

Hodler, *Lola Genre from Gaux, 1917*. Oil/canvas, 25½" x 31½". Collection Joseph Müller, Solothurn, Guggenheim Museum

NEW YORK

APRIL KINGSLAY

Ferdinand Hodler is only a name to the majority of the American art audience, and a name rarely heard here at that. Only scholars are at all familiar with his work, so the exhibition of his paintings and drawings at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, organized by Peter Selz of the University Art Museum in Berkeley, California, with the help of Eva Wyler in New York, is a welcome introduction to his work. Hodler made important contributions and we are grateful for the opportunity to become more familiar with him. His late landscapes, in particular, make an important transition from nineteenth-century realism to twentieth-century expressionism.

Hodler was born in poverty the same year as van Gogh and belongs to the generation of Ensor, Klimt, Munch, and Corinth. A provincial, like these men (i.e. not a Frenchman), he shares with them an offbeat approach to the traditional subjects of art—landscapes, portraits and figure studies—that is so highly charged with emotion it must be considered expressionistic, if not even eccentric. What flows most easily off the Parisian brush during the heyday of the School of Paris, comes with the most difficulty to the German, Dutch or

Swiss painter. Portraits, like Hodler's many self-portraits, for instance, are strained and wild-eyed, in the same expressionist vein as van Gogh's self-portraits or Ensor's wild imaginings. It seems as if the "outsider" has to try so much harder that the strain of his efforts inevitably shows.

Hodler comes from the tradition of Classicist Alpine landscape painting epitomized by Joseph Anton Koch and Johann Jakob Biedermann but shows traces of the Romanticism of Caspar David Friedrich's approach to the subject and Karl Blechen's Biedermeier earthiness as well. He shares little with Fuseli but a great deal with Arnold Böcklin (*The Awakening of Spring of 1880 is particular*). Both of these Swiss artists left their native land to flourish on more fertile artistic ground, Fuseli in England and Böcklin in Germany. Hodler was the first major Swiss artist to stay home and formulate a national art image for his country.

Born in poverty Hodler was surrounded by death in his youth as he lost his parents and most of his siblings to tuberculosis. He was apprenticed first to a sign painter and later to a veduta painter, but he had to acquire all his non-technical art information and the rest of his liberal education on his own. At the age of 19 he went to Geneva where he lived for the rest of his life. He studied with Barthélemy Méreaux, a sophisticated Swiss landscapist (above

the veduta level of painting for tourists) of some international repute. What he learned from Méreaux about Barbizon school painting, especially Courbet's work, shows up in the silvery tonalities of his early portraits and landscapes. But the rigid rectilinear structuring of his early figurative works, their quietness, and their constant color reflect his early Biedermeier training. In his mature years Hodler systematized this structural inflexibility into symmetrical, axial compositions which he supported with a symbolic esthetic system he called Parallelism. Like many of his fellow Central European Symbolists during the period of "International Style" Art Nouveau which extended from the 1880's to the late teens of this century, Hodler codified a clearly readable form language with which to convey his highly complex pantheistic philosophy. He was also intensely involved with modern dance and utilized many of the gestures formalized by that discipline in his paintings. Encouraged and assisted by Paul de Chavannes and Gustav Klimt, Hodler was able to gain Europe-wide recognition in the first decade of this century. He exerted considerable influence on Egon Schiele and many of the German Expressionists before his death in 1918.

The exhibition includes over 100 paintings and drawings, the famous *Night of 1890, Day II* of 1904-06, and *Ecstasy* of 1895, numerous self-portraits and portraits of friends both living and dead (primarily the latter), as well as many Alpine landscapes from all periods of his career. The large-scale symbolic figurative compositions seem peculiarly static, rigidly posed and lifeless. Hard outlines encase each figure in airless sacs which their rhetorical gestures are powerless to break. Backgrounds of flattened cloud clumps and carpets of scattered flowers (reminiscent of Philipp Otto Runge) function decoratively. When the works are not neutrally toned the colors clash unnaturally. (He never really manages to be successful as a colorist.) Hodler's early illustrational figure studies and bi-laterally symmetrical portraits foreshadow all the faults of these grid-like compositions. His system seems a lot closer to a mechanical dividing-up of the surface than to an active compositional balancing of parts, which is probably why the resulting works lack any sense of energy or life. Munch and Klimt treated their figures symbolically, straining their forms into patterns that were readable in the same way as pictographs or sign language, but they usually managed to retain a semblance of real-life believability in their figures.

Because of his Classicist heritage Hodler emphasized the shape-defining outlines of his figures, investing them with sculptural solidity. A frieze of shuffling men like the ones in *Ecstasy* seems closer to Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*. In fact, many of his drawings do as well. And yet these very same linear elements which he struggled so hard to make meaningful are the ele-

Hodler, *The Dissolution*, 1892. Oil/canvas, 47½" x 117½". Collection Kunstmuseum, Bern, Guggenheim Museum



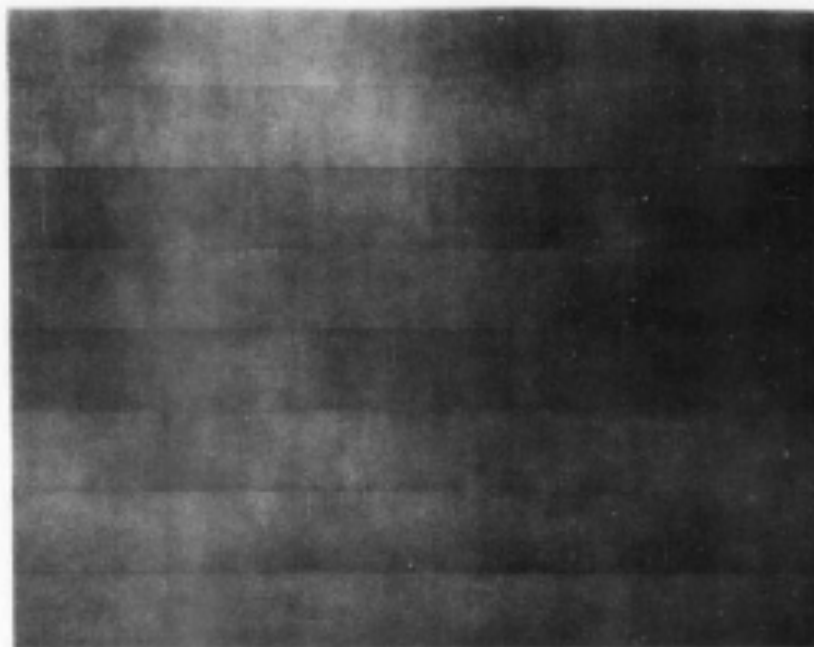
ments his best works function beautifully without. However ironically, his principal contribution seems to have been his ability to transcribe landscape motifs into abstracted structures that are most effective when the brushwork is loose. His early landscapes were full of nervous wiry tree trunks and branches arrayed in parallel sequences. They remind me of early Mondrian landscapes where the trees seem equally spaced and countable. Some of Hodler's symmetrical, bowl-shaped landscapes are also similar to Mondrian's abstract treatment of nature. Toward the end of the first decade of this century Hodler's mountain and lake views, frequently of Lake Geneva, began to loosen up and to show freer paint handling and emotional, deliberately unnatural color. The nearly monochromatic blue painting entitled *Rigi, Mist, and Jungfrau in Mist* is probably the best of these, but many of them are excellent, especially when the paint handling is loose and expressively rich.

During the last eight years of his life Hodler painted many views of a single mountain peak and flat landscapes in which horizontal bands of earth, water and sky are schematically simplified. They are his best work. *Levi Gross from Gao* shows the scrubbed, roughly factured surfaces, casual, sure brushwork, rich, non-local color that are typical of these apparently quickly noted and deeply felt "impressions" of nature. Like his Classicist forbears working in the genre, Hodler manages, in these late works, to render the grandeur of nature without resorting to atmospheric tricks or mood-producing illustrative devices. The paintings are clearly constructed and strong. All trace of romantic sentimentality has been eradicated. Hodler manages, in these works, to bring the tradition of Alpine veduta painting into the realm of twentieth century abstract thinking. He left off, in a sense, where Mondrian began.

We've grown accustomed to seeing Loretta Dunkelmann's work included in many of the group shows of women's art that have been mounted in the past two years, but her first one-woman show at A.L.R. provides a much clearer indication of her abilities than those spot appearances. In addition to three of her familiar wall-size white grid paintings, she showed one loosely stroked pinkish drawing, a large steel-blue painting, and an accordion folded book of white bird cut-outs on composition board. Her technique is to apply oil and wax base chalks layer on top of layer between the grids she makes on long rolls of paper until a smooth matte or glossy surface is obtained. Although the uniform quality is white, some color usually appears close to the grid lines. In *Le Nin* (my reference to Kurt Schwitters's formula for turning the world into art might well be inapt); the grid is large and the edges of each section are pink, providing more stress within the work than is usual.

Two wooden slats brace the top and bottom of Dunkelmann's paintings which look, as a result, like oversize rolled-out window shades. (If twentieth century painting is "about" rejecting the notion of the picture as window, Loretta Dunkelmann certainly manages to close this window both literally and figuratively.) The unbounded sides of these long sheets of coated paper curl naturally with the pull of the materials on their surface. This gives her work the appearance of Fontana's slashed canvases without the emotional connotations of configuration as gesture.

In spite of the large scale of her grids and the surface associations with clouds, ice, rain and snow, the work fails to escape echoes of Paul Frie and Agnes Martin or to get out from the shadows of Bob Ryman and Sol LeWitt. Probably for that reason, I prefer the slate-blue work with natural wood supports top and bottom which was divided by a single central vertical line and widely spaced horizontals in red. It employed the same surface richness as the other works without derivative implications. No such sixty-sixth minimal art involved the use of grids and of white that it is extremely difficult



Loretta Dunkelmann, *My Snow: Summer of '71*. Acrylic/canvas, 96" x 123". A.L.R. Gallery

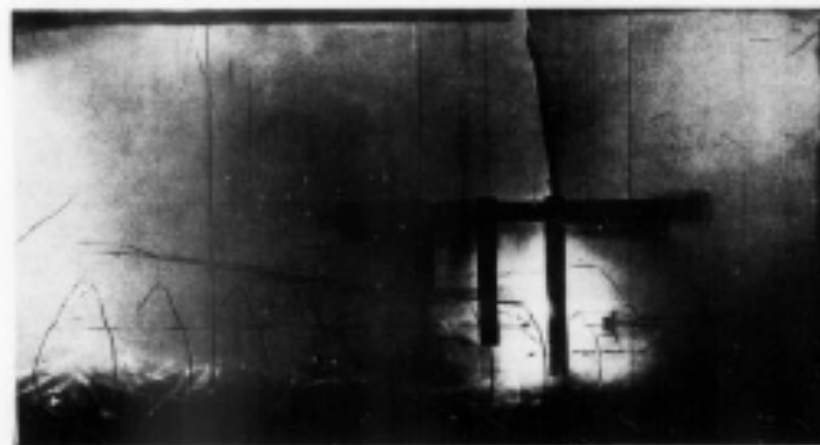
for an artist to continue in that vein today and be original.

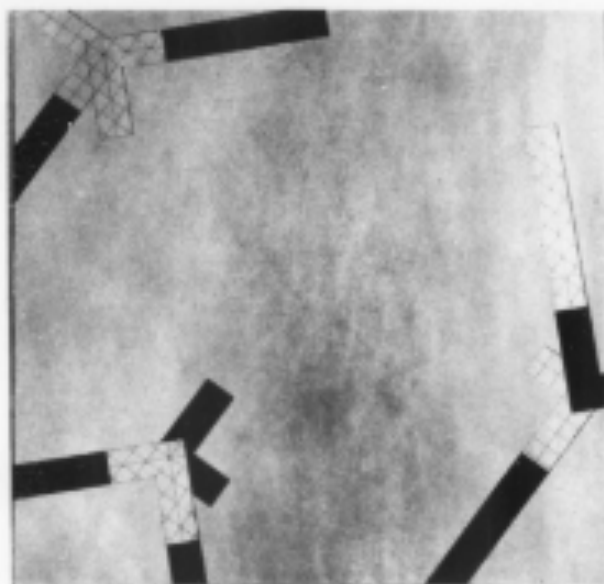
George Noel uses grids, too, but only as one element in a complex whole. His paintings at the Pace Gallery are obviously neo-plastic in derivation, obviously non-New York in their calm assurance, and obviously intelligent. Though he's 49 years old he worked as an engineer designing turbo jets in his native France until 1955 when he began devoting all his time to painting and sculpture. This is his first one-man show in New York and with it he has made a brilliant entrance. He uses sand, polymer binder, ink and graphite on square canvases, some of which he tips on end. The work is black and white, but another color is usually included: the darks are midnight blue and the lights are off white or pale beige. This subtle device promotes warmth and denies the "paper-ground" implications of black on white. His use of sand in polymer medium applied irregularly to the canvas functions similarly. It provides the "beaten touch" of warm color and of texture as well as lighting the deviously connotations of his configurations—right angled "L" or corner shapes which float ambiguously in the painting space. Cut out of the sand surface, and so behind it, their linear activity pulls them forward into our space, while their partially deep blue coloration locates them in some deep place behind the picture plane. Actually

there is no picture plane, as indeed there isn't in any modernist painting which observes the conventions of post-Cubist collage space with its multiple, parallel, unlocatable picture planes.

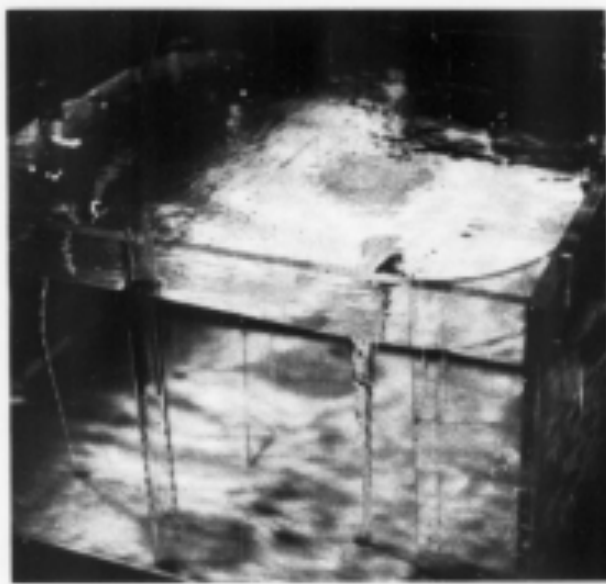
The linear elements within Noel's "corners" usually belong to at least two different grid systems. In the illustration two systems cross each other in three corners, while one of the two systems appears alone in two other corners. Of the six corners, clustered in three groups of two units each, one is looked at the corner's turning so that dark is atop light, one so that light surmounts dark, and the third so that light crosses light transparently. Though no arm of any "L" and no underlying grid system parallels the canvas edges in this particular work (as they do in some of the others on view) their relationship to those edges (in which they firmly adhere) is of paramount importance. The paintings convey a sensation of architectural solidity due to the referral of the internal units to the edges. At the same time the contradictory grid systems and the highly ambiguous spatial play breathe life into the paintings by virtue of their arbitrariness. They convey the sense of surprise, of the unsuspected, that it is in the general spirit of Surrealism. In other words, Noel's supreme attachment to Mondrian is balanced by a healthy grasp of the alternative attitudes contributed to modernist art by Surrealism. There is a fine balance of rational and irrational in evidence here. It gives his work something in common with the paintings of Al

Lytton Wells, *EC 72-73*. Photoprint and acrylic on photosensitized canvas, 7' x 14'. Cunningham Ward





Georges Noël, Untitled, 1972. Sand, ink and graphite with polymer binders on canvas, 72" x 72". Pace Gallery



Rachel Joe-Cobain, *Study I for Good Fortune*, completed in 1971. Recycled water in plexiglass container. A.J.R. Gallery

Held and Harry Kressner, among other New Yorkers who combine automatist procedures and a muscular form of Constructivism. Noël's work is elegant and refined, though stressing the rational side of things in a grossly French way.

The geometry of Noël's right angle and grid is opposed to the graffiti-like concentrations of scratches into and behind the surface. In spite of their precision these marks seem like signs on a since-resurfaced wall—palliposters of a past world behind the surface, once covered only to be exposed once again. Finely executed, exquisitely conceived, and rich in implications, these new paintings place George Noël firmly on the New York art scene. They are especially refreshing in the light of the recent resurgence of general painting here, so much of which is, unfortunately, as vacuous as the color field painting it is replacing.

Lynton Wells is another young painter showing in New York for the first time, and the work at Cassingham Ward is very promising. He overlaps many boundaries as a result of his technique, which is to paint and apply dyes to photosensitized film already containing a developed life-size black and white photograph. He thus combines painting and photography, abstraction and illusionism both real and invented. Since the pigment he applies is almost exclusively black and white or gray, the overall results belong to the tradition of large-scale grisaille painting.

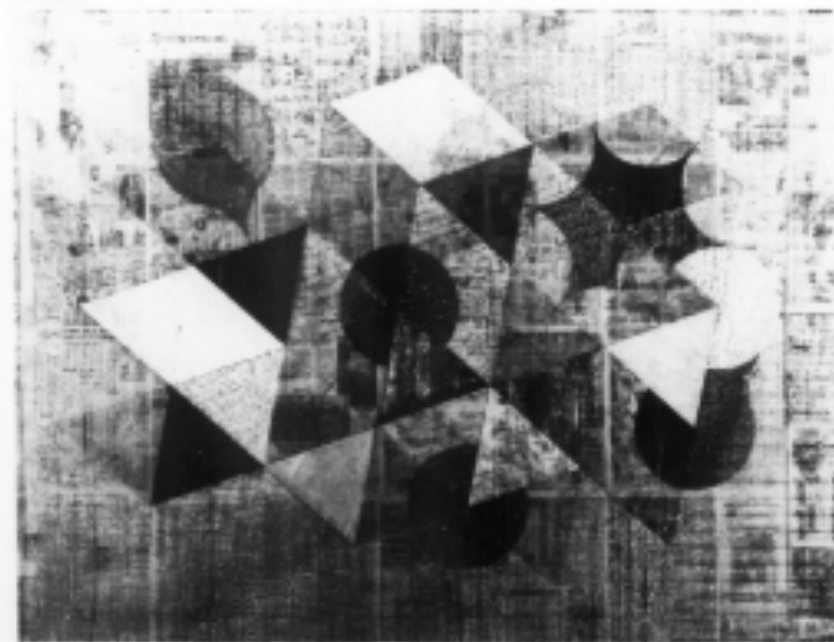
The photographs he utilizes are unclear views of what would seem to be his studio, usually featuring a ladder or some other rectilinearly banded structure of wood or metal. Sheets of clear plastic are often located somewhere within the photographed space and a hint of wall or floor is always given. The area is unevenly illuminated by spotlights located on or near the floor which cause the transparent plastic sheets to shimmer. He denies this illusion of a real room space containing objects by flat overpainting, some of which is applied to create a second, contradictory illusion of depth through the perspectival rendering of geometrical or quasi-geometrical units. Painterly passages near the top and down the sides flatten the space while flecks and dashes of paint float as if they were located on an invisible screen forming the plane closest to the viewer. The photographed plastic sheets function to make the space of the painting transparent and unknowable, but the sturdy wooden structures focus our attention on the "important" place in the painting giving it a strong hierarchical composition. The overall sensation is one of

slivery luminosity, that is optically sensation and impalpable.

Each of the four large four-panel paintings on view share these qualities, though in one the realism of the depicted space is stressed and another is overpainted so heavily that the ambiguous transparency/transparency balance is upset. As far as I know, Wells has marked out a special territory for himself with this technique, and he is occupying that territory with vigor and with a complexity of concept and imagery that is heartening. In this current period of anti-reductivist thinking Wells has widened his options sufficiently to occupy a range of expression from the impulsive muscular calligraphy of Franz Kline, through the *tempe/col* banality of Howard Kanarek's world to the sophisticated multiplicity of Surrealist procedures. One is reminded of Miró's paintings on top of old portraits and, inexplicably, of Magritte. Wells is exploring a fascinating hybrid region, which seems to be a very natural activity in this current post-painter decade.

Like Lynton Wells, Tom Wull has marked off a private art territory for himself, but he does less with it. The new works are, however, stronger than those I've seen before in Los Angeles and in the Sidney Janis Gallery show of L.A. art last spring. His current Ron Feldman Gallery show is his fourth one-man exhibition, the first in New York, which must be fairly remarkable for a 23-year-old artist who emigrated to this country from South America in 1958. Of the six works in the show I found the two on newspaper the most visually rewarding as the others used a white ground which didn't call enough spatial complexity into play for my taste: their figure-ground distinctions were too clear. Wull coats paper, rice paper or newspaper, with clear acrylic, dyes and paints geometrical shapes on their surfaces and then picks out the central area of the painting for stress. Here he reinforces the geometrical shapes—circles, triangles and polyhedrons—with metallic and non-metallic pigments leaving many of them partially or completely solid while he punches holes out of their neighbors and all of the surrounding surface. The result is

Tom Wull, Untitled, Newspaper, metallic and non-metallic acrylics, 79" x 100 1/2". Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



lacy and fragile. Only the top and sides are bordered; the bottom edge is left an open-ended situation.

Wadd's paintings are literally collages, and I think that one of the reasons I prefer the newspaper-ground works is that they refer directly to the use of newspaper in Cubist collage. Like the Cubists Wadd seems to choose his reading material deliberately, and to expose only certain meaningful words. His interest in comics and fashion illustrations also recalls Schwitters's cheerful incorporation of similar imagery. But the general appearance of the paintings is closer, to Paul Klee's delicate overlapping washes and collages, though the scale has been jumped considerably. Wadd's holes unify his surfaces while they open it up to allow the wall behind a role in its spatial layering. The geometries invest his image with structural order, but the fact that all the geometrical units are off the axes of the paintings edges leads to instability and a sense of playfulness to the work. Vertical stability is only present in the newspaper margin which the centralized configurations float and work against. Wadd, like many of his young contemporaries, is overly involved with his materials and too engrossed in detailing, but the play of hard edge and broken line, of opacity and transparency, of open and closed, mathematical and harmonious facets in his work saves it from mere decorativeness.

William Petet is another Californian, but has been living in New York since 1963. He is attempting to condense a firm world out of the mine of color field painting, like a number of his peers, by organizing the canvas into wide banded areas of color. Color field painters wouldn't break the surface consistency of their paintings by using colors that were totally different from one another. They only had time to play with, and even that range was limited to artificial or non-natural colors. The rules controlling their painting were as strict as those of Impressionism, and often much like them. Now this is breaking up. Petet uses a wide range of colors from black to red or yellow and deep blue. Sometimes the automatic spatial implications of his localities cause him trouble. But when he doesn't make the mistake of running a dark area up the side of the canvas where it falls off into deep space or crystallizing a rich saturated color so that it bounces forward off the canvas, he manages to hold his surfaces together.

There is a wide range of paint handling techniques in use from one area to another in his paintings. This variety within a given work is one of his best features. One section may seem to have been poured on, another to have been washed lightly across the surface, while a third travelled thickly on and incompletely scraped away. Each technique bears its own imaginative connotations be it of water flowing over sand, of cellular striations, or of newspaper, and these sensations change the work emotionally.

Rossie Landfield's paintings at the Andre Emmerich downtown gallery represent the same sort of general solidification of color field painting as William Petet's paintings. Landfield too uses color band configurations. He divides his surfaces into wide vertical units adding narrow horizontal bands near the top to prevent a perspectival reading. Some areas are loosely brushed and contain overlapping passages of varicolored pigment while other areas, usually the sides and part of the top, are pure, unmodulated color. Ubiquitous color field pinks and greens are accented by warm areas of deep red or yellow, and dusky blues or greys. These saturated colors cut the sugary sweetness of the pastel hues. Like Richard Diebenkorn's landscape abstractions (with which Landfield's paintings have much in common) implications of nature are minimized by drawing devices as well as by the use of artificial colors. Landfield employs diagonals sparingly, but to good effect, and the areas of swift painterly stroking produce a nice sense of movement by their blurriness in contrast with the still areas of solid flat



William Petet, *Lot*, 1972. Water-based plastic paint, 56" x 71". Willard Gallery

color. Though still derivative and not yet fully evolved, Landfield shows evidence of a reasonable command of compositional techniques and scale which should augur well for his future.

Response to Jan Dibbets' recent show at the Leo Castelli Gallery indicates that he may well be as popular here as we are told he is in his native Holland. Ever since he gave up painting in 1967 for a hybrid form of pictorial conceptualism, Dibbets, it seems, could do no wrong. After an early derivative period in this mode when Richard Long was especially influential on him and two years of fluctuation and uncertainty from 1968 to 1970 when Douglas Huebler, in particular among the Americans, seems to have had a great effect on his thinking, Dibbets managed to level out on a plane of his own. The recent work is especially beautiful, even elegant, and fits right into the Dutch tradition of clear light and pure form. Since 1971 he has been concentrating on still lifes which remind one of the little Dutch masters of old, and landscapes which make allusions to that traditional landscape genre. Of course, Dibbets does it all with photographs, not oil.

His first post-painting works, the "perspective corrections" were executed on temporary sites, usually out-of-doors, but they functioned correctly only from the one point perspective of the camera lens. They probably stem from Richard Long's *England*, 1965, or some other similar earthwork of his. (A similar schema to Long's use of the divided pie configuration in this work recurs in Dibbets' Dutch *Mosaic* works of 1971 where he rotates the camera 360° to photograph an entire horizon at specified intervals.) The basic "trick" of the "perspective corrections" was for Dibbets to actually draw a trapezoid on earth or wall, but to photograph it from just the one angle and distance that would cause it to register as a square in the camera's eye. Such optical geometry games known as anamorphoses were quite popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In the period of fluctuation from 1968 to 1970 Dibbets rocked back and forth between this sort of work, which used the camera's functions as an essential formal element, and utilizing the camera for documentary purposes. It was this second use which brought about a great deal of confusion in people's minds between his work and that of Douglas Huebler whose *Justicia* and *Dispositio* pieces often preceded it. Works in this category include shots of a particular place taken over an extended time

interval such as *The Shower in My Studio . . .*, 1969, and geometries drawn on maps and imaginatively transposed to real sites through photographs like *Study for Moscow*, 1970. There is one important difference between their attitudes though which involves their intentions. Dibbets intends a complete picture of something with a clear, narrative structure which starts at the beginning, passes through a more or less climactic center and ends at a real end. He gives the viewer all the visual data necessary to achieve a complete view of his chosen subject. Huebler, a true conceptualist, only hints. He gives indications that are only sufficient to set up a model of his intentions toward his subject, leaving it to his viewer to actually complete the work through a compound mental/visual process of deductive inference. The results of Dibbets' art activity are finished products satisfying on a purely visual level. Huebler, on the other hand, places much less stock on his visual material, always borrowing it with specially formulated wording, and forces the viewer into an active participation in the piece. Dibbets involves the viewer passively in making esthetic decisions about completed objects.

Since 1971 certain definite qualities have become visible in Dibbets' work that set it apart from that of his peers. Primary among these is his intense relationship to his particular heritage as a Dutch artist. Two pieces in particular in the recent show emphasized this. *Film: Black Four* is a rectangle of 80 slanted color photographs on aluminum mounted in series. Presumably made from film stills like many of his other serial works, it depicts that traditional still life subject, a bottle, coming into view at the left of the frame, crossing its centerpoint, and disappearing off the right edge of the field. Such a progressive approach to a static subject (as well as his static approach to the movie medium) immediately brings Leger's "film strip" compositions to mind, but Dibbets' clear, radiant lighting causes the work to have more in common with a seventeenth-century Dutch interior by Vermeer than anything in modern art. Exactly the same procedures and results are involved in his *Film: White Table* which was displayed at eye level cantilevered out from the long wall of the gallery in a single horizontal extending from one end of the room to the other.

Dibbets makes obvious connections with the art of the past, although sometimes with a tongue-in-cheek attitude, as when he assembles a series of photographs of a panoramic view of



Bill Bollinger, *Ibo*, 1972-73. Cast iron and wood, height 5'10"

the flat Dutch lowland in a swelling curve and calls it a "Dutch Mountain". His recent work is not documentary, but it is also not grossly phenomenological. It is too artfully executed for either intention to be realized in a pure form. Dikken now does less exploring of his medium, photography, for its properties and uses it more for traditional purposes—making well composed still lifes or landscapes—with an up-to-date look.

Some sculpture now, to leave the problems of recent painting for a while. The Whitney biennial was overloaded with so-called "anti-form" sculpture very little of which held even passing interest for me. In fact, I found that Rosalind Bladen, Clement Meadmore, and Tony Smith, all "minimalists", produced the most effective sculpture in the show. Their tough pieces stood out amid the plethora of roughly hewn beams, propped steel and glass, cor-ten and string that translated the Whit-

ney's austere spaces. I was beginning to consider giving up hope for serious sculpture when I came across the Bill Bollinger show at O.K. Harris. Yes, rough hewn beams. Found-looking objects, it's true. Lying on the floor and seeming old and much used, that too. But it had magic! Recalling ancient mid-eastern steles, Mayan plaques, worn Romanesque stone carvings, and modern machinery, each piece had presence and exerted an aura of ritualistic force.

In fact the metal parts of his pieces were cast by Bollinger himself in iron. But they look corroded and ancient as though they once contained recognizable images now so rounded off by the action of the elements as to be indistinguishable. *Ibo* which stood in a formidable upright posture with its chunky feet planted firmly on two banks of timber had the air of being a mystical Celtic or Druidic cult figure. The "U" shaped neck of the piece (which also functions as a negative head) conjures up visions of stocks and gallows. Its five irregular oval

intentional crescent flowers, stained glass windows, a Matisse collage, a star, hand or foot and a dozen other things.

Bollinger adjusts interval as carefully as any other contemporary sculptor following in the wake of Don Judd, but he also has a finely tuned sense of asymmetry which causes his deliberate variations to seem casual and accidental effects to seem planned. Two beams of a piece may line up together at one end, for instance, and one of them be three inches shorter at the other, and yet the pieces seem symmetrical at first glance. Or, regularly spaced units may appear three times in succession and then the fourth, for which there is exactly enough room, will be missing. Bollinger knows that we expect mathematical predictability in sculpture and he gives it to us, but he also hands us a big dose of the unexpected to swallow along with it. None of his work falls into random distribution or informal procedures though, which mark so much recent sculpture.

Bollinger, who has been showing in New York since 1966, used to work with much larger pieces incorporating steel beams, rubber and plastic tubing, water, lumber, and whole timbers. He seemed to be vying with Robert Morris in scale and humor. Since then, his style has solidified into recognizability. In the process his work has become smaller and more compact, as if it too were solidifying and concentrating itself down to essentials. Intellectual considerations now substitute for brute force and the rhythmic power of his work has been amplified. His sculptures relate to architecture because he uses structural members which he places simply on the floor orienting them axially with the room space. Yet they feel anthropomorphic; they have the quality of being live things at rest, still giving off fields of energy. It is much the same feeling that Brancusi's forms evoke—the feeling that the material is still alive and affecting us.

William Sellers' work is so firmly oriented to architecture that it comes dangerously close to merging with it. In his Max Hutchinson Gallery show all the pieces were columnar, comprised only of right angles, and painted white, like the gallery walls. They emerged clearly from the floor and shot straight up to the ceiling except on the rare occasions when they happened to make a right-angled jog over to the wall. There were so many pieces included in the show that it looked like an environment. Some of them were actively articulated by knots of neo-plastic detailing, while others soared smoothly from floor to ceiling. I found the pieces that formed post-and-lintel configurations with the wall to be the most effective, simply because they made me aware of their size in relation to my height. The geometrical purity of Sellers' work obviously links it into the tradition of Constructivism and the work of Van Doesberg and Vantongerloo in particular. But there is something about the general anthropomorphic of David Smith that seems to invade the work mysteriously as well. I feel this is the eccentric clusterings of small units at the ends of large ones; in horizontal aberrantly kicked out from verticals to the wall; when a clean vertical is interrupted by an open-work knot in its mid-region; and in the expansive, eschewed round of the work as a whole. All this makes Sellers' sculpture seem peculiarly American.

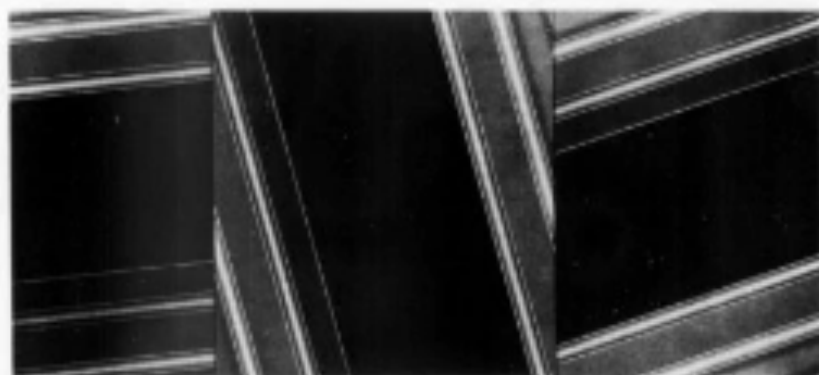
Although the art and technology marriage of the sixties flared for separation some time ago there seem to be a few paings left in the romance—Rachel bas-Cobain's "Water Works" for instance. Her six pieces involving water at the A.I.R. Gallery form ice, condensation, whirlpools, bubbles, and drips through the natural action of temperature, pressure and gravity on air and moisture. All the pieces are transparent except *Das Point*, a small seeping piece involving a cooled copper plate, and *First Piece*, in which a mass of ice crystals formed on a cooled grey metal plate. *Study #7 for Grand Fortin* is an elegant plexiglas tank with four suction holes in

its base which create whirlpools in the water's surface and a keel, unpleasant sucking sound. Its problem is that it involves too obvious a dependence on technology to seem enough like art to be satisfying on an esthetic level. *Mosseswing Rivulet*, a leak piece, does though, and so does *Rising the MTA* which consists of eight cracked glass panels suspended from the ceiling in the middle of the gallery space. It conjures up memories of Duchamp's *Large Glass*, of frost on the window on a cold morning, and of the ubiquitous urban sight of broken windows. *Mosseswing Rivulet* evoked poetic associations with water dripping into a puddle, rain running down a window or onto the roof of a cabin, and splashing in a still pond. All in all, a pleasant if lightweight show.

The latest in the current rash of women's group shows has been the exhibition of "IX Painters" at Fordham University in Lincoln Center. Nine or ten seems to be the magic number of participants for most of these women's shows and it usually works out quite well. It permits a wide range of styles to be included without visual chaos resulting. In the Fordham show, for instance, no two artists worked similarly. Alice Baber's flowing transparent arabesque blobs in pastel occupy the opposite end of the esthetic spectrum from Gertie Campbell's Cézanne-inspired landscape impressions, like *View from the Top of the Hill at Ribbles*, which is a literal expression of her involvement with traditional styles. Loretta Dunkelmann's work has been discussed earlier in this letter. The piece in this show was unfortunately mounted on a floating wall. Its location and its bland surface operated to confuse a number of the viewers who thought it was itself a wall. Natalie Edgar's Matisse-inspired collage-like painting *Away* made an interesting pair with Fay Lussner's Picasso-derived *Motomorphous III* with its abstract curvilinear figures set in a broken collage-like space. Gabriele Ross' smooth, tri-partite striped abstraction seemed particularly clean-edged and precise in the company of Thomas Schwartz's well-sized painting *The Time*, which is actually an over-painted collage of newspaper on canvas. I'd never seen Schwartz's work before and found it to be especially interesting. Nora Speyer, whose work I discussed here a bit last month, showed another of her Adam-and-Eve-and-the-

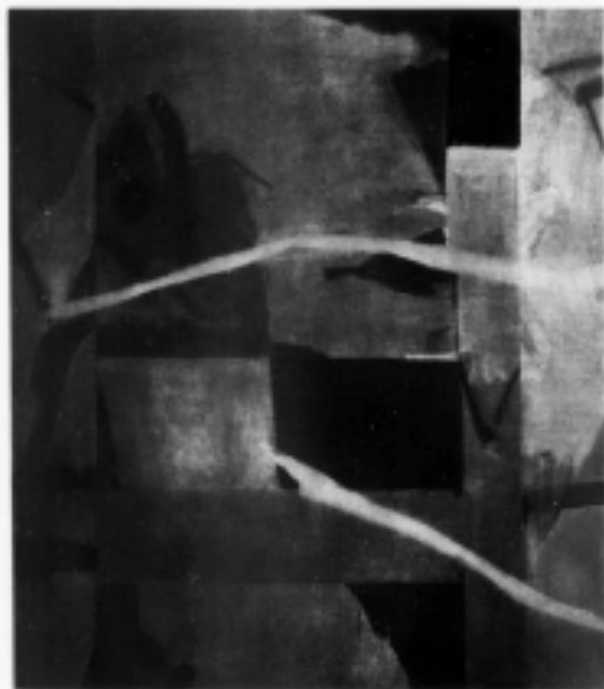


Fay Lussner. *Motomorphous III*, 1971. Oil/canvas, 60" x 100". IX Painters at Fordham University

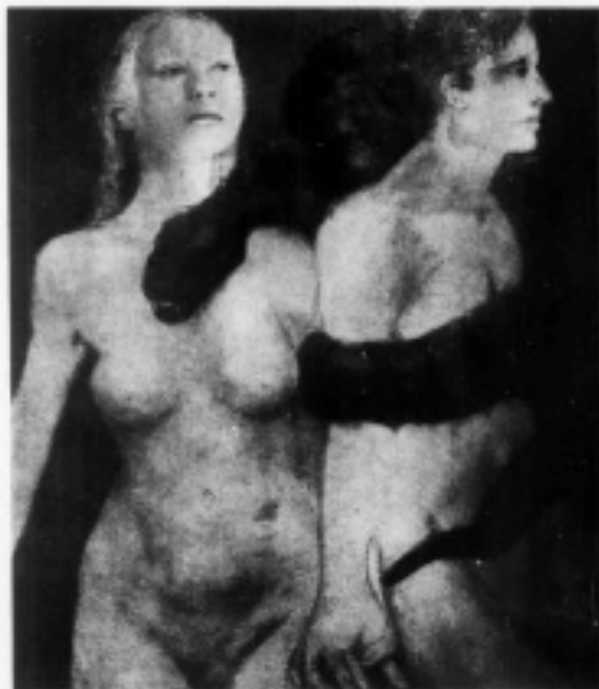


Gabriele Ross. *3 Parts*. Acrylic/canvas, 66" x 144". IX Painters

Natalie Edgar. *Away*, 1972. Oil/canvas, 60" x 50". From IX Painters at Fordham University



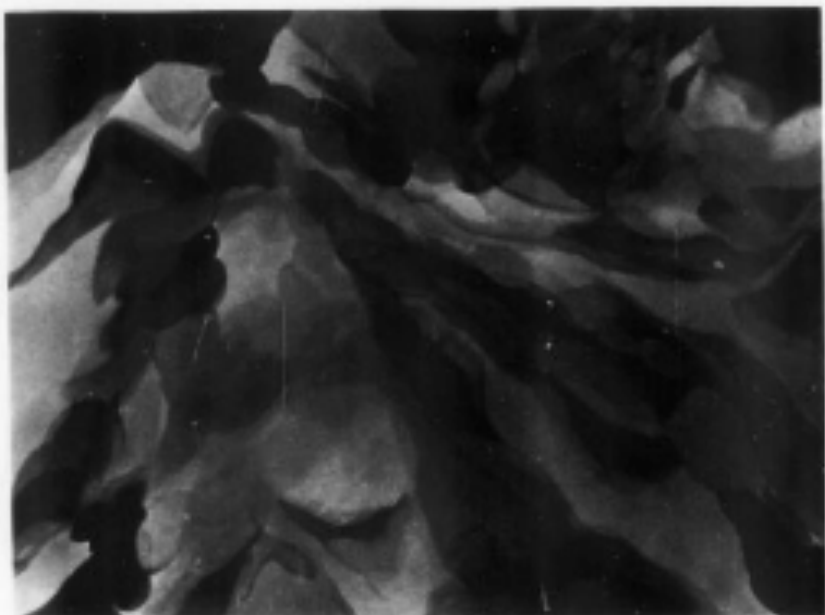
Nora Speyer. *Adam and Women*. Oil/canvas, 60" x 70". IX Painters, Fordham University



make-being-expelled-from-paradise paintings. Vivienne Wechsler's *St. David's Island* seemed too close to Robert Motherwell's early collages for comfort but was a strong painting in spite of that. None of the work seemed particularly "womanly" by any of the standards thus far set forth by critics or by women's liberation spokeswomen. Even my own general feeling that women tend to use curves a great deal was largely relaxed by the lack of them in much of the work in this show. The paintings were as varied in quality as one might expect from any group show, male or female, but they were by no means inferior to the usual all male show.

Lastly, two other women's exhibitions in off-beat locations—Colette in Westbeth and Joanna Baill in the Great Building Crack Up Gallery—are worth mentioning. Both are highly eccentric artists. Colette covered the walls and ceiling of her entrance gallery space with panel-tinted and white silk parachute material, and painted the floor white before covering it with dotted-line diagrams. Bunched and tacked, draped and wrapped around every available surface the silk material turned her gallery space into an exotic *sesaglia* housing a series of sculpted silk-lined armchairs. These were lit from within and housed figural collages in three dimensions made of painted fragments of canvas. The artist or a designated stand-in performed in the gallery at specific intervals. The sheer materiality of Colette's environment was oppressive to the point of claustrophobia, but fascinating in its naïve sensuality nonetheless.

Joanna Baill's primitivizing paintings of Americana seen through the dark glasses of Surrealism seem almost tame in comparison. Disturbing, whimsical, baroque, and not a little cartoon-like, her finely crafted paintings varied from Magrittean sophistication in the



Alice Baher. *Lochite over and under*, 1972. 58" x 77". A. M. Sachs Gallery

Figliac paintings to "Looney-Toons" rancidity in *Gods Beach* where one might expect Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf to put in a warden appearance. Her highly saturated color augments the sense of unreality in her work, but she also employs subtle scale distortions to

create this effect. The show included paintings from 1965 to 1972, each one apparently a painstaking and time-consuming effort. She hasn't made any radical shifts over the course of those years, just a gradual tightening of her hold on compositional skills and color.

Colette. Environment. "I can ... move" (with sound of waves in background). Westbeth Gallery

