

PROGRAM

(1) We have agreed that the most direct approach to our objective is the exhibition of our work. We shall show together at least once a year, making it constantly our effort to have our annual, or more frequent, exhibitions present in a dignified and competent way all the significant "abstract" work done in America. There is no limitation upon our members showing with other groups. On the contrary, we wish to encourage our members to form separate discussion and exhibition groups which may each have a more unified character than our general organization.



(2) American Abstract Artists will provide opportunities for group discussion and experimentation among its members.



(3) In addition to such publicity as attends our exhibitions, we shall undertake when possible a broader and more general type of educational publicity, such as a magazine, a year-book, pamphlets or public lectures.



American Abstract Artists invite into an Associate Membership those individuals who do not wish, or who are not entitled, to exhibit with us, but who otherwise are in sympathy with our general purpose.

**AMERICAN
ABSTRACT ARTISTS**

**GENERAL
PROSPECTUS**

GENERAL PURPOSE

Our purpose is to unite American "abstract" artists, (1) to bring before the public their individual works, (2) to foster public appreciation of this direction in painting and sculpture, (3) to afford each artist the opportunity of developing his own work by becoming familiar with the efforts of others, by recognizing differences as well as those elements he may have in common with them.

CHARACTER OF THE GROUP

We believe that a new art form has been established which is definite enough in character to demand this unified effort. We recognize, however, the need for individuals to experiment and deviate at times from what may seem established directions. For this reason we place a liberal interpretation upon the word "abstract", a word which we moreover recognize as neither adequate nor accurate.

What we desire is a broad inclusive organization of all artists in this country who have produced work which is sufficiently in character with this liberal conception of the word "abstract". We invite into our membership the best known "abstract" artists in America, as well as those who are totally unknown. We invite also the members of any other similar groups, assuring them that to join with us does not conflict with their own group relationships.

MEMBERSHIP

Full members of American Abstract Artists bind themselves to contribute a certain sum each month (at present this amounts to 50 cents a month) to defray current organization expenses. The sum of \$5 from each member is expected to cover the costs of hiring a gallery for the forthcoming exhibition, and a further sum of about \$5 each should cover the necessary outlay for publicity. (These amounts may vary as the group membership varies. All members are expected to contribute exactly the same amounts.)

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Associate Members of American Abstract Artists bind themselves to contribute only the same regular monthly dues (see above) as do the full members, and are entitled to take part in all cultural, intellectual, literary or educational activities of the group on the same basis as full members. They may not exhibit unless they become full members. They will also have no vote in business meetings of the organization for deciding policies, programs, activities, finances, etc., of the group.

NEW MEMBERS

It is the express desire of American Abstract Artists to include within its membership as broad and representative a number of painters and sculptors, working in the "abstract" direction, as possible.

Since the so-called "abstract" movement has, however, grown to far greater proportions, and enlisted a far greater number of American artists and students than most of us are aware of, it was felt that, to ensure a certain standard of clarity of statement, achievement, unity, etc., in the public exhibitions, some sort of control must be exercised. It was therefore decided that artists whose work was not well

known to a majority of the present group, but who would like to join, be asked to submit examples of their best work, (preferably finished paintings, or photographs in the case of sculptors or out-of-town painters) and these works would be passed upon by secret ballot by a majority of those present at a meeting consisting of at least two thirds of the entire membership.

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP

The present membership (January, 1937) of American Abstract Artists consists of the following names: George McNeil, Jeanne Carles, A. N. Christie, C. R. Holty, Harry Holtzman, Marie Kennedy, Ray Kaiser, W. M. Zogbaum, Ibram Lassaw, Gertrude Peter Greene, Byron Browne, Rosalind Bengelsdorf, George L. K. Morris, Vaclav Vytlacil, Paul Kelppe, Balcomb Greene, R. D. Turnbull, Frederick J. Whitman, John Opper, Albert Swinden, Ilya Bolotowsky, George Cavallon, Leo Lances, Alice Mason, Esphyr Slobodkina, Werner Drewes, Richard Taylor, Josef Albers.

The membership is steadily increasing, so that this list is far from definitive.

ADDRESS

All communications or inquiries should be addressed to

R. D. Turnbull, Secretary
51 West 10th Street,
New York City.

JEROME KLEIN

ABSTRACT ARTISTS MAKE NEW STAND

Thirty-nine Painters and Sculptors Mustered in Group Showing at Squib Building

Put down under "prosperity notes" the revival of abstract art. Well might put to rout by the rush toward social realism in depression years, abstractionists now rally for a new stand. A band of thirty-nine has been mustered for the first exhibition on view in the Squibb Building by the recently organized American Abstract Artists.

Youth predominates and some of the most interesting things are by artists as yet hardly known to the public. I would cite among these the paintings of George McNeil, who designs with spontaneity and a real painter's sense of tonal modulation; Hananiah Marari's work, particularly Hannaniah Harari's work, sculpture of the "spare-rib" variety by Ibrim Lassaw; Esphyr Slobodkina's canvases, with their involved stage-wing spaces and the work of Harry Bowden and Anne Cohen.

Out of the more seasoned ranks come Louis Schanker's brilliant big figure piece, a handsome bronze by Warren Wheelock, novel constructions of sliced toy ten pins by Vaclav Vytlacil and paintings by Josef Albers, which I count the most mature and original in the show.

Schanker Show on View.

Louis Schanker, having an exhibition of his recent work now at the Artists Gallery, is an American. Though he has had one-man shows before this, he is perhaps best known to the public through his large and widely reproduced mural decoration executed last summer for municipal radio station WNYC.

Schanker is one of the more personal and original of our younger crop of abstract painters. He has a light and witty touch, building his pictures not of rigid geometrical masses but of spontaneous-appearing though carefully conceived calligraphic patterns laid onto fresh and sparkling color. Sometimes the patterns cling closely enough to reality for one to distinguish recognizable forms. At others they're completely abstract, and if they suggest reality at all it's in the movement of things, rather than in their shape. (The picture Schanker calls Football I, is a good example of this.)

But all of his pictures—whether they're primarily linear patterns on color, like Musicians; or Composition III, which has, in its arrangement of its jagged motifs, something of the character of primitive embroideries; or the more solid than usual (for Schanker) Composition I—reveal his genuine talent.

SCHANKER, MURAL ARTIST EXHIBIT AT THE ARTISTS' GALLERY

Sugar Loaf and Warwick friends of Louis Schanker will learn with interest that he has an exhibit at The Artists' Gallery, 33 West 8th Street, New York city of recent paintings, woodcuts, sculpture. Exhibit is from Nov. 14th to Dec. 5th and hours are from 10 - 9 daily and Sunday 3-9. Mr. and Mrs. Schanker have leased a cottage on the Charles Wisner Barrell farm at Sugar Loaf for several years. His murals at the World's Fair received great praise.

*Warwick Valley Reporter
Nov 15, 1937*



Louis Schanker's wood sculpture, *Abstracted Man* (center) and oil, *Three Men on a Bench* (right) at the American Abstract Artists' Squibb Building Exhibition, 1937

AMERICAN
ABSTRACT
ARTISTS

1 9 3 8

initial exhibition of the American Abstract Artists, held last year at the Squibb Building in New York, on the whole was a bracing and fresh display showing that some excellent work was being done and holding promise for the future. Discernible influences for the most part came from the eight quarters. Not many of the exhibits were too derivative. The second exhibition was held in February of this year, forty-four members exposing their work. One perceived in this show that a healthy development was taking place and considerably more maturity. With their talents ripening, it is not unreasonable to expect that certain of the group will continue to make progress and later reveal even greater accomplishment and invention.

The soil here is fertile, not over-cultivated, as in many European countries, and from it we may reasonably expect vigorous art forms eventually to emerge. André Gide, writing of the U. S. S. R., and Thomas Mann writing of conditions in Germany, have told us of the plight of the artist in countries where intellectual liberty does not exist. Americans therefore should be on their guard against the importation of political beliefs and subversive activities which run counter to the doctrines for which America fought the Revolution. The U. S. A., where all races are mingled, where citizens of other countries have brought their national cultures, especially memories of highly significant peasant arts, is favorably situated: Remy de Gourmont states that the "United States if closed to immigration would fall into complete languor," going on to remind us that "There is not a century since the Eleventh during which French thought has not been revived by some foreign ferment" and that "The national spirit is no more thwarted by these absorptions than the blood of man is vitiated by healthy food." In recent times we know what stimulant French painting received from Negro sculpture and the Russian ballet.

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Yet another word may perhaps be permitted with regard to the aims of non-representative painting, not in defense, but in explanation. One recalls the desire of Hokusai to live long enough to be able to reduce life to a single tone, a single line. Oriental notions have rarely attached any special importance to subject. For the initiated, and the spectator must be able to meet the artist half way, the pure enjoyment of painting is often marred by the intrusion of subject-matter, just as scenery and costumes distract certain people at the opera. In China scenery at theatrical productions has never been employed except symbolically; the most convincing play given in New York this past season was equally bereft of scenery and costumes. The upward plunge of New York's skyscraping buildings, so stark and majestic, is in most instances impaired by superimposed and irrelevant Gothic or Romanesque ornaments. Let not the artist be afraid to divest his work of all non-essentials.

INTRODUCTION

It is encouraging, as it is gratifying, to learn that the group known as the American Abstract Artists has been successful in arranging an exhibition of work by its members for display in a group of museums throughout the West. Upon the conclusion of this tour it is hoped that it may be possible to show their paintings, sculptures and constructions in certain of the Eastern museums as well.

The execution of this further programme would also be highly desirable, although possibly more difficult of attainment, for most of the Eastern museums are scarcely more than dusty repositories of the art of past ages. Such institutions when they do open their doors to contemporary efforts are usually so cautious and opposed to experimentation and exploration, upon which, Henry James reminds us, art lives, that all genuine creative work is excluded. But it is to be hoped that some museums on the Eastern seaboard, less timorous, will be glad to hang this demonstration of living art, as they have on certain occasions welcomed exhibitions of this character in the past.

There is no doubt that the efforts being made by most of the painters and sculptors constituting the American Abstract Artists are definitely pointed in the right direction. No other group concerned with the fine arts in this country is as likely to produce an authentic American cultural expression. Their approach to the problems of painting is the correct one: they seek plastic qualities in their work and regard all subject-matter as extraneous. Their concern is with the fundamental principles of form, design, construction and the functioning of color, as understood by the great masters. Giotto, Uccello and El Greco are among their spiritual ancestors, and, more recently, Cézanne and Seurat. All belonged to the great main current which flowed down through the ages, became a mere stream in the Nineteenth Century, with the weakening of the aristocratic tradition, and then received great impetus from the innovations of Picasso, Braque, Gris and Léger, who cleared away the debris and gave to the world new and imaginative art forms. The stark bones of the great traditions may also be discerned in Mondrian's false lines and rectangles of fundamental color: high points of Twentieth Century painting.

By completely eliminating all subject-matter, which was a necessity for the Old Masters, historical and documentary recorders as they were for the most part, and propagandists for the Church, such artists as Mondrian have purified painting, have given us painting for its own sake in the same sense that music exists for itself alone, as it also possible for architecture.

Vastly encouraging I find it for the cause of American painting and sculpture to see how this group has developed, not only numerically, but in the quality of the work, and in such a short space of time. The

Art Instructors Hold Exhibition

By EMILY GENAUER.

The American Artists School opens its season with an exhibition of work by members of its faculty, numbering among them such well-known figures as Moses Soyer, Philip Evergood, Francis Criss, Maurice Glickman, Abraham Harrington, Walter Quirt, Philip Reisman, Harry Glassgold and Louis Schanker.

Criss is so well collected that no original canvases by him were available for the exhibition; so photographs of works in the Whitney, Brooklyn and other museums, as well as in distinguished private collections, are shown instead. Glickman, because the majority of his sculptured figures are so large, must also be seen in photographic reproduction. But Walter Quirt is there in originals, and these are enough to make any show. Quirt is the daring fellow who attempted to harness that medium of the arch-aesthetes, surrealism, to something as vivid and real as the class struggle. And succeeded in turning out canvases that, however potent they may be in hastening the revolution, are excellent works of art.

There is also a first rate canvas by the younger Soyer, a portrait of a dignified, meditating girl in a yellow blouse. Louis Schanker, whose rich abstractions we have not seen in some time, is also commendably represented. Schanker seems to have evolved for himself a definite and individual personality and point of view. And that, in a school as circumscribed as abstraction, is no mean achievement. We also liked the finely textured prints by Eugene Morley and the clean sweep of Harrington's "Tri-Boro Bridge."

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM,

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1938.

Numerous Artists Show

Their Work

Some Original Talent.

There are some original talents to be seen in this show, though they are not in every case effective. Paul Kalpe, for instance, appears to be charting his own way, preceding from the point where Gleizes left off. But his separated forms, like segments of pipes and blocks, beautifully drawn and sensitively colored, lack movement. It is as though a juggler were tossing them and a camera caught them in mid-air.

Janet Young, working in colored marbles, secures interesting, original and pleasing results.

Louis Schanker's pictures have the freshness and charm characteristic of his things. And Werner Drewes retains his status as one of few American abstractionists whose

works really have a vigorous, creative individuality.

Sparks fly at the exhibition of the American Abstract Artists, at the Fine Art Gallery. But they are kindled by visitors' violent reactions to these painted combinations of lines, triangles, cubes and the like, organized into what might be called plastic representations of geometrical formulae, rather than by the intrinsic attributes of the paintings themselves. Because there's not a stray emotion in a carload of them.

None of the works, by their very nature, even attempt to convey the essence of personal, or human, emotions. Nor do they need to, to retain their status as legitimate works of art. What is more important, few of them provoke (or they didn't, that is, to this observer) any emotional, or sensuous, reaction to their purely plastic harmonies, the rhythms of their masses, colors, or lines.

Two large rooms are filled with work by members of the group, although if you didn't know that, you might easily imagine, after a cursory glance about the walls, that they were tossed off in weak moments by Picasso, Miro, Klee, Kandinsky and others of the European school of abstractionists.

Work Too Derivative.

That seems to be the trouble with American exponents of the principles of non-objective art. Their work is too palpably derivative and, as imitation, lacks the fire of the original artists who were their inspiration.

Rosalind Bengelsdorf's abstraction is like a late Picasso, with none of the monumental, frenzied force of the Picasso and only its exterior, weakened form. Ilya Bolotowsky's things are so close to Miro the Catalanian could very easily sue the American for plagiarism and win his suit, though Bolotowsky's effort has none of the humor or the extraordinary liveness of Miro's work. Susie Frelinghuysen's "papier colle" paintings would be charming if their source, Picasso, didn't keep getting between picture and spectator.

AMERICAN ABSTRACT ARTISTS

cordially invites

to attend the opening of its

Third Annual Exhibition

to be held at the

RIVERSIDE MUSEUM

310 Riverside Drive at 103rd Street, New York City

Monday, March 6th, 1939, at 8 P.M.

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SUNE, TUESDAY,

MARCH 7, 1939

Abstract Artists Open Annual Exhibition Today

Group's Largest Show Held in Riverside Museum

The American Abstract Artists, a group devoted to advanced forms of non-representational painting, sculpture and graphic art, opened their third annual exhibition last night at the Riverside Museum, 310 Riverside Drive. The show, which opens to the public today, is the largest in the history of the organization. About 250 exhibits—all typical of the cubist and post-cubist trend in painting—have been assembled, filling seven galleries and two corridors.

In addition to paintings which occupy most of the galleries, two rooms at the display are devoted to watercolors, pastels and collages, designs composed of colored paper and other materials pasted and superimposed upon one another. Another display is of wood block prints, etchings and lithographs in abstract designs, and another of sculpture in wood and metal. Among the more unusual exhibits are abstractions

constructed in relief and painted, including a shadow-box creation with a design of metal and wire construction.

Fifty-three artists are represented by from one to ten exhibits each in the show, though the average is about three exhibits to a person. Louis Schanker, one of the most versatile, has two oils, two sculptures in wood and several colored wood block prints. Four new members represented for the first time in the annual are John Ferren, of Paris; Durnel Grant, of Springfield, Ohio, and I. Rice Pereira and A. D. F. Reinhardt, of New York City.

Others prominent are Susie Frelinghuysen, Joseph Albers, Burgoyne Diller, Werner Drewes, Balcom Greene, Carl R. Holty, George L. K. Morris, Charles G. Shaw, Albert Gallatin, Esphyr Slobodkina, Vaclav Vytlačil, Warren Wheelock, R. D. Turnbull, Albert Swinden, Paul Kelpel and Ibram Lassaw.

A souvenir book on "American Abstract Art," with illustrations of the work of all members, biographical notes and credo, is available at the exhibition. The show is open from 1 to 5 p. m. daily through March 26 and is free.

EXHIBITION

American Abstract Artists

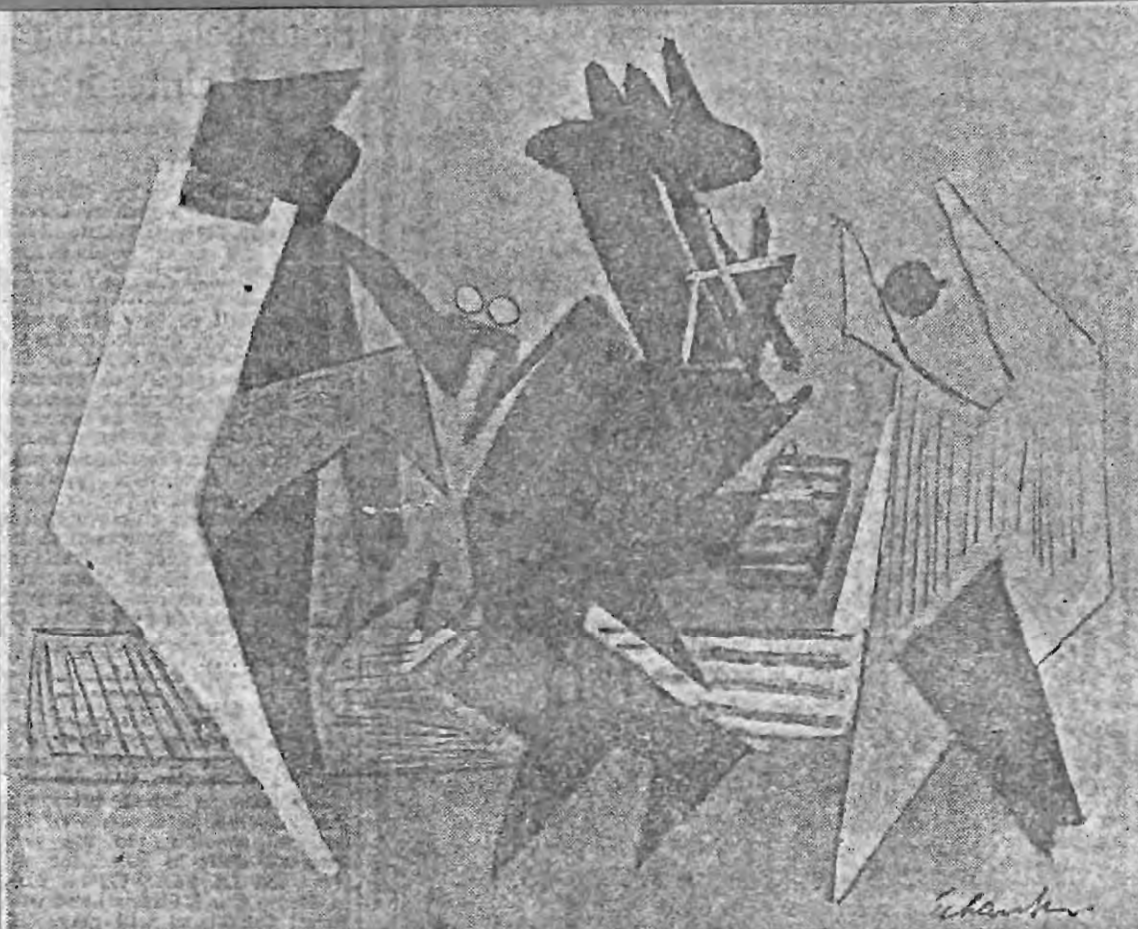


RIVERSIDE MUSEUM, NEW YORK

March 7-26, 1939

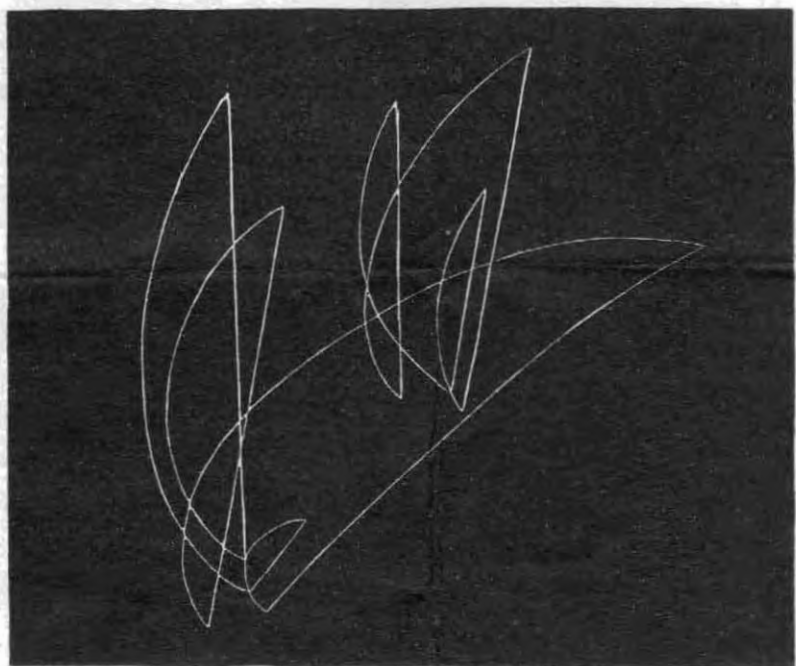
The numbers on each exhibit correspond to the numbers below

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Joseph Albers | 27. Paul Kelpé |
| 2. Rosalind Bengelsdorf | 28. Leo Lances |
| 3. Ilya Bolotowsky | 29. Ibram Lassaw |
| 4. Harry Bowden | 30. Agnes Lyall |
| 5. Byron Browne | 31. Alice Mason |
| 6. Jeanne Carles | 32. George McNeil |
| 7. Giorgio Cavallon | 33. George L. K. Morris |
| 8. A. N. Christie | 34. I. Rice Pereira |
| 9. Anna Cohen | 35. Margaret Peterson |
| 10. Burgoyne Diller | 36. A. D. F. Reinhardt |
| 11. Werner Drewes | 37. Ralph M. Rosenberg |
| 12. Herzl Emanuel | 38. Louis Schanker |
| 13. John Ferren | 39. Charles G. Shaw |
| 14. Susie Frelinghuysen | 40. Esphyr Slobodkina |
| 15. A. E. Gallatin | 41. David Smith |
| 16. Fritz Glarner | 42. Florence Swift |
| 17. Durnel Grant | 43. Albert Swinden |
| 18. Balcomb Greene | 44. R. D. Turnbull |
| 19. Gertrude Greene | 45. Vaclav Vytlacil |
| 20. Hananiah Harari | 46. Rudolph Weisenborn |
| 21. Carl R. Holty | 47. Warren Wheelock |
| 22. Harry Holtzman | 48. Frederick Whiteman |
| 23. Dorothy Joralemon | 49. Harry I. Wildenberg |
| 24. Ray Kaiser | 50. Robert J. Wolff |
| 25. Gerome Kamrowski | 51. Beckford Young |
| 26. Frederick Kann | 52. Janet Young |
| | 53. Wilfrid Zogbaum |



"Composition," by Louis Schanker, in the exhibition by the American Abstract Artists at Riverside Museum.

**AMERICAN
ABSTRACT
ARTISTS**



NATIONAL EXHIBITION

1940

BY the fact of their active existence and production, the American Abstract Artists express the authenticity and autonomy of the modern movement in the United States. The word abstract is incorporated in their title as a provisional gesture, so that they can be identified as a particular group in their effort to clarify growing and actively significant concepts of art.

The members of this group recognize the need for individuals to experiment and deviate at times from what may seem established directions. By means of this organization, individuals working and studying against the odds of isolation can now be articulate and related to others working in similar directions. And by it, too, has been achieved a growing response to abstract art in America.

UN**TIL** comparatively recently it has not been easy to see abstract paintings in America; and to see abstract paintings by American artists was a practical impossibility for the general public. For some time there have been indications that new art-forms were in the course of evolution, as befitted a civilization with a character of its own. The pioneers in the new expression were Europeans, for Europe has long been the center of world-culture. America has only recently asserted itself as a cultural force, and in America to-day there are numerous painters and sculptors who are delving beneath the long-eroded traditions of surface illustration.

There are still large sections of the public that have never seen an abstract painting; many people do not know what it is when they see one. This is quite natural; for generations people have been taught from childhood that works of art were no more than glimpses into nature. Custom and prejudice make it doubly hard to recover the lost properties that made for esthetic sublimity during the great epochs of art-history. The abstract artists have travelled the whole way, they have gone to those furthest beginnings of structure and design which have held the emotions of the artist since the first drawings of the cave-man.

Abstract paintings are a logical beginning. They are not puzzles; they are not difficult to understand; they need only to be looked at, as one might look at a tree or a stone itself, and not as the representation of one. They stand with the independence of architectural shapes, and through very simple means a whole new world is opened.

George L. K. Morris

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 1 | JOSEF ALBERS
Reverse
Frames | 20 | ELEANOR deLAITRE
Reflections
Floating Divide |
| 2 | ILYA BOLOTOWSKY
Abstraction | 21 | IBRAM LASSAW
Construction with Light |
| 3 | HARRY BOWDEN
Still Life | 22 | AGNES EARL LYALL
Abstraction |
| 4 | BYRON BROWNE
Head | 23 | GEORGE McNEIL
Composition in Black
Composition |
| 5 | GIORGIO CAVALLON
Composition | 24 | ALICE MASON
Oil
Oil |
| 6 | A. N. CHRISTIE
Abstraction | 25 | GEORGE L. K. MORRIS
Composition
Composition 1938 |
| 7 | WERNER DREWES
Composition
Advancing | 26 | I. RICE PEREIRA
Ascending Scale |
| 8 | JOHN FERREN
Abstraction | 27 | A. D. REINHARDT
Abstraction |
| 9 | SUSIE FRELINGHUYSEN
Abstraction
Carmen | 28 | RALPH M. ROSENBERG
Evening |
| 10 | A. E. GALLATIN
Composition | 29 | LOUIS SCHANKER
Composition |
| 11 | FRITZ GLARNER
Composition | 30 | CHARLES G. SHAW
In Flight
Abstraction |
| 12 | BALCOMB GREENE
Angular
Primary Construction | 31 | ESPHYR SLOBODKINA
Abstraction
Abstraction |
| 13 | GERTRUDE GREENE
Construction | 32 | FLORENCE SWIFT
Abstraction |
| 14 | HANANIAH HARARI
Railroad Signals | 33 | ALBERT SWINDEN
Study in Apposition |
| 15 | CARL R. HOLTY
Composition
Composition | 34 | R. D. TURNBULL
Oil 1938 |
| 16 | HARRY HOLTZMAN
Abstraction | 35 | VACLAV VYTLACIL
Still Life |
| 17 | RAY KAISER
Composition | 36 | WARREN WHELOCK
Carving |
| 18 | FREDERICK P. KANN
Mobile | 37 | HARRY I. WILDENBERG
Space Division |
| 19 | PAUL KELPE
Composition | 38 | ROBERT J. WOLFF
Abstractions |

JUNE 5 - 16

**AMERICAN
ABSTRACT
ARTISTS**

PAINTINGS:

- 1 JOSEF ALBERS
- 2 ROSALIND BENGELSDORF
- 3 ILYA BOLOTOWSKY
- 4 BYRON BROWNE
- 5 GEORGE CAVALLON
- 6 A. N. CHRISTIE
- 7 ANNA COHEN
- 8 BURGOYNE DILLER
- 9 WERNER DREWES
- 10 SUSIE FRELINGHUYSEN
- 11 A. E. GALLATIN
- 12 SIDNEY GEIST
- 13 FRITZ GLARNER
- 14 BALCOMB GREENE
- 15 GERTRUDE GREENE
- 16 HANANIAH HARARI
- 17 HARRY HOLTZMAN
- 18 CARL HOLTY
- 19 DOROTHY JORALEMON
- 20 RAY KAISER
- 21 FREDERICK P. KANN
- 22 PAUL KELPE
- 23 LEONORE KRASSNER
- 24 ELEANOR DE LAITRE
- 25 IBRAM LASSAW
- 26 HOWARD LESTER
- 27 AGNES LYALL
- 28 ALICE MASON
- 29 GEORGE McNEIL

- 30 L. MOHOLY-NAGY
- 31 GEORGE L. K. MORRIS
- 32 I. RICE PEREIRA
- 33 MARGARET PETERSON
- 34 A. D. F. REINHARDT
- 35 RALPH M. ROSENBERG
- 36 LOUIS SCHANKER
- 37 CHARLES G. SHAW
- 38 ESPHYR SLOBODKINA
- 39 FLORENCE SWIFT
- 40 ALBERT SWINDEN
- 41 R. D. TURNBULL
- 42 VACLAV VYTLACIL
- 43 WARREN WHEELOCK
- 44 FREDERICK WHITEMAN
- 45 HARRY WILDENBERG
- 46 ROBERT JAY WOLFF

ARCHITECTS:

- 47 BENJAMIN BALDWIN
- 48 E. O. SCHNIEWIND

GUEST ARCHITECTS:

- 49 GREGORY AIN
- 50 MARCEL BREUER
- 51 WALTER GROPIUS
- 52 FERDINAND KRAMER
- 53 RICHARD J. NEITRA

AMERICAN FINE ARTS GALLERIES
215 WEST 57TH ST NYC HOURS 10-6 SUN 1-6

EXHIBITION

HOW MODERN is

THE MUSEUM of MODERN ART



Lets look at the record

In 1939 the Museum professed to show ART IN OUR TIME—
 Whose time Sargent, Homer, Le Farge, or Whistler?
 Or Picasso, Braque, Leger and Mondrian? Which time?
 If the descendants of Sargent and Homer, what about the descendants of Picasso
 and Mondrian? What about American abstract art?
 If he had been in America, what dizzy successes for Rapin? Even for Meissonier?
 Or J. L. Gerome? What about Towne and Ward—British cattle painters—
 turned loose on a Missouri farm? A Minnesota grain elevator painted by
 Daubigny? Bellows' 'Stag at Sharkey's' done by Henri Regnault? The Nebraska
 prairies by Eugene Boudin? The Bowery by Eugene Carriere?

And MODERN MASTERS (to counterbalance the Italian Masters, as this feeble demonstration
 from a great period was advertised) Eakin, Homer, Rydor, Whistler—died in 1916,
 1910, 1917, 1903. Those are the only Americans included. Are they the
 grandfathers of the Europeans they are shown with? Seurat, Van Gogh,
 Gauguin, Lautrec—died in 1885, 1890, 1903, 1881. These are the older
 Europeans represented.

ITALIAN MASTERS! — Caravaggio, Raphael, Bronzino! And such examples!
 How easy to justify a Praxiteles show! How revolutionary the Egyptians!
 And an Eighteenth Century JAPANESE!

WHAT DOES "MODERN" MEAN?

Does it mean ALL THE GREAT ART OF ALL TIME?
 Then why the hundreds of living Americans?
 Does it mean the POPULAR ART PRODUCED IN OUR TIME?
 Then why the old masters?
 Does it mean METROPOLITAN PLUS WHITNEY MUSEUM?
 Then why a Museum of Modern Art?

and now the art of the three alarm fire!

Is the Artist a Reporter?

Is the MUSEUM a BUSINESS?

What about the P.M. contest and exhibition? What is journalistic art? Why should
 this evening tabloid P.M. try to revive it? What is the Museum trying to
 revive? Will the Museum sponsor the Police Gazette? What about Eastman,
 Leica, and Pathe News?
 Why and when does a modern museum depart from presenting 'the Art of Today'
 to promoting the art of yesterday?
 Why not day-before-yesterday? Why not Resurrections, Adorations and Madonnas?
 Why not build Pyramids? Why not tear down the Museum and build a pyramid!
 As big as Radio City! With 100,000 slaves! Think of the publicity!

What is this - a three ring CIRCUS?

ART DEPT.: Nelson Rockefeller, head
 of the Museum of Modern Art, told a
 group that the Museum is spending more
 money than it is receiving—that this was
 the first time he ever was engaging in
 show-business, but that the off-balance
 wasn't worrying him . . . "It's all right,"
 Rockefeller assured. "The Greatest Show-
 man of our times—a man in Washington
 —works on the same principle."

Leonard Lyons
 MARCH 21, 1940
 NEW YORK POST

How about Billy (Aquacade) Rose as the next trustee?

Shouldn't "modern" conceivably include the "Avant Garde"?
 Why not a show of the English Abstractists?
 How about the younger European expressionists
 Hartung, Goni, Magnelli, Heron, Eyring, Taeuber-Arp, Rieme, Seuphor,
 Schwab, Nebel, Sims, Max Bill, Starn, Erni, Tutundjian, Prinner?
 What about the hundreds (literally) of modern and non-objective artists in America?

April 15, 1940

American Abstract Artists 13 West 17th Street, New York City

JOSEF ALBERS
 ROSALIND BENGELSDORF
 ILYA BOLOTOWSKY
 BYRON BROWNE
 JEANNE CARLES
 GEORGE CAVALLON
 A. N. CHRISTIE
 ANNA COHEN
 WERNER DREWES
 ELEANOR DE LAITRE
 HERZL EMANUEL
 JOHN FERREN
 SUSIE FRELINGHUYSEN

A. E. GALLATIN
 FRITZ GLARNER
 BALCOMB GREENE
 GERTRUDE GREENE
 HANANIAH HARARI
 HARRY HOLTZMAN
 CARL HOLTY
 DOROTHY JORALEMON
 RAY KAISER
 FREDERICK F. KAHN
 PAUL KELPE
 LEVI LANCES
 IBRAM LASSAW

AGNES LYALL
 GEORGE McNEIL
 ALICE MASON
 GEORGE L. K. MORRIS
 L. MOHOLY-NAGY
 I. RICE PEREIRA
 MARGARET PETERSON
 RALPH M. ROSENBERG
 A. D. F. REINHARDT
 LOUIS SCHANKER
 CHARLES G. SHAW
 ESPIR SLOBODKINA
 DAVID SMITH

FLORENCE SWIFT
 ALBERT SWINDEN
 E. O. SCHNIEWIND
 R. D. TURNBULL
 VACLAV VYTLACIL
 RUDOLPH WEISENBORN
 WARREN WHEELOCK
 FREDERICK WHITEMAN
 HARRY WILDENBERG
 ROBERT JAY WOLFF
 BECKFORD YOUNG
 JANET YOUNG
 W. M. ZOGRAUM

1903-1981

Though much of my work is generally classified as abstract, all of my work develops from natural forms. I have great respect for the forms of nature and an inherent need to express myself in relation to those forms. No matter how far my experimental design may take me . . . there remains always a core of objective reality which I have no desire to destroy or even to impair but only to investigate, analyze, develop.[1]

LOUIS SCHANKER WAS ONE OF MANY MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN ABSTRACT ARTISTS who chose to base his art in the objects, patterns, and rhythms of nature. Although never a student of Hans Hofmann, Schanker's ideas about art had many parallels with Hofmann's. Concern for the spatial dynamics of a painting's surface, and an insistence on some aspect of nature as a starting point for art, are two areas that mirror a shared philosophy between the two artists. Although much of Schanker's later work is completely abstract, during the 1930s and 1940s he frequently used direct, identifiable themes---motifs drawn from sports, his early years working for a circus, and even socially conscious subjects not normally employed by abstract artists.[2]

As a youth, Louis Schanker quit school and ran away to join the circus. He put in two years of "interesting but gruelling hard labor." [3] After leaving the circus, he worked as a laborer in the wheatfields of Canada and the Dakotas, as a "gandy dancer" on the Erie Railroad, and as a stevedore on Great Lakes steamers. For almost a year Schanker cast his lot with hobos, riding freight trains throughout the country. In 1919, he put this itinerant life behind him and began attending night classes at Cooper Union. Subsequently, he studied at the Art Students League of New York and the Educational Alliance. Schanker spent 1931 and 1932 in Paris. He took classes at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière and worked on his own, doing plein air landscapes and street scenes. The work of Renoir, Degas, and Signac made a deep impression on the young artist. After he moved to Mallorca in 1933, Schanker began abstracting form to a greater degree and incorporating Cubist devices of uptilted planes and prismatic color in his work.

During the mid 1930s, Schanker began making prints and subsequently became a graphic arts supervisor for the WPA. He also completed murals for radio station WNYC, the Neponsit Beach Hospital in Long Island, and the Science and Health building at the 1939 New York World's Fair. During World War II, Schanker worked as a shipfitter and began teaching the technique of color woodblock printing at the New School for Social Research. In 1949, he became an assistant professor at Bard College, where he remained until his retirement.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Schanker exhibited frequently in group shows both in museums and in commercial galleries. He became especially well known for his innovations as a printmaker. Schanker belonged to "The Ten," a group that exhibited together in protest against the hegemony of American scene painting in Whitney exhibitions and in support of artistic experimentation and an international (rather than nativist) outlook in art.[4]

Schanker imbued his prints, paintings, and sculpture with an animated expressionism that aims at a fundamental emotional structure. Sculptures such as Owl, carved in 1937, adroitly convey not only the bird's physical appearance, but the quality of mystery that has made it a symbol of wisdom and secrecy. Three Men, exhibited in the American Abstract Artists' first annual exhibition in 1937, exemplifies the expressive, angular animation for which Schanker's work was frequently praised in press reviews of the 1930s.

1. Louis Schanker, "The Ides of Art: 11 Graphic Artists Write," Tiger's Eye 8 (June 1949): 45.

2. In a letter to the editor of Art News in 1938, an art historian noted the similarities between Schanker's Circus, a WPA mural done for the children's dining room in the Neponsit Beach Hospital and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's I Saltimbanchi. In his reply, Schanker said that he had chosen his subject matter based on his own experience: "I ran away from school to join the 'big top' and put in two years of interesting but grueling hard labor as a 'canvas-man,' 'animal ostler' and 'property-man' for clowns, acrobats and other performers with one of the best known American circuses. The visual memories that I retain of this period are, needless to say, vivid if not particularly humorous." Louis Schanker, "The Artist Replies," Art News 37 (29 October 1938): 16.

3. Louis Schanker, letter to the editor, Art News 37 (29 October 1938): 16, 21. I am grateful to Joel Schanker, Louis's brother, for relating details about Schanker's life and work in a videotaped interview, 9 June 1988.

4. Other members were Ben-Zion, Ilya Bolotowsky, Louis Harris, Earl Kerkam, Ralph Rosenborg, Joseph Solman, Adolph Gottlieb, and Mark Rothko (then still using the name Marcus Rothkowitz). The group associated for five years and held exhibitions at Montross, Passedoit, and Mercury galleries, and at the Galérie Bonaparte in Paris. For further information about The Ten, see Lucy McCormick Embick, "The Expressionist Current in New York's Avant-Garde: The Paintings of The Ten" (Master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1982)

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