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EVELYN WELCH
University of Essex

Gotico e Rinascimento. 319 pp. +
ri, Milan, 1988).

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& Albert's reassessment
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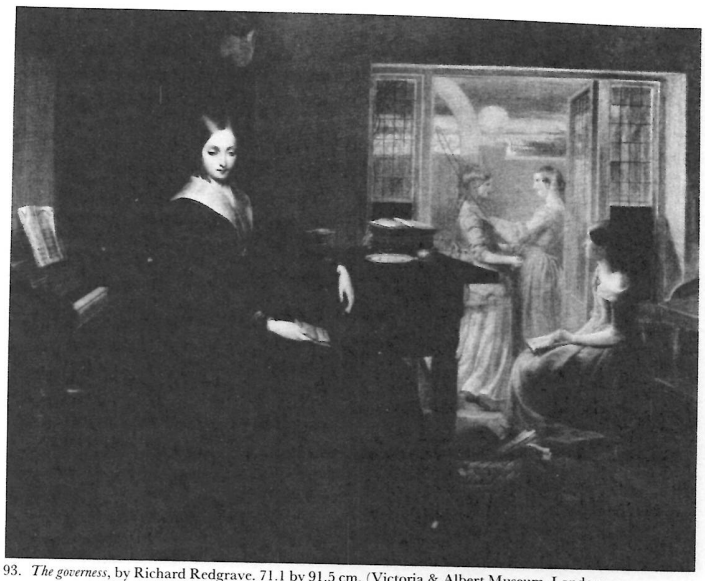
and ornament. In one of the strongest essays in the accompanying book/catalogue,* Anthony Burton has shown how far Redgrave was the mouthpiece for the Cole coterie and the populariser of other current design ideas.

Although his later public life was both glamorous and high-profile, Redgrave's early years were full of anxiety. His family were genteelly poor, and his youthful diaries reveal his horror at having to debt collect for his father's ailing business, having to brave terrifying slum children and the criminal classes of Regency west London. His early paintings, the famous *The governess* (Fig.93), *The poor teacher* and *The reduced gentleman's daughter* all deal with female victims of poverty and loneliness. His heroines are all unmistakably 'ladies', gentle creatures with pale, exquisite features and slender hands, who, like Redgrave, had come down in the world or whose sensibilities are too frail to bear its harshness. Their oppressors are either absent and unspecified or the vulgar *nouveau riche* – a class to which no-one lays claim to belong. These are not protest pictures but are designed to express and evoke poignant sympathy. These helpless, suffering women form an unthreatening species of worker who would not join a Chartist march or combine in a Trades Union.

The exhibition, which has now moved from the V & A to the **Yale Center for British Art** (to 7th August), was, in its London showing, in many ways a disappointingly inarticulate effort. Redgrave's pictures appear like isolated icebergs, unexplained and curiously opaque objects. The pictures were rigorously segregated from Redgrave's designs, although they are contemporaneous and indeed reflect upon one another in interesting ways. Redgrave's obsession with naturalism and detail could have been brought out by more daring juxtapositions. This arrangement, compounding the common discrimination against applied art, is a missed opportunity. Redgrave's earnest social conscience, his zeal for all forms of national progress and his willingness to earn his keep at any art enterprise, are equally relevant to his art and to his design productions. To separate them is particularly ironic since Cole and his set were committed to bridging the gulf between fine and manufactured art.

The disjunctions in the arrangement of the exhibition are carried over into the book/catalogue which expensively accompanies it. The family histories of the Redgraves and their remote 'connections' are explored at extraordinary length. Redgrave's technique as a draughtsman is given short shrift. The exhibition's principal organiser, Susan Casteras, gives a sadly brief account of his fascinating genre and subject paintings (Fig.94) and a thoughtful essay on his fine landscapes. The decision to write a book of 99 pages in the form of eight essays by seven, very different scholars, was surely a mistake. Redgrave inevitably escapes between the spaces of their interests and we are left with a somewhat unsatisfying result. It is doubtful whether the multi-talented Redgrave would have chosen to fragment the different aspects of his career and experience into these categories. The real book on Redgrave, his significance as a cultural manager during this crucial period of transition for the arts, and the meanings of his curious paintings, has still to be published.

JOAN HICHBERGER
Manchester Polytechnic



93. *The governess*, by Richard Redgrave. 71.1 by 91.5 cm. (Victoria & Albert Museum, London; exh. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven).

The Burlington Magazine, Vol. 130, No. 1024 (July 1988), 561-563.

*Richard Redgrave 1804-1888. Edited by Susan P. Casteras and Ronald Parkinson, with essays by Elizabeth Bonython, Anthony Burton, Shirley Bury, Lionel Lambourne, Oliver Millar and Robert Twyman-Heaven. 175 pp. + 12 col. pls. + numerous b. & w. ills. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1988). £30. ISBN 0-300-04221-3 (HB); ISBN 0-300-04305-8 (PB).

New York
Baziotes, Newman, Motherwell, Dehner, Hare

These days a number of New York galleries are acting as mini-museums, mounting small-scale retrospectives of their senior artists' work often accompanied by informative catalogues written by important critics and scholars. This spring, Abstract Expressionism, now generally recognised as an American national treasure, has been the focus and, happily, with the exceptions of William Baziotes and Barnett Newman, all of the exhibited artists are alive and still working.

94. *The emigrant's last sight of home*, by Richard Redgrave. 67.9 by 98.4 cm. (Tate Gallery; exh. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven).

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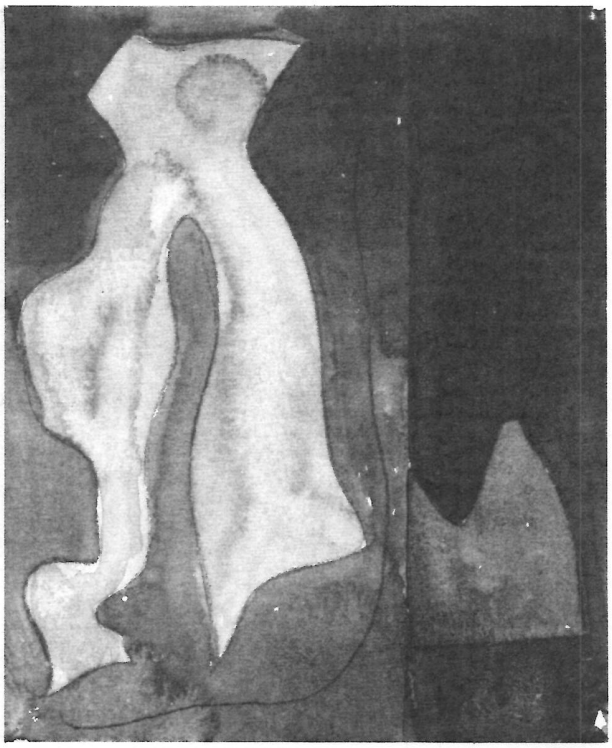
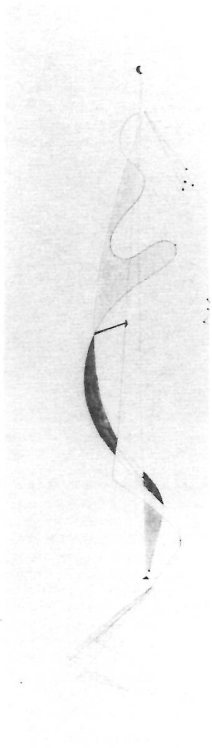


95.

95. *Untitled*, by William Baziotes. c.1962. Water-colour on paper, 21.6 by 17.8 cm. (BlumHelman, New York).

96. *Homely Protestant II (40 years later)*, by Robert Motherwell. 1980-88. Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 213.2 by 106.7 cm. (Knoedler, New York).



97. *Artist and model*, by Dorothy D (Twining Gallery, New York).

98. *Apple window*, by David Hare. New York).

The Baziotes and Newman exhibitions (both on 57th Street at the **BlumHelman** and **Pace** galleries respectively) tied for first prize in terms of quality of work selected, installation, and catalogue. Four decades of works on paper were represented in the Baziotes exhibition (Fig.95), while twelve major paintings executed between 1946 and 1970 featured in the Newman show. Both installations were elegant and, since the Newman exhibition consists of works on canvas borrowed from public and private collections for the occasion, it is literally of museum quality.

As for the catalogues, the Baziotes is preferable, with its artist's bulletin-board-like portrait by his wife Ethel and its fine essay by Michael Preble; one learns much more about Baziotes's paintings and the man who made them than can be gleaned from Yve-Alain Bois's formalist treatment of Newman in the Pace catalogue. Bois's prose is sometimes off-putting, sprouting, as it does, sentences such as: 'The laterality of the field which is enunciated by the symmetry is undermined by the illusion of shallow depth.' But, style notwithstanding, he does make a strong case for his idea that Newman's work is fundamentally an 'inquiry about the nature of perception'. Of course, the formal appearance of Newman's paintings might well justify this approach, except that Newman disliked his work being discussed in such abstract terminology. One remembers his claim that 'esthetics is for the artist as ornithology is for the birds'.

Newman was as deeply involved with mythic themes and primordial subject matter as was Baziotes, and, if his titles mean anything, he may have been as inspired by philosophy and religion as Baziotes was by French symbolist poetry. But it is far less obvious in Newman's work than in Baziotes's dreaming world of biomorphic forms afloat in limpid pools of coloured light. Creation about nothing was decoration to Baziotes, just as it was to Newman, Robert Motherwell, and David Hare, all of whom shared teaching hours at The Subjects of the Artists School on 8th Street between 1948 and 1950. These men urged their students to expunge all traditional subject matter from their canvases and to forget what they had previously learned, whether it was in a conventional academic setting like the Art Student's League or from the School of Paris cubists. Instead the students were encouraged to put in visual form what they alone could express: their own most personal and idiosyncratic vision. As one can readily trace in his works on paper, Baziotes had found the biomorphic image-world capable of expressing his deepest thoughts early in the 1940s (with some helpful inspiration from surrealist friends). By the end of the decade, Newman took the next step out of that world of image-objects and into 'pure ideas' expressed in paint. When he did – as in *Onement I*, 1948 – he became a radical new kind of painter. (In this way Newman resembles Franz Kline, who made his similar breakthrough late in the 40s and also showed the radical results of his 'conversion' to the rest of the art world for the first time in 1950.)

Baziotes, whose literary gifts were as finely honed as his painting skills, once wrote about paintings as a search for self: 'Pictures reflect us . . . Today it's possible to paint one canvas with the calmness of an ancient Greek, and the next with the anxiety of a Van Gogh . . . They are my mirrors. They tell me what I am like at the moment'. His words r his old friend Robert M paints like a man who beg if he does not know what he is. The range of imagery colouristic modes in his **K** bition of recent collages a viously unshown works r some critics' idea that h Motherwells' over and ove dicates how desperately he to clarify his aesthetic ide cool master of perfect place the collages or is he the c draftsman of the bulbous 'H he the heir to Matisse's cry ism as his *Open* series led u to a clashing, turgid Vlami the new paintings suggest? spirit to Mondrian's constr Dubuffet's brutalism? The show varies widely in qua painting, *Homely Protestant II* equivocally marvellous. Lik of the later years, this exhil a Motherwell who searches here, failing there, and not to repeat old successes.

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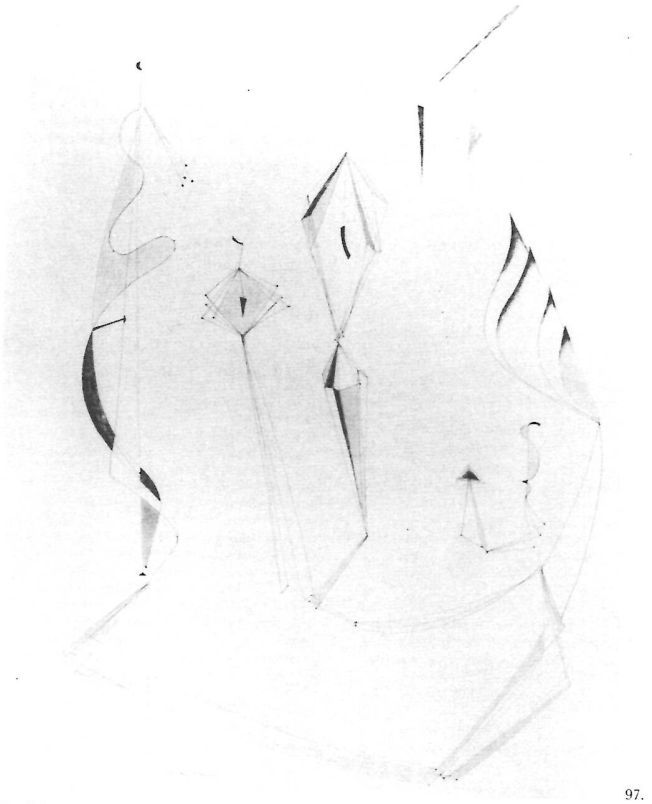

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97. *Artist and model*, by Dorothy Dehner. 1950. Pen and ink on paper, 58.4 by 46.4 cm. (Twining Gallery, New York).

98. *Apple window*, by David Hare. Steel and bronze, 33 by 15 by 12 in. (Gruenebaum Gallery, New York).

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the moment'. His words ring as true for his old friend Robert Motherwell, who paints like a man who begins each day as if he does not know what kind of painter he is. The range of imagery, handling and colouristic modes in his **Knoedler** exhibition of recent collages and other previously unshown works runs counter to some critics' idea that he is 'painting Motherwells' over and over. Instead it indicates how desperately he is still seeking to clarify his aesthetic identity. Is he the cool master of perfect placement we see in the collages or is he the clumsy, wobbly draftsman of the bulbous 'hollow men'? Is he the heir to Matisse's crystalline colourism as his *Open* series led us to believe, or to a clashing, turgid Vlaminck as some of the new paintings suggest? Is he closer in spirit to Mondrian's constructivism or to Dubuffet's brutalism? The work in this show varies widely in quality; only one painting, *Homely Protestant II* (Fig.96), is unequivocally marvellous. Like the Cézanne of the later years, this exhibition shows us a Motherwell who searches on, succeeding here, failing there, and not content merely to repeat old successes.

Motherwell has never tried his hand at sculpture, though his friend David Smith often urged him to do so. It is interesting how many of the Abstract Expressionist painters did take up sculpture – De Kooning, Gottlieb, Gorky and Newman, whose *Broken obelisk* may, arguably, be the single finest American work in the medium. (Kline and Pollock made a few minor attempts at sculpture.) Conversely, and equally of interest, are the Abstract Expressionist sculptors who also worked in two dimensions. Besides Smith, there are his wife, Dorothy Dehner, and David Hare and Herbert Ferber. Recently, Dorothy Dehner was the subject of a major retrospective spanning six decades at the **Twining Gallery** in conjunction with Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The Twining show contained numerous drawings: those from the fifties (Fig.97), and her laterally-oriented 'landscape' sculptures are so spatially interactive and rich in suggestion that they pull away from everything else being done at the time, including her husband's work. Dehner's situation parallels Lee Krasner's in that both women were initially the strong, front-running artistic figures in the marriage and both spent a long time in their husbands' shadows once they were overtaken. Now that Dehner is out in the light we can see the unique aspects of her achievement.

David Hare started out as a photographer, became a sculptor in the early 40s (while still in his twenties), producing pieces which remain the cornerstones of many a major museum's collection of early Abstract Expressionism, and, during the last two decades, has been at least as busy making collage-paintings as sculpture. The survey at the **Gruenebaum Gallery** (5th to 28th May) included mixed metal welded figural work from the forties, hybrid pieces assembled out of wood, stone, metal, and plexiglass from succeeding decades, and a selection of the paintings. *Apple window* (Fig.98) is a fine example of his work in its multiple associations and vaguely menacing quality, but untypical in its relative simplicity. Much of his work is so technically refined in its skilful manipulation of many different kinds of material for wide-ranging effects that it seems a little over-ripe to eyes accustomed to minimalist austerity. His paintings, on the other hand, are big and bold, and look very much apiece with other work on view in New York today.

APRIL KINGSLEY