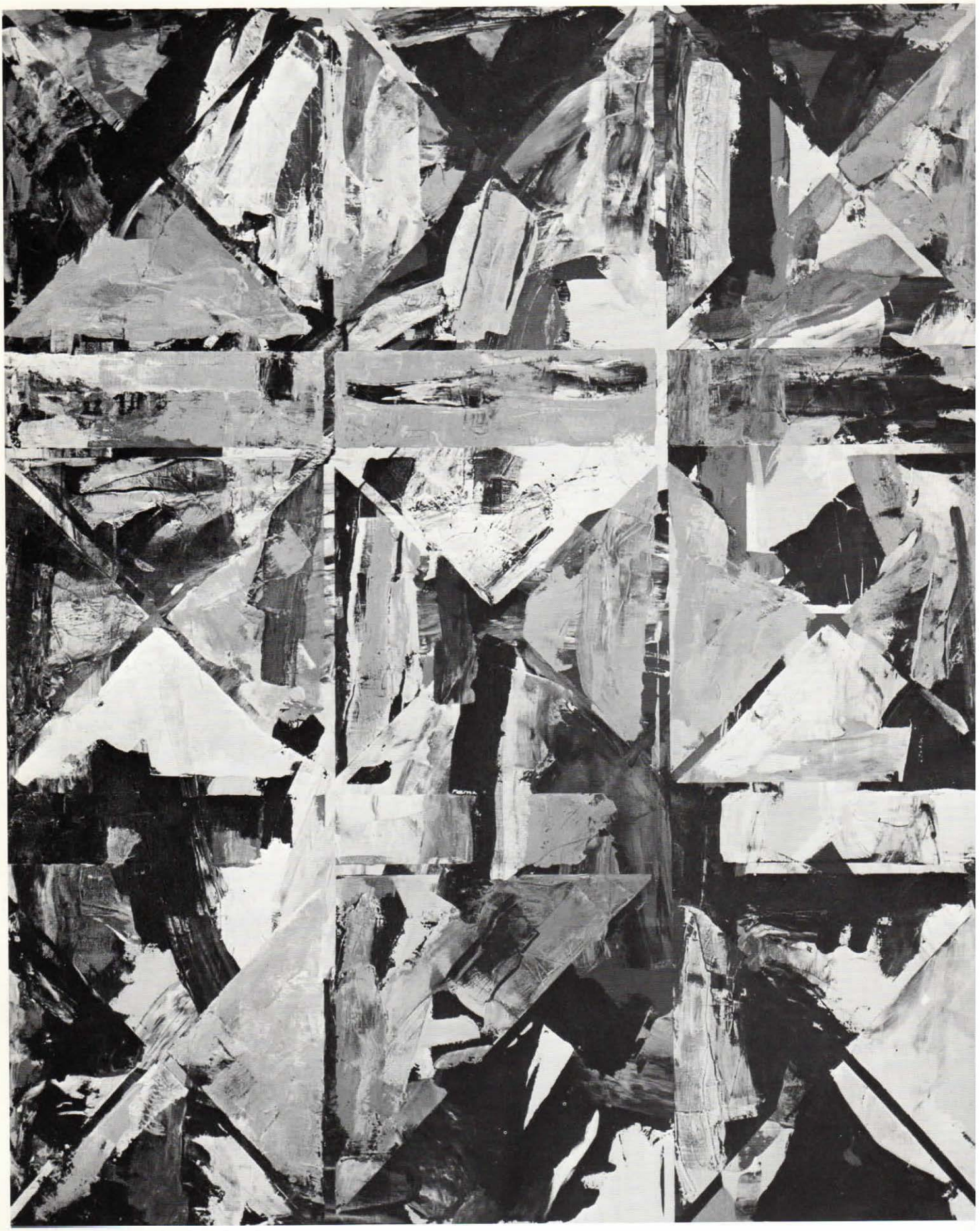
The intensity required for this project can be seen in e the relentless variousness of John Seery's methods. He e scrapes, esprays, stains his canvases. Recently he has put them underwater to soak until the paint reveals itself in e ways e not available to more direct "gestures." Just as e Pollock's early e i p paintings are not linear in relation to e i e later more heavily splashed ones—for the later ones e

Intricate, fully occupied depths through varying methods of applying color: John Seery's *Payshtha*, 1970, 118 inches high. Art Institute of Chicago, on extended loan by the Richard Gray gallery.

are not painterly in the traditional sense—so Seery's scraping is not a transformation of his staining ech-nique, nor is his staining a transformation of is spraying. Above all, e does not soak his canvases in order to soften the differences between his various techniques. It is not a "dialectical" process intended to unify opposing results. In fact it accentuates their differences, carrying his works beyond the space where differences can be contained in coherent oppositions.

Seery's methods are brought ogether to undercut each other—to impinge, sometimes chaotically, upon each other. The unity that results is not between methods, textures or shapes and colors composed according to a pre-existing ideal to which composition refers by transcending its own particularity in an individual painting. The unity ere defies the medium in which it persists, for it is the unifying (immanent) intensity of Seery's gesture—his intention *to paint*. His success, especially in his most recent, most violent paintings, is in making this intention survive against e potential for chaos in his methods, and in is endency to make use of all of these methods in a single work.

The striations in Larry Poons's heavily poured paintings invoke the canvas edge, but the edge is without containing power: *569*, 1969, 115 inches high. David Mirvish gallery, Toronto.



Cubist grid dissolved by the painted:
Gary Bower's *Rearview*, 1971, feet high.

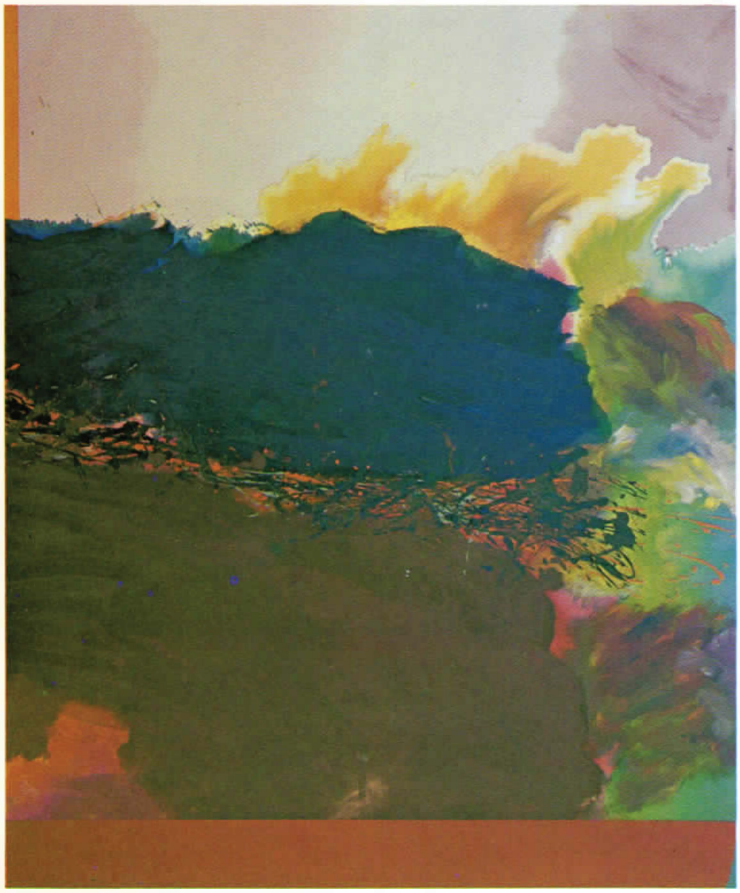
'o enter the sublime space is to give up the assurances ffered by the architecture of values derived from antiqui- y and the Renaissance. This is not just a way of being riginal. It's a dangerous undertaking, the project of an ıdividuality which can never be fully "appreciated" ecause its isolation in its own unity—its reflex- veness—doesn't permit full critical comment, unlike a arcer guided by the structure of the architectural space, art of the elaboration of which is a long-standing and elf-justifying critical tradition.

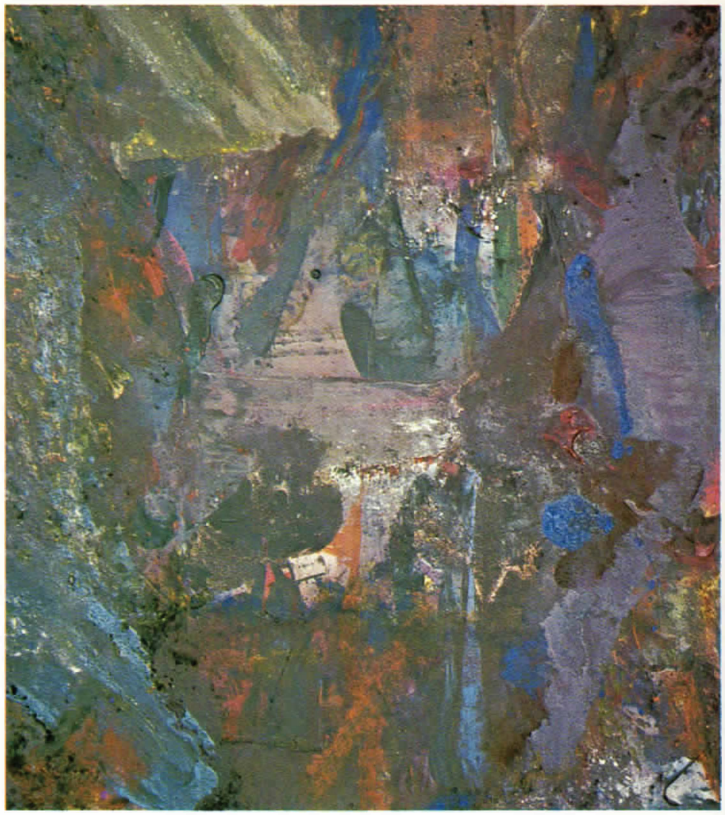
Because of its dangers—Edmund Burke insisted ngest on its terrors—many young artists who recently egan to enter the sublime have now, one or two years ter, retreated from it. The "Lyrical Abstraction" show at the Larry Aldrich Museum in the spring of 1970 (and again at the Whitney Museum, spring, 1971) was filled with works by painters who had taken up tentative positions toward the sublime. But the sublime obliterates tentativeness. Most of the works on view in these exhibitions failed to show any individual intention whatsoever.

In a few cases this tentativeness manages to maintain itself in an uneasy eclecticism. Recently, Landfield has imposed a structure of stripes in solid colors on the chaotically stained-in areas of his canvas. This puts his work under the influence of composition without really composing them. They now take their interest from a vague elaboration of the opposition *painterly/linear*.

Pattern fades into sublime, edgeless space: John Torreano, untitled, 1971, 112 1/2 inches high. Reese Palley gallery.

Stripe structure evokes the opposition painterly/linear: Ronnie Landfield's *Storm Thread,* 1971, 9 feet high. David Whitney gallery.





An impulse toward he sublime in fundamentally painterly work: Philip Wofford's *Revelation's Abyssal Blue,* 1970, 9 feet high.

This is n tte mpt to make up in traditional refer- n es — nd ssuranc es—for a lack of the intensity which would allow these paintings to survive in the sublime space toward which Landfield's work was heading at the time of the first "Lyrical Abstraction" show. Since the sublime doesn't grant ny valu to traditional ro- gressions, rhaps this very *heading toward* revented Landfield from rriving.

Much the same can be said about Pettet's recent, heavily gestural but at the same time very obviously composed— ve n Baroque—paintings. Gesture in the serv- ice of composition produces the interly , not the *painted,* as with Philip Wofford's paintings, which for ll their n ergy and textural variation—all their yearning for the sublim — are held back by edges as fund me nt lly Cubist in their ffe ct as those in the works of St h n Mueller, a young interly painter who never indulged in the ploy of seeming to reject the architectur l sp .

Pop Art, formalism nd anti-formalism were tte mpts to reinstate the rchit ecture of oppositions. Perhaps this recent use of the look of sublime painting is nother such attempt. Its function would be to revive the opposition *painterly=Action-Painting/Hard-Edge Paint- ing=linear* which was obscured for a time by formalist insistence on the opposition *optical/tactile.*

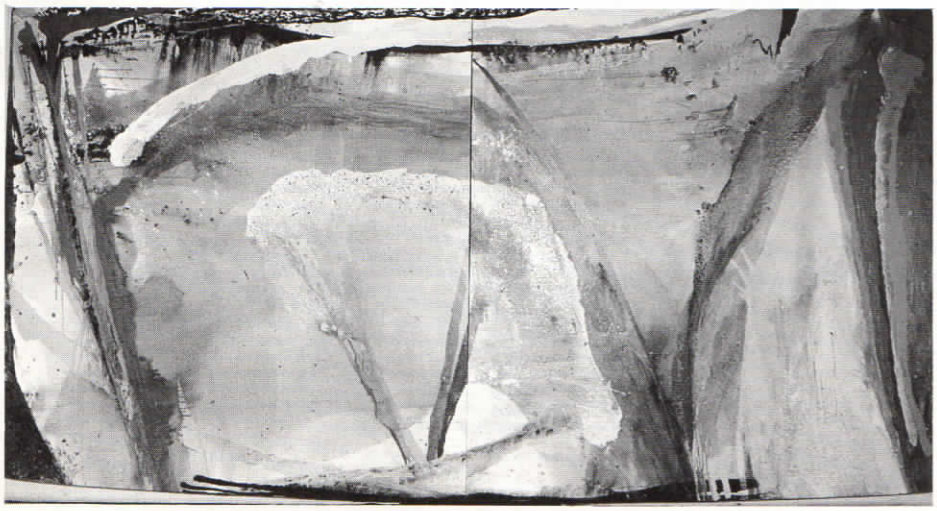
The differ nc between the two sorts of painting we've considered here is that one transcends itself toward the r - xisting values from which it takes its possibilities, while the meaning of the other is immanent in h painting—as it is produced or as it is viewed. But the rchitecture of values which defin s Western compo- sition nd pictorial beauty has been x mined ndle ssly by modern painters, most intensely during the Cubist xp rime nts, re titiously and to less and less effect in the Con tualist "investigations." It's not surprising then that our discussion of the meaning of painting in the sublime allows us to see st the repetitious transcendentalizing in the architectural space to its own version of immanent meaning.

For x mple , Robert Ryman's painting does not *refer* to the generaliz d Western (f or modern inter, Cubist) architecture of values. Thanks to their "blank- ness," to the eccentric, intensely localiz d and indi- vidual way they impose on their r gul r iz d formats, and to their ability to engage the eculiaritie s of their urban surroundings, they *inhabit* their archite ture, without ngaging its traditional o ositions—without transcendentalizing. Ryman's brushwork can be vy , energetic, even messy, but is intings r not inter- ly, rather—like certain of Willem de Kooning's very

dfferent, but equally individual and equally unsublime paintings—they are *painted.*

1. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History* (1915), New York, 1950, p. 14.
2. *Ibid,.* pp. 14-16.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
4. Francis V. O'Conner, *Jackson Pollock,* Museum of Modern Art., New York, 1967, from an interview taped in the summer of 1950, p. 79.
5. Wölfflin, op. cit., pp. 14-16.
6. Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy* (1644), *Philosophical Works,* translated by Haldane. Vol. 1, London, 1911, 237 ff.
7. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), *Philosophical Works,* Vol. 1. London, 1911, 157 ff.
8. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Sex of the Heavenly Bodies," *Introduction to Structuralism,* ed. Michael Lane, New York, 1970, p. 337.
9. A notable exception to this oversight is: Meyer Schapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," *Semiotica,* Paris, I, iii, 1969.
10. Roger Fry, "The Seicento" (1926), *Transformations,* New York, 1956, 127 ff.
11. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *Art and Literature,* Spring, 1965; see also Michael Fried, *Three American Painters,* Cambridge, 1965, p. 14.
12. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), London, 1962, 228 ff.
13. Robert Morris, "Antiform," *Artforum,* April, 1968; "Notes on Sculpture, Part 4: Beyond Objects," *Artforum,* April 1969; "The Art of Existence," *Artforum,* January, 1971; James Monte and Marcia Tucker, *Anti-Illusion: Procedure/Materials,* Whitney Museum, New York, 1969.
14. Joseph Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy," *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects,* New York Cultural Center, 1970, p. 4.
15. Clement Greenberg, op. cit. p. 102.

Landfield's earlier heading toward sublime space: *Off the Coast,* 1969, 8 feet high. Lannan Foundation collection.



Philip Wofford: *The Tides,* 1969, 8 feet high. David Whitney gallery, New York.