

# THE MINIMAL TRADITION

**the aldrich museum of contemporary art, ridgefield, connecticut**

MUSEUM COPY

# THE MINIMAL TRADITION

April 29 through September 2, 1979

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The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut

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## THE ARTISTS

Carl Andre	Brice Marden
Stephen Antonakos	Agnes Martin
Jo Baer	Brenda Miller
Ronald Bladen	Robert Morris
Mel Bochner	Mary Miss
Kenneth Capps	Barnett Newman
Walter DeMaria	Kenneth Noland
Jackie Ferrara	Ad Reinhardt
Roland Gebhardt	Dorothea Rockburne
Robert Grosvenor	Robert Ryman
Donald Judd	Richard Serra
Ellsworth Kelly	Joel Shapiro
Lyman Kipp	Tony Smith
Barry Le Va	Robert Smithson
Sol Lewitt	Frank Stella
Robert Mangold	Jackie Winsor

## Lenders to The Exhibition

Carl Andre	Mary Miss
Stephen Antonakos	The Museum of Modern Art
Jo Baer	The Pace Gallery
Kenneth Capps	Dorothea Rockburne
Leo Castelli Gallery	Robert Ryman
Construct, Chicago, Illinois.	Sculpture Now
Paula Cooper Gallery	Joel Shapiro
Roland Gebhardt	Estate of Robert Smithson
Sol LeWitt	Sonnabend Gallery
Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc.	Sperone, Westwater, Fischer Gallery
Mrs. Albert A. List	The Wadsworth Atheneum
Andrew and James Mangold	John Weber Gallery
The Massachusetts Institute of Technology	The Whitney Museum of American Art
Mr. and Mrs. Martin Melzer	
Brenda Miller	

## Preface

We hope you find our spring show, "The Minimal Tradition", a rewarding one. Minimal art is not an easy art; often there does not appear to be much to see. The subject matter, composition, and color of abstract expressionism, pop art, or realism is generally lacking. The great philosopher José Ortega Y Gasset in writing about the art of the day in 1925 said that the task it sets itself is enormous, it wants to create from nought. "Later, I expect, it will be content with less and achieve more". You will have to decide for yourself if he was right about minimal art.

Richard Wolheim, a philosopher and critic was one of the first to apply the label "minimal" to the work of Andre, Flavin, Judd, LeWitt, and Morris. Using the simplest of forms and working largely in the three dimensional, these artists have created new ideas of form, shape, object, scale, and space. However, since there is less to see, more effort is required by the viewer to get something out of the art.

These simple forms lack the detail we are used to looking at in trying to understand a work of art. Hopefully, the longer one looks at, thinks about, and gets involved with the work, the more meaningful the work becomes and we begin to see what the work is about. We are forced to use our imagination. As Donald Judd, one of the artists in the show has said, "simplicity of shape does not necessarily equate with simplicity of experience".

Painters such as Kelly, Reinhardt, Stella, and Noland have long worked with simple geometric forms, minimum composition using few colors to carry illusions, new sensations, and new energies.

In addition, Barnett Newman's canvases punctuated by one or two vertical lines of another color carry for some symbolic meanings of the sublime. Such painters, long involved in a tradition of minimalism, want the viewers to experience new ideas and to take new feelings from their works.

Using the minimal form as a basis, other artists such as Bochner, Rockburne, Mangold, Marden, Martin, Serra, Shapiro, and Smith have moved on to develop an art of greater complexity, giving us additional concepts and relationships and stirring new thoughts. Professor E. E. Goossen in discussing minimal art said that it is not the time it takes to read it that counts, but the time it takes to forget it. We hope he is right.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the important help of several gallery directors, particularly Susan Brundage (Leo Castelli), Susanna Singer (John Weber Gallery), Angela Westwater (Sperone Westwater Fischer, Inc.), Joyce Nereaux (Sonnabend), and Antonio Homen (Sonnabend) for their help in planning and developing the concept of the exhibition as well as the loan of work. Other galleries loaning works are: Pace Gallery, Max Protetch, Paula Cooper and Max Hutchinson. Our thanks also go to The Whitney Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Sculpture Now, and Chicago, for loaning works to our exhibition.

Richard E. Anderson  
*President, April 1979*

**“ART IN ART IS ART.  
THE END OF ART IS ART AS ART.  
THE END OF ART IS NOT THE END.”**

**Ad Reinhardt**

In 1967, The Aldrich Museum organized a “Cool Art” exhibition in response to the “Primary Structures” exhibition at The Guggenheim Museum, and work by artists working in the manner not then identified by the label “minimal”. “Cool Art” was called many things: New Abstraction, ABC Art, Abstract Images, Symplistic Art, New Esthetics, and the paintings were labeled “systemic.”

The “Cool Art” catalog explained: “The artist cooperates with modern technologies. He may send drawings or models to a fabricator who will make the piece for him. He readily uses plastics, fiberglass, aluminum, formica, extruded alloys and new methods of shaping and forming metals. He turns away from the emotionalism of the 50s with its disorderly chanciness. He is the child of Malevich, Barnett Newman, Tony Smith and Ad Reinhardt. He studies and explores new concepts of space, mathematics, engineering structures, physics.”

Of the forty-two artists in the “Cool Art” exhibition, ten are included in this current exhibition: Carl Andre, Walter DeMaria, Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Lyman Kipp, Sol Lewitt, Robert Mangold, Ad Reinhardt, Robert Smithson, and Frank Stella.

Now, ten years later, we take another look at this group and add to it Stephen Antonakos, Jo Baer, Ronnie Bladen, Mel Bochner, Kenneth Capps, Jackie Ferrara, Roland Gebhardt, Robert Grosvenor, Barry LeVa, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, Brenda Miller, Kenneth Noland, Dorothea

Rockburne, Robert Ryman, Richard Serra, Joel Shapiro, Tony Smith and Jackie Winsor.

Minimal art has been described as being reductive, non-referential, a rule governed creativity, concrete actuality, total presence, space embracing, scientific, technological, impersonal, intellectual, non-illusory, monumental, non-fussy, classical, objective, unemotional, direct, calculated, non-arty, intensely physical, inhuman, pure, unromantic, artistic, intuitive, reasonable, orderly, systematic, machine-like, symmetrical, and non-hierarchical.

Where did the minimal tradition begin? Art historians cast Kasimir Malevich, Russian, 1875-1935, in the role of the first practicing minimalist, although he was classified as a “Suprematist”. Donald Judd’s article in *Art in America*, March/April, 1974, explained Malevich’s position.

Malevich writes:

*“The intuitive, it seems to me, should reveal itself in forms which are unconscious and without response.*

*The intuitive form should emerge from nothing.*

*In the same way that Reason, which creates things for everyday life, takes them from nothing and perfects them.*

*The square is not a subconscious form. It is the creation of intuitive reason.”*

Circa 1918, Malevich painted “White on White”, now in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. Rodchenko followed with “Black on Black”. A tradition of all white or all black painting investigation has emerged evermore. Each investigation teaches appreciation of the infinite possibilities of such aesthetic adventure.

In the United States, minimal art emerged in 1964-65 as a major trend, evolving from similar sensitivities of the 1920s and 1930s, i.e. Suprematism and Constructivism. In the late 1950s, works and words by Malevich, Tatlin and Rodchenko were being carefully scrutinized by many artists. (See Camilla Gray’s “The Great Experiment.”).

Critics have frequently tried to trace these new trends to the de Stijl and Bauhaus groups, but as their formal solutions were almost exhausted by then, their influence was less impressive to emerging minimal thought.

Lucy Lippard explains minimal thinking, (*Art in America*, Sep/Oct 1974): “The concept of art based on one idea—that of a single, rather than an overall image; the concept of the thinking artist, as opposed to the physically active artist constantly in the process of working out emotions in paint.”

Leo Steinberg comments: “It is quite wrong to say that the bewilderment people feel over a new style is of no great account since it doesn’t last long. Indeed it does; it has been with us for a century. And the thrill of pain caused by modern art is like an addiction—so much of a necessity to us, that societies like Soviet Russia without any outrageous modern art of their own, seem to us to be only half alive. They do not suffer that perpetual anxiety, or periodic frustration, or unease, which is our normal condition.”

Andrew Ritchie: “A common factor running through all . . . motivations towards abstract art is protest. Protest against the established order of traditional perspective, naturalistic space and color, conventional subject matter. All modern, advanced-guard art movements have been protests, of course, but abstract art is the most protestant of all.”

Ad Reinhardt’s “Twelve Technical Rules, Or How to Achieve the Twelve Things to Avoid” are helpful in understanding minimal thinking. They are:

1. **NO TEXTURE.** Texture is naturalistic, mechanical and a vulgar quality, especially pigment texture or impasto. Palette knifing, canvas stabbing, paint scumbling and other action techniques are unintelligent and to be avoided. No accidents or automatism.

2. **NO BRUSHWORK OR CALLIGRAPHY.** Hand writing, hand working, and hand jerking are personal and in poor taste. No signature or trade-marking. Brushwork should be invisible.

3. **NO SKETCHING OR DRAWING.** Everything, where to begin and where to end, should be worked out in the mind beforehand. In painting the idea should exist in the mind before the brush is taken up. No line or outline.

4. **NO FORMS.** The finest has no shape. No figure, fore or back-ground. No volume or mass, no cylinder, sphere, or cone, or cube or boogie-woogie. No push or pull. No shape or substance.

5. **NO DESIGN.** “Design is everywhere.”

6. **NO COLORS.** “Color blinds.” “Color sticks in one’s eyes like something caught in one’s throat.” Colors are an aspect of appearance and so only of the surface, are “distracting embellishment,” and “manifest an indiscreet personality with shameful insistence,” “cannot be completely controlled” and “should be concealed.” “no white. white is a color, and all colors.” White is “not artistic, appropriate and pleasing for kitchen fixtures,” and hardly the medium of expressing truth and beauty. “White on white” is “a transition from pigment to light” and “a screen for the projection of light” and “moving pictures.”

7. **NO LIGHT.** No bright or direct light in or over the painting. Dim, late afternoon, nonreflecting

(continued on page 44) 7

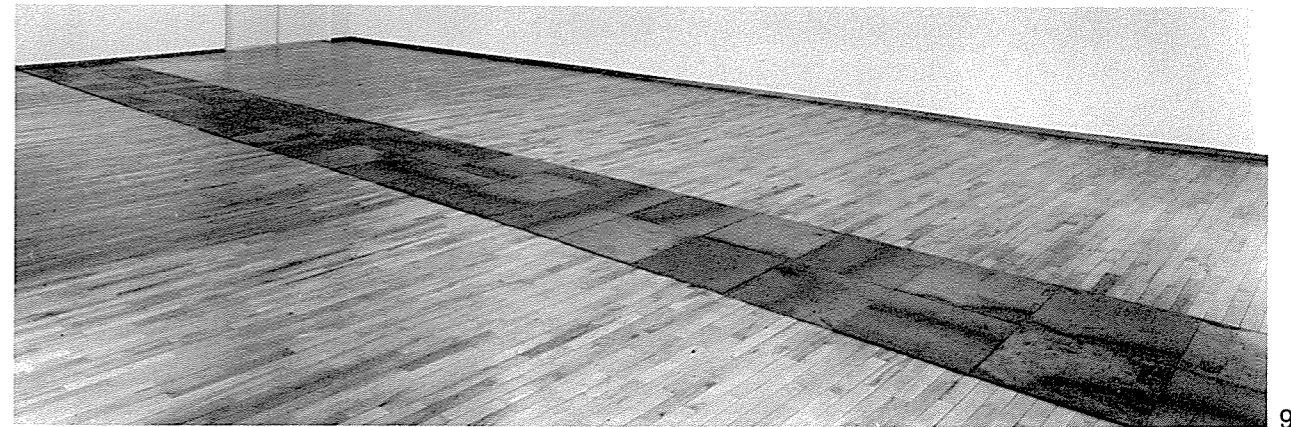
# THE MINIMAL TRADITION

CARL ANDRE

born Quincy, Mass. 1935.

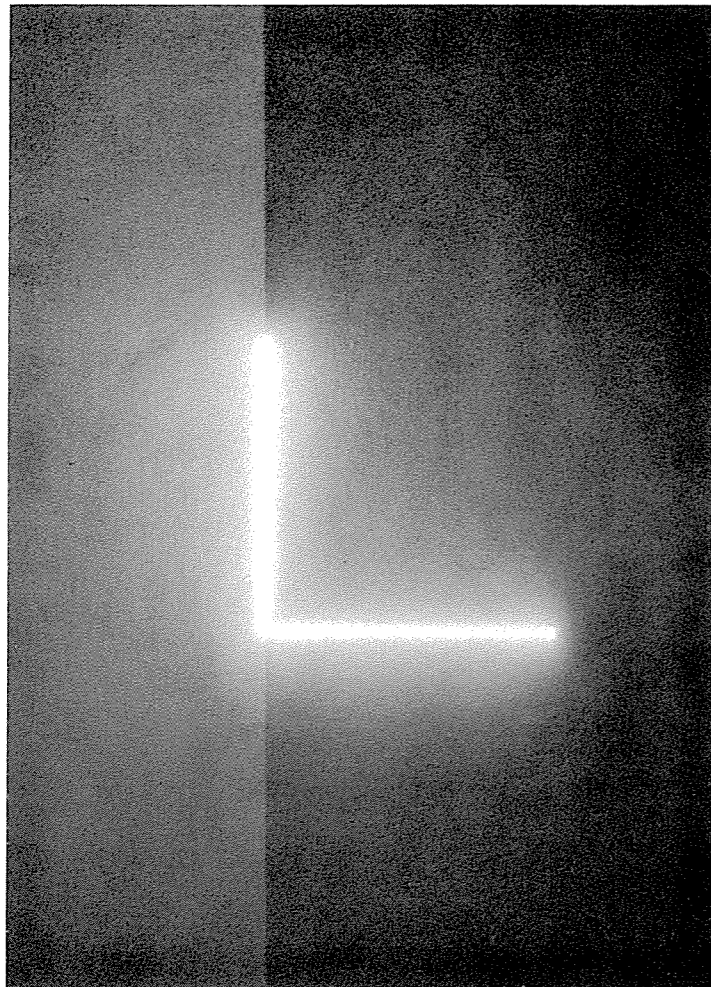
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CARL ANDRE  
"FIFTIETH STEEL CARDINAL." 1979.  
hot rolled steel.  
0.5 cm x 100 cm x 1,250 cm.  
Sperone Westwater Fischer Inc.



STEPHEN ANTONAKOS

born Greece 1926.

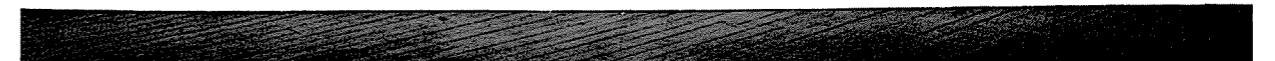
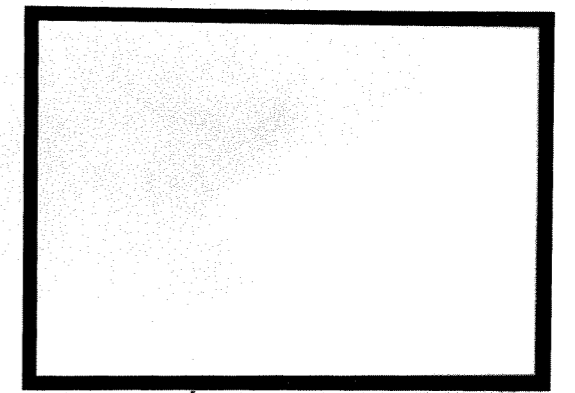
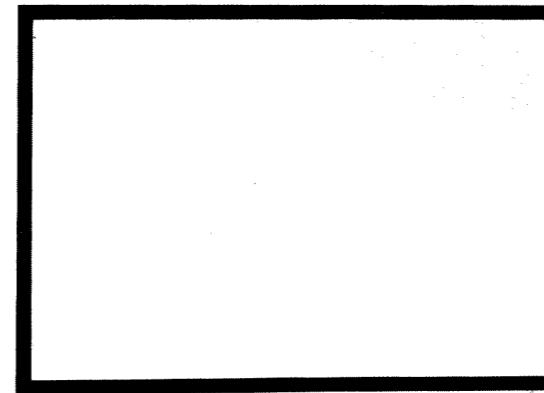


STEPHEN ANTONAKOS  
"INCOMPLETE BLUE NEON SQUARE  
AT THE CENTER OF A WALL  
HALF PAINTED BLUE." 1979.  
NEON ON PAINTED WALL. 96 x 48.  
NEON: 20 x 20.  
on loan from the artist

JO BAER

born Seattle, Washington.

JO BAER  
"UNTITLED, HORIZONTAL DIPTYCH." 1968-74.  
oil on canvas.  
two panels, each 72 x 96.



RONALD BLADEN.

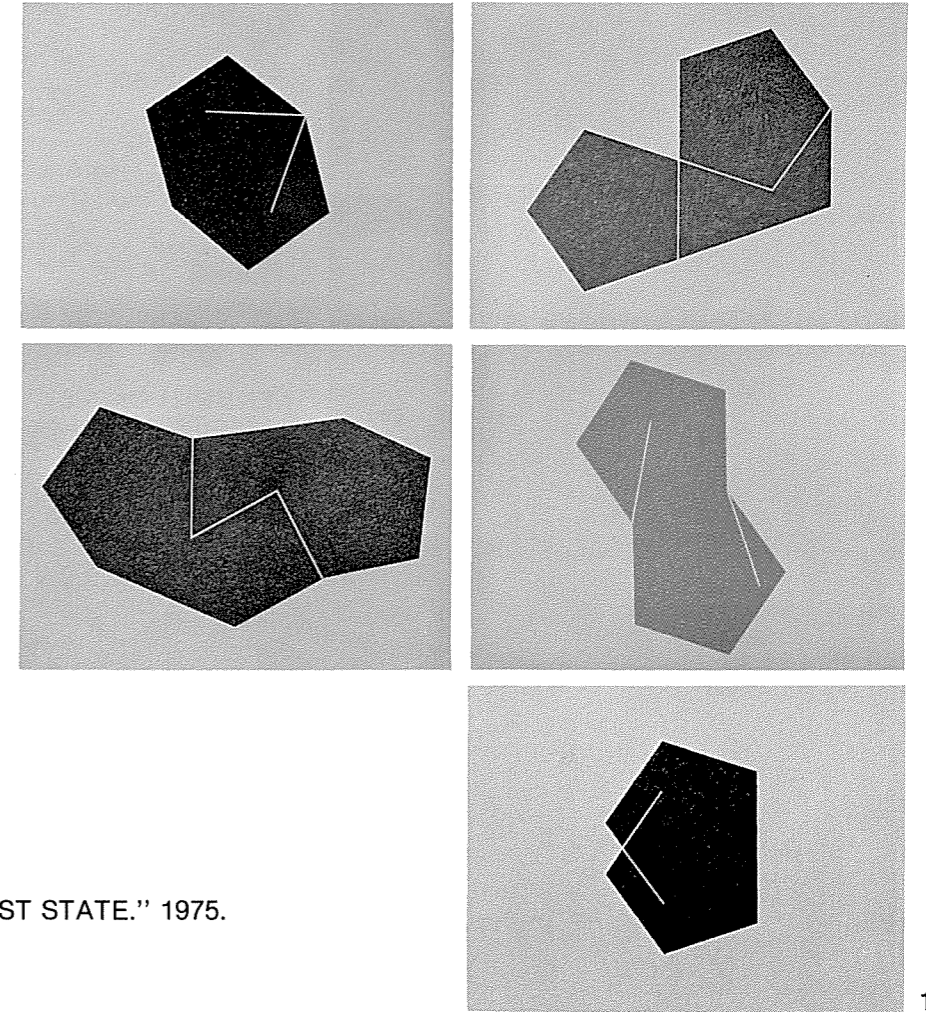
born Vancouver, B.C. 1918.



RONALD BLADEN  
"BLACK SAXON." 1977.  
WOOD MODEL: 1" = 1'.  
78 x 127.  
Sculpture Now, N.Y.C.

MEL BOCHNER

born Pittsburgh, Pa. 1940.

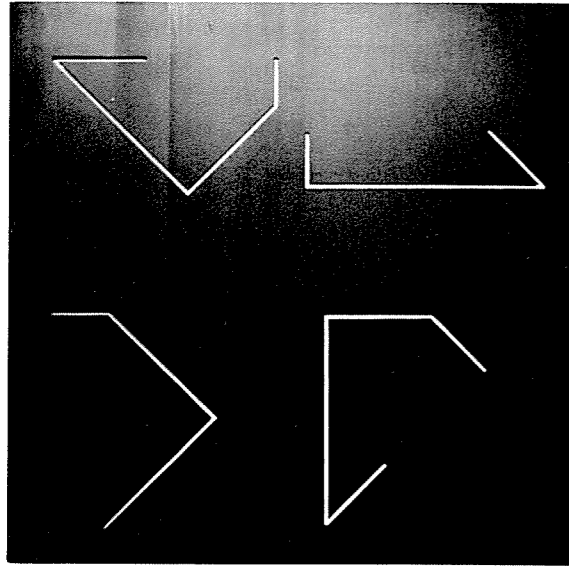


MEL BOCHNER  
"FIVE INTRANSITIVE: FIRST STATE." 1975.  
Pastel on paper.  
five drawings 38 x 50.  
Sonnabend Gallery.

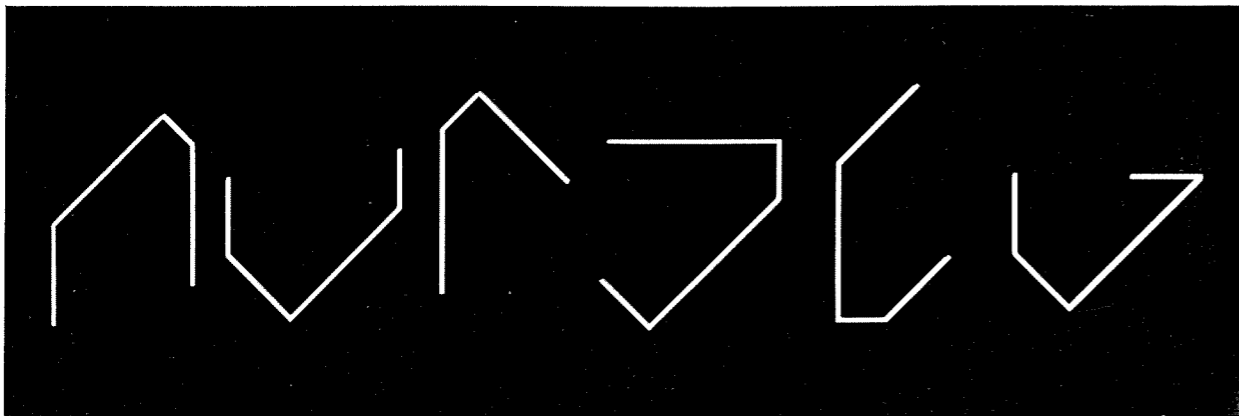


KENNETH CAPPS

born Kansas City, Mo. 1939.



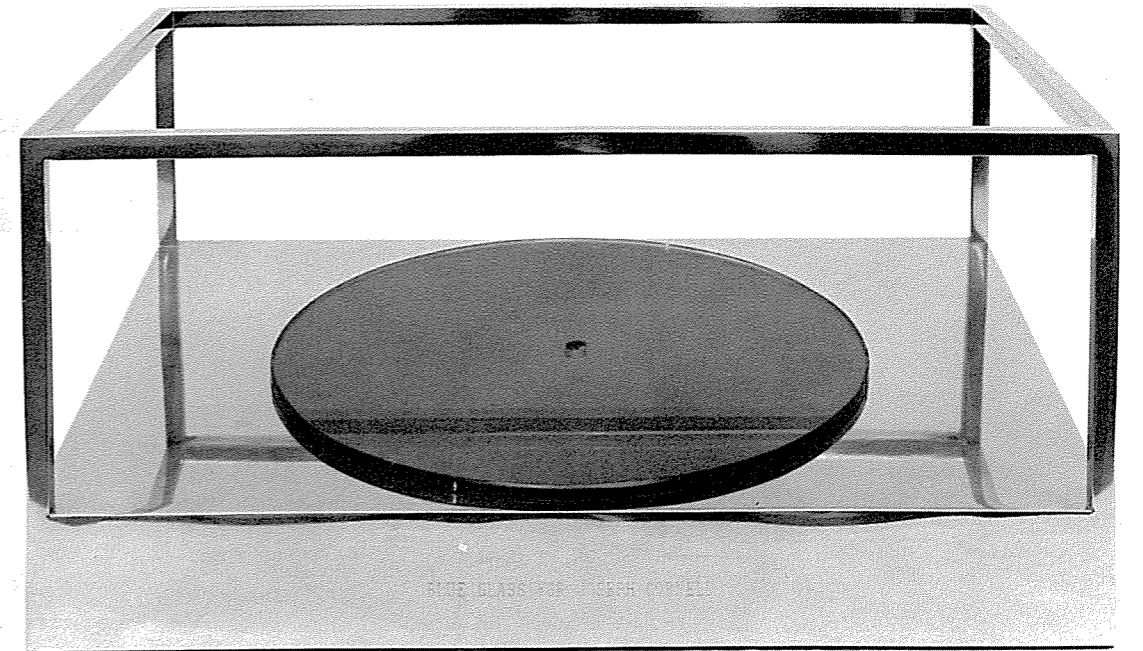
KENNETH CAPPS  
"STEEL DRAWINGS." 1978.  
Steel.  
2 36 x 36  
2 20 x 60  
on loan from the artist



WALTER DE MARIA

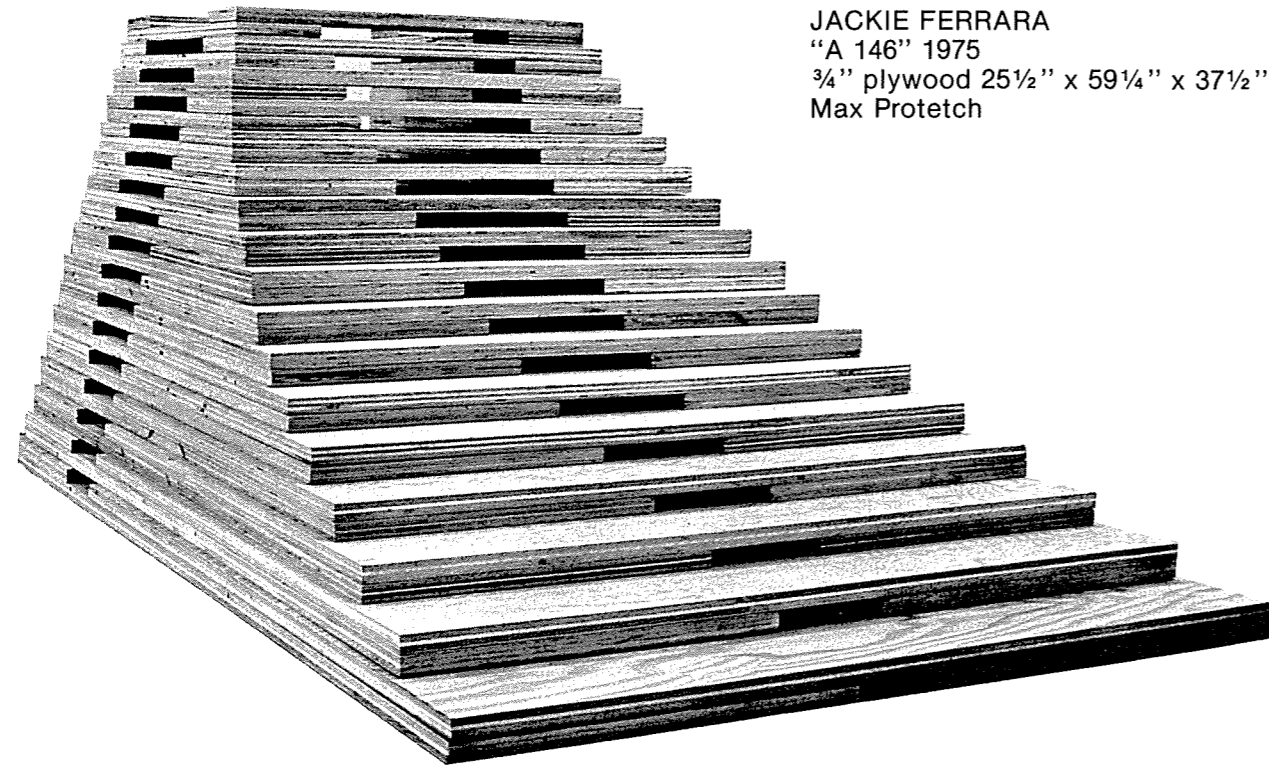
U.S. citizen born 1935.

WALTER DE MARIA  
"BLUE GLASS FOR CORNELL." 1966.  
glass and stainless steel.  
15 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 10 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ .  
Whitney Museum of American Art,  
Jean and Howard Lipman foundation



JACKIE FERRARA

born Detroit.



JACKIE FERRARA  
"A 146" 1975  
3/4" plywood 25 1/2" x 59 1/4" x 37 1/2"  
Max Protetch

ROLAND GEBHARDT

born Paramaribo, Surinam 1939.



ROLAND GEBHARDT  
"9-15-77." 1977.  
STONE.  
28 x 108 x 36.  
on loan from the artist

ROBERT GROSVENOR

born New York City 1937.

ROBERT GROSVENOR

"UNTITLED." 1976-77.

wood, steel bolts, creosote and axle grease.

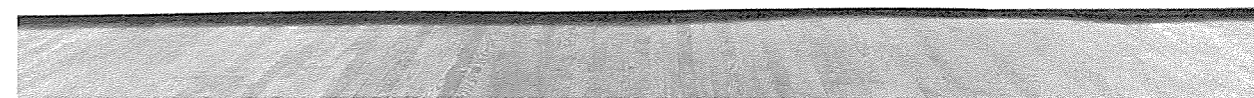
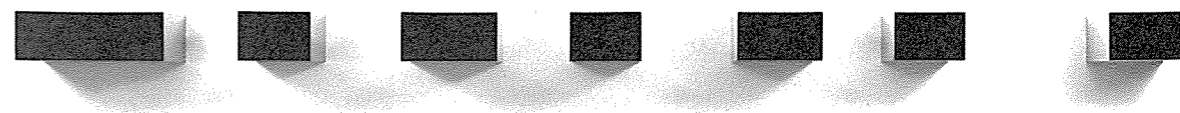
34 x 85 x 35

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Collection,  
gift of Mrs. Albert A List.



DONALD JUDD

born Excelsior Springs, Mo. 1928.



DONALD JUDD

"UNTITLED." 1974.

(SEVEN PART DISCONNECTED PROGRESSION)

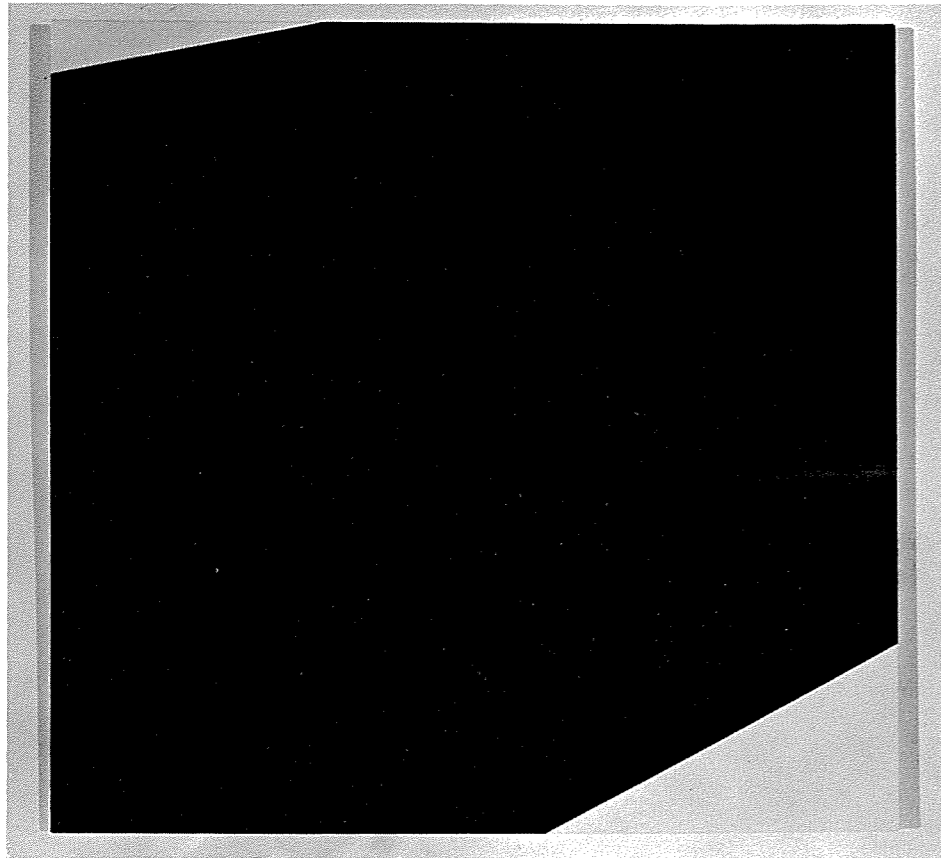
stainless steel and amber plexiglas over medium gray.

8 x 194 x 14

Leo Castelli Gallery

ELLSWORTH KELLY

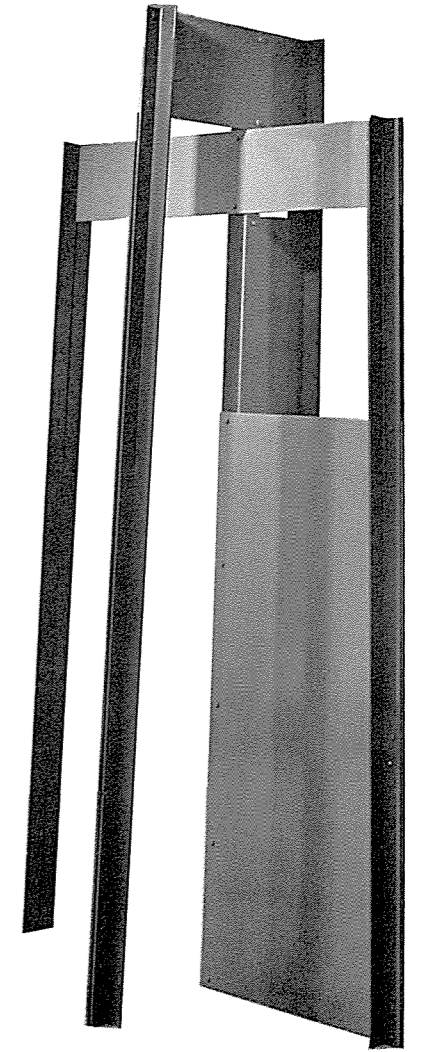
born Newburgh, N.Y. 1923.



ELLSWORTH KELLY  
"BLUE, WHITE." 1958.  
oil on canvas. 48 x 50.  
Leo Castelli Gallery.

LYMAN KIPP

born Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. 1929.



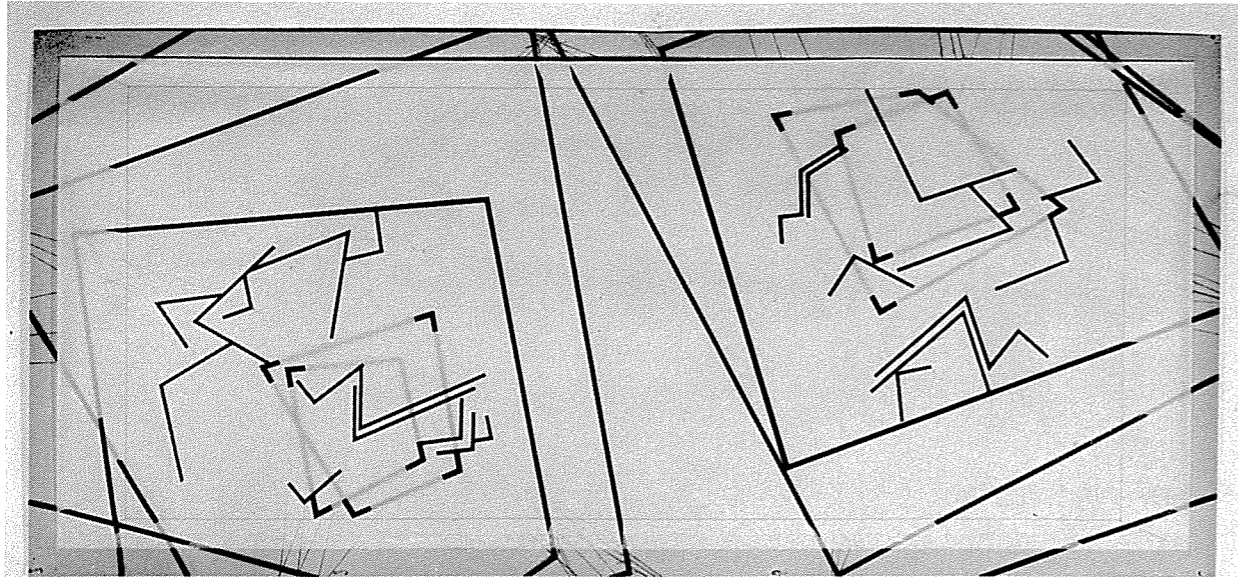
LYMAN KIPP.  
"E." 1978.  
painted aluminum  
88 x 23½ x 41¼.  
on loan from the artist and  
Construct, Chicago

BARRY LE VA

born Long Beach, California 1940.

---

BARRY LE VA  
"CORNER SECTIONS (OF 5-4  
SIDED BOUNDARIES)." 1977.  
ink and pencil on  
Construction and tracing paper.  
Sonnabend Gallery.



22

SOL LEWITT

born Hartford, Conn. 1928.

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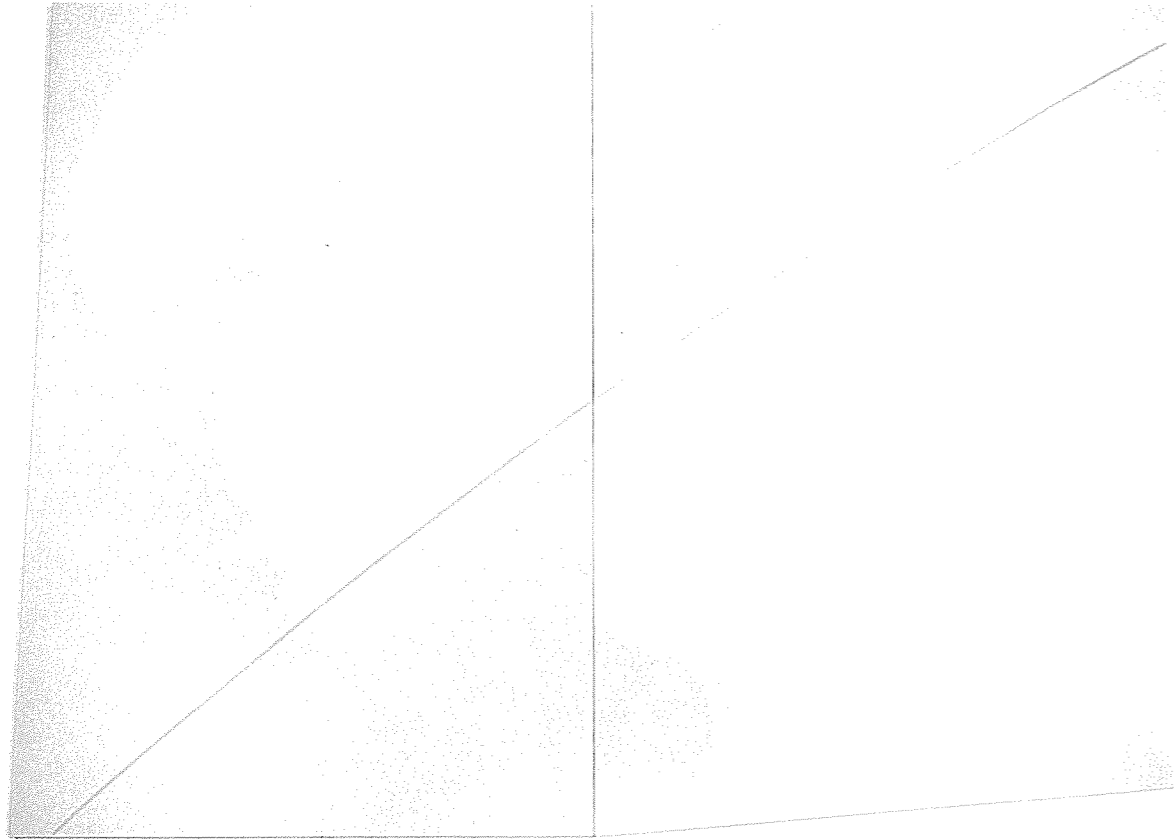
SOL LEWITT  
"ON A WALL WHICH IS DIVIDED INTO THREE  
SECTIONS, ONE EACH, BLUE, YELLOW AND  
RED, A 1" PENCIL GRID." APRIL 1979.  
PENCIL ON PAINTED WALL. 116 x 324.  
John Weber Gallery

First execution of work.  
No photo available.

23

ROBERT MANGOLD

born North Tanawanda, N.Y. 1937.



ROBERT MANGOLD.  
"A CURVED LINE WITHIN TWO DISTORTED RECTANGLES." 1978.  
acrylic and pencil on canvas  
78<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 110<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>.  
courtesy John Weber

BRICE MARDEN

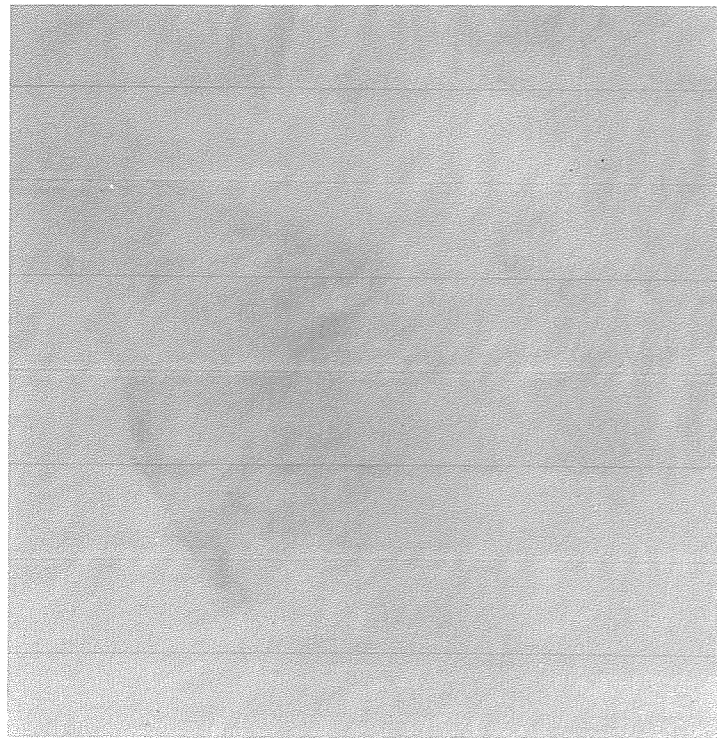
born Bronxville, N.Y. 1938.

BRICE MARDEN  
"MOON STUDY II." 1978.  
graphite and wax on paper. 29<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 41<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>.  
The Pace Gallery.



AGNES MARTIN

born Maklin, Canada.

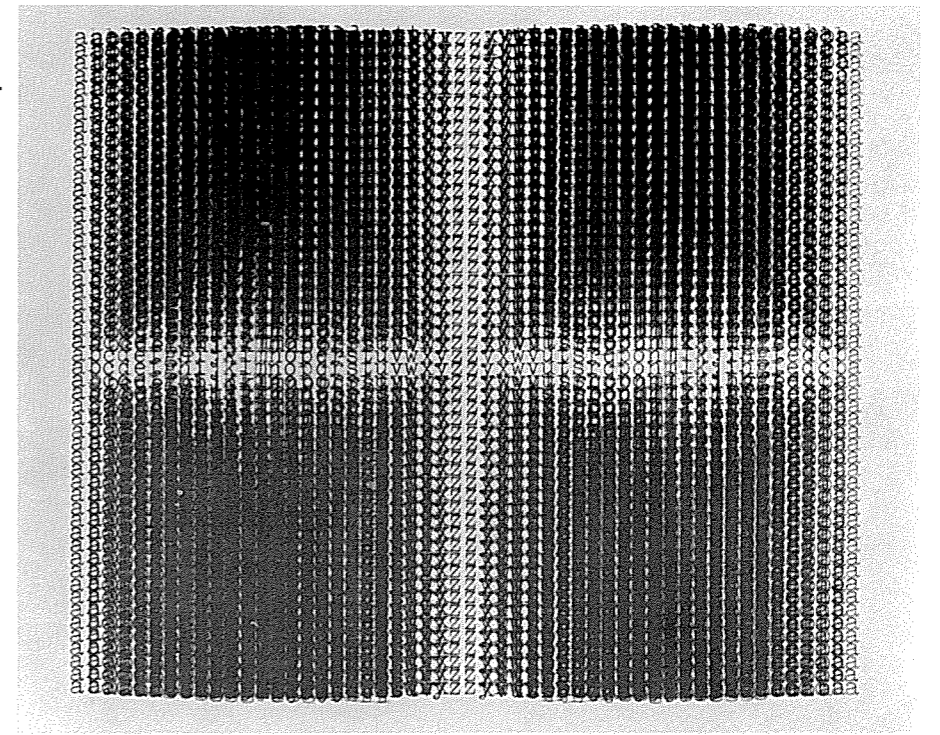


AGNES MARTIN  
"FOUR UNTITLED DRAWINGS." 1977.  
watercolor, graphite and inks on paper.  
9 x 9  
The Pace Gallery

BRENDA MILLER

born Bronx, N.Y. 1941.

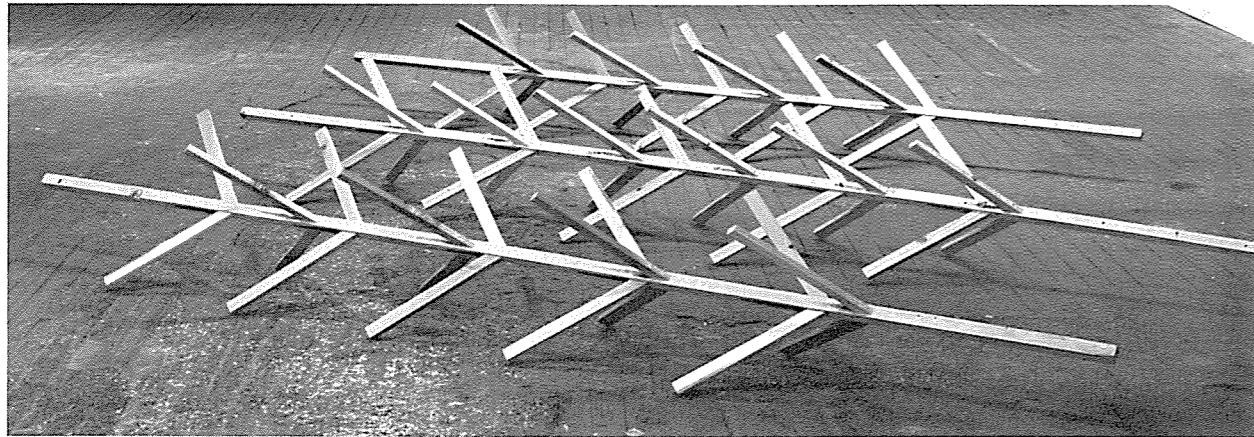
BRENDA MILLER  
"HORIZONTAL  
ALPHABET (13)." 1978-79.  
typewriting on paper.  
11½ x 136.  
Sperone Westwater  
Fischer Inc.



MARY MISS

born 1944.

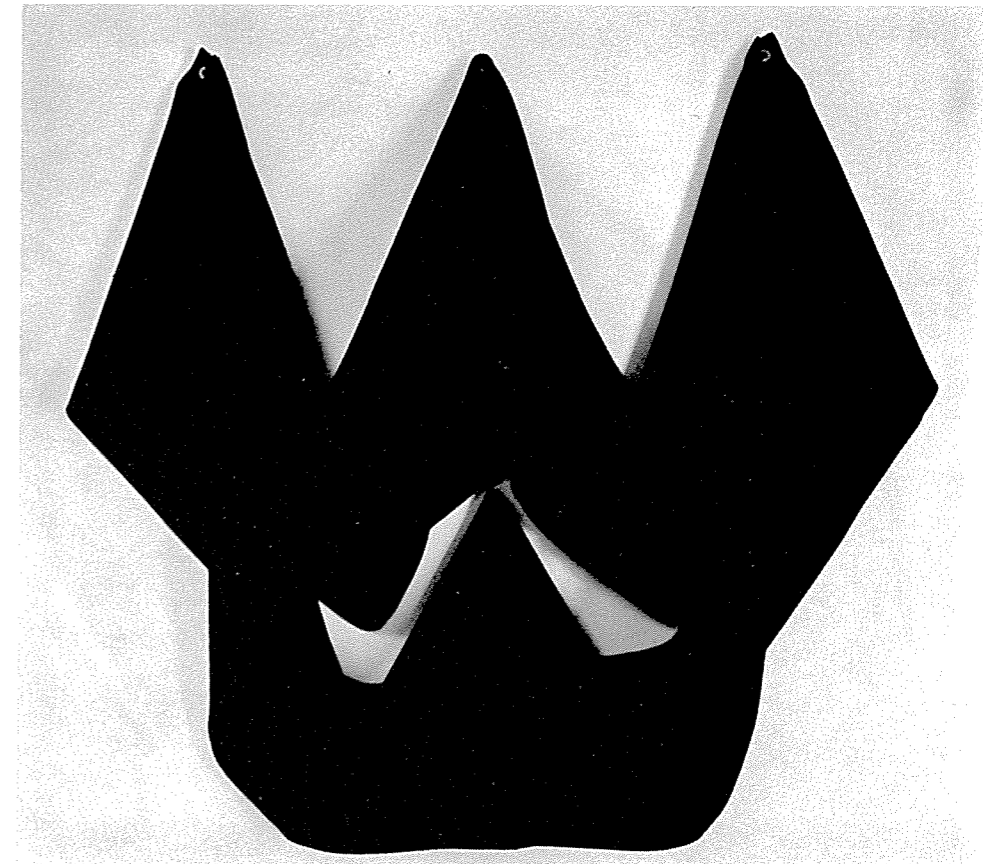
MARY MISS  
"FLOOR BARRIER." 1972.  
wood. each 30 x 156  
on loan from the artist and Max Protech Gallery



ROBERT MORRIS

born Kansas City, Kansas 1931.

ROBERT MORRIS  
"UNTITLED" 1976.  
black felt with  
metal grommets  
88 x 92 x 25  
Leo Castelli Gallery





BARNETT NEWMAN

born New York City 1905-1970.



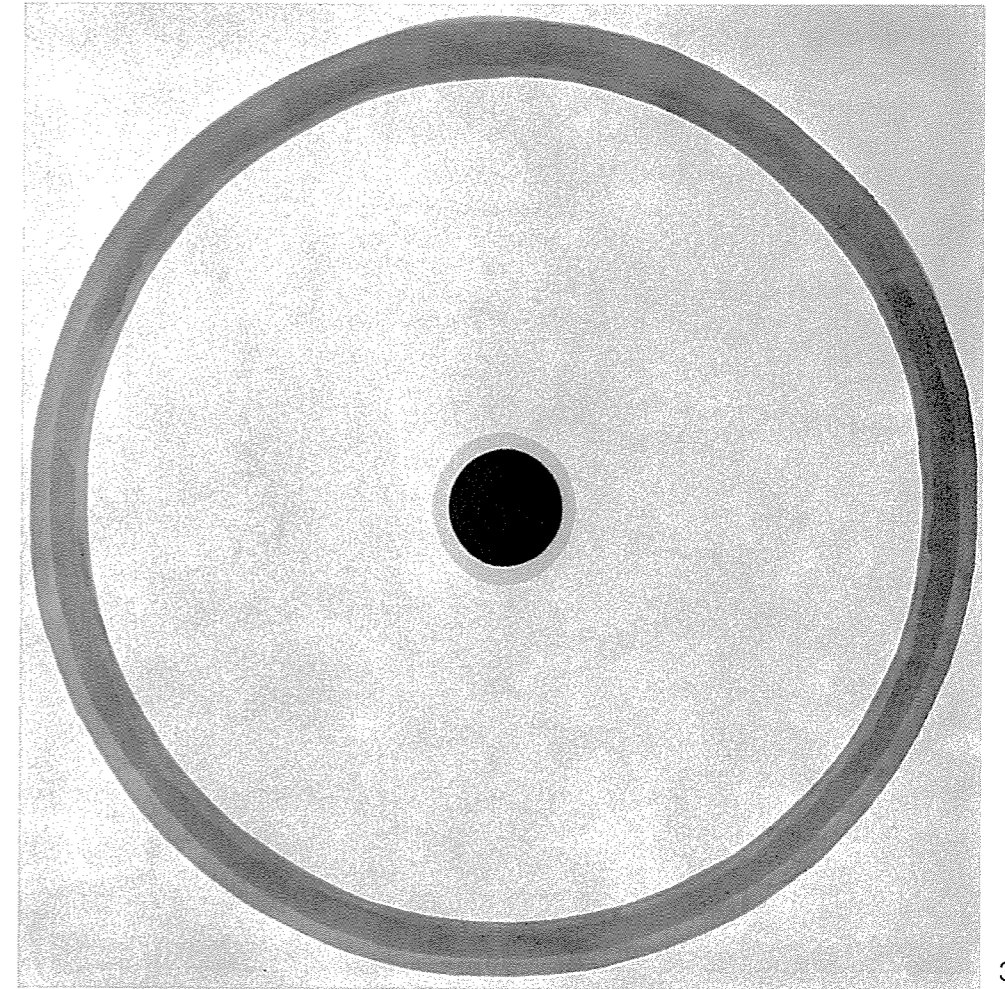
BARNETT NEWMAN  
"THE WILD." 1950.  
oil on canvas. 1" x 95 3/4".  
Museum of Modern Art

gift of the Kulicke family.

KENNETH NOLAND

born Asheville, North Carolina 1924.

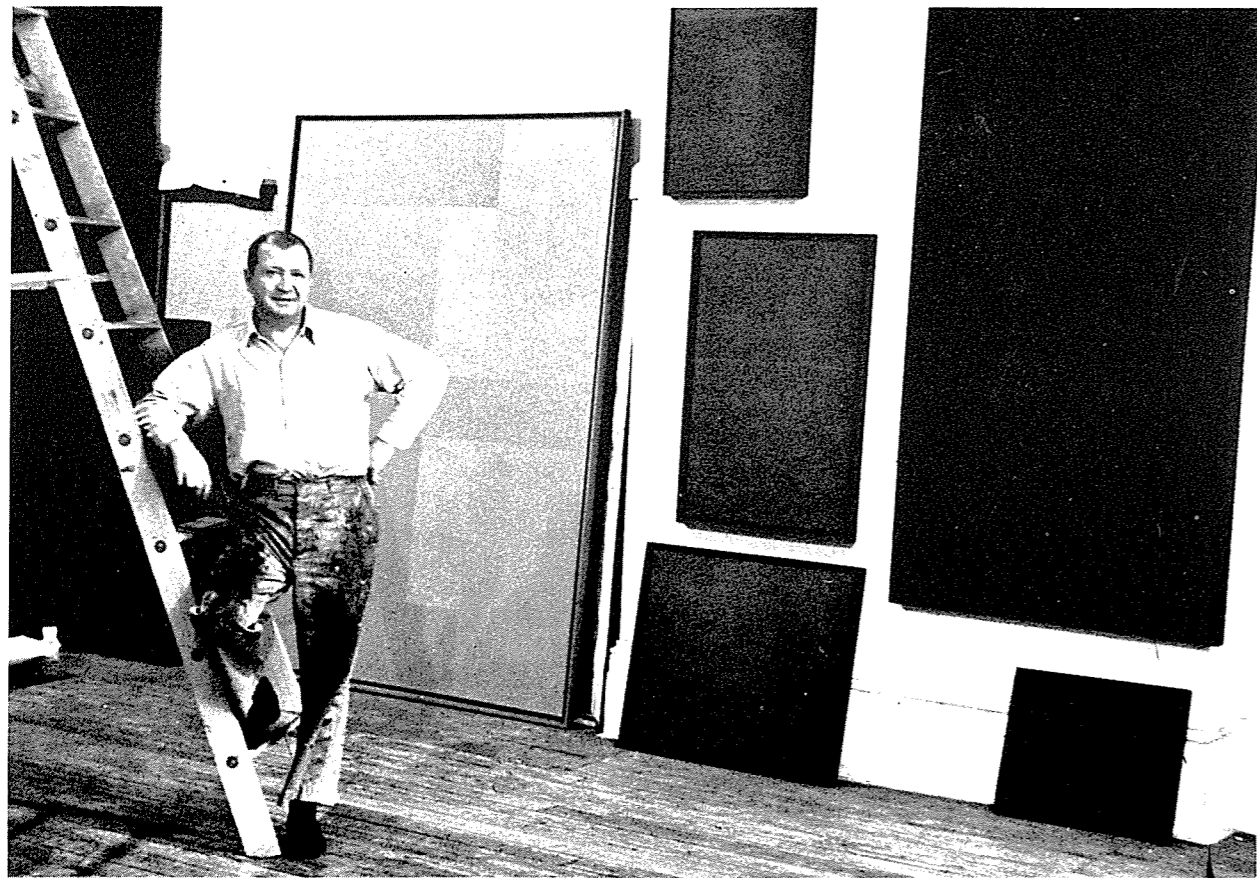
KENNETH NOLAND  
"PEGAUS." 1961.  
acrylic on canvas  
Leo Castelli Gallery



AD REINHARDT

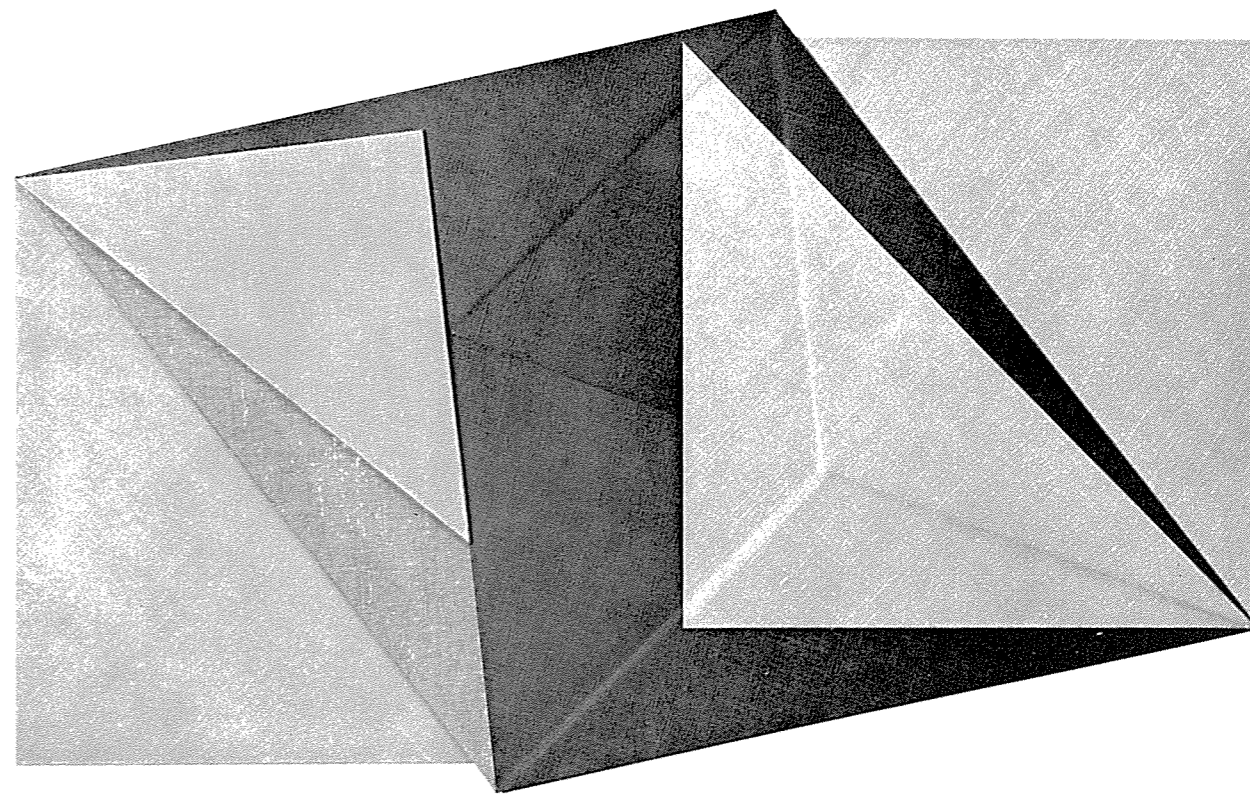
born Buffalo, New York 1913-1967.

AD REINHARDT  
Portfolio 1962  
Wadsworth Atheneum



DOROTHEA ROCKBURNE

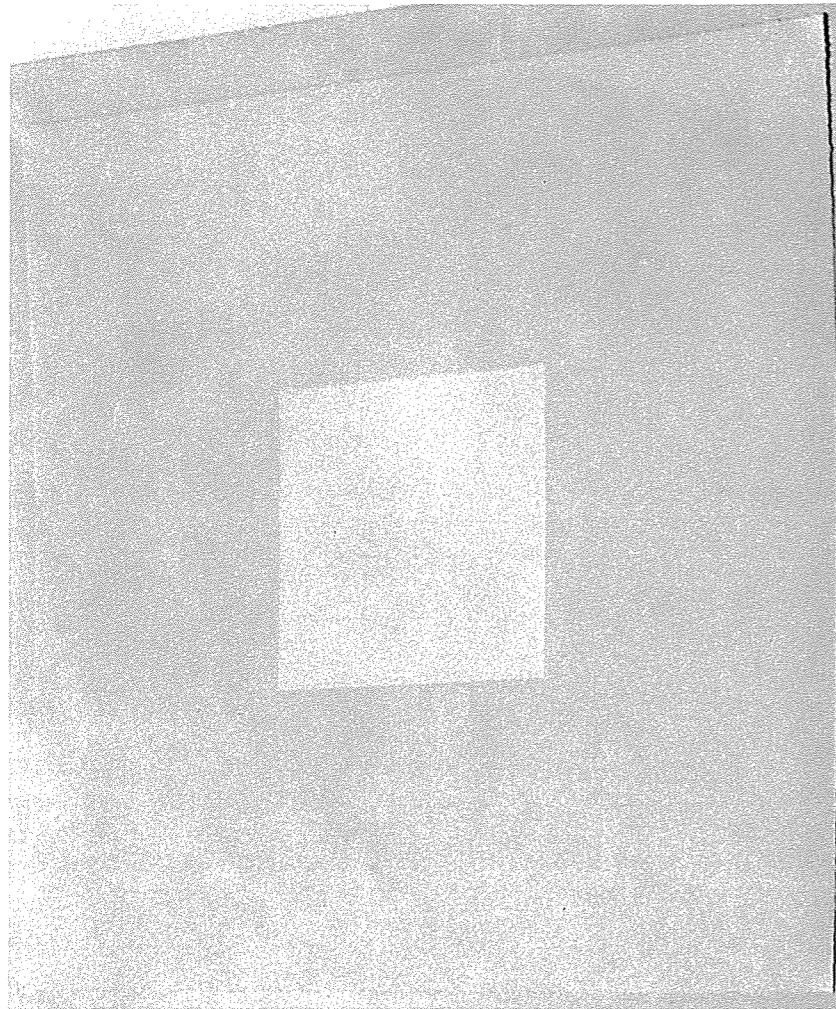
born Verdun, Quebec.



DOROTHEA ROCKBURNE  
"DISCOURSE." 1976.  
gesso, oil paint, varnish, and  
blue pencil on linen. 32½ x 52½  
John Weber Gallery

ROBERT RYMAN

born Nashville, Tennessee 1930.



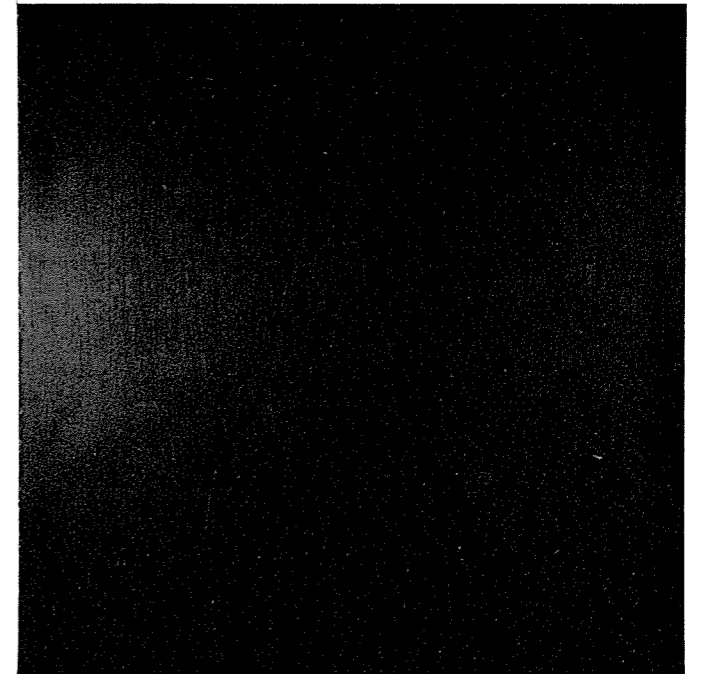
ROBERT RYMAN  
"SIX AQUATINTS" 1975.  
AQUATINT TRIAL PROOFS.  
John Weber Gallery

34

RICHARD SERRA

born San Francisco 1939.

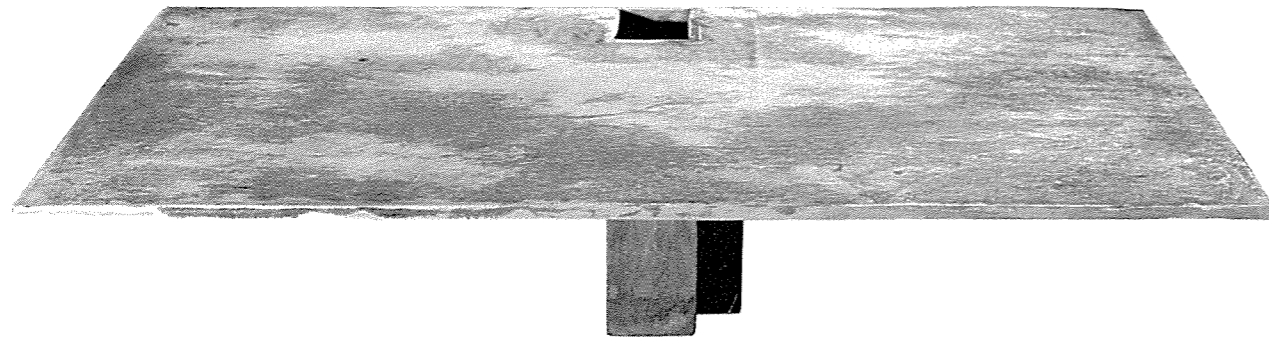
RICHARD SERRA  
"3rd RECTANGLE TO THE FLOOR. 1978  
paintstick on Belgian linen  
111 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 106 $\frac{3}{4}$ .  
Leo Castelli Gallery



35

JOEL SHAPIRO.

born New York City 1941.



JOEL SHAPIRO  
"UNTITLED." 1978.  
cast bronze. 16-11/16 x 23-7/16 x 15-3/16.  
on loan from the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery

TONY SMITH.

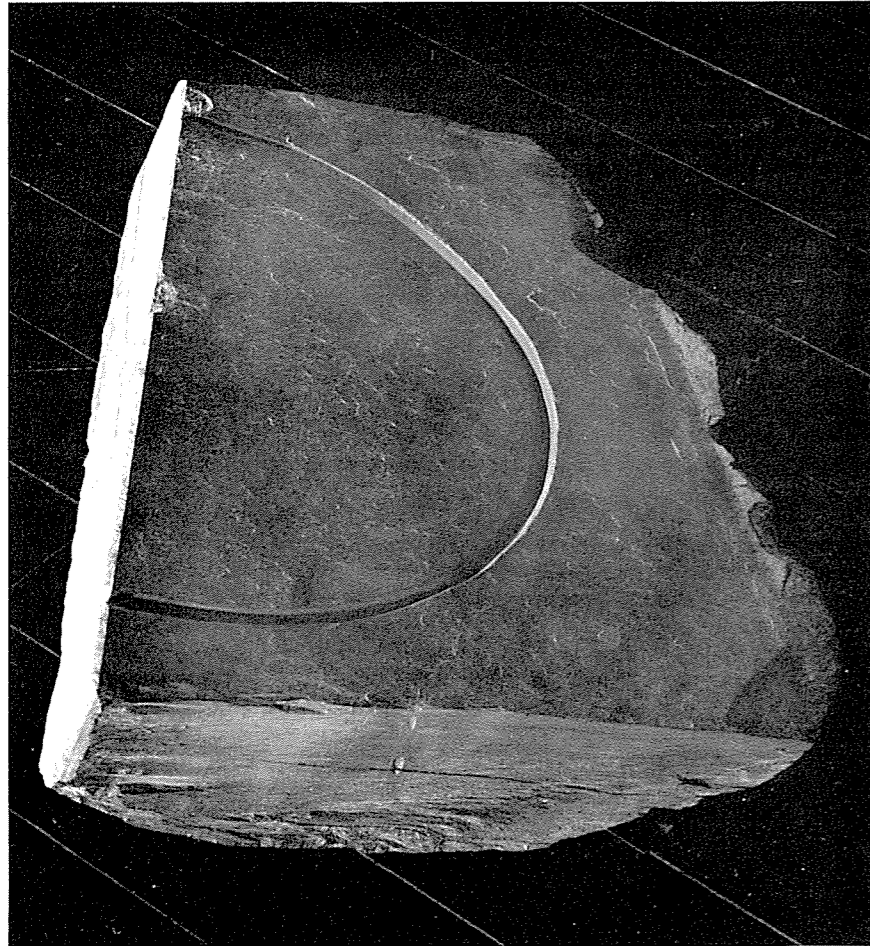
born South Orange, N.J. 1912.



TONY SMITH  
"GRACE HOPER."  
cast bronze. 60 x 72 x 72.  
on loan from Mr. and Mrs. Martin Melzer

ROBERT SMITHSON

born Rutherford, N.J. 1938-1973.



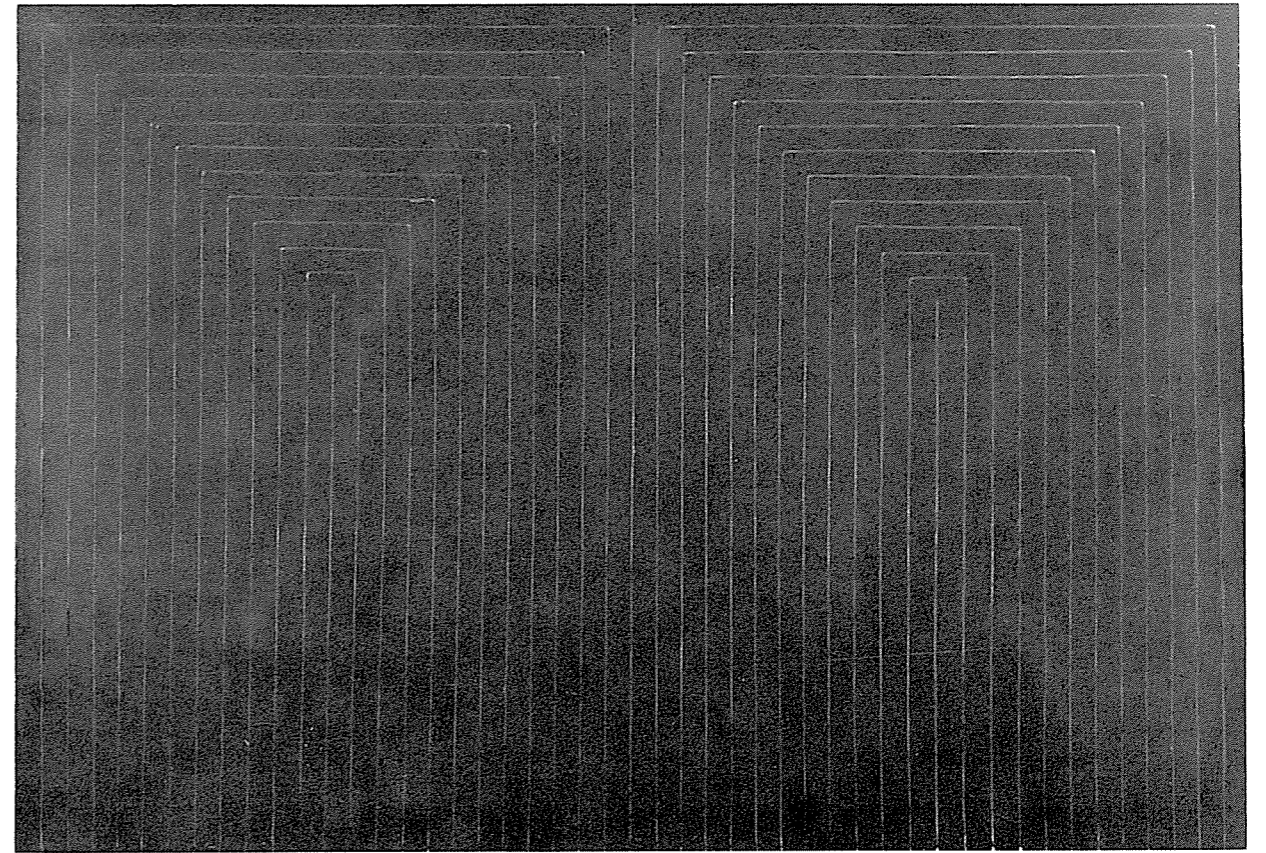
ROBERT SMITHSON  
"SLATE GRIND #1." 1973.  
Slate. 13½ x 19 x 13¼.  
estate of Robert Smithson  
and John Weber Gallery.

38

FRANK STELLA

born Malden, Mass. 1936.

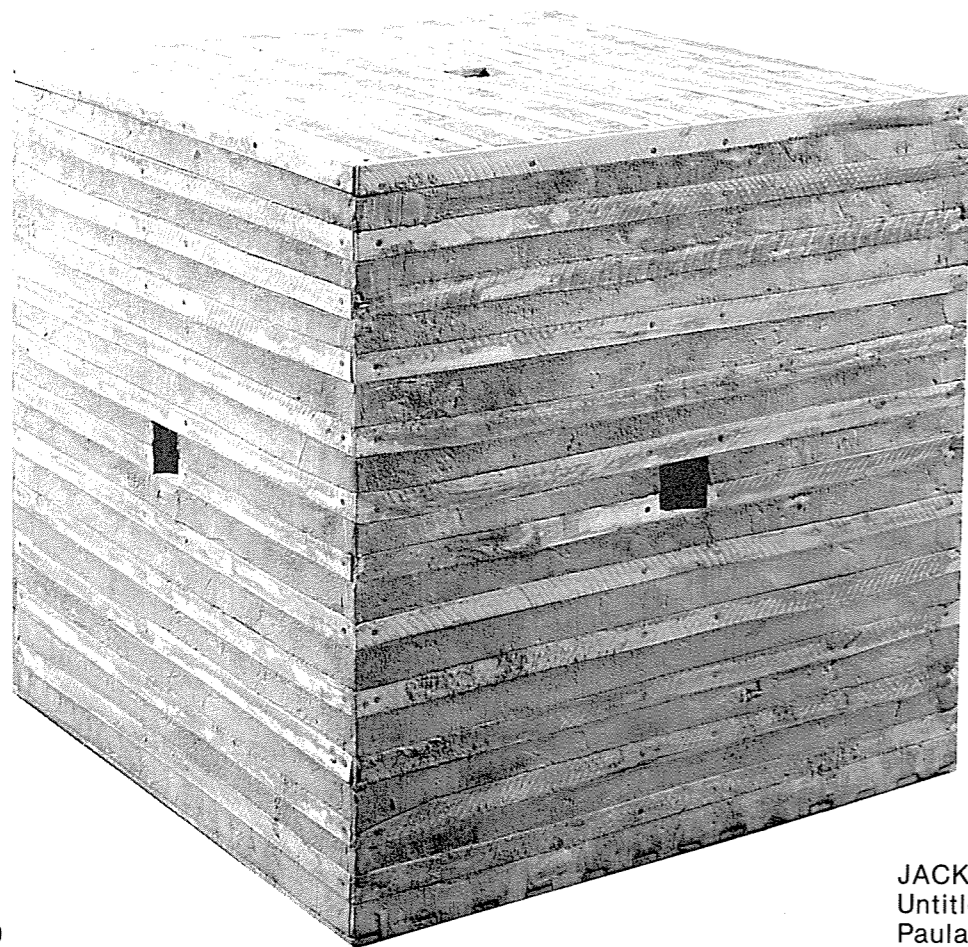
FRANK STELLA  
"MARRIAGE OF REASON AND SQUALOR". 1959.  
OIL ON CANVAS. 90¾ x 132¾.  
The Museum of Modern Art.  
(The Aldrich Purchase Fund)



39

JACKIE WINSOR

born Canada 1941.



JACKIE WINSOR  
Untitled  
Paula Cooper Gallery

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- Gene BARO, "American Sculpture: A New Scene", *Studio International*, Jan. 1968
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- Gregory BATTOCK, "The Minimal Art Anthology", New York, 1968
- Mel BOCHNER, "Primary Structures", *Arts Magazine*, May 1966
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museum office      weekdays 9-5  
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admission      adults \$1; students  
                                    and senior citizens 50¢  
group tours      weekdays  
                                    by appointment  
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## INTRODUCTION (continued)

twilight is best outside. No chiaroscuro, "The malodorous reality of craftsmen, beggars, toppers with rags, and wrinkles."

8. **NO SPACE.** Space should be empty, should not project, and should not be flat. "The painting should be behind the picture frame." The frame should isolate and protect the painting from its surrounding. Space divisions within the painting should not be seen.

9. **NO TIME.** "Clock time is inconsequential". "There is no ancient or modern, no past or future in art". "A work of art is always present." The present is the future of the past, and the past of the future.

10. **NO SIZE OR SCALE.** Breadth and depth of thought and feeling in art have no relation to physical size. Large sizes are aggressive, positivist, intemperate, venal, and graceless.

11. **NO MOVEMENT.** "Everything is on the move. Art should be still."

12. **NO OBJECT.** No subject, no matter, no symbols, images, or ready-mades.

José Ortega y Gasset somewhat agrees with the twelve rules when he writes, "Preoccupation with the human content of the work is in principle incompatible with esthetic enjoyment proper... Even though pure art may be impossible, there doubtless can prevail a tendency toward a purification of art. Such a tendency would effect a progressive elimination of the human, all too human elements, predominant in romantic and naturalistic production... The new art is an artistic art."

We hope you enjoy the exhibition and our sculpture garden, and gain a greater appreciation of painting and sculpture in THE MINIMAL TRADITION. In the case of this exhibition and its contents, minimal thought is not acceptable.

Dorothy Mayhall  
*Director*



