

material object floating in the empty air. Turrell's most ambitious effort has been the site work called the *Roden Crater Project* (fig. 24.55), begun in 1974 and still in progress. By moving hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of earth and slightly reshaping the bowl of this extinct volcano, he is enhancing its ability to create optical effects, transforming it into a vast "viewing space." Far from city lights, visitors look up from the bottom of the crater; they witness with remarkable clarity the subtle yet extraordinary phenomena produced by changing atmospheric conditions in the clear Arizona sky. At times, the firmament over their heads can appear to solidify into an opaque disk that seems to rest on the rim of the crater. Under other conditions, the sky opens up as an illuminated dome of infinite depth, becoming what Turrell calls "celestial vaulting."

Abakanowicz's Sculpture

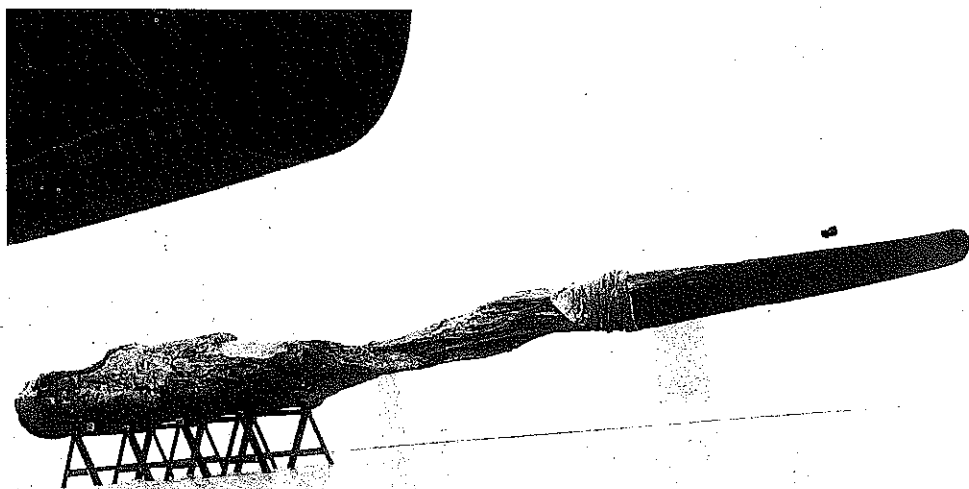
Unlike most sculptors interested in the nature of particular sites, the Polish artist **Magdalena Abakanowicz** (b. 1930) has focused on the human form. Her serial groups of figures owe some of their effectiveness to their complex surface textures, which give them each a certain organic, living quality, comparable to that of skin, as well as an individual identity. In the mid-seventies, Abakanowicz planned a series of seated figures cast from plaster molds, one mold for the front and one for the back, but wound up making only frontal figures. A few years later she decided to use the back parts of the molds, too, which had been set aside. The result was the sculptural ensemble called *Backs* (fig. 24.56). Here, vulnerable-looking hunched-over forms, headless and with only remnants of arms and legs, gather

in a crowd. The group produces an unsettling effect when installed at any site, regardless of whether it is a landscape or a museum. Outdoors, the *Backs* may recall knots of dispirited refugees resting by the side of the road, not an uncommon sight in Central Europe during the artist's lifetime. When shown in the confines of a gallery, the *Backs* become patient captives put on display, turned away from the museum visitors who have come to look.

A sense of vulnerability is also evident in *Zadra* (fig. 24.57), from the artist's cycle *War Games*. Working with huge tree trunks that foresters had cut down and left behind, Abakanowicz attacked the wood with ax and chainsaw, hacking it into forms associable with military aggression, such as cannon or projectile shapes.



24.56 Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Backs*, 1976–80. Burlap and resin, 80 pieces, each approx. 25¼ × 21¼ × 23¾" (65.4 × 55.2 × 60.3 cm). Installed near Calgary, Canada; 1982. Collection Museum of Modern Art, Pusan, South Korea.



24.57 Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Zadra*, from the cycle *War Games*, 1987. Wood, steel, iron, and burlap, 4'3" × 3'3" × 27'4¾" (1.3 m × 100.3 × 8.4 m). Hess Collection, Napa, California.

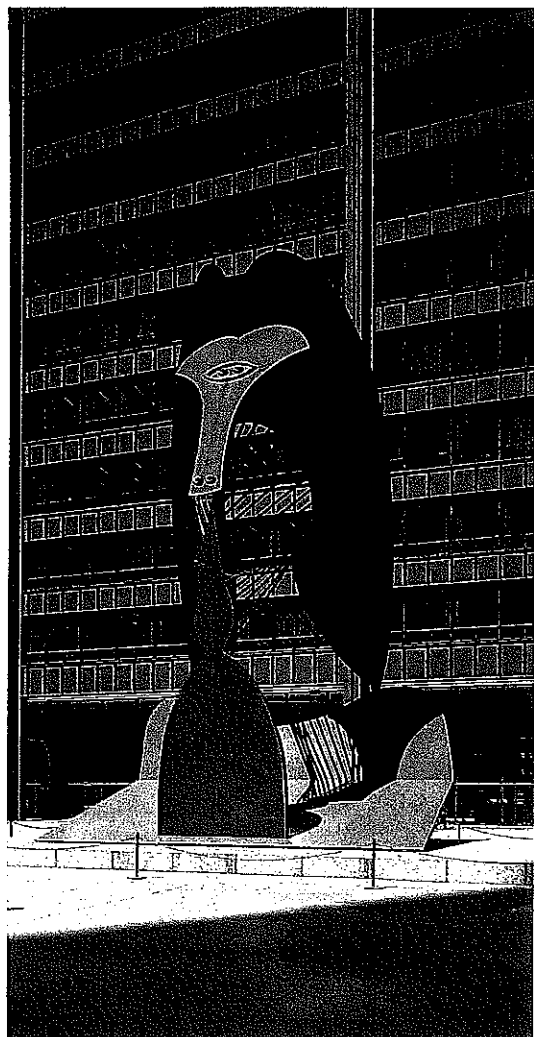
Yet she treated others of the dismembered trees as if they were war's helpless victims and compassionately bandaged them with burlap. (The bandage idea may owe something to the red-marked sackcloth collages made after World War II by Alberto Burri—see fig. 20.40—who had been a doctor.) In this way, concerns related to the body were made manifest through natural materials from a particular site.

Visible Statements: Monuments and Public Sculpture

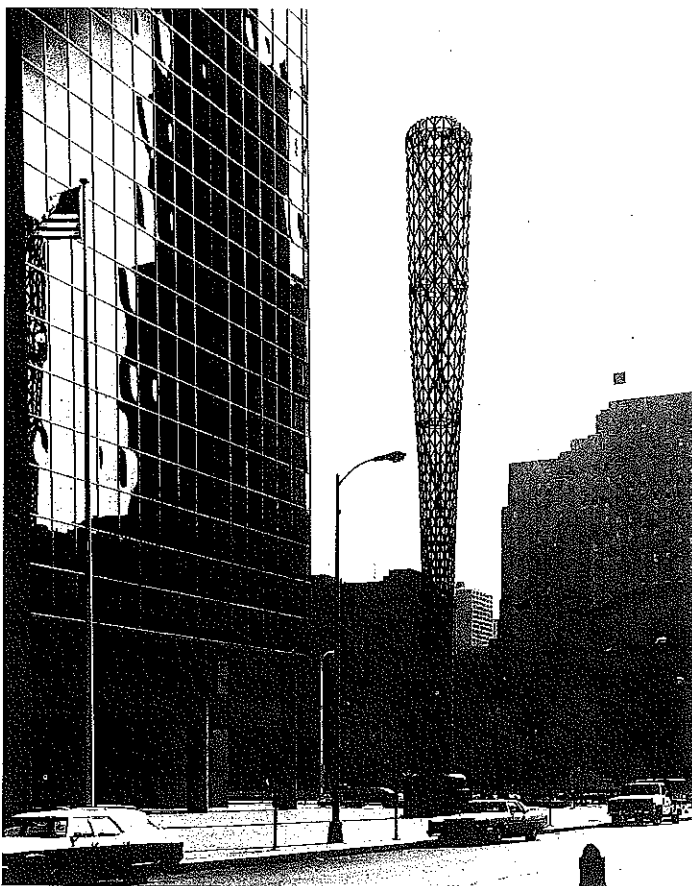
The environmental impulse struck a deep, resonant chord in the consciousness of artists and patrons alike, and it continued to reverberate even as the trend developed away from interventionist procedures toward sculptural or architectural forms made independently of, but in relation to, the chosen site. Inevitably, public sculpture has produced conflicts, especially since much of it has been created under public commission or within the public domain, a situation that seems automatically to require that art strike some tenable balance between its own need for internal

coherence and the needs of the immediate surroundings. At issue has been the degree of accommodation necessary between the essentially private, enigmatic character of modern art and the expectation that art placed in the public arena be accessible—that is, expressive and meaningful—to the public at large. A dramatic precedent for daring, monumental sculpture in an outdoor public setting had been provided by the aged Picasso's nearly sixty-six-foot-high (20 m) Chicago Civic Center sculpture of 1966 (fig. 24.58). That huge work's conspicuous location and popular acceptance did much to certify the validity of urban site works, as well as provide encouragement to young artists. But if site sculpture represented a return to a variant of the very "aesthetic object" that Conceptualism had set out to eliminate from art, the actual objects now produced by environmentally minded artists nonetheless remained relatively free of a purist formal modernism.

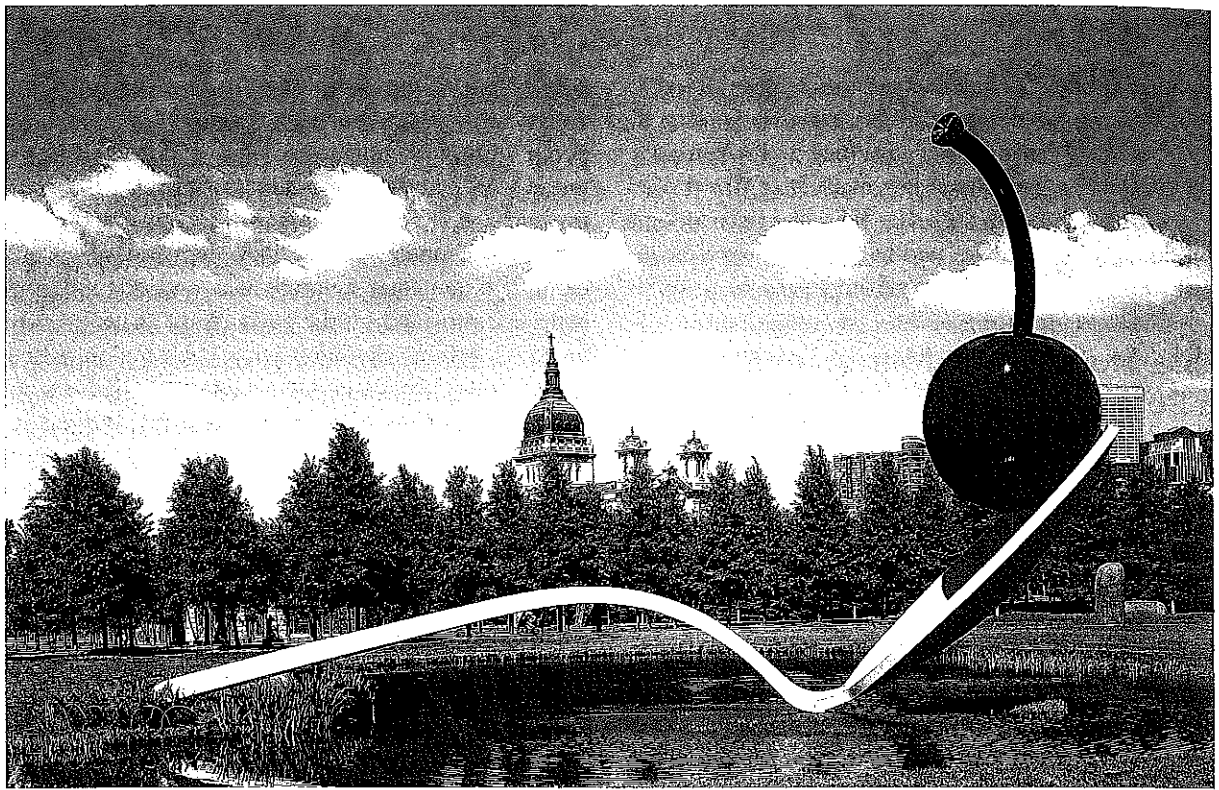
Monumental sculptures spread across the American urban landscape, largely owing to the United States General Services Administration's Art-in-Architecture program, which required one-half of one percent of the cost of constructing a new federal building to be allocated for the installation of artworks designed to enhance the new structure and its site. One of the most successful of the federally sponsored public monuments is Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929)



24.58 Pablo Picasso, *Chicago Monument*, 1966. Welded steel, height 65'9" (20 m). Civic Center, Chicago.



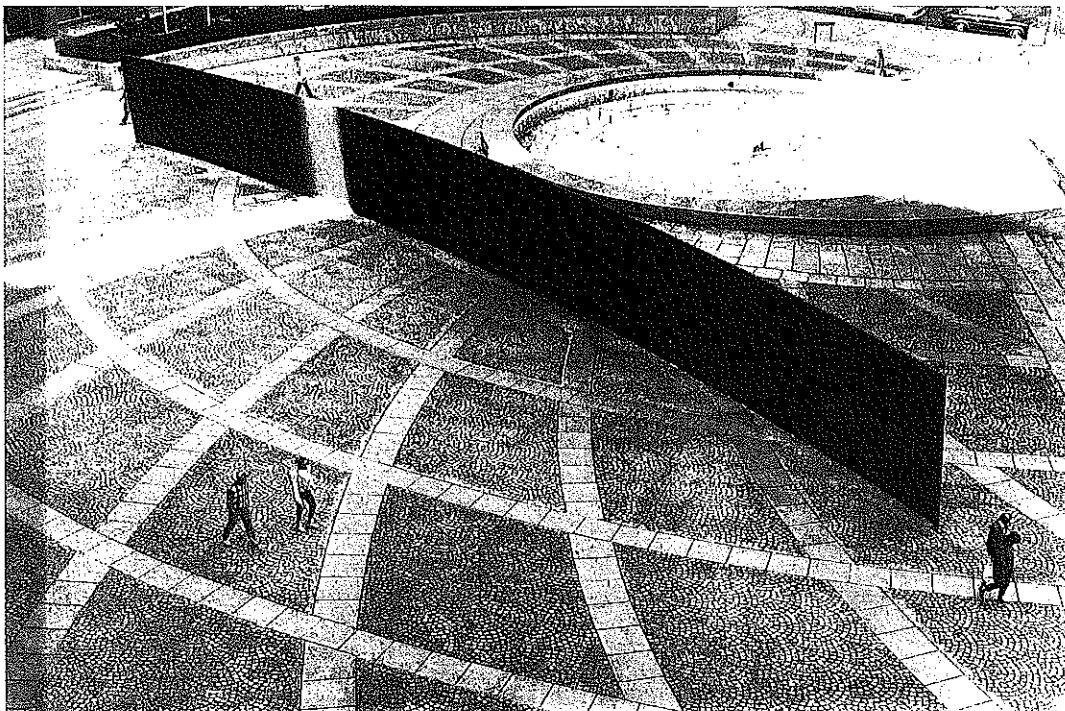
24.59 Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen, *Batcolumn*, 1977. Welded steel bars painted gray, height 100' (30.5 m). United States Social Security Administration, Chicago.



24.60 Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, *Spoonbridge and Cherry*, 1985–88. Aluminum, stainless steel, and paint, 29'6" × 51'6" × 13'6" [9 × 15.7 × 4.1 m]. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

and Coosje Van Bruggen's (b. 1942) *Batcolumn* (fig. 24.59). This large-scale project, as the collaborators prefer to call their monumental outdoor work, is a hundred-foot-tall (30.5 m) open-work, diamond-grid steel shaft erected in 1977 directly in front of the new Social Security Administration center in a former slum near the west end of Chicago's Loop. Oldenburg and Van Bruggen settled on the baseball-bat shape for the city of Chicago, an image

mimicking the many heroic columns in the city's older Beaux Arts architecture, the soaring towers of the skyscraper architecture Chicago invented, the countless smokestacks celebrated by Carl Sandburg, and the game played and cheered with such passion on Wrigley Field and Comiskey Park. *Batcolumn* also makes a wry comment on art, specifically recalling Brancusi's *Endless Column* (see fig. 9.19) and Gabo's 1956–57 construction for the Bijenkorf



24.61 Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, 1981. Hot-rolled steel, height 12' (3.7 m) length 120' (36.6 m). Formerly at Federal Plaza, Foley Square, New York; removed in 1989.

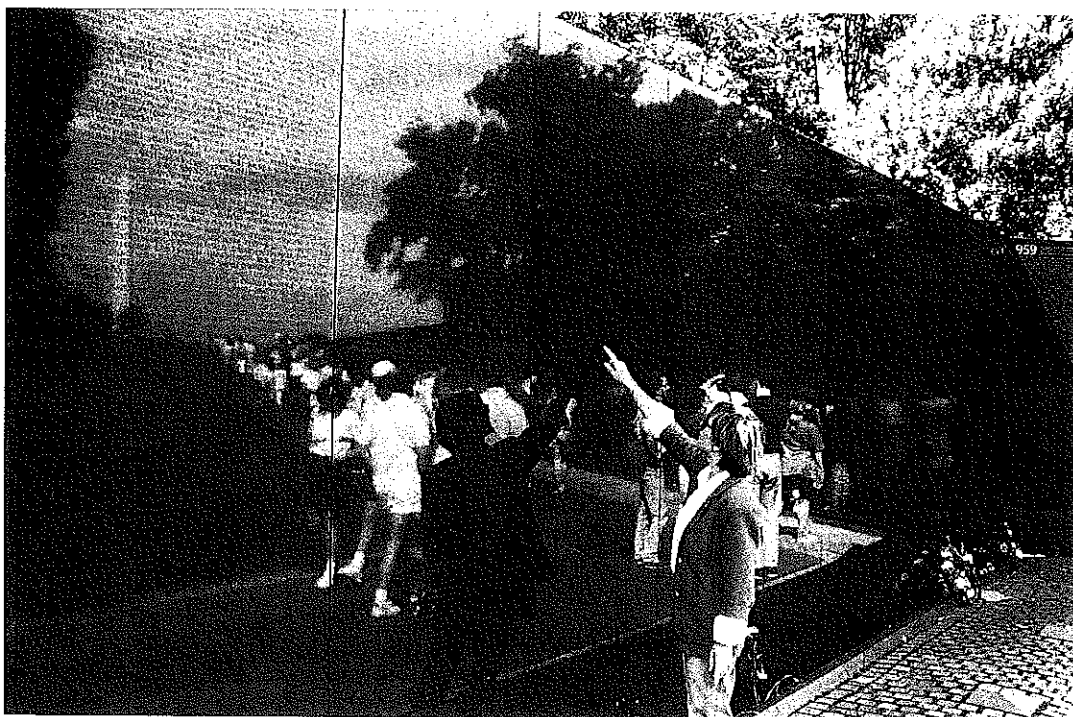
department store in Rotterdam (see fig. 17.6). By recasting such a banal form on a monumental scale, the artists brought to fruition something of Oldenburg's earlier visionary "proposals" for revitalizing the urban world with familiar objects fantastically enlarged—immense baked potatoes, lipsticks, bananas, and Good Humor bars (see fig. 21.28). More recently, in the mid-eighties, the pair has realized *Spoonbridge and Cherry* (fig. 24.60) for the sculpture garden of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. In this work, an enormous aluminum spoon gracefully spans a pool of water. A red cherry, serving as a counterpoint to the spoon's curve, spurts water from its stem in summer.

The GSA program also commissioned the controversial *Tilted Arc* (fig. 24.61) by Richard Serra (b. 1939), a 120-foot-long (36.6 m), 12-foot-tall (3.7 m), 72-ton (73 tonne) slab of unadorned curved and tilted steel for the federal building complex (Federal Plaza) in New York City's Foley Square. Installed in 1981, the work was removed in 1989 in response to the demand of local civil servants, who found it objectionable. It was called a "hideous hulk of rusty scrap metal" and an "iron curtain" barrier not only to passage across the plaza but also to other activities that once took place there, such as jazz concerts, rallies, and simple lunchtime socializing. The removal occurred in the face of heavy opposition mounted by the professional art community, which supported the artist in his contention that to relocate a piece he deemed utterly site-specific would be to destroy it, and that such action would constitute a breach of the moral, as well as legal, agreement the government made to maintain the work permanently as the artist conceived it.

During the heated public debate, little attention was given to the more positive, even lyrical, qualities of *Tilted*

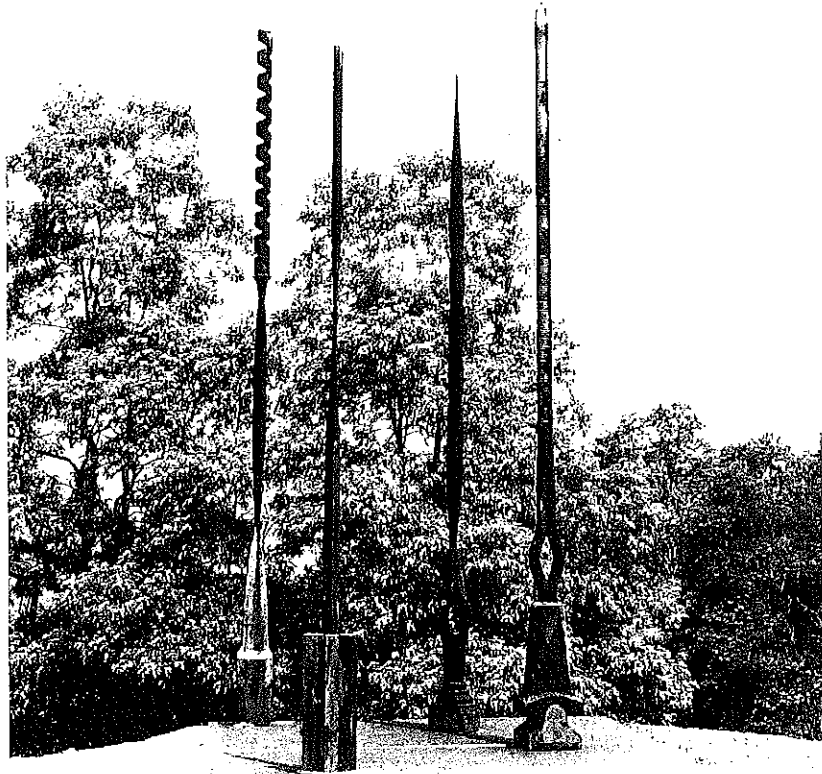
Arc as a physical object. For example, it could be argued that this surprisingly graceful sculptural "wall," with its elegantly leaning curvature, actually shielded the viewer from the barren vistas of Foley Square, at the same time helping to reshape what had surely been among the bleakest public plazas in New York City. And the worst insult hurled at the sculpture—"rusty scrap metal"—in fact pointed to one of its most distinctive characteristics, a feature related to Process art: a close examination showed that the steel's oxidizing surface was becoming more richly textured and complex as it aged and weathered. By the time it was dismantled, *Tilted Arc* had begun to look like an homage to the expansive, dappled surfaces of late Monet—a kind of industrial *Water Lilies*.

In contrast to the dispute over Serra's *Tilted Arc*, few monuments created for urban sites have achieved such enthusiastic public acceptance as Maya Ying Lin's (b. 1960) Vietnam Veterans Memorial (fig. 24.62), commissioned in 1981. Since its completion, the memorial has been so highly acclaimed that it is difficult to remember how controversial the proposal originally was. In a competition to create a monument that would pay tribute to the 58,000 Americans killed in the Vietnam War and that would harmonize with its surroundings on the Mall in Washington, Lin daringly proposed two simple walls of polished black granite that would meet at an angle, an idea that at first seemed too abstract for some of the interested parties. Several veterans' groups wanted to add a realistic sculpture of soldiers at the apex of the structure, which would have drastically compromised the original concept; the figure sculpture was eventually added, but at a distance from the granite wall that allowed both artworks to retain their individual integrity. In its finished state, the memorial's



24.62 Maya Ying Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 1982. Black granite, length 500' (152.4 m). The Mall, Washington, D.C.

24.63 Beverly Pepper,
 Four ductile iron sculptures
 installed at Central Park
 Plaza, New York, 1983.
 Left to right: *Volatile
 Presence*, height 27'
 (8.2 m); *Valley Marker*,
 height 25'8" (7.8 m);
Interrupted Messenger,
 height 29' (8.8 m);
Measured Presence,
 height 24' (7.3 m).



24.64 Beverly Pepper, *Cromlech Glen*, 1985–90. Earth, sod, trees, and sandstone, 25 × 130 × 90' (7.6 × 39.6 × 27.4 m). Laumeier Sculpture Park, Saint Louis, Missouri.

reflective black surface shows visitors their own faces as they search among the names of the casualties inscribed on the wall, an emotionally compelling effect that many have compared to an encounter between the living and the dead. In addition, visitors have the option of making pencil rubbings of the names of their loved ones.

Since the sixties, the American sculptor **Beverly Pepper** (b. 1924) has created welded steel constructions that have an imposing, if enigmatic, presence. Certain of the forms appear to be based on ancient tools and spears, giving an effect of prehistoric monumentality, but others are more closely related to the modern industrial world that produced them, such as the drill and corkscrew shapes and the screwdriver form seen in her 1983 ensemble in New York's Central Park Plaza (fig. 24.63). This paradoxical interplay between the modern and the prehistoric gives Pepper's work much of its rich associative power. Her concern with elemental form later led to create an outdoor environment in her *Cromlech Glen* of 1985–90 (fig. 24.64). In this work, although she somewhat reshaped the contours of the land, her most notable intervention was restricted to arranging sandstone steps over small, grassy hills. Her modest outdoor setting in a public sculpture park is more respectful of the earth than is much Land art, and more immediately welcoming than many of her metal sculptures.

Body of Evidence: Figurative Art

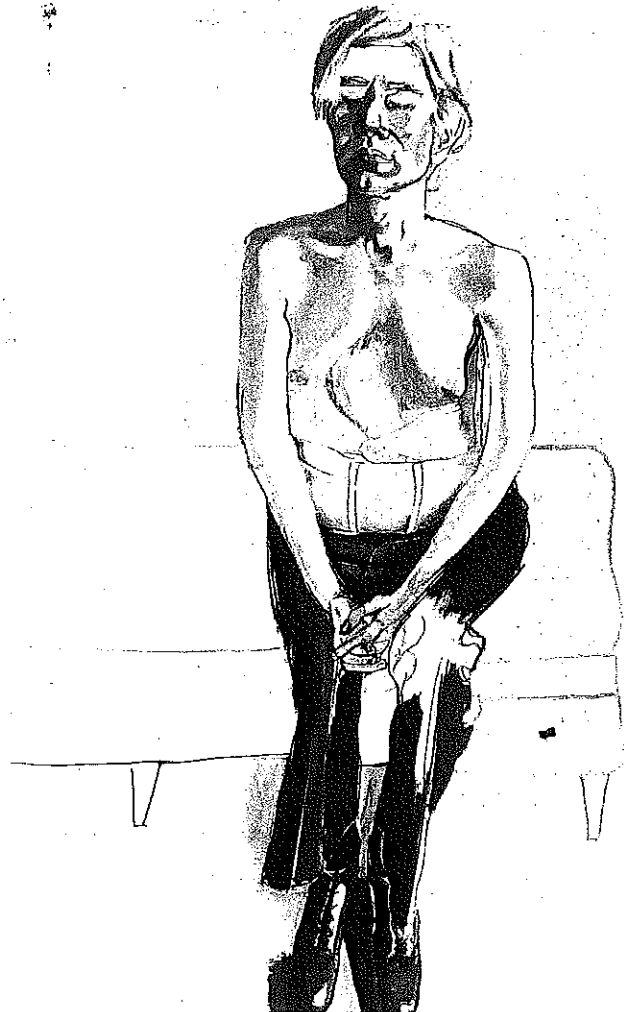
Figurative artists, too, in their turn, succeeded in overturning the dominance of Minimalist abstraction, and in the seventies they created new kinds of illusionism. As they did so, however, they revealed their roots in the rejected Minimalist aesthetic by translating its stillness and silence into the frozen, stop-action image of the camera—an approach for which artists found sources in the work of Edward Hopper (see fig. 18.36). And this was true even in the work of many painters who adamantly excluded photography from their creative process. Given its markedly static character, almost all of what became known as the New Realism (not to be confused with European *Nouveau Réalisme*, see chapter 21) could be seen as a variety of still life, whatever its subject matter. Inevitably, therefore, genuine still-life motifs now made a stunning reappearance in painting, long after their early career in modernism, when artists favored inanimate, anonymous subjects as more conducive to cool, formalist manipulation or distortion than, for instance, the human image, with all its complicated moral and psychological associations.

Traditional Realism

In the United States, a pragmatic preoccupation with material reality, with the “old” realism, so to speak, had been too deeply ingrained to die out, even as Abstract Expressionism and its Minimal aftermath made American painting and sculpture more rigorously abstract than almost anything ever seen in the history of art. Throughout



24.65 Andrew Wyeth, *Christina's World*, 1948. Tempera on gessoed panel, 32¼ × 47¾" (81.9 × 121.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

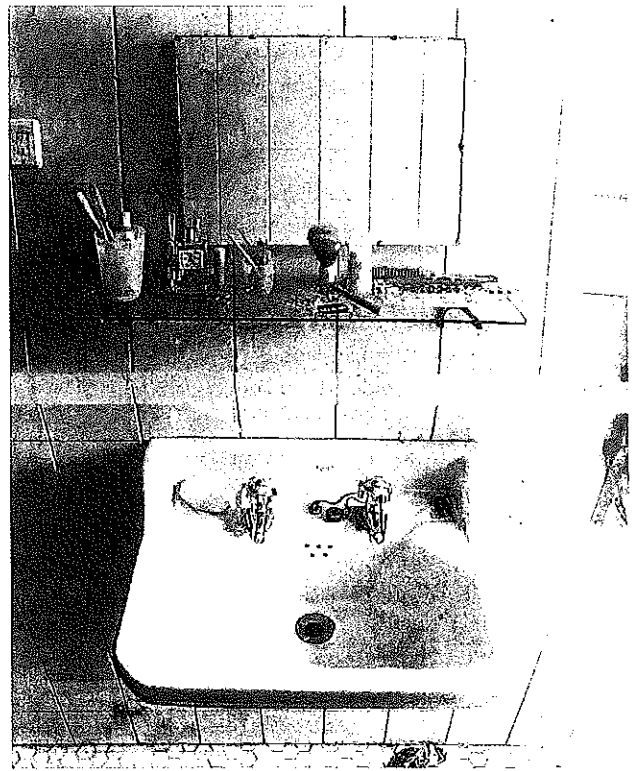


24.66 Alice Neel, *Andy Warhol*, 1970. Oil on canvas, 60 × 40" (152.4 × 101.6 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

this very period, in fact, the most widely recognized of all living American painters was probably **Andrew Wyeth** (b. 1917), whose impeccably observed *Christina's World* (fig. 24.65) long remained, during an era dominated by abstraction, the most popular painting in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art in New York. Another American artist who never lost the realist faith was **Alice Neel** (1900–84). After many years of subsisting on the fringes of mainstream art, Neel came into late, but considerable, fame as a portraitist of such searching, psychologically penetrating power that she seemed to be “stealing” the very souls of her sitters (fig. 24.66). In the same generation as Neel was **Fairfield Porter** (1907–75), who painted radiant, grandly composed intimist pictures (fig. 24.67). Albeit thoroughly American, his works seem aesthetically and spiritually at one with the calm, coloristic art of Vuillard and Bonnard (see figs. 3.24, 3.27). Commenting on his luminous environments, Porter said: “I was never one to paint *space*. I paint air.” Although committed to figuration in his own painting, Porter regularly wrote criticism that early and unflaggingly supported the American Abstract Expressionists. This posed no conflict for Porter, since, as he stated, “the important thing for critics to remember is the ‘subject matter’ in abstract painting and the abstraction in representational work.” Happy to work in the traditional genres of still life, landscape, and



24.67 Fairfield Porter, *Under the Elms*, 1971–72. Oil on canvas, 62 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 46 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (159.9 × 117.5 cm). Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.



24.68 Antonio López García, *Washbasin and Mirror*, 1967. Oil on wood, 38 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 32 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (98.1 × 83.5 cm). Private collection.

interior, as well as portraiture, Porter was convinced that the uncommon could be found in the commonplace, that “the extraordinary is everywhere.”

A cultured realist known for his almost monastic dedication and attention to craft is the Spaniard **Antonio López García** (b. 1936). His *Washbasin and Mirror* (fig. 24.68) gives meticulous attention to the most mundane objects, inviting comparison with certain of the Photorealists about to be discussed. At the same time, the geometric lucidity of this work—with the lowly bathroom tiles providing a strict compositional grid—carries on a tradition of firmly constructed shelf- and tabletop still lifes that can be traced back to Cézanne.

Photorealism

Although he began as a late Abstract Expressionist, **Chuck Close** (b. 1940) sought to reconcile the conceptual ramifications of the artist's mark with the likeness of the sitter. The camera-made image imposed the discipline of a fixed model that told precisely what the painting should look like even before it had been started (fig. 24.69). Furthermore, Close banished all color and worked exclusively from black-and-white images. He gave up thick, luxurious paint, and permitted himself only a few tablespoons of pigment for a huge, mural-size canvas. This was possible once he threw out his bristle brushes and adopted the airbrush, the better to eliminate all response to medium and surface; thus, his work achieves what appears to be the smooth, impersonal surface of a photographic print or slide.

At the same time that Close used photographs as his point of departure, in lieu of the drawings, studies, or time-consuming observation employed by traditional realists, he committed himself to the long, arduous labor of transferring the image and all its information onto the canvas by means of a grid, a uniformly squared pattern comparable to the screen that makes tonal variations possible in photo-mechanical printing. The grid has served painters for centuries as a device for transferring compositions from one surface to another, usually while also changing their scale, but only with Photorealism did the squares become so small that they could present the most minute facts, as well as overall form, so insistently as to become a dominant characteristic of the art. As though to counterbalance the mechanical impersonality of this process, Close decided to paint only the faces of himself and his friends, their heads full front and close up, and usually on a large scale. Trapped in a shallow, almost airless space and pitilessly exposed in all their physical imperfections, the subjects appear as much heroicized as exploited, as iconic as early American portraits, and as defiant as a police mug shot.

Eventually Close progressed toward color, at first by reproducing, one on top of the other, the cyan, magenta, yellow, and black separations of an image used in photo-mechanical color printing. The more Close experimented, however, the more he seemed to move away from realism toward greater involvement with process, which inevitably carried his art back toward the realm of abstraction where it first began. Such a development is especially evident in the *Fingerprint* paintings, for which the artist filled each unit of the grid with an impression of his own fingerprint inked on a stamp pad. Other works have each cell filled with ovals or lozenge forms (fig. 24.70), breaking up the figure into geometric atoms in a manner reminiscent of portraits by Gustav Klimt. While these devices heightened the desired tension between the mechanical and manual aspects of the technique, as well as the fluid and fixed elements of the image, they so tipped the balance between image and system that the former is all but subordinated to the dominant and voracious grid. In 1988 Close suffered anterior spinal artery syndrome, which partially paralyzed his body and confined him to a wheelchair. Despite this



24.69 Chuck Close,
Linda, 1975–76.
Acrylic on linen, 9 × 7'
(2.7 × 2.1 m). Akron Art
Museum, Ohio.



24.70 Chuck Close,
Self-Portrait, 1991.
Oil on canvas, 8'4" × 7'
(2.5 × 2.1 m). Collection
Paine-Webber Group,
Inc., New York.



24.71 Richard Estes, *Bus Reflections (Ansonia)*, 1972. Oil on canvas, 40 × 52" (101.6 × 132.1 cm).
Private collection.

disability, the artist has continued to develop his art, producing new variations on the gridlike formats he uses to paint his large-scale portraits.

The art of **Richard Estes** (b. 1936) has the quintessential Photorealist look. Estes does not work from a single photo but rather from two or more, combining them in various ways (fig. 24.71). Although his pictures have all the flat, planar qualities of broad sheets of reflective glass, those supposedly transparent surfaces reveal less what is depicted in depth than what is forward of the painting surface, achieving the effect of an inside-out world reflected from the viewer's own space. Reinforcing the sense of flatness is the uniformly sharp focus with which the artist, thanks to his photographic models, resolves the painting's two-dimensional surface, incorporating a vast quantity of visual information, however far or near. The richness of such an image reveals the importance of the camera to this new variety of realism, for never would a painter, however skilled, be able to render all that Estes has in a single work, or with such clarity and precision, merely by studying the subject directly. In the time required to complete the picture, everything would change—the light, the reflections, the weather, the season, the presence or absence of people and traffic, and certainly the commercial displays. The methods of traditional realism could not possibly freeze a modern urban jumble to one split second of time.

A mediating figure in the Photorealist style is **Audrey Flack** (b. 1931), who, while credited with painting the first genuine Photorealist picture, also revived certain thematic concerns guaranteeing an emotional and psychological content remote from the cool detachment characteristic of Photorealist art. Departing from her early career as an



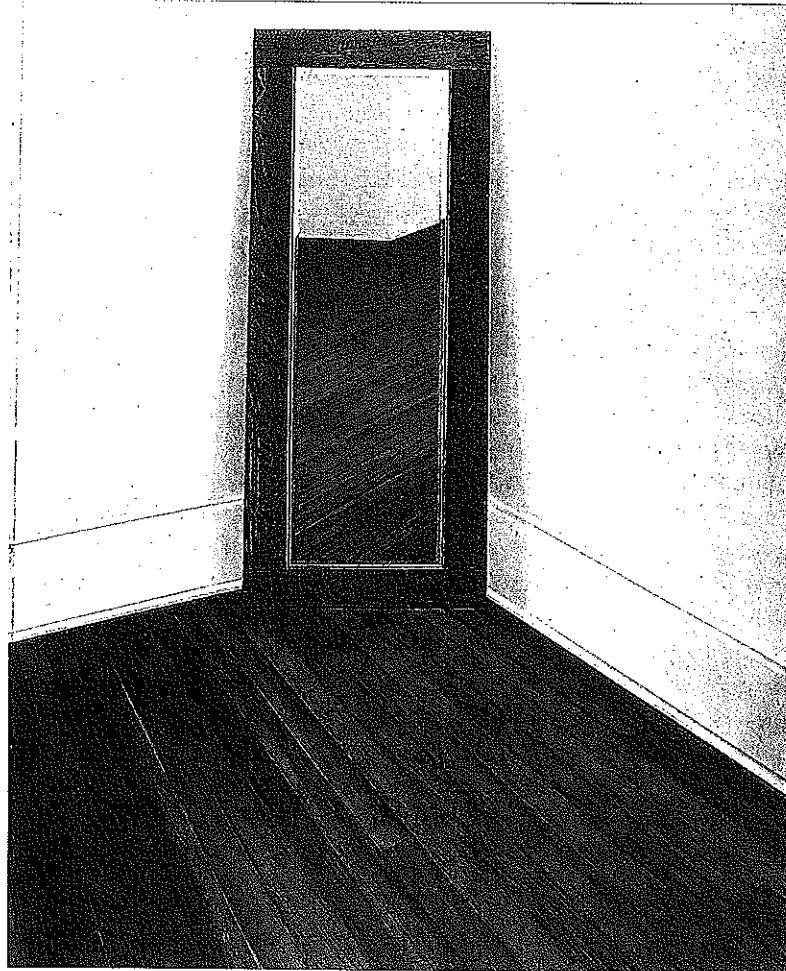
24.72 Audrey Flack, *Wheel of Fortune*, 1977–78. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 8 × 8' (2.4 × 2.4 m). Collection Louis, Susan, and Ari Meisel.

Abstract Expressionist, Flack turned to illusionism creating her own contemporary versions of the seventeenth-century *vanitas* picture (fig. 24.72). These are still-life compositions positively heaped with the jewels, cosmetics, and mirrors associated with feminine vanity, mixed, as in old master works, with skulls, calendars, and burning candles, those ancient memento mori symbols designed to remind human beings of their mortality and thus the futility of all greed and narcissism. Flack also composes in a traditional way, assembling the picture's motifs and arranging them to suit her purposes. Only then does she take up the camera, make a slide, project it onto the canvas, and paint over the image with an airbrush. Jammed with visual information and cropped like Baroque still lifes, Flack's pictures possess a striking lushness of color, a spatial complexity, and vastness of scale.

A British-born artist resident in New York since 1958, **Malcolm Morley** (b. 1931) had an early engagement with Photorealism, but, given his lack of interest in simulating the peculiar, glossy look of photographic images, he is only tangentially related to the style. In fact, Morley's unrelenting search for meaning has led him in a variety of fascinating but label-defying directions. One such avenue of exploration involved using photographic material in the



24.73 Malcolm Morley, *Ship's Dinner Party*, 1966. Magna color on canvas, 6'11 $\frac{1}{4}$ " × 5'3 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (2.1 × 1.62 m). Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Utrecht, The Netherlands.

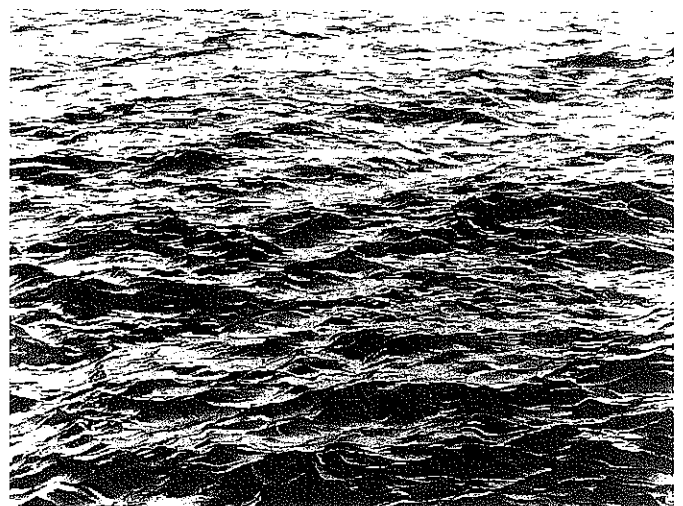


24.74 Sylvia Plimack Mangold, *Opposite Corners*, 1973. Acrylic on canvas, 6'6" × 5'3¼" (2 × 1.62 m). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.

form of a color illustration from a magazine or a travel brochure for his essential study or “drawing” for a painting (fig. 24.73). After dividing up this image into numbered squares, Morley would enlarge and transfer them, one by one, to the canvas, often painting parts of the image upside down as an added means of maintaining the superiority of the abstract process. This process offered the dual advantage of distancing the artist from the standard tricks of *trompe-l'oeil* painting, while ensuring that the abstractly rendered image would contain something of the reality reflected in its source. To acknowledge the artificiality of that source, Morley often even retained the standard white border of the color reproduction or photographic print. Although he has denied overt political content, his choice of subject matter—for example Americans at play at a time of grave social unrest—is not without irony.

During the sixties, the painter **Sylvia Plimack Mangold** (b. 1938) concentrated on rendering convincing images of ordinary floors, showing the lines of the floorboards receding into illusionistic space. The wit of these images arose from their being domestic, indoor versions of Renaissance *veduta*, or views of a city square, with schematic lines of perspective fanning out from the central vanishing point. Mangold began including mirrors in these works in 1972. *Opposite Corners* (fig. 24.74) shows one corner but also

depicts a leaning mirror reflecting the opposite corner of the same room. At first the mirror’s frame appears to be a doorway leading into the space of some adjoining chamber. But after a moment, it becomes clear that this receding “space” is in fact an illusion, as of course is the rest of



24.75 Vija Celmins. *Untitled (Big Sea No. 2)*. 1969. Graphite on acrylic ground on paper, 34 × 45" (86.4 × 114.3 cm). AT&T Art Collection.

the picture. A few years later, Mangold began adding rulers to her images of floors. Some of these later works show one ruler within the image proper—lying in perspective on a receding floor—and also a second ruler, apparently out in the viewer's own space and abutting the edge of the painting, as if fastened to the side of the canvas. Nothing could more economically demonstrate, and yet at the same time question, the laws of perspective that governed Western art from the Renaissance until modern times.

Born in Latvia, **Vija Celmins** (b. 1939) was taken to Germany as a child and then relocated to the United States in 1948. Her meticulously rendered, photograph-based drawings, paintings, and prints are also related to Photorealism. In a series of dispersed, all-over compositions, she worked from photographs of irregular natural surfaces—the desert, waves on the sea, and the craters of the moon. The surface depicted, often with richly textured graphite, becomes nearly identical with the picture plane itself, undermining any sense of objective “distance” from the thing being shown. The result is often to turn the source photograph into a near-abstraction. The wave crests of *Untitled (Big Sea No. 2)* (fig. 24.75), for example, become so elaborately nuanced, through the thousands of

individual marks made by the artist, that the camera's flat-footed realism is replaced by an infinitely complex pattern of surface incident. The surface becomes a vivid subject in its own right. Celmins also created portraits of individual objects, including World War II aircraft, based on found photographs, and combined quite distinct kinds of imagery in composite prints based on separate, seemingly unrelated photographs.

Hanson's Superrealist Sculpture

Nowhere has the ambiguity and tension between the realness of artificiality and the artificiality of reality yielded more bizarre effects than in the work of **Duane Hanson** (1925–96), whose lifesize, freestanding sculptures (fig. 24.76) seem, at first glance, to close the gap between art and life with a rude, decisive bang. To achieve such verisimilitude—in which artifice truly assumes the artlessness of literal reality—Hanson used direct casting from live models in the way Superrealist painters use photography, as a means of shortcutting the preparatory stages so that the artist can devote the maximum time and energy to virtually duplicating the look of the model. So successful is the resulting counterfeit that the delight it can produce in



24.76 Duane Hanson, *Tourists*, 1970. Polychromed fiberglass and polyester, 64 × 65 × 47" (162.6 × 165.1 × 119.4 cm). National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

viewers may suddenly turn to horror when what appears to be breathing flesh and blood fails to breathe, remaining as stiff and static as death. Having cast the figure in fiberglass-reinforced polyester resin, Hanson adds to the textured reality of pores, wrinkles, and bulges the coloration of skin, veins, and even boils and bruises. Such waxworks literalism stands in fascinating contrast to the figural sculptures of George Segal (see fig. 21.23), who also casts from live models, but avoids confusion between reality and make-believe by using the white mold as the final form. Furthermore, Segal restricts his use of actual objects to environmental props, while Hanson adds them to the figure as clothing and accessories.

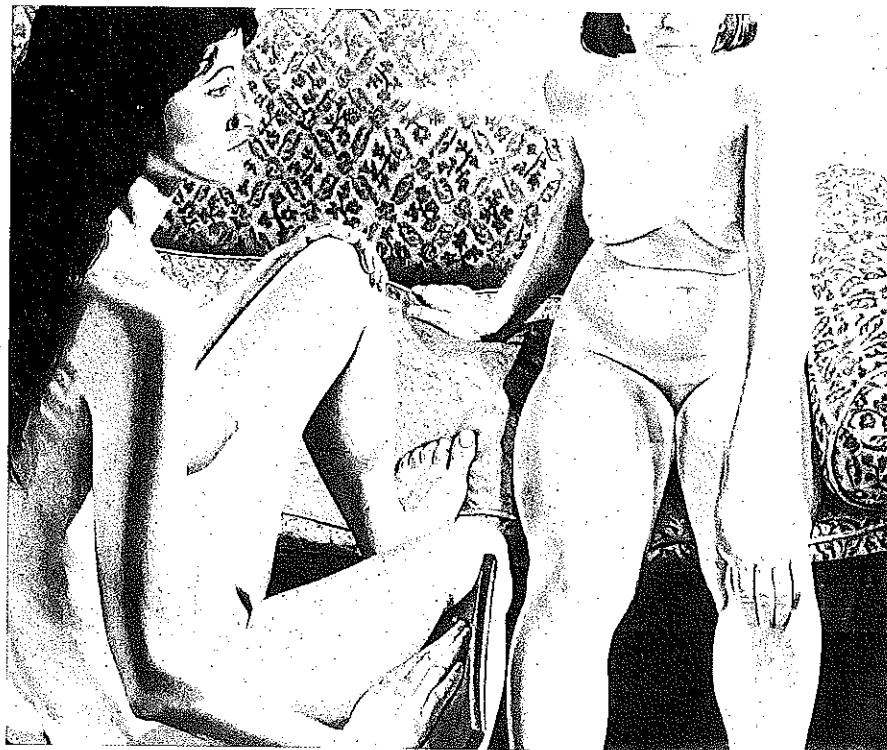
Stylized Naturalism

The illusionist revival that produced Photorealism in painting and Superrealism in sculpture also regenerated naturalistic painting based on the traditional method of direct and prolonged examination of the model or motif. But even there, much new art took on a distinctly photographic look, reflecting the dominance of camera-made imagery in an age increasingly saturated by the media. One of the preeminent masters of directly perceived, sharp-focus realism is **Philip Pearlstein** (b. 1924), a painter who belongs to the Pop, Minimalist, and Conceptual generation and even shares its preoccupation with banal subject matter and two-dimensionality, as well as cool, hard-edge handling. Pearlstein, however, reached his artistic maturity in about 1970, and did so with an art devoted to the nude figure represented as a solid form in simulated depth (fig. 24.77). Pearlstein set about integrating modernism's flatness and cropping, characteristics initially fostered by the influence

of Japanese prints. Thus, at the same time that he reproduces his figures in all their sexual explicitness, he also robs them of their potential for expressionist content by a process of objectification, by rendering only one part of the anatomy at a time. This results in the loss of bodily context and, often, extremities, a further depersonalization that becomes especially acute when it involves the head. The painter calls his pictorial manipulation of the figure "a sort of still-action choreography." Pearlstein declared:

I have made a contribution to humanism in 20th-century painting—I rescued the human figure from its tormented, agonized condition given it by the expressionistic artists, and the cubist dissectors and distorters of the figure, and at the other extreme I have rescued it from the pornographers, and their easy exploitation of the figure for its sexual implications. I have presented the figure for itself, allowed it its own dignity as a form among other forms in nature.

If some painters associated with realism were moving toward a more direct account of visual appearances, paradoxically some photographers were going in the opposite direction, treating their subjects in a manner increasingly formal and abstract. **Joel Meyerowitz** (b. 1938), who earlier in his career had earned recognition as a street photographer, now constructed images that, in their immaculately refined sensibility, seemed intent on portraying another world. Although *Porch, Provincetown* (fig. 24.78) remains rooted in an actual time and place, it also brings to the fore highly abstracted elements, such as the conspicuously displayed trapezoid of the roof and the cleanly abutting planes of the sea and sky. The subtly graduated blush of twilight on the central column is so finely gauged



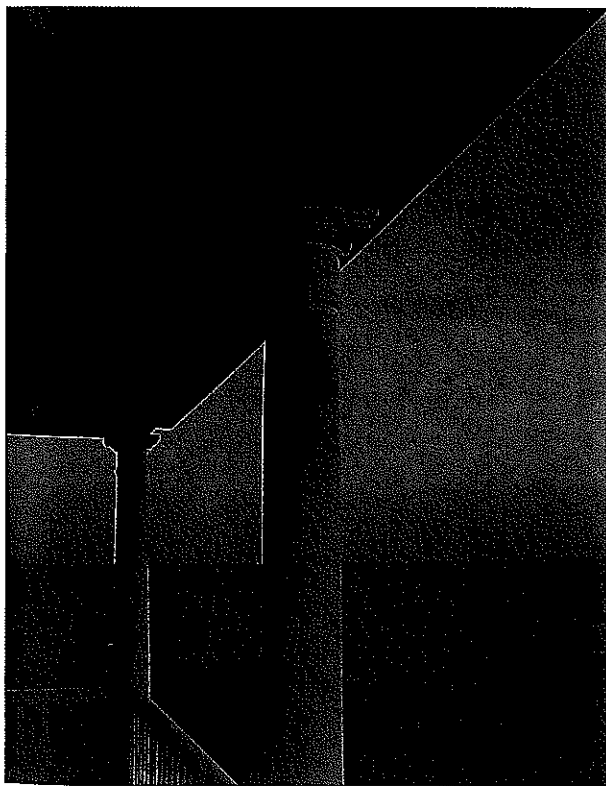
24.77 Philip Pearlstein, *Two Female Models with Regency Sofa*, 1974. Oil on canvas, 60 × 72" (152.4 × 182.9 cm).

as to make that cylindrical form look like a geometric sculpture, while the tinted atmosphere recalls painters of the sublime, even the Color Field art of Mark Rothko. Finally, the porch is shot from an angle that makes it appear to be suspended, without ground support, over the sea, as if in a Surrealist painting by René Magritte.

A reference to Surrealism can also be seen in the work of the Detroit-born photographer **Jerry Uelsmann** (b. 1934). Uelsmann combines two or more images into a composite work. By bringing together two ordinary representations in an unexpected way, the resulting image can have the disorienting, uncanny effect that the nineteenth-century French poet Lautréamont, admired by the Surrealists, compared to “the chance encounter on an operating table of a sewing machine and an umbrella.” Uelsmann’s *Untitled (Cloud Room)* (fig. 24.79) creates just this effect of “defamiliarizing” the ordinary. The banal Victorian interior, taken on its own, would be quite unremarkable, and the cloudy sky, too, is part of the everyday world. But when storm clouds gather indoors, their unexpected presence creates a strangely disquieting scene,

indebted to the works of painters like Magritte and Delvaux (see figs. 15.30, 15.31, 15.34). Uelsmann’s technical mastery in printing the composite photographs enhances the effect; he joins the disparate images together so seamlessly as almost to convince us for a moment that we are witnessing something impossible but true.

The painter **Alex Katz** (b. 1927) made an early choice of figuration and stuck with it throughout the heyday of American abstraction, turning some of abstraction’s own sources of inspiration, such as Henri Matisse and Milton Avery, to his own purposes. Foremost among the formal abstract influences are broad fields of flat, clean color, elegantly brushed surfaces, radically simplified drawing, and epic scale. Selecting his portrait subjects from among family, friends, and artworld personalities, Katz monumentalizes them not only by the sheer size of the painted image but also by the technique of representing the sitters only from the shoulders up, as if they were antique emperors or empresses presented to the public in the form of portrait busts (fig. 24.80). But since the rendering has been done with a reductiveness reminiscent of movie billboards,



24.78 Joel Meyerowitz, *Porch, Provincetown*, 1977. Color photograph, 10 × 8" (25.4 × 20.3 cm). Courtesy the artist.



24.79 Jerry Uelsmann, *Untitled (Cloud Room)*, 1975. Toned gelatin-silver print. Collection Jain and George W. Kelly, New York.



24.80 Alex Katz, *The Red Band*, 1978. Oil on canvas, 6 × 12' (1.8 × 3.7 m). Private collection.

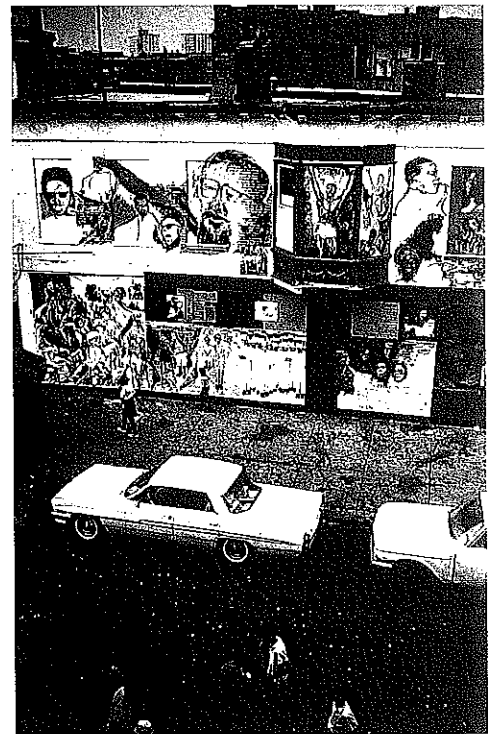
a more apt association might be with the royalty of Hollywood rather than with that of monarchical Europe. Katz has declared, "I like to make an image that is so simple you can't avoid it, and so complicated you can't figure it out." To illustrate this quality of ambiguity, Katz here refers to the painting seen in fig. 24.80: "The original background was green grass," he said. "But when I painted green, it just didn't have enough light in it. It didn't show the light that I was seeing. So I turned it to yellow, switched to violet, and then to orange. Finally, that was a plausible light, the light I was really seeing, instead of just a bunch of pretty colors. It was a glowing summer light."

Constructing Respect: Art and Racial Politics

Figurative art, often interrupted and overlaid with text, was used by a number of artists to address issues of race that burst onto the political stage of postwar America with the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties, which pressed for full civil and legal rights for black Americans. As often noted, the visual arts were slow to find a role in racial struggles. There was a feeling that art was a luxury to be indulged after more pressing political rights and economic goals had been achieved. As artists did incorporate their practice in the political movements, they gave a priority to communicating messages. Figurative art, with its historical role in political mural art and printmaking, provided a means of communication that could be manipulated while still maintaining maximum legibility.

OBAC, Afri-COBRA, and SPARC

One of the first major visual projects to address the issues of African-American experience was the *Wall of Respect* (fig. 24.81) created in Chicago in 1967 by the Visual Arts Workshop of the Organization of Black American Culture



24.81 OBAC (Organization of Black American Culture), *Wall of Respect*, 1967. Oil on brick, 30 × 60' (9.1 × 18.2 m).

(OBAC, pronounced o-BAH-see to emphasize “oba” the Uruba word for leader.) OBAC was primarily a political and literary organ, but its experiment with the visual arts had an immediate and lasting effect. The *Wall* was a collaborative mural, created and conceived by artists and residents of the Southside neighborhood in which it was painted. Essentially a collection of portraits, the mural features a cast of black political, artistic, and sporting heroes, including Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Charlie Parker, Aretha Franklin, and Muhammad Ali. Upon completion, OBAC gave up all proprietary rights, deciding on principle that a mural in a community belonged to that community. The history of the *Wall* after that point is tragic. As the mural became a magnet for the news media seeking to document the creativity and blight of Chicago’s Southside, it became a source of power. Local gangs competed for

rights to the site and there was even a murder. The violence compelled the city of Chicago to demolish the mural and the building on which it was painted.

Despite the final debacle of the mural, the mission of the Visual Arts Workshop to use art to galvanize African-American communities continued. Several participants in the mural project, including Jeff Donaldson, Wadsworth Jarrell, Barbara Jones, and Carolyn Lawrence formed Afri-COBRA, the African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists. Afri-COBRA provided a forum for discussing common aesthetic and political issues in the African and African-American experience. Determining that, “Blackness contributed a specific quality to their visual expression,” Afri-COBRA artists strove to articulate that quality. Wadsworth Jarrell’s (b. 1929) *Revolutionary* (fig. 24.82) captures the group’s aesthetic and philosophical principles.



24.82 Wadsworth Jarrell, *Revolutionary*, 1971. Acrylic on canvas, 50.5 × 63.5" (1.28 × 1.61 m).



24.83 Judy Baca, *Great Wall of Los Angeles*, 1976–83. Length one half-mile (0.8 km).

The image is a portrait of Angela Davis, philosopher and Black Panther Party leader, who at the time was in hiding. She raises her fist into a field of text reading “Resist, Revolution, Black Nation time ...” Afri-COBRA works aimed to be legibly programmatic on an individual and national level. Jarrell’s figurative style uses brightly colored text—instructions, as it were—to build the figure of the revolutionary and contribute to the struggles of African peoples. The integration of text and image that Afri-COBRA called “mimesis at midpoint” was intended to join the objective and the nonobjective, reality and revolution at a strategic point where the viewer was required to act: to read, see, and translate the image into the message. Using “Cool-Ade colors” “luminosity,” and “shine,” Afri-COBRA productions were designed to be easily reproducible, and images like Jarrell’s were created in multiple screenprints to be widely circulated.

In Los Angeles in the mid-seventies, artist-activist **Judy Baca** (b. 1946) generated a political figurative art in the form of the world’s longest mural, *Great Wall of Los Angeles* (fig. 24.83), along one half-mile (0.8 km) of the Tujunga Wash drainage canal in the San Fernando Valley. Baca’s project, begun in 1976 and initially finished in 1983 (it continued in a variety of formats into the 2000s), organized schoolkids to paint the history of California from prehistory to the sixties in a style reminiscent of the Mexican muralists

of the thirties (see chapter 18). Accompanying its creation, Baca also founded SPARC (the Social and Public Art Resource Center), a non-profit organization that “produces, distributes, preserves and documents community based public art works ... that [reflect] the lives and concerns of America’s diverse ethnic populations, women, working people, youth and the elderly.” SPARC has since sponsored public mural projects throughout Los Angeles, creating images that respond to both local concerns and citywide issues, as well as portable works, an education and visual resource center, a website (www.sparcmurals.org), and interactive proposals for bringing the mural up to date. Baca has negotiated for funding from various branches of the city government to sponsor the conservation and continuation of the mural and related SPARC projects.

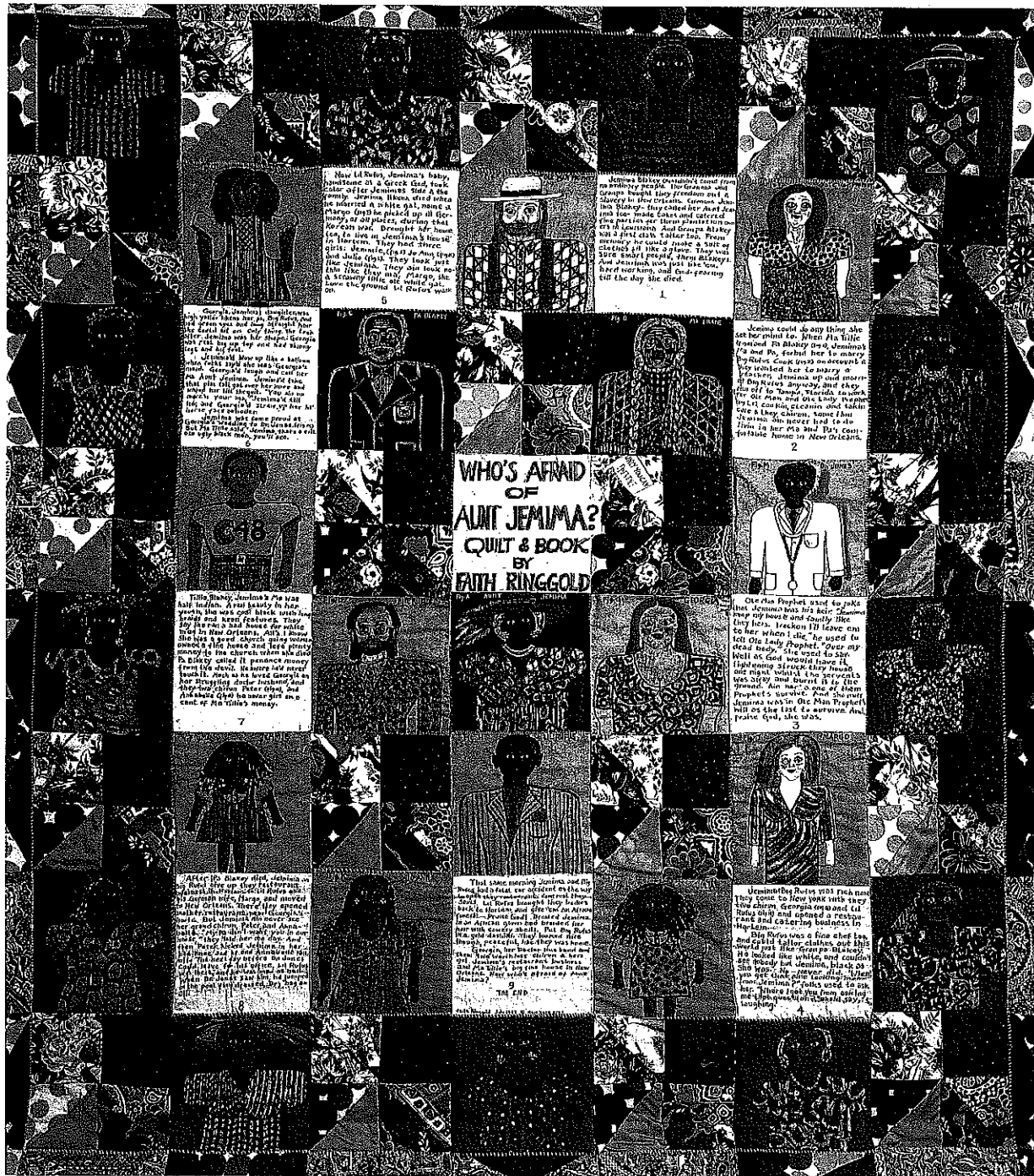
Ringgold and Folk Traditions

In the seventies the New York-based artist **Faith Ringgold** (b. 1930) created two- and three-dimensional artworks that presented racially informed social analysis in forms that connected high art and folk traditions. Ringgold was committed to expressing the experiences of the African-American community, with particular attention to the experience of African-American women. In the sixties she had painted flat figural compositions focusing on racial conflict in circumstances ranging from riots to cocktail

parties. In the seventies Ringgold began to draw on African and American folk traditions, crafting figural sculptures that she often made from beaded and painted fabrics to represent fictionalized slave stories and more contemporary news accounts. Informed by a strong political conscience and sense of narrative complexity, her sculptural groups of weeping, speaking, shouting, and dying figures anticipated the painted story-quilts that have since become Ringgold's signature works.

Ringgold began quilting as a means of "mixing art and ideas so that neither suffers" in a family tradition that

extends to her great-grandmother, who had learned quilting as a slave. She began her first quilt, a collection of portraits called *Echoes of Harlem* (1980), with her mother Willi Posey. In 1982, a year after her mother's death, Ringgold created her first story-quilt, *Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?* (fig. 24.84), which told the story of Aunt Jemima, a matriarch restaurateur. The quilt and story weave together, describing the relations of the main character and her family as they compete with one another, meet and marry, and ultimately vie for the family business. Her characters are of different races and are compromised,

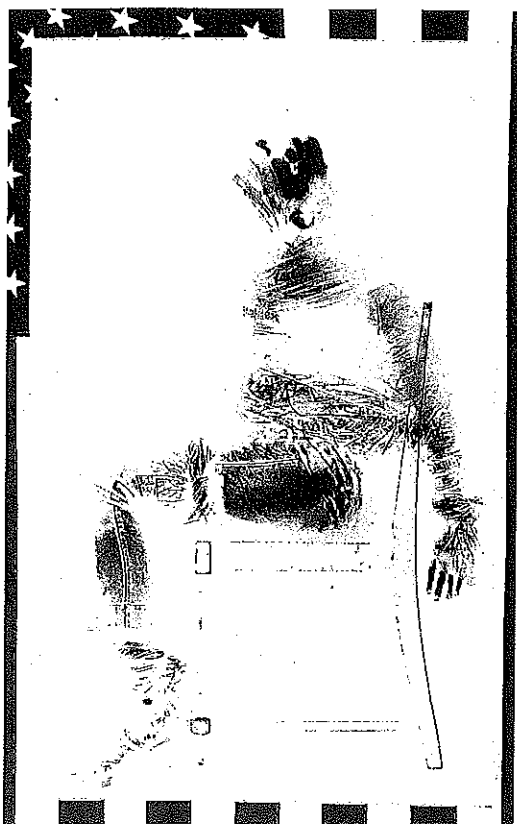


24.84 Faith Ringgold, *Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?* 1983. Printed and pieced fabric, 7'6" x 6'8" (2.29 x 2.03m).

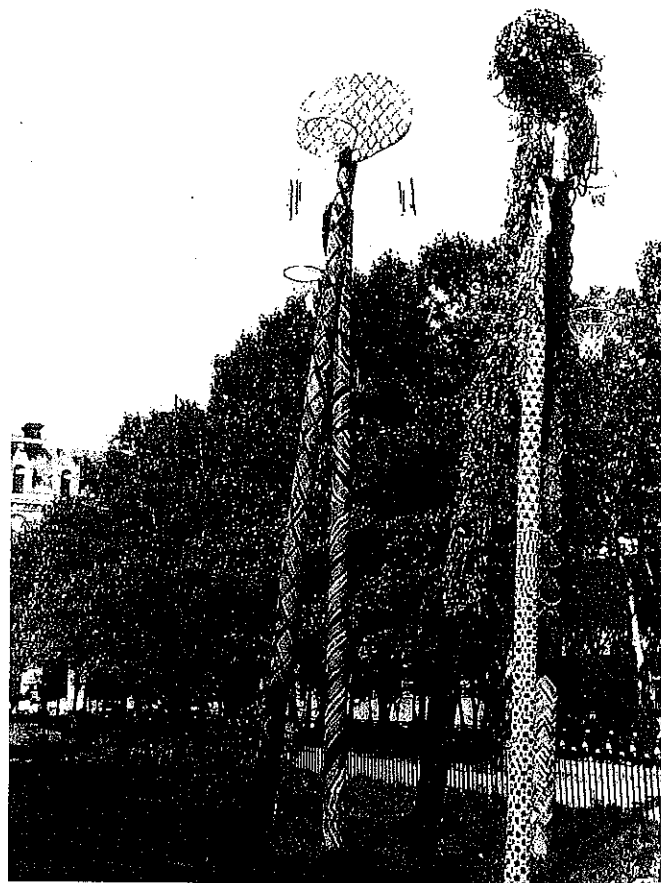
sometimes morally upstanding, sometimes weak, always human. Ringgold has integrated quilts into performances and books, including several children's stories.

Social and Political Critique

David Hammons (b. 1943) has used his art to present social and political issues in blunt terms. Among his first works were prints with intense and controversial content. His *Injustice Case* (fig. 24.85) shows, in negative, a bound and gagged captive tied to a chair. The figure could be any political prisoner in the world, were the composition not framed by an American flag. The positive associations usually evoked by the flag are challenged, replaced by an implicit assertion that America does not offer "liberty and justice for all." It seemed natural that Hammons would later turn to public sculpture, gaining a broader audience for his continuing critique of American icons. In *Higher Goals* (fig. 24.86) Hammons applied bottle caps by the hundreds to telephone poles. The patterns of shiny, repeated caps give this unlikely urban monument a sense of the energy of street life. But the work also implies concern for the well-being of the city's youth. At the tops of the telephone poles are another emblem of street life: basketball hoops, placed far higher than anyone could possibly reach. "It's an anti-basketball sculpture," Hammons comments. "Basketball has become a problem in the black community because the kids aren't getting an education.



24.85 David Hammons, *Injustice Case*, 1970. Mixed-media print, 63 × 40½" (160 × 102.9 cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



24.86 David Hammons, *Higher Goals*, 1982. Poles, basketball hoops, and bottle caps, height 40' (12.2 m). Shown installed in Brooklyn, New York, 1986.

That's why it's called *Higher Goals*. It means that you should have higher goals in life than basketball." Hammons's installations have continued to challenge the politics of race in the U.S., as his works, especially his increasingly baroque basketball hoops, reach record prices. As an artist who began his career selling snowballs in a snowstorm, Hammons is now in the ironic position, rare among his peers from the seventies, of creating cultural criticism in the form of artworld commodities.

In 1997, when **Robert Colescott** (b. 1925) became the first African-American to represent the U.S. at the Venice Biennale, he joined David Hammons as an artist who had brought racial politics from the margins of the seventies artworld to the center in the nineties. Colescott's career began with formal training at Berkeley and, from 1949 to 1950, in Paris under Fernand Léger. His breakthrough works, done in the mid-seventies, drew on the European traditions in which Colescott had trained as a source for the satire of racial politics in history and art. *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook* (fig. 24.87) is an ironic reversal of the race of heroes depicted in Emanuel Leutze's (1816–68) 1851 *George Washington Crossing the Delaware* and a serious commentary on the relationship between race and history in America. Above the fray of drunken

debauchery, depicted in the iconography of racist imagery, the sole figure of Carver stands, a token black admitted to history books.

Whether he is referring to Leutze's paintings or Van Gogh's, Colescott populates well-known masterpieces with "Aunt Jemimas" and other cultural stereotypes of black American identity. Even such figures as Carver cannot seem to enter into the Western canon without being misrepresented. Colescott has commented on the role of racist images in his project of creating African-American figures: "Unfortunately stereotypical images are part of American heritage. I had to come to terms with it for myself, ultimately controlling the images by making them say some things for me." Colescott incorporated the free use of stereotypes in a painterly language that combines the abstracting impulse of Picasso with the cathartic stylistics of Expressionism. With striking emotional force, he transformed a range of Western representational approaches to

depicting black bodies and lives. Like the descriptive projects of his feminist contemporaries, Colescott has made the exclusions of the past unavoidably apparent. In addition, his work is carefully attuned to the difference between the identity and the history of African-Americans; it is "not about race, [but] about perceptions," as he has explained.

Another artist to examine the disruptive lens of racism is **Adrian Piper** (b. 1948). Piper has explained that her art arises from a "compulsion to embody, transform, and use experiences as a woman of color in constructive ways, in order not to feel powerless." Drawing on her identity as a light-skinned black woman, and the insight into both black and white communities that this has provided, Piper's work examined the centrality of attitudes about race to the formation of personal and community identity in America. In her *Political Self-Portrait #2 [Race]* (fig. 24.88) the text, an account of the prejudice the artist encountered while growing up, serves as a screen through which a



24.87 Robert Colescott, *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware*: Page from an American History Textbook, 1975. Acrylic on canvas, 4'6" × 9" (1.37 × 2.74 m).

divided image of the artist can be seen. The narrative of a life subjected to racial biases colors the view of the body. Like Colescott's use of stereotype, Piper's narrative of prejudice conveys the intrusions of language, particularly signifiers of race, on our perceptions of individuals and our creation of communities.

Piper's training and early work included Conceptual and Performance art as well as a doctorate in philosophy, which she continues to teach and practice. In the mid-eighties she brought together all three in *Calling Cards* (1986-90), a series of small note cards revealing the artist's identity as a woman of African descent. *Card #1 A Reactive Guerrilla Performance for Dinners and Cocktail Parties* was devised as a strategy for minimizing confrontation when she was compelled to challenge someone's racist behavior. Rather than staging a verbal and public confrontation, she handed

the offender a card that begins, "Dear Friend, I am black. I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark." And ends, "I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me." The passing out of the cards, when necessary, was followed by public sessions in which the action was explained and discussed. In the most successful *Calling Card* discussions, the defensive hostility initially felt by the largely white audience gave way to an uncomfortable contact upon hearing how devastating the "performance" was for the artist. Unlike more popular proclamations of humanity joining all races, Piper's work joined blacks and whites in a difficult social interaction based on awkward and painful regret. The performance takes up the Fluxus dictum that the world is art enough and informs it with the political attitude that the world must be transformed.

Animated Surfaces: Pattern and Decoration

While some saw Minimalism's aloof stillness, silence, and simplicity as potent with rarefied meaning, others saw only a void, vast as the monumental scale of much mid- to late twentieth-century art, begging to be filled with a richly varied, even noisy abundance of pattern, decoration, and content. Here indeed was rebellion, for in the formalist's vocabulary of terms, the words "pattern" and "decoration" were fraught, still more than "illusionism," with pejorative connotations. This taboo prevailed, even though pattern—a systematic repetition of a motif or motifs used to cover a surface in a decoratively uniform manner—has an effect fully as flattening as any of the devices employed by the Minimalists. However, pattern and decoration, often abbreviated P&D, was dismissively used to mean work by anonymous artisans, not individuals of known genius, usually done for the purpose of ending mundane or utilitarian objects with an element of sensuous pleasure and delight. These qualities were thought to be secondary to the more intellectual concerns of high art. Thus, despite Duchamp, whose readymades proved that the context can define what is, or is not, art, skeptical purists wondered how objects formed from designs, materials, and techniques associated with crafts, folk art, and "women's work" could be transformed into vehicles of significant content.

The answer lay in the sources of inspiration for the P&D movement, which began to stir in the early seventies and coalesced as a major development in the second half of the decade. First of all there was Matisse, a proud "decorator" in the grand French tradition, and his late, brilliantly colored and patterned paper cutouts (see fig. 14.15). Then there were the arabesques and fretwork of Islam's intensely metaphysical art, the pantheistic interlaces of ancient European Celtic art, and the symbol-filled geometries of Native American art, all recently brought into stunning prominence by important exhibitions or installations.



24.88 Adrian Piper, *Political Self-Portrait #2 [Race]*, 1978. Photostat, 24 x 16" (61 x 40.6 cm). Collection Richard Sandor.

ally, but perhaps most important of all, came the called craft works—carpets, quilts, embroidery, needlework, mosaic, wallpaper—not given much attention since Nouveau or the art of the Bauhaus. Apart from its visible beauty, such patterned, decorative, and pragmatic folk art gained esteem for its content. Pattern painting, albeit based on the same grid as that underlying the minimalist structures of Minimal art, appeared to resist self-criticism in favor of an almost limitless embrace of surface. Because of its intrinsically more democratic character, it enjoyed broader and more enthusiastic support than other contemporaneous developments in Photorealism.

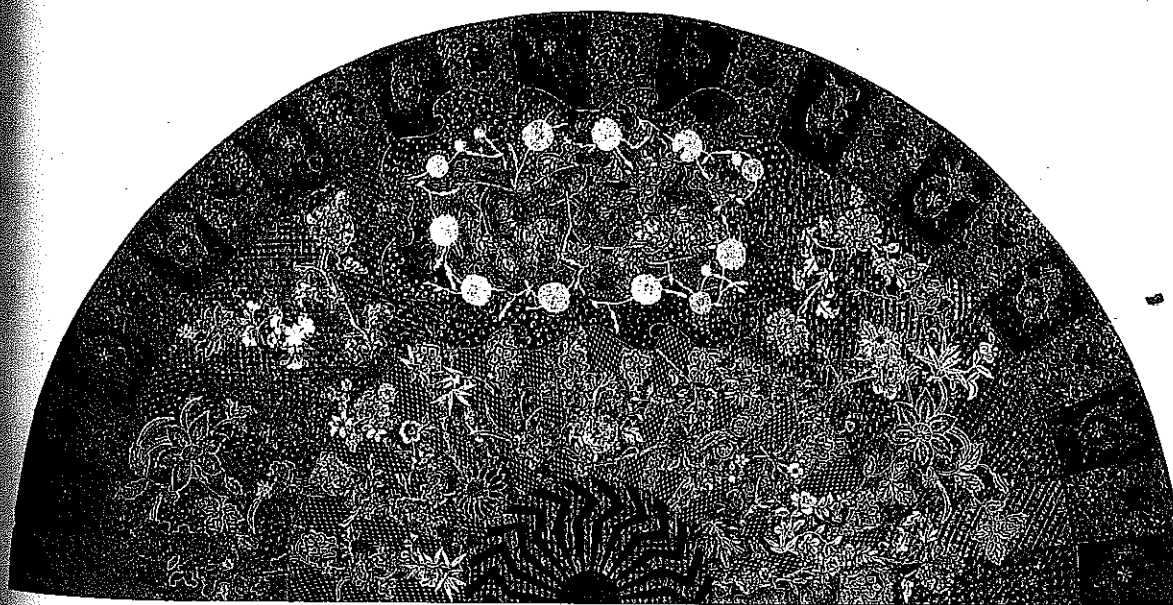
Initially, one of the strongest and most seasoned talents to transform traditionally undervalued decorative materials into ambitious, original art was **Miriam Schapiro** b. 1923, criticized by feminism as well as by a love of ornamental detail, however “low” or “high” its origins. Like so many of her generation, Schapiro had begun painting in an Abstract Expressionist style, but later turned to hard-edged photorealism, using computers in the design process. In the late sixties she joined the women’s movement, which led her to become, with artist Judy Chicago, the director of the Feminist Art Program (see above).

Schapiro later drew her imagery and materials from the history of women’s “covert” art, using buttons, threads, beads, sequins, yarn, silk, taffeta, cotton burlap, and other materials, all sewn, embroidered, pieced, and appliquéd into intricate but decorative objects. Reassembling them into dynamic, baroque, almost exploding compositions, she created what she called “femmages,” a contraction of “female” and “image” that connotes something of the technique of collage, photomontage, assemblage, and quilting tech-

niques used to make these grandly scaled projects, without referring by name to the modernist male tradition of avant-garde collage. Moreover, her works are as large as an Abstract Expressionist painting, indicating also her desire to compete with modernist art and monumentalize “women’s work.”

Schapiro frequently articulated her new style—a synthesis of abstraction, images labeled by society as feminine (such as eggs, hearts, and kimonos), architectural framework, and decorative patterns—in the form of floral bouquets, lacy borders, and floating flowers. In one series she chose the fan shape—itsself a decorative form—for wall-size canvases collaged with a wealth of patterned materials, ranging from cheap cotton to upholstery to luxurious Oriental fabrics, all combined to simulate the spreading folds of a real fan. *Black Bolero* (fig. 24.89) is a potpourri of art and craft, structure and decoration, abstraction and illusion, public politics and personal iconography, thought and sentiment.

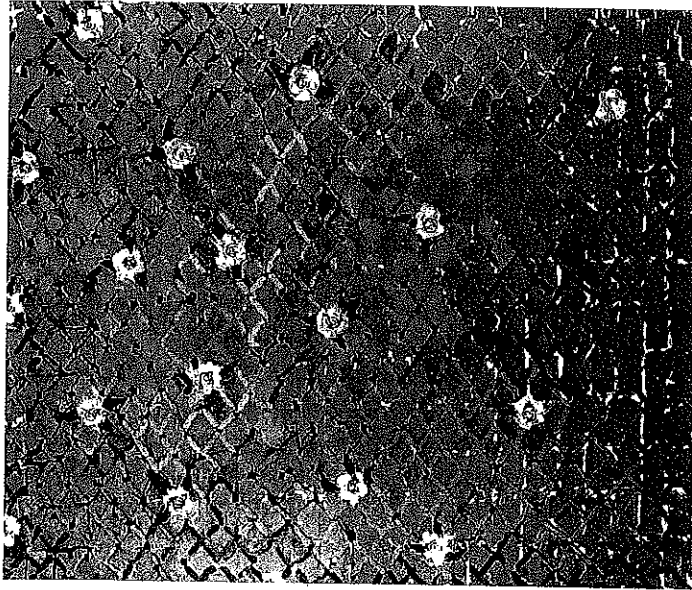
In 1975 **Robert Zakanitch** (b. 1935) met Miriam Schapiro during a term of guest teaching at the University of California in San Diego, and early the following year in New York the two painters jointly organized a group called the Pattern and Decoration Artists. The group held its first meeting in a SoHo loft space, signaling not only to the art world at large but also to the participating artists that a greater variety of painting was being done than Conceptualism had allowed anyone to believe. This led to the Ten Approaches to the Decorative show in September 1976, sponsored by the Pattern and Decoration Artists themselves, and to a kind of collector interest that turned the recently opened Holly Solomon Gallery into a home for



24.89 Miriam Schapiro, *Black Bolero*, 1980. Fabric, glitter, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 6 × 12' (1.8 × 3.7 m). Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia.

such P&D converts as Robert Kushner, Kim MacConnel, Valerie Jaudon, Ned Smyth, and Robert Zakanitch.

When Zakanitch took up decorative imagery, he had been working as a Color Field abstractionist faithful to the Minimalist grid as the structural system of his painting. Once employing decoration, he retained both his color sophistication and his respect for structure, but translated



24.90 Robert Zakanitch, *Double Shirt*, 1981. Acrylic on canvas, 6 × 5' (1.8 × 1.5 m). Private collection, Sweden.

the latter into a free, often organic lattice pattern and the former into floral motifs rendered with a lush, painterly, lavender-and-plum palette (fig. 24.90). Taken together, the painterliness, the opulent hues, the blooms, and the latticework invite obvious comparison with wallpaper designs, which in fact hold a preeminent place among the artist's acknowledged sources.

In 1974 Robert Kushner (b. 1949) went on an extended journey to Iran and Afghanistan. The experience was something of an epiphany for Kushner, who said: "On this trip, seeing those incredible works of genius, really master works which exist in almost any city, I really became aware of how intelligent and uplifting decoration can be." Although many of the masterworks happen to have been architectural, Kushner chose to express his love of arabesque fluency and grace not in mosaic or stone, but rather in loose, free-falling fabrics, decorated by their own "found" printed or woven patterns and Kushner's overpainting of leaf, vine, seed pod, floral, or, eventually, beast and human imagery. He disclosed a certain preference for a horizontal alignment of vertical panels, but instead of arranging his fabrics in a generally evenhanded sameness of length, he assembled them in whatever manner would produce a wearable costume. These works were then hung, unstretched, on the wall (fig. 24.91). When donned, these richly patterned and colored pieces, often in original atonal harmonies, yielded an effect of barbaric splendor unknown since the heyday of the *Ballets Russes*.



24.91 Robert Kushner, *Blue Flounce* from *Persian Line*, 1974. Acrylic on cotton with miscellaneous fabrics and fringe, 7'2" × 6'3" (2.2 × 1.9 m).

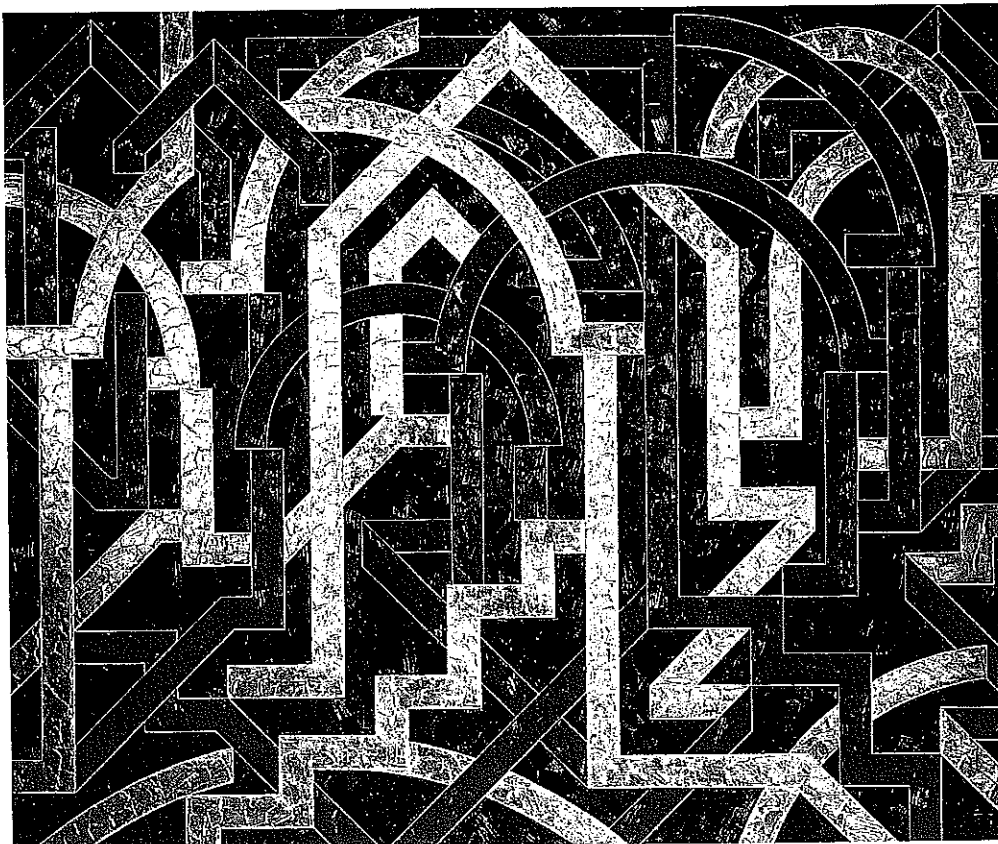
In his wall pieces, also structured from fabrics and airily billowing against the plane, Kushner made an unabashed avowal of his devotion to Matisse. Like the Frenchman, Kushner counterbalanced his passion for “Oriental” embellishment with a Western humanist interest in the classical nude, flattened and all but lost in a crazy quilt of competing but subtly coordinated patterns, only to be slowly revealed, sometimes in mirror-image reversals, by the patterns themselves, as well as by the artist’s own magisterial drawing.

Valerie Jaudon (b. 1945), a Mississippi-born artist with a cosmopolitan background, began in Color Field painting and, by concentrating on the decorative aspect of that style, continued to be a steadfast abstractionist throughout her work in P&D. To the degree that she is a purely nonobjective artist, Jaudon has remained closer to her Islamic sources, mingled with Celtic interlaces, than any of the practitioners seen thus far in the P&D movement. However, her patterns are not copied but freshly reinvented, ribbonlike paths traced over and under one another along arcs and angles reminiscent of Frank Stella (see c.p. 350). With their symmetrical order and complex weave of clean lines, which invite the eye but immediately lose it in the indivisibility of the total configuration, Jaudon’s earlier maze patterns also became something of a hard-edged counterpart of the all-over, holistic, or nonrelational compositions realized by Jackson Pollock. In subsequent work, Jaudon stabilized her interlaces within a solidly

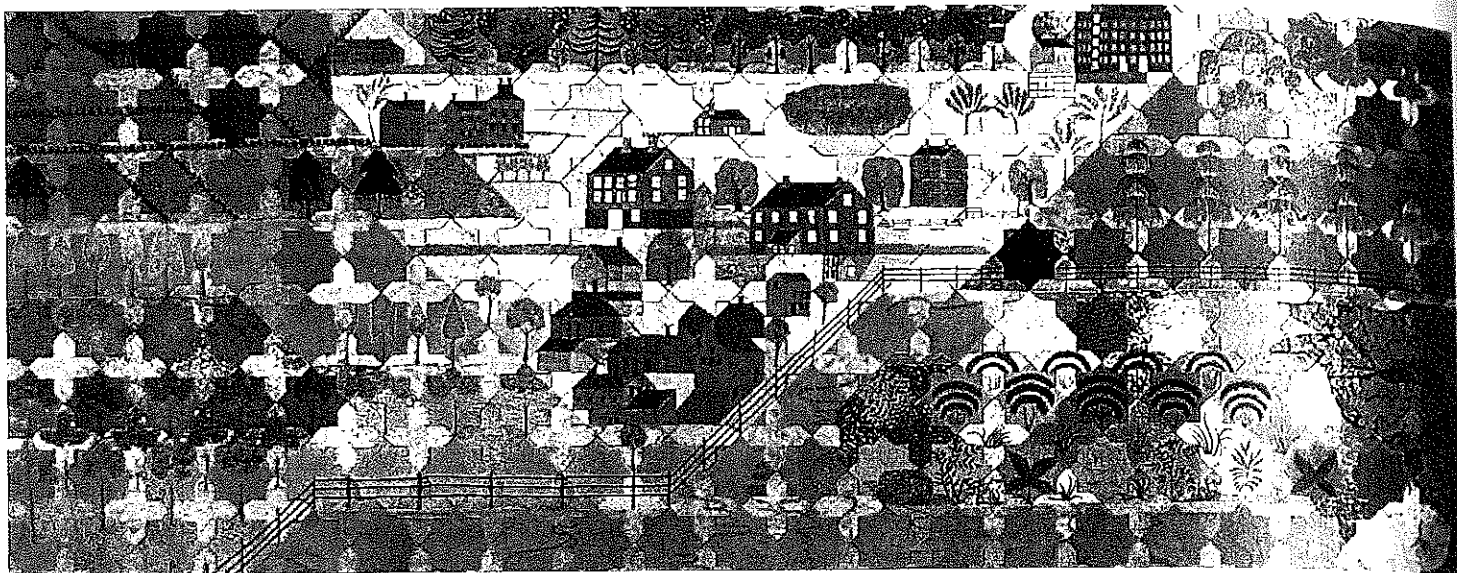
grounded architectural image, capped by round domes, pointed steeples, and ogival arches (fig. 24.92). Adding to the sense of gravity and depth are the impastoed surfaces and the brilliant, strongly contrasted colors that distinguish one band or strap from another as well as from the background. Illusionism is denied, however, due to the emphatic linearity of the interlocking geometries and their resolutely flattened “folds” and “knots.” Jaudon has said of her intricate art:

As far back as I can remember, everyone called my work decorative, and they were trying to put me down by saying it. Attitudes are changing now, but this is just the beginning. If we can only get over the strict modernist doctrines about purity of form, line, and color, then everything will open up.

Feminism also encouraged **Joyce Kozloff** (b. 1942) in her decision to work in a decorative style. In her eagerness to dissolve arbitrary distinctions—between high and low art, between sophisticated and primitive cultures—Kozloff copied her sources more faithfully than most of her peers in the P&D movement, depending on her “recontextualization” of the motifs for the transformation necessary to create new art. At first, she sought her patterns in the late Baroque architecture of Mexico, but soon turned directly to its origins in Morocco and other parts of Islam. She then relocated them to independent picture or wall panels, composed of the most intricate, run-on,



24.92 Valerie Jaudon, *Tallahatchee*, 1984. Oil and gold leaf on canvas, 6'8" × 8' (2 × 2.4 m).



24.93 Joyce Kozloff, *Mural for Harvard Square Subway Station: New England Decorative Arts*, 1984. Tiles, overall 8 × 83' (2.4 × 25.2 m). Cambridge, Massachusetts.

and totally abstract patterns, and executed them in gouache on paper or canvas or silkscreen on fabric. The architectural sources of her inspiration eventually drew the artist into large-scale environmental works, not for exterior display but rather for interiors, as large, complex installations that distributed patterns made of tile, fabric, and glass, among other materials, over every surface—ceilings and floors as well as walls.

Subsequently, Kozloff began to work on a monumental scale designing comprehensive tile decorations for public transport stations in San Francisco, Buffalo, Wilmington, and Cambridge, Massachusetts (fig. 24.93). The imagery ranges from purely abstract quilt and wall-stencil patterns to representations of clipper ships, milltowns, farm animals, tombstones, and the flowers and trees of open nature, all stylized, in the naïf manner of American folk art, to fit within the star shape of prefabricated tiles.

Figure and Ambiguity: New Image Art

In December 1978 the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York mounted an exhibition entitled *New Image Painting*. Though less than a critical triumph, the show provided a label for a number of emerging artists whose works had little in common other than recognizable but distinctly idiosyncratic imagery presented, for the most part, in untraditional, nonillusionistic contexts. Moreover, while honoring Minimalism's formal simplicity, love of system, and emotional restraint, they also tended to betray their roots in Conceptual art by continuing to be involved with elements of Process and Performance, narrative, Dada-like wit, and socio-psychological issues, sometimes even in verbal modes of expression. While all the latter may,

quite correctly, imply a Post-Minimalist sensibility, the New Imagists have almost invariably produced works that tend to prompt a more immediate appreciation of form, with content more evocative than obvious or specific in meaning. The great progenitor of the New Imagists was Philip Guston (see fig. 19.21), who by 1970 had abandoned his famous Abstract Expressionist style for a rather raucous form of figuration.

By the time the New Imagists matured in the seventies—painters like Nicholas Africano, Jennifer Bartlett, Jonathan Borofsky, Susan Rothenberg, Donald Sultan, Robert Moskowitz, and Joe Zucker, or the sculptors Joel Shapiro and Barry Flanagan—the artistic legacy they inherited was a heavy one indeed, consisting as it did not only of Abstract Expressionism, but also the whole incredibly dense and varied sequence of reactions and counteractions that had followed. To assimilate such cultural wealth and yet move beyond it posed an awesome challenge, but the artists eager to accept it proved to be a hardy, clever, immensely well-educated lot—many of them graduates of Yale University's School of Art in the time of such directors as Josef Albers and the Abstract Expressionist painter Jack Tworkov—and could never have approached the problems of *how* or *why* in the comparatively free, unselfconscious way of the first-generation New York School. But, however complex and contradictory the situation, the younger artists who entered it were fortified with the competitiveness that came with an art market exploding from the effects of media hype. These artists satisfied the rising demand for imagery and collectible objects after the market's near demise under the impact of Minimalism and Conceptualism. Their striking originality lay not in style, which varied widely from practitioner to practitioner, but rather in the particular techniques and ideas appropriated

from the recent past, to the end that something familiar or banal would become unexpectedly fresh and strange, possibly even magical, thereby engendering a whole new set of possibilities.

Rothenberg and Moskowitz

In conjuring the kind of eroded or fragmentary figuration last seen in the art of Giacometti or, more robustly, De Kooning, Susan Rothenberg (b. 1945) further defied Minimalism's immaculate, abstract surface by filling it with a dense, painterly, silver-gray facture reminiscent of Philip Guston's probing Abstract Expressionist brushwork and sooty palette (see fig. 19.20). The motif with which she realized her first major success was the horse (fig. 24.94), a massive form steeped in myth yet intimately involved with human history, obedient and faithful but also potent and wild, and often a surrogate in Romantic painting for human feeling. At a time in the Post-Minimal period when the more advanced among younger artists were not quite ready to deal with the human face and figure, "the horse was a way of not doing people," Rothenberg has said, "yet it was a symbol of people, a self-portrait, really." Fundamentally, however, her concerns, like Giacometti's, were formal rather than thematic. In the case of

Rothenberg, these centered, as in Minimal painting, on how to acknowledge and activate the flatness and objectivity of the painting surface, while also representing a solid recognizable presence.

Robert Moskowitz (b. 1935) has said that "by adding an image to the painting, I was trying to focus on a more central form, something that would pull you in to such an extent that it would almost turn back into an abstraction." His method is to isolate an image of universal, even iconic familiarity—natural or cultural shrines like Rodin's *Thinker*, New York's Flatiron Building, or Yosemite National Park's Seventh Sister—and then strip the form bare of all but its most basic, purified shape, making it virtually interchangeable with an abstract pictorial structure. "In all good work there is a kind of ambiguity, and I am trying to get the image just over that line," he said.



24.94 Susan Rothenberg, *Pontiac*, 1979. Acrylic and Flashe on canvas, 7'4" × 5'1" (2.2 × 1.55 m). Private collection.



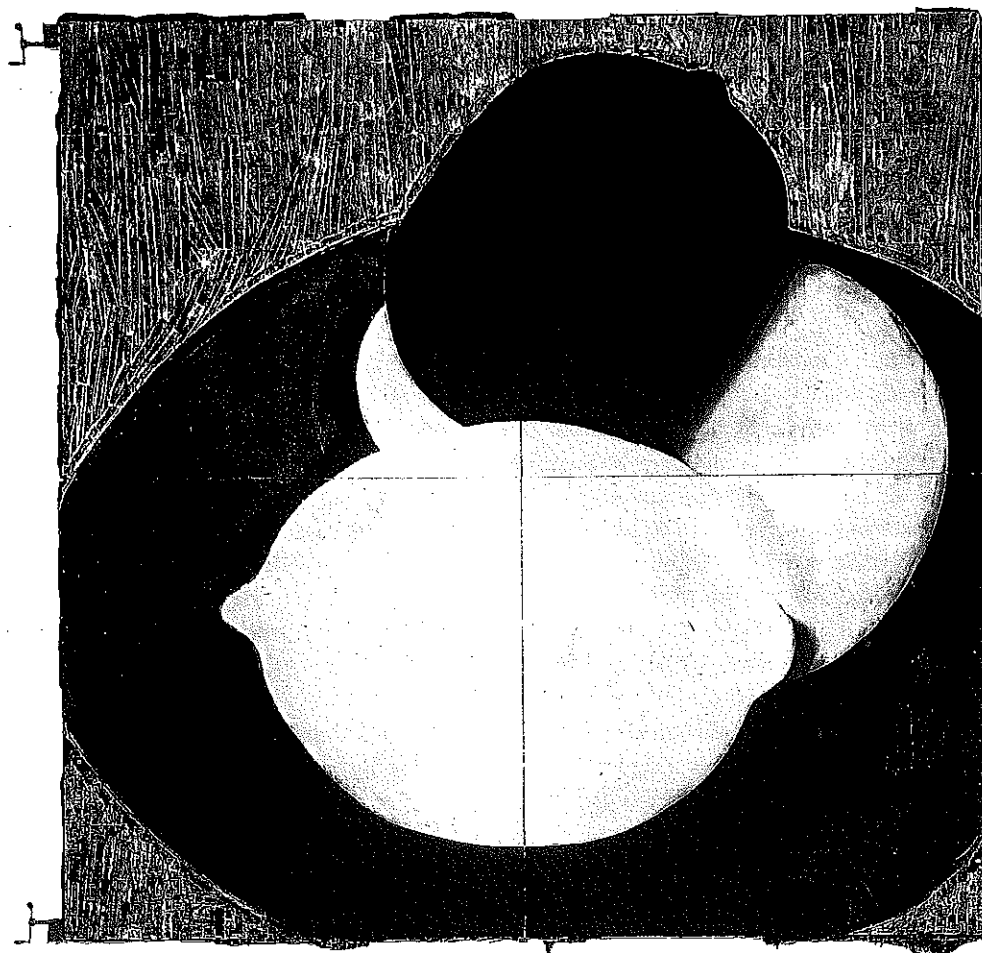
24.95 Robert Moskowitz, *Red Mill*, 1981. Pastel on paper, 9'3" × 4' 3/4" (2.8 × 1.24 m). Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego.

By allowing it to travel no farther, however, the artist makes certain that, with the help of a clarifying title, the viewer feels sufficiently challenged to puzzle out and then rediscover the marvel of the monument long since rendered banal by overexposure (fig. 24.95). Aiding the cause of regenerated grandeur and refreshed vision are the epic scale on which Moskowitz casts his imagery and his tendency to cut images free of the ground, so that they seem truly out of this world, soaring and mythic. This effect is achieved within the enchanted realm of the artist's pictorial surface, a gorgeous display of painterly craft, alternately burnished, flickering, or luminous, glorifying the flatness of the plane and seducing the eye into exploring the image.

Sultan and Jenney

In his break with Minimalism, **Donald Sultan** (b. 1951), like most of his New Image peers, did not so much want to reject the past as to make his art contain more of it. Sultan wanted figuration with the monumental simplicity and directness of abstract art, an approach that would enable him to find an image that would clearly metamorphose out of the materials and mechanisms of its own

creation. While teaching himself to draw—a skill seldom imparted in the figure-averse academies of the sixties and early seventies—and working as a handyman at the Denise René Gallery in New York, Sultan found himself retiling his employer's floor with vinyl. He immediately felt an affinity for the material's weight and thickness, as well as for the "found" colors and mottled patterns the tiles came in. Further, there was the unexpectedly sensuous way in which the cold, brittle substance became soft and pliant when warmed by cutting with a blowtorch, a process that, along with the medium and its special colors, would suggest a variety of new subject matter. Sultan also fell in love with the tar—called butyl butter—he used for fixing the tiles to their Masonite support, and began drawing and painting with it on the vinyl surface. This led to covering the plane with a thick layer of tar, which the artist would then paint on or carve into, in the latter instance achieving his image by revealing the vinyl color that lay below. Process had indeed now served as a means of putting more and more elements back into the art of painting. And it again served when Sultan hit upon what, so far, has been his most memorable motif, a colossal yellow lemon



24.96 Donald Sultan, *FOUR LEMONS*, February 1, 1985, 1985. Oil, spackle, and tar on vinyl tile, 8'1" × 8'1" (2.5 × 2.5 m). Collection the artist.



24.97 Neil Jenney, *Meltdown Morning*, 1975. Oil on panel, 2'1 $\frac{3}{8}$ " \times 9'4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (0.64 m \times 2.9 m). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

(fig. 24.96)—a luscious, monumental orb with nipped protrusions—whose color seems all the more dazzling for being embedded in tar, traces of which make the fruit's flat silhouette appear to swell into full, voluptuous volume.

A key figure among the New Imagists was Neil Jenney (b. 1945), who did not abandon the strategies he first learned in Minimal, Pop, and Process art so much as integrate them with beautifully illusionistic subject matter to achieve paintings of galvanic visual impact and chilling moral, even admonitory force. In such works as *Saw and Saved*, 1969, for instance, Jenney rediscovered a version of the liquid Abstract Expressionist stroke and the cartoon-like drawing favored by the Pop artists, along with the visual-cum-verbal punning so beloved by both Pop and Conceptual artists (the work depicts a felled piece of timber), all set forth within a monochrome Color Field organization and a heavy, title-bearing frame that together betray a Minimalist consciousness of the painting as a literal object. In tension with this literalness is the witty ambiguity of the meaning implied by the juxtaposition of words and images.

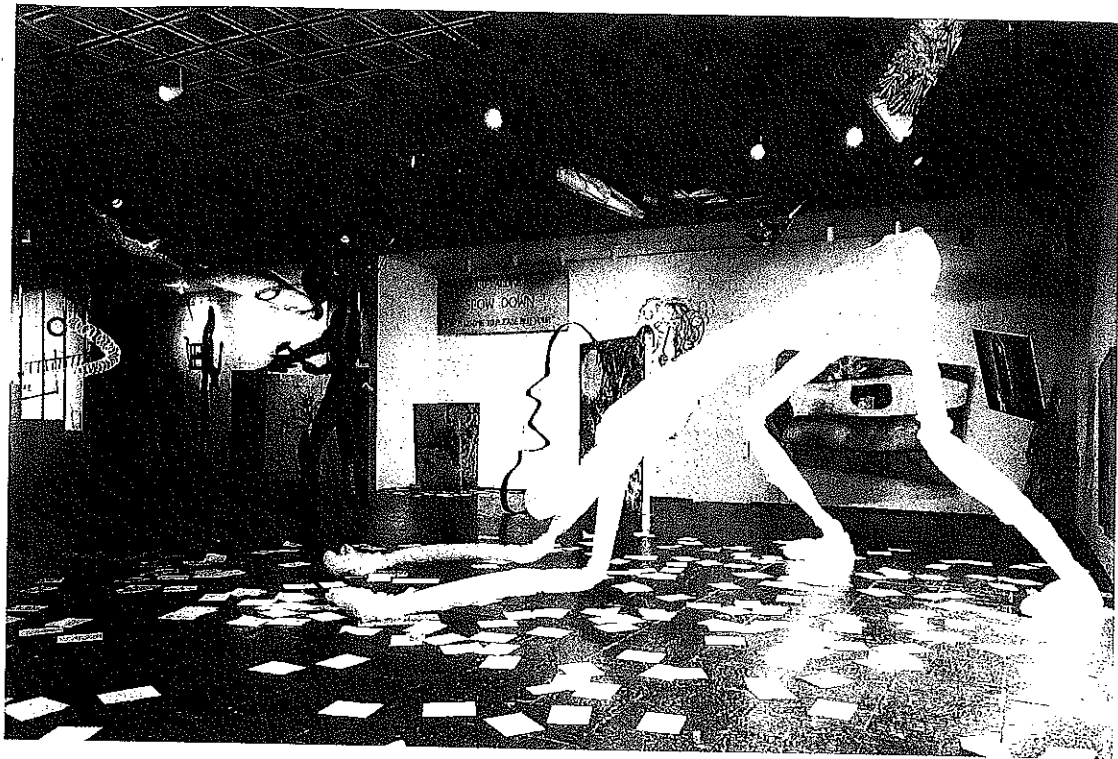
Articulate and politically minded, Jenney has spoken of art as "a social science," and as a language through which to convey "allegorical truths." Gradually, as the visual and verbal jokes interact to engage the mind, and the painterly fluidity seduces the eye, attentive viewers find themselves drawn, through a chain of unexpected relationships, into a consideration of the consequences of human deeds, consequences of a serious environmental import. In subsequent paintings, Jenney reversed the relationship between his imagery and its enclosing frame until the latter—massive, dark, and funereal—allows a mere slit of an opening through which to glimpse a tantalizingly lyrical and illuminated nature (fig. 24.97). Along with the monumentalization of the coffinlike frame has come a vast enlargement of the label. And when this spells out a title like *Meltdown Morning*, the image so segmentally revealed assumes the character of longing for a paradise already lost beyond recovery, as well as mourning for the old world as it may appear—like a rare fragment presented in a museum showcase—following nuclear armageddon or environmental catastrophe.

Borofsky and Bartlett

By his own admission, Jonathan Borofsky (b. 1942) has placed politics firmly at the center of his riotously pluralistic art, saying: "It's all about the politics of the inner self, how your mind works, as well as the politics of the exterior world." To express what has become an untidy multiplicity of concerns, Borofsky is at his most characteristic not in individual works but rather in whole gallerywide installations (fig. 24.98), where he can spread over ceilings and windows, around corners, and all about the floor the entire contents of his mind, his studio, and even the history of his art, which began at the age of eight with a still life of fruit on a table.

The first time he mounted such a display, at Paula Cooper's SoHo gallery in New York in 1975, the show, Borofsky said, "seemed to give people a feeling of being inside my mind." Mostly that mind seems filled with dreams or with the free associations so cherished by the Surrealists, all of which Borofsky has attempted to illustrate with an appropriate image or object. A representative installation would contain a giddy mélange of drawing, painting, sculpture, audio work, and written words, all noisily and messily driving home certain persistent themes. The drawings typically begin with automatist doodles in which the artist discovers and then develops images, such as a dog with pointed ears, blown up by an opaque projector to spill over and be painted onto walls and ceilings, as if a mythological monster were hovering above and threatening the whole affair.

Among the other presences activating the installations are the giant "Hammering Men" (visible, in two versions, at the left in fig. 24.98), the motorized up-and-down motion of their arms inspired by the artist's father, on whose lap young Borofsky sat while listening to "giant stories." Another character took the artist into the realm of sexual politics, where he conjured images of an androgynous clown dancing to the tune of "My Way." As a kind of interstitial tissue serving to link these disparate images, Borofsky littered the floor with crumpled fliers, which were in fact copies of an actual letter recounting the difficulties of ordinary life, a "found" work picked up by the artist from a sidewalk in California.



24.98 Jonathan Borofsky, Installation at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, December 21, 1984–March 10, 1985.

The artist has also imposed continuity on his work through his obsessive counting, a rational process of ordering, unlike the instinctual, random one seen elsewhere in his work, that he began in the late sixties and has now taken beyond the three-million mark. Along the way he applies numbers to each of his pieces and sometimes even to himself, thus joining their separateness into one continuous, ongoing sequence. The record of this monotonous activity is displayed, in graph paper filled with numerals, stacked waist-high, and enshrined in Plexiglas.

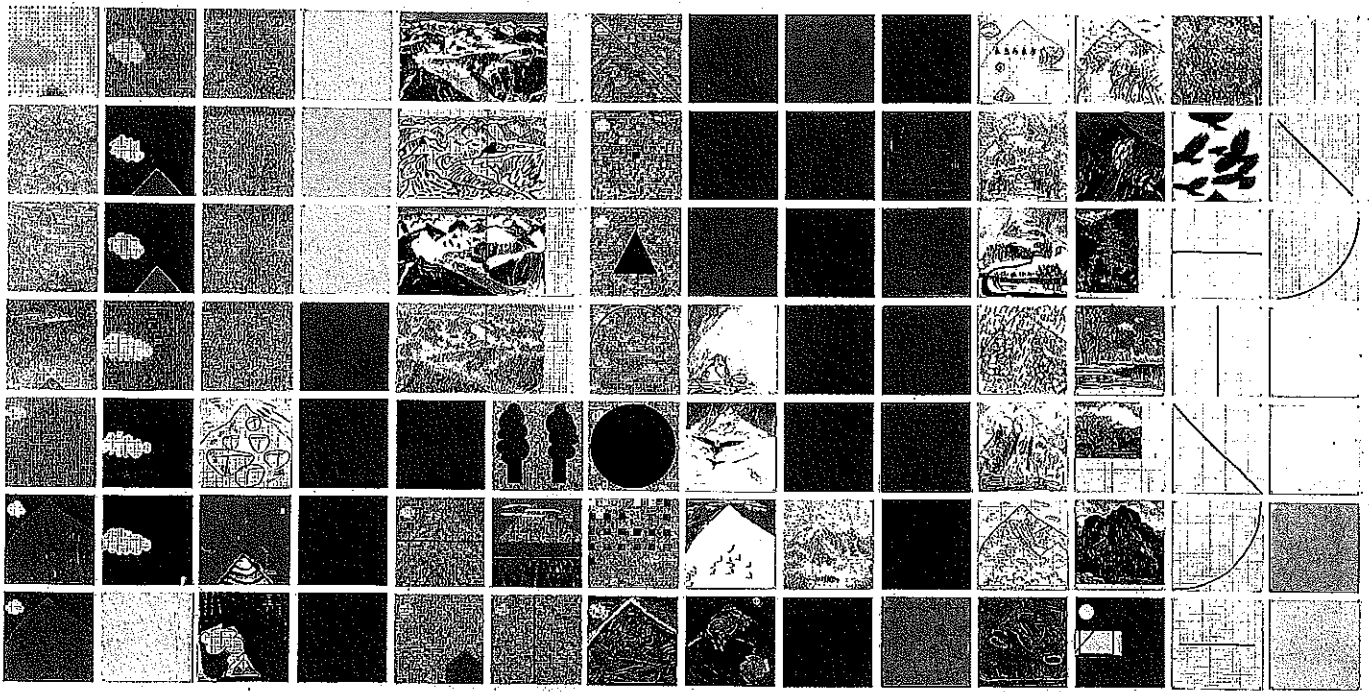
Another New Image artist with a voracious appetite for exhibition space and the creative energy to fill it is **Jennifer Bartlett** (b. 1941), whose vast 987-unit painting entitled *Rhapsody* (fig. 24.99) became, upon its presentation in 1976, one of the most sensational works of the decade. She simplified her painting process, eliminating wooden stretchers, canvas, and the paraphernalia of the oil paint, until she depended upon little more than the basic module of a one-foot-square (0.3 m) steel plate, a flat, uniform surface commercially prepared with a coat of baked-on white enamel and an overprinted silkscreen grid of light gray lines. When finally assembled on a large loft-size wall, hundreds of the enameled steel plates yielded multipart compositions filled with color-dot paintings in an eye-dazzling display of brilliantly decorative abstract patterns.

For *Rhapsody* Bartlett used a large repertoire of colors and, in a further attempt to include “everything,” decided to have figurative as well as nonfigurative images. For the former she chose the most “essential,” emblematic

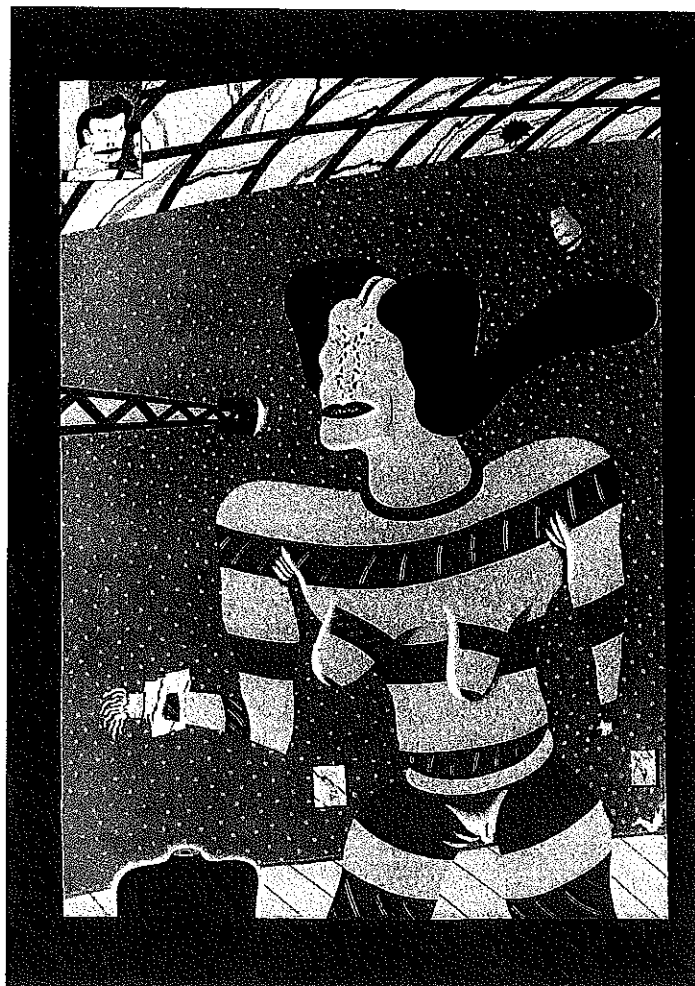
forms of a house, a tree, a mountain, and the ocean, and for the latter a square, a circle, and a triangle—Cézanne’s “cylinder, sphere, and cone” two-dimensionalized. She also had sections devoted purely to color, others to lines (horizontal, vertical, diagonal, curved), and some to different techniques of drawing (freehand, dotted, ruled). The painting finally climaxed in a 126-plate ocean sequence incorporating 54 different shades of blue. Bartlett went on to expand her basic themes in new directions, accommodating sculpture and undertaking large public and private commissions.

Chicago Imagists: Nutt and Paschke

A group of young figurative artists with a fondness for fantasy and grotesque exaggeration became known as the Chicago Imagists, since many of them studied at the school of the Art Institute of Chicago. **Jim Nutt** (b. 1938) began exhibiting in 1966 with a smaller group of these irreverent artists, which called itself the Hairy Who. At that time, Nutt’s scribbly images of women were filled with adolescent aggressiveness. A more controlled work from a few years later, *It’s a Long Way Down* (fig. 24.100), still portrays a woman in anxious, if cartoonish, terms. Nutt says that the painting has to do with the movies, and the gigantic female here, so hugely out of proportion with the tiny inset figures at the upper left and the fleeing form at the lower right, does seem to come from fifties science-fiction epics like *Attack of the Fifty-Foot Woman*. The headless torso (or is it a mannequin?) at the bottom and the severed



24.99 Jennifer Bartlett, *Rhapsody* (detail), 1975–76. Enamel and baked enamel silkscreen grid on 987 steel plates, each 12 × 12" (30.5 × 30.5 cm), overall 7'6" × 153'9" (2.3 × 46.9 m). Collection Sidney Singer, New York.



24.100 Jim Nutt, *It's a Long Way Down*, 1971. Acrylic on wood, 33 3/4 × 24 1/4" (86 × 62.9 cm). National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



24.101 Edward Paschke, *Duro-Verde*, 1978. Lithograph, 4' × 8' (1.22 × 2.4 m). Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond.

head plummeting through the skylight complete this scene of comic mayhem.

Also initially associated with the Chicago Imagists is **Edward Paschke** (b. 1939). Paschke's figures of the seventies may owe something to the particularity of Photorealism in their smoothly modulated contours, as with the exposed skin of the woman in *Duro-Verde* (fig. 24.101). But even though that work may depict a recognizable event—presumably a high-society party or masked ball—the outrageous colors that Paschke employs nullify any sense of illusionistic fidelity. The artificial, electric green is akin to garish neon lighting, and it recalls as well the distortions of a poorly tuned color TV set. Also puzzling is Paschke's deliberate overelaboration of the headgear and masks, perhaps intended to imply that this scene is more than it appears to be. Oddest of all are the dramatic poses of the figures. The frowning, lance-wielding male on the left and the pensive couple on the right suggest nothing so much as a Postmodernist version of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.

Steir

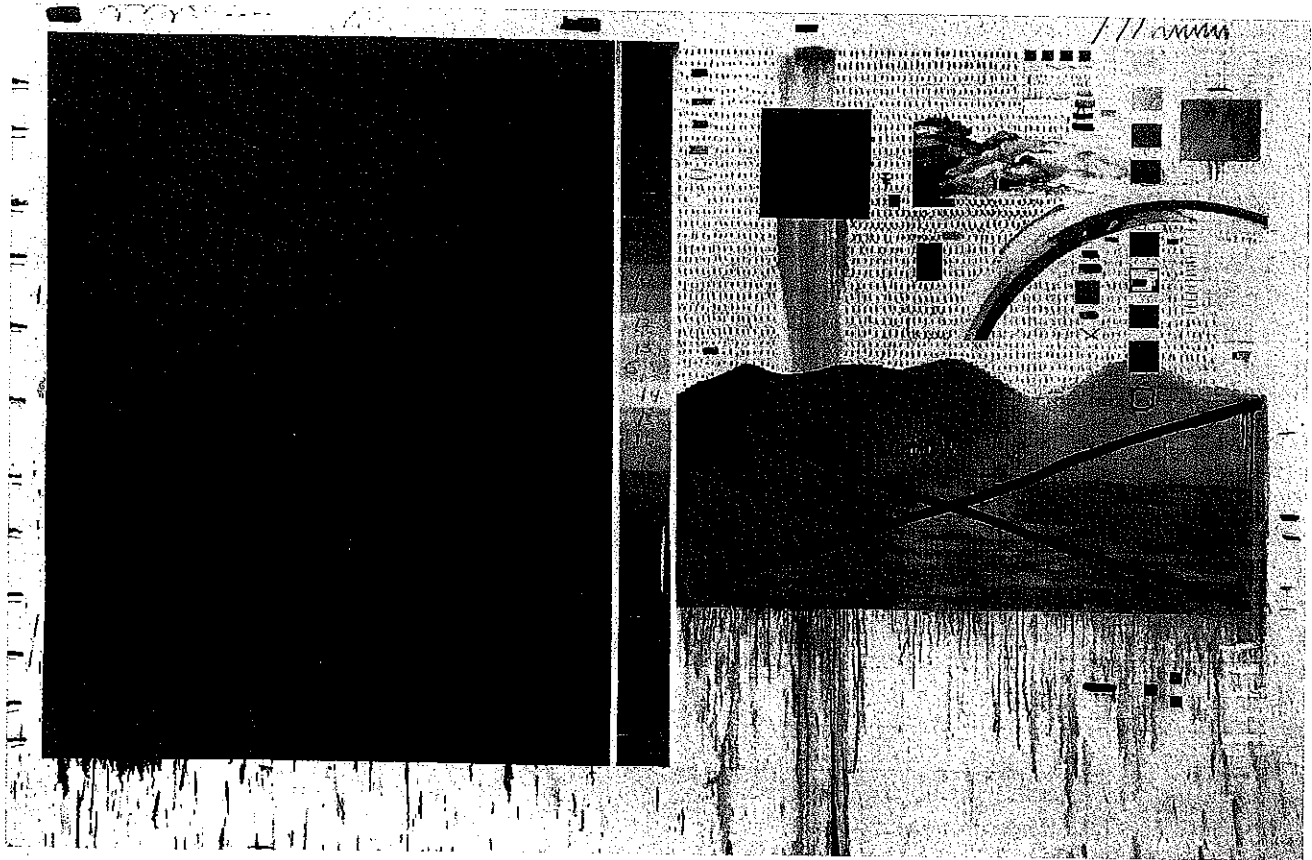
The work of **Pat Steir** (b. 1940) reflects a consciousness that art always comes from older art, giving culture a vernacular of current forms, which each painter or sculptor reinvests with subtly or sharply different meanings. A clear demonstration of the principle can be found in *Cellar Door* (fig. 24.102). The large, unmodulated black square form at the left is a quotation of Malevich's *Black Square* (see fig. 11.18) of 1914–15, a key point of origin for subsequent geometric abstraction. As if to acknowledge Malevich's

original challenge to traditional kinds of painting, Steir added a generic landscape to the right half of *Cellar Door* and then crossed it out, just as Malevich himself had once pasted a small reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* into one of his own works and marked an "X" across the face. Yet Steir also maintains a certain ironic distance from Malevich, not least by the title she gives her painting. The black square in *Cellar Door* is not a mysterious geometric icon like the one that Malevich made, but rather something from ordinary experience—just the doorway to an unlighted basement.

Steir's later *Red Tree, Blue Sky, Blue Water* (fig. 24.103) is a triptych. In this work, a "quotation" from Van Gogh on the left progresses across the three panels in a cinematic sequence, from distant shot to medium one and finally close-up. As they move in graduated stages from resolution to dissolution, the panels also illustrate Steir's conviction that realism and abstraction are the same thing. Adding to the complexity is the echo of Van Gogh's own quoted source: a Hiroshige woodcut. Furthermore, the bold red-on-blue coloration and the swirling, almost Art Nouveau configuration of the image in the right panel—a blowup of a blossom—would seem to betray a side glance at Mondrian's 1908 *Blue Tree* (see c.p. 120). But however absorbed she may be in the history of painting, Steir is also absorbed in the *act* of painting, as can be seen in her extraordinary lavishness of stroke, medium, and color.

New Image Sculptors: Shapiro and Flanagan

In the context of the long figurative tradition of sculpture, **Joel Shapiro** (b. 1941) might conceivably have had less difficulty than painters when he determined to warm the



24.102 Pat Steir, *Cellar Door*, 1972. Oil, crayon, pencil, and ink on canvas, 6 × 9' (1.8 × 2.7 m). Collection Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kaye, New York.

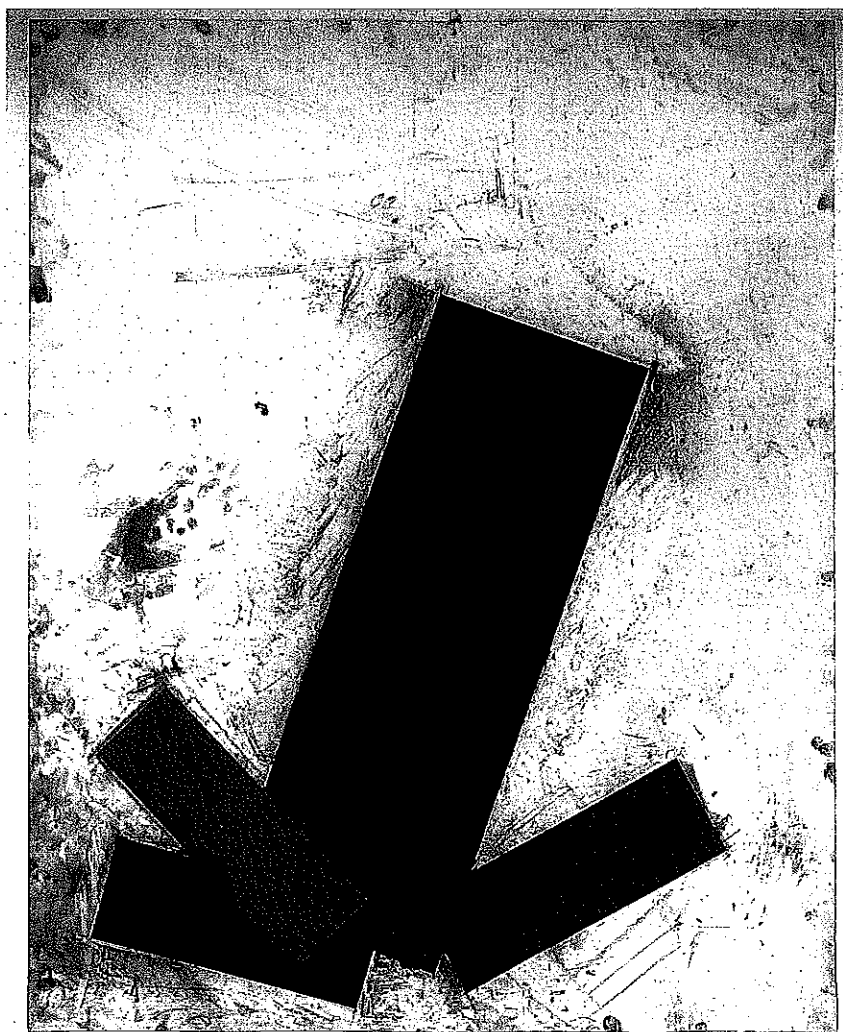
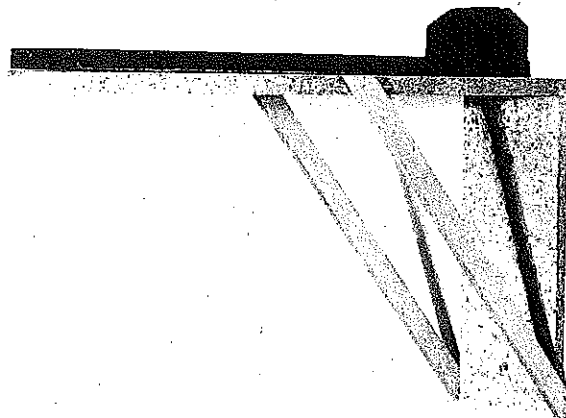


24.103 Pat Steir, *Red Tree, Blue Sky, Blue Water*, 1984. Three panels, each 60 × 60' (152.4 × 152.4 cm). Private collection.

chill perfection of Minimalism's cubic forms with some sense of an activated human presence. Even so, Shapiro found it necessary to proceed only gradually, moving toward the figure through the more abstract objectivity of its habitations in an early seventies series devoted to the house (fig. 24.104). Right away, however, Minimalism lost its monumentality as Shapiro miniaturized the image and pruned the form of all but its most primary or archetypal

masses. As for the humanity excluded from these modest abodes, Shapiro so formed and inflected his figures that, on a larger scale, they share both the houses' clean lines and conflicted condition. His later stick figures, built of square-cut posts and cast in iron or beautiful reddish gold bronze—wood grain, knotholes, and all—display the economy of a Sol LeWitt sculpture, only to break free of constraints and seem to pivot, writhe, dance, collapse,

24.104 Joel Shapiro, *Untitled*, 1973–74. Cast iron, 3 × 27¼ × 2½" (7.6 × 69.2 × 6.7 cm); clipboard base, 14¼ × 29¼ × 5" (37.5 × 75.6 × 12.7 cm).



24.105 Joel Shapiro, *Untitled*, 1987. Charcoal and chalk on paper, 53½ × 42½" (134.9 × 108.1 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

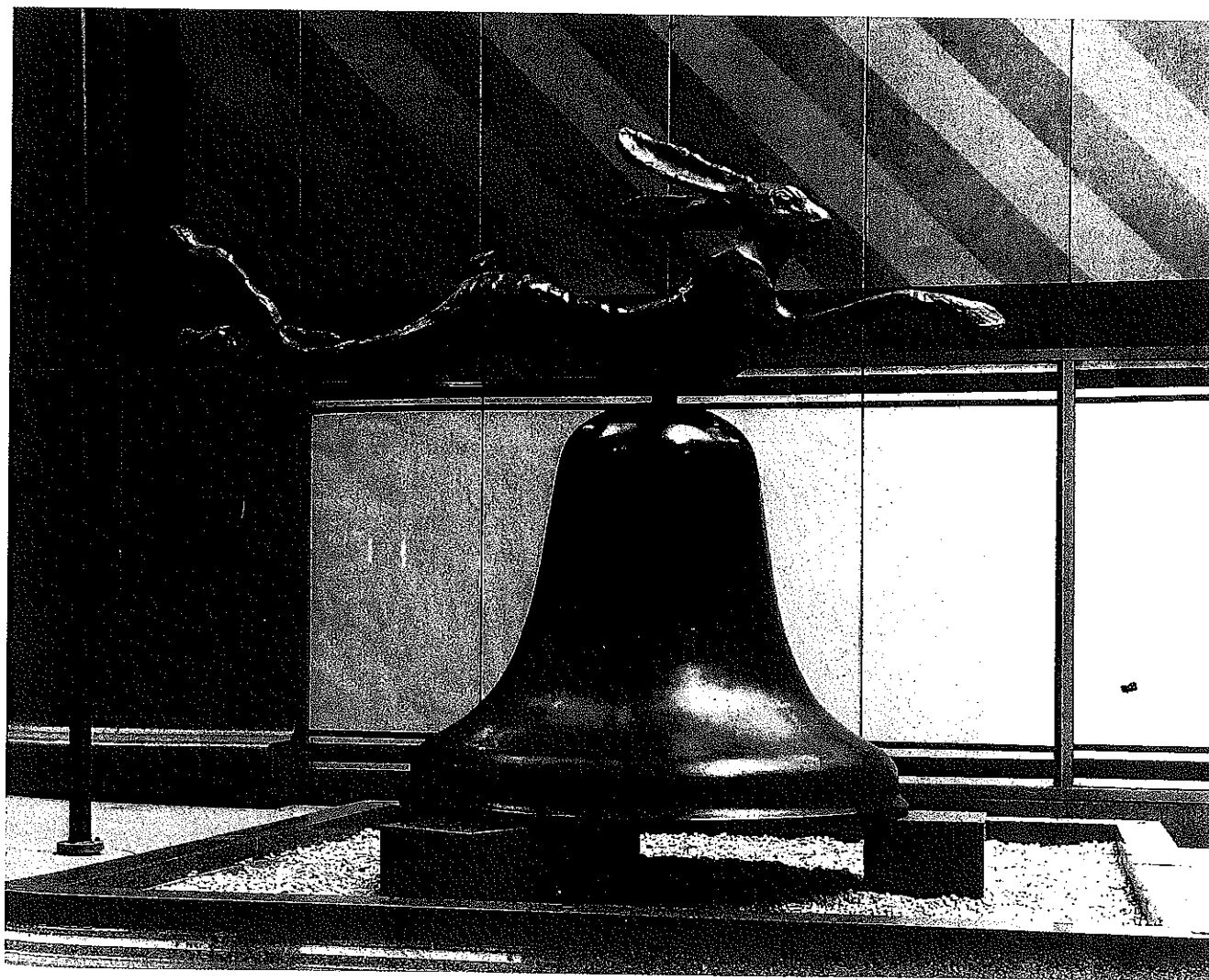
and crawl, as if echoing in antiheroic, Constructivist terms the tormented poses and gestures of Rodin's figures. Even more evocative are some of Shapiro's drawings (fig. 24.105), in which his ethereal smudging of the charcoal endows the geometric shapes with an aura of mystery, an effect enhanced by the use of deep colors. Beam-and-plank assemblages occupy a vast, atmospheric space that owes something to Romantic notions of the sublime.

The British sculptor **Barry Flanagan** (b. 1941) arrived at his New Imagist art by way of painting, dance, and various Conceptual installations produced with organic materials and processes. Throughout a highly varied oeuvre the consistent factors have been those of poetic association, inventiveness, and good humor. Flanagan favors substances such as hessian, rope, felt, steel, stone, ceramic, or bronze, which can be manipulated to "unveil" an image in the course of handling and shaping. In the early eighties, while squeezing and rolling clay, Flanagan found a hare "unveiling" itself in the material, and the image proved to have all the fecundity in art that the creature displays in life

(fig. 24.106). Leaping, strutting, dancing, balancing, or boxing, the slender, free-formed, but graceful bronze hare seems an emblem of Flanagan's own spontaneity, openness, and humor.

Wegman's Photography

William Wegman (b. 1942) started his career with a sense of humor and an aesthetic kinship with the New Imagist painters, if only a bit more adolescent. One drawing from 1975 presents a small childlike rendering of a coiled snake, centered on a piece of drawing paper over the words, "A HUGE DEADLY SNAKE RENDERED HARMLESS." Wegman also experimented with video and photography. After he had completed a movie of himself playing baseball with two full teams of neighborhood dogs, his most successful subject came bounding into camera range. It was a Weimaraner puppy, who grew up so stagestruck and histrionically gifted that nothing could keep him either from the lights or from performing once they were turned on. Wegman chose to photograph the puppy in order playfully



24.106 Barry Flanagan, *Hare on Bell with Granite Piers*, 1983. Bronze and granite, 7'11½" × 8'6" × 6'3" (2.4 × 2.6 × 1.9 m). Number one of edition of five. Collection the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States, New York.

to insinuate the notion of charming canine turned surrogate person. Naming his dog Man Ray, the artist punned himself—Dada fashion—into reversing roles with the dog and thus becoming his—Man’s—best friend. For some ten years, until the canine celebrity died, Wegman found the photogenic Man Ray to be a gallant and sensitive actor in an ongoing comedy of still photographs, made first with a Polaroid and then with a large-format camera (fig. 24.107). One by one they show Man Ray costumed and

fully rehearsed to play through the whole range of ordinary and supposedly rational situations in contemporary society, all rendered farcical and pretentious—often hilariously so—by ironic contrast with the manifest dignity and intelligence of the noble Weimaraner. In such ways, art in the seventies, from the politically charged to the whimsical, provided a theater in which to push beyond the constraints—formal, social, and personal—that had weighed on Western art and society in the previous decade.



24.107 William Wegman, *Blue Period*, 1981. Color Polaroid photograph. Private collection.

