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ANONIMA GROUP RETROSPECTIVE

1960-1971

October 28-November 26, 1971

**Robert Hull Fleming Museum
The University of Vermont
Burlington, 1971**

This exhibition is a collective effort. The Museum provided the means and the time and place for an event to happen. The event itself is the work of those most concerned. The works were assembled by the Anonima Group members, New York artists Ernst Benkert and Edwin Mieczkowski, and Francis Hewitt, now a member of the University Art Department. His colleague, William Lipke, a historian of modern art, served as coordinator. Karen Hewitt did back-up research. Students assisted in a variety of ways. The installation was devised by Messrs. Lipke and Hewitt with John Kurtz, Museum Technician. Their work completed, the final ingredient, an interested audience, is assured. The Anonima show is a major document. It is also the University Museum at its best, a forum for art and ideas where artists, faculty, students and the public are the scene and administrators out of sight.

*Richard H. Janson
Director, Fleming Museum
Chairman, Department of Art*

INTRODUCTION

"Virtually nobody in the whole of New York," remarked Bridget Riley in reference to the *Responsive Eye* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1965, "was capable of the state of receptive participation which is essential to the experience of looking at paintings."¹ The work of Ernst Benkert, Francis Hewitt and Edwin Mieczkowski which was included in the *Responsive Eye* exhibition is assembled here in a retrospective exhibition; it is quite possible that Riley's remark will be applicable to the paintings and drawings of the Anonima Group.

Several explanations can be cited for the lack of receptive participation on the part of the spectator. There is the historical phenomenon of a time lag between artistic occurrence and appearance;² a distance that is sometimes overcome by critical insight. "Op Art", as the works included in that Museum of Modern Art exhibition were labeled, was made famous "by all the magazines except the art journals."³ Rather than a resultant set of critical constructs which would enable the spectator to comprehend the New Abstraction, commercialization and popularization obfuscated the real issues.

Admittedly, while William Seitz who had organized that exhibition had attempted to specify the various approaches to "perceptual abstraction," the inclusion of varying and sometimes contradictory positions failed to clarify the radically distinct features of the works included. Thus, as Harold Rosenberg championed Abstract Expressionism, and Alan Kaprow provided the dialectic for Happenings; while John Cage and Alan Solomon laid down an aesthetic for understanding Rauschenberg, Johns, and Dine, and Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried have endlessly defended Modernist Painting (Post-Painterly Abstraction), no clear statement from a critic has yet summed up the intricacies of perceptual abstraction. (While, for example, the work of Benkert, Hewitt and Mieczkowski could be seen as included within Greenberg's theory of Modernist Painting, or relevant to Lawrence Alloway's notion of Systemic Painting, there are not enough strands of similarity to warrant such inclusion.) The gap between occurrence and appearance (even acceptance) is still a real issue facing the Anonima Group.

The best criticism and insight into Anonima Group work is to be found in the writings of the Group members. They

share much in common with the positions of the late Ad Reinhardt. It is for this reason that a large part of the catalogue is devoted to a chronological selection of Anonima Group writing. The history of the Group has appeared elsewhere in several forms.⁴

The writings and visual works of Anonima seen together also reveal that prior to their inclusion in the *Responsive Eye*, their position was undoubtedly more concisely stated than that of any other American painter involved with perceptual abstraction. As early as 1960 Hewitt had urged painters to "move away from the study of the structure of the external object and [its] context to a study of the visual and perceptual process itself as a method of extending the possibilities of painting." This broad delineation of concerns roughly characterizes the decade of Group work. As such, it is important for the spectator to understand that Anonima work is distinct from older painting as "ideas transmitted which cause the transmission to be forgotten;"⁵ or painting where the "materiality of communication" becomes the sole concern. Rather than be seen exclusively as determined by the reaction to the aesthetics of Abstract Expressionism, Anonima work would be better understood in light of the theories and data of perceptual psychology;⁶ the commitment to a systematic study of visual information irrespective of stylistic or economic pressures.

Anonima painting seen in the general context of perceptual abstraction, as distinct from the work of such contemporaries as Anuszkiewicz or Stanczak, can be further characterized as painting which depicts the conditions governing our perception of the world. *How* the visual data is taken in. Hence, there is a directness and impact to the painting that is on the order of "brute facts." (Hewitt) William Seitz emphasized this aspect of perceptual abstraction when he wrote:

"perceptual responses would appear to follow innate laws, limited though our understanding of them may be. The eye responds most directly when non-essentials such as freely modulated shape and tone, brush gestures and impasto are absent, [for] these means muffle and distort the purely perceptual effect of lines, areas, and colors."⁷

But as Hewitt also observed those direct responses have to "push beyond mere calisthenics of the eye." As late as 1967 the Group was reaffirming its commitment to a

"critical examination of form and the consequent visual experience, its limits and its possibilities in painting." Not visual gymnastics, but a carefully thought out position to systematically investigate the "innate laws" of which Seitz speaks.

If Seitz had some comprehension of certain aspects of perceptual abstraction in terms of how the paintings worked, he evidently had serious objections as well to the kinds of responses such work could elicit:

"Can such works that refer to nothing outside themselves replace with psychic effectiveness the content that has been abandoned? . . . Can an advanced understanding and application of functional images open a new path from retinal excitation to emotions and ideas?"⁸

Part of the dilemma in which Seitz found himself was a result of asking perceptual abstraction to do what older art did: applying a procedure for interpretation which simply didn't fit. For the aspection of Anonima paintings and drawings confirms that their principle content is *complexity of information*. Abraham Moles has articulated this concept when he noted: "information is a measurable quantity which characterizes the process of communication . . . Information differs essentially from meaning; information is only a measure of complexity."⁹

What criterion of value can be used in offering judgments of quality when confronted with such work? Moles again provides an answer: "The measure of information no more depends on the *number* of symbols transmitted than on the *effects* of these symbols; rather, it measures the *originality of the grouping* of these symbols."¹⁰ [my emphasis]

The viewer is thus asked to take on a greater responsibility in acknowledging the "originality of the grouping," for he first must see what is there. This is not an easy task; Hewitt has phrased it another way as "the problem of defining the distinction between what a particular observer has the *desire and ability* to recognize and identify and what is *perceptually possible* for the human visual process." In these works, that range of possibilities includes interlaced groupings of information that do in fact border on the threshold of perceptibility, to those works which, although less complex in the use of single or binary systems, considerably challenge the viewer's ability to see what is in front of him.

In sum the procedures for aspecting Anonima paintings are different than those of other paintings in that communication "must be concluded by some signification that is entirely the creation of the observer. Viewers with little patience or skill will soon become frustrated and antagonized by the work and its designer. They are unwilling or unable to assume *the beholder's share*." (Hewitt)



The function of any retrospective exhibition is to assemble works, created over a span of time, to enable the viewer to assess the development of visual ideas. The focus of this exhibition is slightly larger. Rather than exclusively concerned with looking at the past achievements of the Anonima Group, emphasis is also given to current work which, while related to the earlier Group development, shows most clearly the individuality of its members. "Anonymity," one critic remarked, "is not a consequence of highly finishing a painting. The artist's conceptual order is just as personal as autographic tracks."¹¹

The inclusion of selected writings chronicles in a different way, the increasingly social and political stance the Anonima Group has had to take in order to maintain integrity in their work. For Anonima this has meant in the past and continues to mean in the present, the avoidance of determined art seasonal styles seen as "trends" or "breakthroughs." The commitment to systematically exploring stable two dimensional systems by Anonima is made in spite of the economic realities of the critic/art mag/gallery/museum syndrome which calculates a painter's product as saleable commodity rather than measures the quality of visual work.

The clarity of the writing as well as the clarity of the visual work provides a network of information for the reassessment of the Anonima Group's place in contemporary history. As all serious painting has done in the past, Anonima work has taught us how to look at the world with that relevance of which Lawrence Alloway has written:

"What seems relevant now is to define systems in art, free of classicism which is to say free of the absolutes which were previously associated with ideas of order."¹²

William C. Lipke
Assistant Professor

NOTES

¹ Quoted in Lawrence Alloway, "Notes on Op Art" (An expanded version of a lecture "A Response to the Responsive Eye" given at the Guggenheim April 11, 1965) in *The New Art*, ed. G. Battcock, (New York, 1966), p. 85.

² The phenomenon is discussed by George Kubler, *The Shape of Time* (New Haven, 1962).

³ Alloway, "Notes" p. 86.

⁴ For histories of the Anonima Group, see Helen Weinberg, "The Anonima Group," *Anonima*, Vol. I, No. 2 (New York, 1964), pp. 3-7; and Henry P. Raleigh, "Anonima Group," *Leonardo*, Vol. II (London 1969), pp. 423-430.

⁵ Abraham Moles, *Information Theory and Esthetic Perception*, trans. Joel E. Cohen, (London, 1966), pp. 196-197.

⁶ George Rickey has noted the difference between the functions of the perceptual psychologist and painters who draw on that information.

"The artist's role differs from the scientist's who seeks to find out what is happening. The artist shows that it is happening." Quoted in George Rickey, "Scandale de Succes," *Art International*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (May 1965), p. 18.

⁷ William C. Seitz, "Introduction," *The Responsive Eye*, exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, (New York, 1965), p. 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43. Critics Barbara Rose, Thomas Hess and Dore Ashton felt equally uncomfortably in accepting perceptual abstraction in 1965. See Alloway, "Notes", p. 86.

⁹ Moles, *Information Theory and Esthetic Perception*, p. 197.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹¹ Lawrence Alloway, "Introduction," *Systemic Painting*, exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, (New York, 1966), p. 18.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

SELECTED ANONIMA GROUP WRITINGS: 1960-1971

RANDOM NOTES OF GEORGE B. MORRISON

A move from the study of the structure of the external object and context to a study of the visual and perceptual process itself, as a method of extending the possibilities in painting. Where after the Cubist study of the consequences of Cezanne and Mondrian's study of the consequences of the Cubists has there been a fruitful "study" in painting?

Man is still the measure—we are concerned with the possibility of ethical action. As we know more, we become more responsible. Information then is one source of moral action and decision. How do we get information? In so far as there is the possibility for visual information, the expansion of the capacity for both more complex and more determined visual structures is a consequential moral action. The question arises, how to push this beyond mere calisthenics of the eye?

Hewitt November, 1960 (unpublished)

CURRENT Spring, 1961, Vol. 1, No. 2. (published and printed by the Cleveland Institute of Art)

No matter what technical extremes a draftsman or painter takes to represent the world of physical objects, if he does not abandon the physical two-dimensional surface (e.g., build painted wax, full scale sculptural models), he is still manipulating contradictory cues for visual perception. These are the binocular cues of a flat, bounded surface with painted or drawn areas across it, and the monocular cues of overlap, relative size, degree of contrast, etc., which result in perceptual conflict. The more reliable information from stereoscopic vision and touch usually dominate. The final realization of this dilemma, i.e., the contradictions implied in an imitational theory of visual art, has led modern painters to eliminate the representational elements altogether and concern themselves only with the spatial implications, unrelated to a clear and well-formulated object identity . . .

What is needed is a reassessment of the position in painting today of the two-dimensional plane of the surface . . .

The question of illusion is hardly ever carried beyond the obvious physical existence of the materials, a consistency with the prevalent materialistic limit of reality only to external physical objects that can be experienced by touch. If the question is asked what is more "real", the physical object, the light rays, the retina, the optic nerve pathways or the brain, the materialist must admit that they are all physically measurable quantities. Thus, we have extended the constitution of the "real" to include the visual perceptual apparatus, as well as the object seen. The question of illusion is then to be measured by the way the object stimuli is utilized in vision and not by a comparison with a gross tactile confirmation by the hands moving in space . . .

The existence of the elements of visual perception, and their subsequent utilization as implication of depth into the visual field, is as substantial and "physical" as is the experience of any external object that can be isolated by rubbing one's fingers over the surface of a resistant object. This utilization of cues is as inherent a part of tactile perception as it is in visual perception . . .

The particular modes of appearances and the distal cues we are given in non-representational art "mean" only the visual physiological response they cause and nothing else. It is at this

point in the perceptual process that information from the painting stops. No indication is given as to the specific object reference outside of the psycho-physical phenomena. The definite psychological, philosophical, more specifically aesthetic response is then entirely the formative act of the viewer. This kind of visual art is not merely representing cues from the total visual world of experience. It is presenting concrete brute facts of one material spread over another—a flat surface. It will necessarily deal with memories from the manipulation and interaction with the visual world, both those of the painter and those of the contingent spectator. These memories are not in some way embodied in the material of the artifact. They are brought forth in the encounter with the object. The problem of aesthetic meaning in art, then becomes the problem of defining the distinction between what a particular observer has the desire and the ability to recognize and identify, and what is perceptually possible for the human visual process. To confuse the former condition with what is "out there" in the painting, is to perpetuate the fallacious tradition of thinking and speaking of the effects on the beholder as somehow existing in the object that stimulated them. For example, ". . . that painting has a nice mood." This process of looking at pictures is often confused with that of communication. The specific difference is that communication, or the transference of information, is only a part of the aesthetic experience. It must be concluded by some signification that is entirely the creation of the observer.

"Reassessment of the Surface and
Subsequent Implications for
Contemporary Painting" Hewitt

A PROGRAM FOR PAINTING 1961 (unpublished)

The need for a program for painting comes from a number of sources, some contemporary and some historical. To propose a program is to imply a need for an inter-personal communicable plan or governance over single works and the developing series. It also offers the framework for a set of criteria that a group of painters might bring to bear on the resulting work. To establish such emphases is clearly to reject the personal, solipsistic position of traditional expressionism or romanticism. It is through the notion of a program that we are exposed to the dangers of academic studies with its tiresome pieties of fundamentals and basic studies. Yet perhaps it is the need for such a "new Academy" of which Ad Reinhardt spoke that some painters have proposed programs, plans, diagrams and outlines as basic to their work procedure . . .

Our particular group was formed in 1960, with just such reaction as the source of irritation for proposing alternatives to the then current Abstract Expressionism that so dominated thinking about painting in the 1950's. In the early 1940's Robert Motherwell had posed his formal dilemma as that of choice between the aesthetics of Miro or those of Mondrian, for us in the end of the fifties there was no problem. The need for development out of Mondrian and the complete rejection of Miro seemed the only course to again open up alternatives. Perhaps, if Mondrian is now the ghost in Motherwell's elegant closet, it can't be similarly said that Miro is in ours. His influence and stature has diminished, compared say to Matisse, whose late collages are haunting . . . It was through Mondrian back to the earlier European traditions of geometric and constructivist painting that our imagination was freshly aroused. There was very little actual painting in this tradition to be actually seen except through reproduction. With the exception of a handful of artists here in the United States very little was actually being painted out of this tradition.

Hewitt

1960

SUMMER Benkert, Hewitt, Mieczkowski form group and work in Springs, Long Island in Benkert's studio. First concentrated work with systematic perceptual concerns.

Dimensional Drawing Course based on research in visual perception developed by Hewitt and Mieczkowski at Cleveland Institute of Art.

1961

SPRING Hewitt, "The First and Last Manifesto of George B. Morrison," *Polemic VII* (Western Reserve University), p. 12.

Hewitt, "Reassessment of the Surface and Subsequent Implications for Contemporary Painting," *Current*. V. 1, N. 2 (Cleveland Institute of Art), pp. 5-8.
SUMMER Group at Benkert's studio (Springs, L.I.) working cooperatively.



Hewitt, Progress of Perception, 1960

The painter finds himself in charge of one of man's projects that has no direct control over the immediate world and the problems posed by it. His works can easily be dispensed with during times of threat and just as easily ignored in a stable world by those unwilling to distinguish the difference between paintings and mere impenetrable matter. His charge, the sensible qualitative mass of pigment patches called painting, falls in our experience somewhere between what we consider necessary for existence and all we are indifferent to. If as it has been said, the role of the painter is to initiate new realities, then these realities will not replace but be in addition to that which is real to us at all times. Thus, the amount of stretch between the world of physical appearance and the opposite point where everything breaks down into subjective wishful incoherence might be thought of as the measure of the painter's success.

It is fortunate if there are those within the community who recognize the necessity of leaven for the painter's ideas and ambitions. Invaluable to him are the peripheral individuals who tone and test his developments in direct personal contact and even conflict. Better strife than the administrations of those who prefer to coddle the painter. He needs to save himself from those who regard him as an inspired artist aloof from the need to grapple with social and ideological pressures and as one whose fine gifts owe nothing to tradition except as a convenient frame within which to operate . . .

Our time is now complicated by the too uncritical acceptance of the view that art is an emotive language, that it is arrived at through emotional frenzy. Feeling, mood and sentiment prevail and thought is downgraded as merely a hindrance. The attempt is being made to transfer the emotional state of the artist operating in the generative stages of the work, to something perceivable by the spectator. Materials are sought that will have variation and response to moves and gestures. Ideally, the spectator is invited to even view the act of assembling these materials and thus participate in making it.

PAINTING AND PREDICTION Mieczkowski

Only Duchamp had enough wit to admit that he no longer wanted to paint and in so doing left us some valuable hints. I take it for granted that he warned: better to think about painting, or not to think about it, than to become a thoughtless hand . . .

The old idea of nature as a warehouse of possibilities has simply moved indoors and into the action of painting itself, where one small segment, the automatic responses of the artist to his own movement on canvas, can be manipulated. Action equals nature here, the response to raw accidental experience. The acceptance of this is based on the assumption that the successive attempts of the artist to use his reactions to the action of painting itself will suffice as the sole source of his ideas about painting . . .

Nature, to use this word for the last time, is thus seen as a construction of man's intellect, and not as an already given construction awaiting investigation and interpretation.

PARAGRAPHS Benkert

The unhappy lessons of history have taught us that it is not the concern of visual art to consider constructions in language or in mathematics that cannot be corresponded with a *thing*. Without this reifying function, the thought or idea is not visualizable, hence not paintable. It then stands only within the formal concerns of philosophy or mathematics—it is the prey of the symbolic mind. The physical and psychological aspects of *seeing* the reified thought are both necessary and advantageous to visual art . . .

The function of picturing or visualizing is one of the most primitive and basic limiting agents of thought, whether it is done metaphorically, analogically, or graphically. Picturing is a kind of

isolation and reification of an idea that is like naming or categorizing. It allows us to go beyond the descriptive structure and to posit and observe unpredictables emerging from, and in interaction with, the simpler primary system . . .

The perceptual process predicts, does not discover; constructs, does not abstract, in the formation of what is seen and where it is seen. The tradition of experiencing painting has not allowed for a simple acceptance of the "thing" presented for seeing . . .

The physical fact that the relations in a painting are constant and thus allow us to return to reaffirm or question our perceptions is an important justification for the "intellectual" or contemplative orientation in visual art . . .

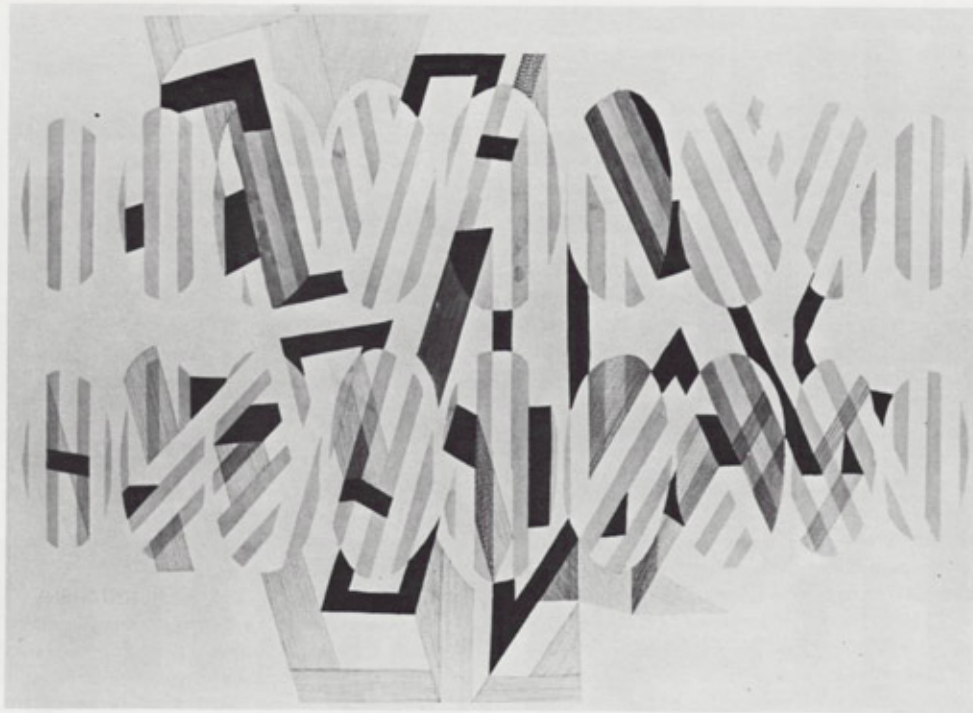
The tradition and history of looking at pictures has taught us to expect to see things in the picture in different relative locations. When we look at the picture we have certain expectations that are either confirmed or denied. As we have mentioned before, a "perception may be regarded as primarily the modification of an anticipation" . . .

In our efforts to find out what the cues "mean" or signify in painting, we are often guilty of overlooking the cues themselves . . .

In the case of selecting one position from a number of possible interpretations in an ambiguous figure, we are simply deciding between alternative categories, i.e., in front of, behind, etc. In this sense the viewing of painting is a process of decision making. It is clear that the relative information one needs in various paintings often varies considerably. If the field is consistently organized, we might need only one or two highly reliable indications to make the decision. But if the field has conflicts or contradictions, then many cues have to be searched out before the choice is made. The tolerance level for this conflict is different for each. Some viewers take "risks" and go quickly to the categorical level from cue information, whereas others are more cautious and try to accommodate many cues while weighing their decision. The viewer has to be capable and willing to venture many possible "guesses" or "bets" in order to understand the highly variable schemes of the New Abstraction. The ultimate vitality and form of the schemes depend in turn on this willingness to venture guesses and to keep making them. In the most simple sense the decision or choice is hinged on three aspects or terms; and/or/not. The main question to be asked about the choice is, what are the probabilities of the several alternatives? . . .

Our first attempt to read the painting is to search for consistency, and this probabilistic interaction of the cues is upset in the event of antagonistic tendencies. Certain "hitches" develop, and break the smooth, easy assimilation of the incoming information. The interruption occurs because of the simultaneous presence of these incompatible tendencies. The perceptual conflict results from these relatively equal alternative routes and the absence of an accommodation of the visual field to our hypotheses. These hitches may be irritating as well as provocative. Viewers with little patience or skill for the game will soon become frustrated and antagonized by the work and its designer. It demands that they resolve the simultaneous presentation of the incompatible tendencies they observe. They are unwilling or unable to assume the "beholder's share". It is this period of perceptual lag during which the perception changes while the pattern remains constant that gives the uniqueness to this kind of schema in painting today. It is the result of a direct and conscious attempt by the painter to reduce our certainty in the choice or decision making process, to produce a kind of shaky confidence in any particular categorization . . .

It is naive to claim that this is an art for everyman. The quality and depth of the experience depend on the willingness to perceive and the persistence to overcome certain levels of frustration. This is the beholder's "share" . . .



Mieczkowski, Harmonica C, 1960



Benkert, Composition, 1960

1962

NOVEMBER *Recent Developments in Visual Design: Perception and Constructs*. Group exhibition, including E. Grossi (photographs), K. Hewitt (motorized construction) at Group's 10021 Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio.

1963

SUMMER Group working cooperatively at E. A. Benkert's studio, Mill Spring, North Carolina.

NOVEMBER *In-Out 10021*. Group publication (contributions by Benkert, Hewitt, Mieczkowski, Grossi.) Cleveland.

ANONIMA, Vol. 1, No. 2, March, 1964

New painting by definition, is an object outside the critical and historical pattern . . .

It is generally agreed that the images presented by this painting are difficult, even frustrating in their resistance to categorization. It seems that the production of such visual fields actually generates confusion and contradiction at the critical level as well. For we find the most determinate procedures being used to beget the most indeterminate and unstable visual results, even the most vague and subjective emotional states . . .

It may be that painters using these perceptual and intellectual contradictions have finally succeeded in doing what has been traditionally most difficult, to frustrate the game of communication. Painters have always been best when they are not playing that game . . .

The new determinate abstraction has no agreed upon aesthetic or intellectual foundations . . .

The inability to completely conceptualize and categorize this painting results in a type of anonymity . . .

In the long view there does seem to be one formal attribute or procedure that has been common to the old and the new abstraction: inconsistency and contradiction . . .

The visual structures of both the forementioned "classical" abstractionists and the contemporary "new" abstractionists have no empirical correlations with physical objects or no consistently logical methods for procedure in the construction of the painting. The artist has been free, but bound, to devise his own devices, systems and ultimately his own justifications . . .

. . . pictorial representation was rigidly bracketed by numerous *a priori* assumptions about the visual world. These were: 1) that the spectator maintain a single viewing position and eye level, 2) that the object did not change its position while viewing, and 3) that the viewer uses only one eye to view the object . . .

The most provocative new view or "new look" at perception has centered around the work of the group known as Transactionalists. They are so called because of their emphasis on the transactional nature of perception — between the set or anticipation (guess or hypothesis) and the attributes of the object seen (cues) . . .

PERCEPTUAL CONFLICT AND THE NEW ABSTRACTION Hewitt

ViBrAtIoNs eleven, Martha Jackson Gallery, January 6- January 31, 1965

Don't Confuse:

art and life
geometry and art
perception and optics

Don't Equate:

hands with brains
tools with machines
anonymity with conformity

Additional Confusions (Equations):

illusion and unreality
reality and nature
construction and abstraction
repetition and decoration
complexity and disorder (profundity)
simplicity and originality
artists and movie stars
formalism and repression
informalism and freedom
responsive and responsible
publicity and fame
exposure and acceptance

Anonima Statement, November, 1964

1 + 1 = 3 An Exhibition of Retinal and Perceptual Art April 11-May 9 The University Art Museum of The University of Texas

1: Although the term "optical" has been used in the past in a general way to refer to vision in all its aspects, it does have a specific designation; namely to that branch of physical science which treats of the nature and properties of lights and lenses and other optical instruments. Any book that used the words "Optics" or "optical" in its title today would be a highly technical and mathematical study of the geometrical projection of light and its effect on lenses. This would indicate an exclusive use of the terms "optical" and "Optics" outside of the realm of general visual experience.

2: Since as painters we do not study or employ any of the theories or data of optics as defined above, it would be misleading to use this term to describe our work.

3: We have studied and employed the theory and data of perceptual psychology and have found it relevant and useful in the construction of visual schemes. If we have to refer our work to any field outside of the history of painting, we would prefer that it be to the psychology of perception. But we are reluctant to employ any name or suggestion of a name which so limits the description of our work that its persistent connection with the history of painting is lost sight of . . .

ANONIMA STATEMENT: FEBRUARY 1965

ANONIMA GROUP Feb. 9-March 19, 1966 Institute of Contemporary Arts, London

Anonima proposes:

— that artist form groups to implement the progress and freedom of artists from the commercial and political confusion of the Art world

— that all works of art relate to or react to a tradition, and that the lessons of and respect for that tradition underlie the development of all progressive art

— to limit its own activity and interests to the problems generated by a strict commitment to stable two-dimensional systems

— a clearer, more concerted effort to study and understand the recent theories and data from the psychology of visual perception

— communication and cooperation between artists to coordinate and shape the direction and content of such study

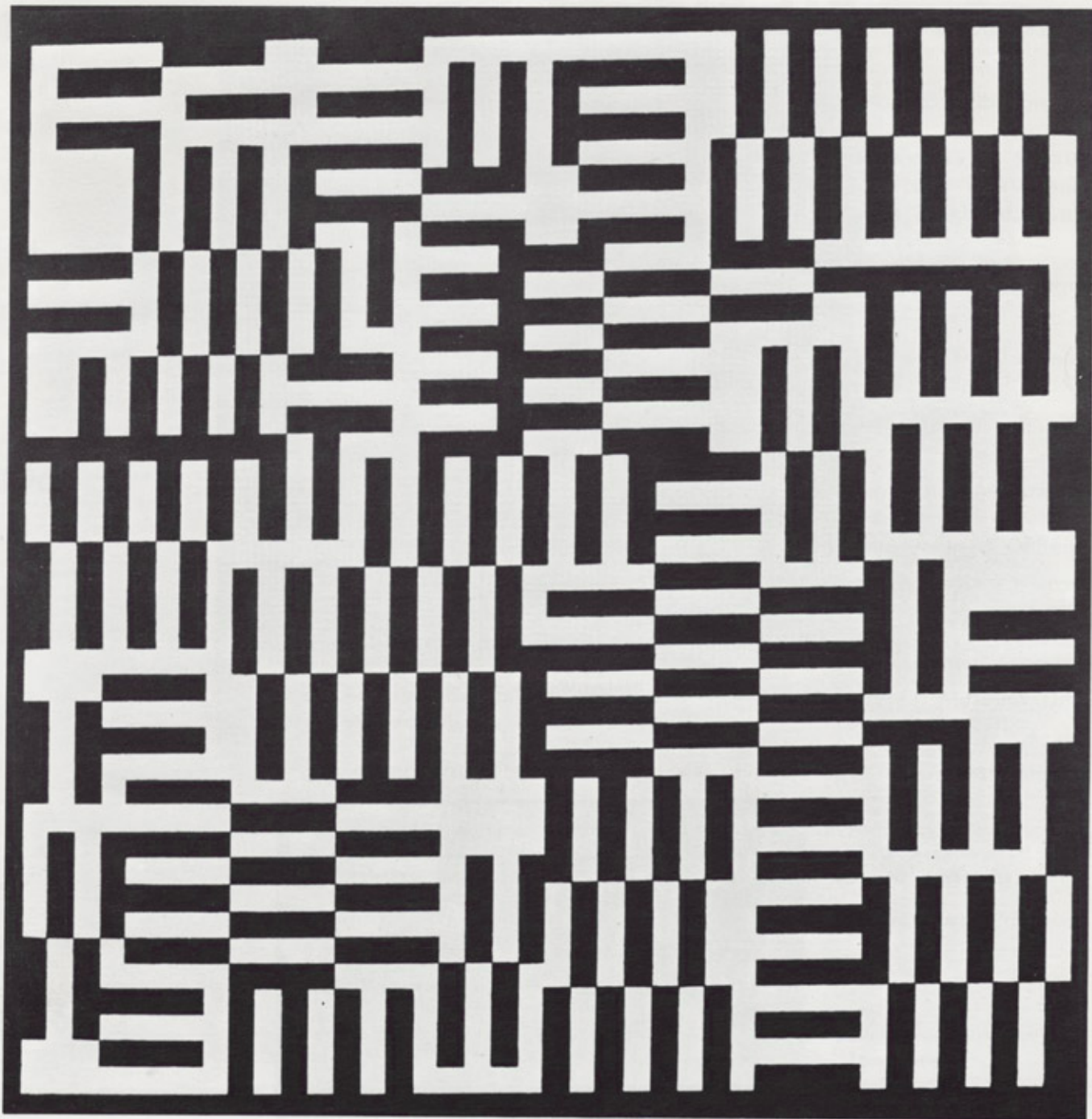
— that the lack of interest in our position which will inevitably be shown by the art world audience will serve to concentrate and sharpen the audience that continues to carry the beholders share

ANONIMA GROUP STATEMENT

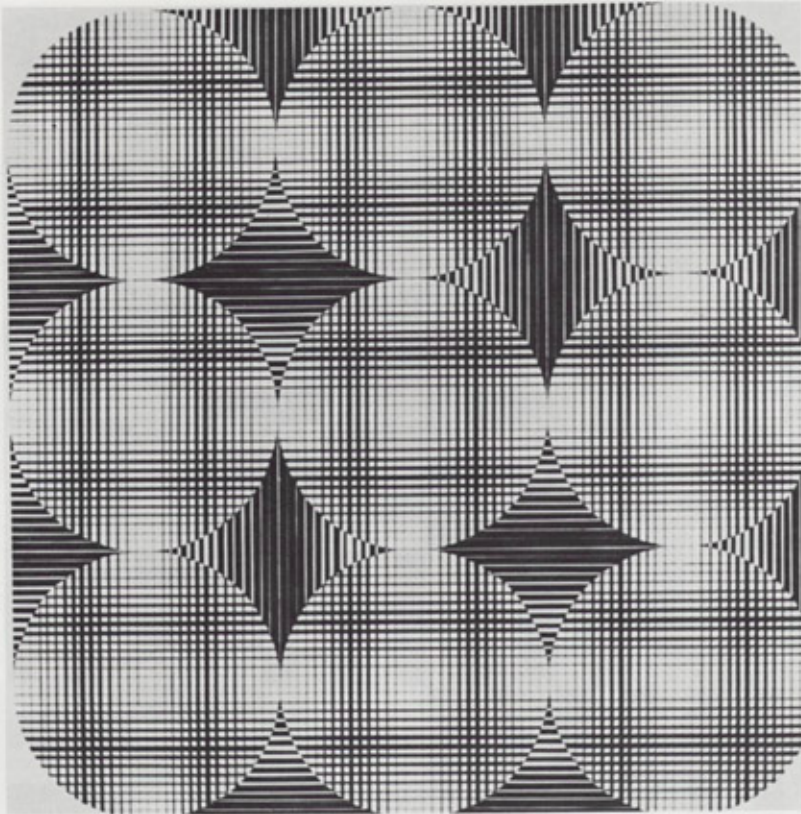
Anonima Group, U.S.A. Galeria Foksal Psp Warszawa, Pipiec, 1966

An Anonima Idea (within the group):

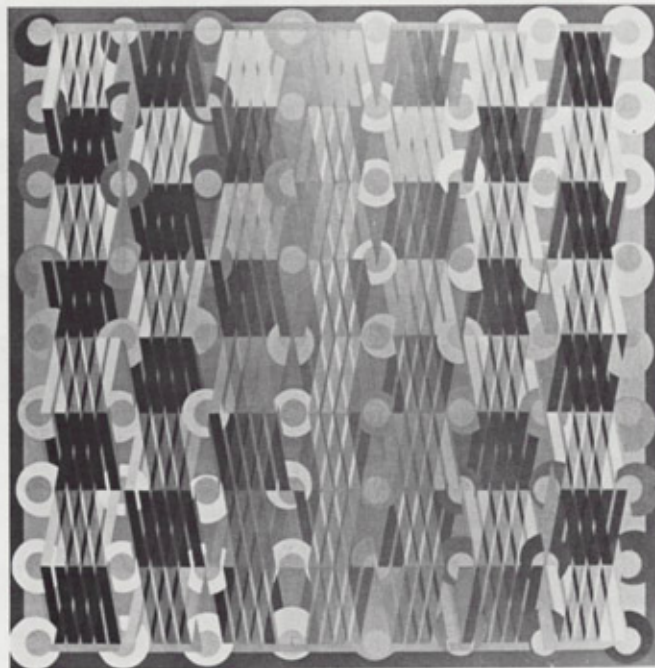
Anonima does not mean anonymity within the group. It means, on the contrary, the recognition of individual differences (temperamental as well as ideological) among its members. At the same time it provides a basis for a program of group cooperation, and a way of exploiting these individual differences for larger purposes, without denying their force. Any program (or plan for work shared by the group) which hopes to be fruitful must be flexible enough to accommodate each member's contributions, while maintaining the original, agreed upon limitations. These limitations, which outline the scope of any program undertaken, are not just arbitrarily arrived at, but are suggested by commonly shared experiences within the group, and are the result of information given by the success or failure of previous work carried out within and outside the group.



Benkert, Half Inch Grid or Quarter Inch Grid, 1962



Benkert, Warsaw #4, 1965



Mieczkowski, Hommage to Charmion Von Weigand, 1965

1964

JANUARY Hewitt, *Mieczkowski Drawings*, Group Gallery, 10021 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

APRIL *Anonima* (Vol. 1, No. 2) *Anonima* Group publication. Contributions by Benkert, Hewitt, Mieczkowski, Reid, Weinberg. New York.

Paintings and Drawings and a Motorized Construction by K. Hewitt. *Anonima* Group show, *Anonima* Gallery (23 W. 56th St., New York). Panel Discussion, "Geometry and Art," moderated by Charles Parkhurst. Panel Members: Hewitt, Mieczkowski, Benkert, Don Judd, Anthony Hill.

OCTOBER "Op Art: Pictures That Attack The Eye," *Time*, V. 84, N. 17 (October 23, 1964), pp. 42-48.

DECEMBER *Anonima* Group included in *Mouvement II* show, Denise Rene Gallery, Paris.

1965

JANUARY Sidney Tillim, "Optical Art: Pending or Ending?" *Arts Magazine*, V. 39, N. 4. (January 1965) pp. 16-23.

Anonima Group included in *Vibrations Eleven*, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York.

FEBRUARY *Anonima* Group included in *The Responsive Eye*, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

APRIL *Anonima* Group included in $1 + 1 = 3$, University Art Museum, University of Texas, Austin, Texas.

MAY *Anonima* Group included in *Optics, Illusion and Art*, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

Anonima Group included in *Nebraska Art Association Annual*.

AUGUST *Anonima* Group included in *New Tendency 3*, Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

SEPTEMBER Group works at E.A. Benkert studio, Mill Springs, North Carolina.

1966

JANUARY *Black, White and Gray Paintings 24" Square*, *Anonima* Group show at painting loft and Group Gallery, 40 W. 28th St., New York.

FEBRUARY *Anonima* Group, Institute of Contemporary Arts Gallery, London England.

JULY-AUGUST *Anonima* Group included in *New Tendency 4*, Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

AUGUST *Anonima* Group USA, Galeria Foksal, Warsaw, Poland.

Anonima's "program of agreed upon limitations" is based upon the study of the psychology of visual perception and its application to stable two-dimensional schemes. The group, working as a team, is investigating one aspect at a time of visual experience. Using a four-year plan as an outline (control), its goal is a series, not necessarily limited, of two-dimensional examples embodying this study. The plan will focus on certain definite features of visual structures: the obvious two-dimensional monocular cues of an implied three-dimensional experience, listed (and to be examined) in order of their psychologically tested validity and reliability. These cues are: 1) overlap (or interference phenomena), 2) relative size changes, 3) brightness ratio (or relative contrast phenomena), and 4) light and shade. The four-year plan will make possible a sustained pursuit of goals by individual artists working as a group. It will free the artists from the structure given by the Art World and replace it with a structure put together by the artists themselves. The relevance or irrelevance of the work done will be determined by its contribution to the growth and elaboration of the investigation, and not by any other criteria. The plan demands the long-range commitment of the artists to their individual ideas as they relate to the plan, and demands that each be responsible for the way it develops.

ANONIMA GROUP STATEMENT

Anonima Group, U.S.A. Galeria Foksal PSP Warszawa, Pipiec, 1966

An Anonima Idea (within the world):

Anonima means anonymity for its members in regard to the world. Anonymity is not necessarily a virtue in itself, an ideal state to be achieved. It is the basis of any group which values the results of collaboration more than the individual distinction of the collaborators.

Anonima has as a purpose within the world, the frustration of any attempts to misdirect, misrepresent, or misinterpret its activities. Anonima thus means no to Commercial Galleries, Biennales, Competitions, Prizes, Commissions, Mass Media Publicity, Critics and Architects. At stake is the freedom to make the work, to exhibit the work, in whatever form and whenever it seems necessary, or simply to withhold it, following the rhythm of the artist and the development of his work, rather than the market or any of its more subtle extensions.

The members of Anonima have agreed to exhibit only as a group. In order to do this, and to carry out their group projects, they have established a gallery and workshop in New York. Although it is primarily for its own use, Anonima offers the Gallery as a potential exhibition space for other groups, or for work done in cooperation with other groups. The confrontation of artists, the comparison of results of individual or group projects, and the free discussion of ideas relating to such work is not possible in the present gallery-museum exhibition system. Anonima publishes its own magazine. This provides a means for the members of the group to present their ideas, make their proposals, and explain their projects. It also offers space to other artists who want to discuss things publicly, as artists. The magazine is not necessarily limited to a single viewpoint, nor does it have any publicity value, or carry any advertising.

Anonima has begun its own four-year plan. This program would move further and more quickly if other groups, or individuals who might have ideas in common with Anonima would participate in it, even in part. Such research on an agreed upon problem would provide a concentration of many resources in ideas, materials and techniques that are obviously not available to the Anonima Group. Even more important, an exploration of a limited area of visual experience carried out by a variety of

widely scattered groups (and individuals) would put the ideas to a more critical and thorough examination than would otherwise be possible. **GROUP STATEMENT**

Perceptual Inquiry 1: Overlap (1967)

Beginning in 1959, visual perception seemed to be an area of study that offered a body of theory and experiments that helped to clarify and unify the formal visual problems of painting . . .

The justification for discussing a painting in terms of the psychology of perception rather than in art jargon, is an effort to shift the emphasis from a traditional critical concern with "Style" to a critical examination of form and the consequent visual experience, its limits, and its possibilities in painting . . .

Very basically, there are six kinds of perceptual tasks that are used in psychophysics and these could easily be said to be the methods of a section of the work of Anonima.

1. the relatively simple detection of a change
2. the detection of the change of a specific attribute
3. the detection of a change with attribute and direction specified
4. the detection of a change with amount specified
5. similarity judgments
6. recognition thresholds and identification thresholds.

One could argue that all of the promotion and discussion of the operation of the elementary perceptual tasks, however relevant to psychological testing, is irrelevant to painting. In painting, nothing is being tested or proven or verified. The possible visual situations are only demonstrated. This fact offers only a vacant hope for those that would want to change the spirit, the perceptions, the ideas, the behavior or the testaments of a society or culture. Currently, both psychologists and artists seem to be preoccupied with the mission of *reductionism*. It is generally an effort to reduce the level of explication and explanation to lower perceptual and conceptual considerations. This level varies according to the demand of the factual, critical or theoretical context. Simple, obvious schemes and materials have provided release for much interesting recent work in both art and psychology. To summarize: these simple perceptual tasks and the organization of the nature of this inquiry in painting around these tasks seems to have been a productive method of planning schemes and examining results.

PERCEPTION AND PAINTING Hewitt

The aesthetic philosophy of impressionism marks the beginning of a process of complete inbreeding in art. Artists produce their works for artists, and art, that is the formal experience of the world *sub specie artis*, becomes the real subject of art. **Arnold Hauser**

QUOTATIONS FOR 1967 Benkert

There is so much random exposure to visual information in the environment that the influence of structured difficult visual experience, i.e., good painting, is often important only to specialists. It seems that artists make object-schemes for other specialists and are usually most pleased when these specialists respond favorably . . .

The artist's role is not to change or influence the perception of the general culture through any media or technique, or else he is educating or selling. He can not remain an antagonist and be used by the media, because it is the function of media to disperse, to spread, to dispel the power of the artist and others to antagonize and provoke society and culture. We all fear reproduction on a massive scale, but what else is *Time*, *Life*, *Art News*, *Arts*, or *Art Forum* or *Art International*?

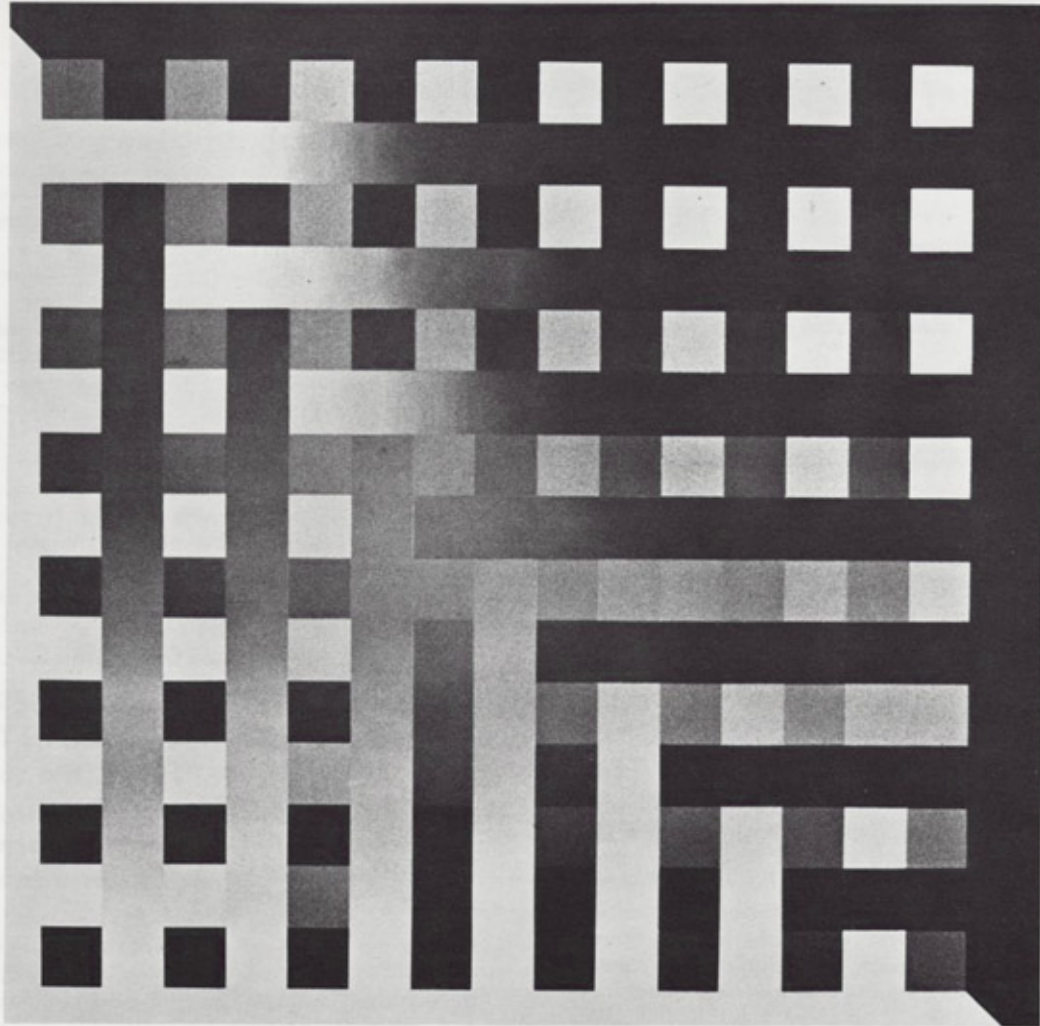
SOME CONSIDERATIONS OF A CURRENT PROBLEM Hewitt

1967

NOVEMBER Anonima Gallery Show: G. Nichols, G. Herdman, R. Postma.

APRIL *Perceptual Inquiry I, Overlap*. Anonima publication and Group show, at Anonima Gallery, 40 W. 28th St., New York.

NOVEMBER *Anonima Group*. Exhibition at Wooster School, Carmel, New York.



Hewitt, *Overlap Series #7*, 1966

1968

MARCH Anonima Group included in *The Square in Painting* (organized by Anuskiewicz for American Federation of Art).

Anonima Group included in *Plus by Minus: Today's Half Century*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.

APRIL *Perceptual Inquiry II: Relative Size Change*. Anonima Group. Exhibition, Anonima Gallery, 40 W. 28th St., New York. Benkert, Hewitt, Mieczkowski and motorized construction by K. Hewitt.

MAY Art Research Center Group Exhibition at Anonima Gallery, 40 W. 28th St., New York (Thogmartin, T. Stephens, Van Voorst, Chase, Abblick, N. Stephens).

This exhibition is the first in a series that will present the results of the Anonima Group's inquiry into basic visual cues which underlie the perception of depth on a two dimensional surface. It was the Group's decision to investigate these cues in order of their tested relative strengths as indicators of spatial position in the visual field. The *overlap condition* is the first in order of importance and this year's inquiry began there. The next problem will be the study of *relative size change*.

GROUP STATEMENT

Minority Report #1 (statement read to H. Wise, March, 1968 at H.W. Gallery) Published in Documents I (Art Workers Coalition) 1969. p. 45

We as artists support only in part the action and demands being made today against the Museum of Modern Art. Furthermore, we recognize that the Museum of Modern Art and the galleries are inseparable. Today museums serve as galleries and galleries serve as museums. They both represent the same interests.

We question artists from galleries protesting a museum that in matters of contemporary art is guided by these same galleries.

Artists from galleries who take action against a museum should be willing to join unaffiliated artists and in turn take action against the galleries.

Because three of the leaders of today's protest at the Museum of Modern Art are associated with the Howard Wise Gallery, we think it, the Howard Wise Gallery, an appropriate place for a protest simultaneous to the demonstration going on at the Museum of Modern Art.

A Protest such as this, against a small (but representative) part of a society corrupted by the war in Vietnam, may seem irrelevant, but the devil dwells in small details.

Anonima and Herdman

Perceptual Inquiry II (April 1968) Statement

The Group is continuing the program it began last year. This year's exhibition, the second in a series, is concerned with the problem of relative size-change, one of the primary cues of two dimensional spacial organization. Three aspects of the size change problem have been dealt with in the work: arithmetic size change, projective size change, and apparent size change. The brightness ratio cue will be the limit for next year's work.

MINORITY REPORT #2 (May 1968) (published in Documents I Art Workers Coalition. p. 23 - 1969

We are here in support of today's protest. However, we once again object to the singling out of the M.O.M.A. as the only target for today's protest. We reassert that the galleries are also responsible for a number of problems that the artists have with today's society.

On Friday evening of March 21st, a group of artists met to discuss the initial small action planned for the next day at the M.O.M.A. At that time doubts and misgivings were expressed about the specific differences of opinion we had with the thirteen points and the undemocratic procedures of previous meetings. We felt artists were being asked in to amass strength for the support of policies that were decided upon by only a small number of artists. We therefore felt it necessary to draw up our 1st minority report and take action.

We read the minority position report to the group assembling on Saturday, March 22nd for the small demonstration made that day at the M.O.M.A. In order to emphasize our view that the

museums and galleries are mutually dependent, we decided on a simultaneous parallel protest at the Howard Wise Gallery. We read our five points to Mr. Wise in his office, discussed the issues, leafleted the premises and left.

Although we continue to support the artists' protest against the M.O.M.A., we will also continue to object to both the existence of commercial galleries and their connection with Museums.

Benkert, Herdman, Hewitt, Mieczkowski

Art Research Center 5th Publication 1968

Technology advances.

Art Changes: it never advances . . .

Proposals reveal less than objects or situations made to exemplify them.

Using geometry is not the only way to think clearly.

Groups are a way out of the Art World, not into it.

The Art World reveals the artist at his worst, the artist as businessman trying to be irresponsible in the marketplace. Bad business.

Artists haven't changed society, can't and never will. Art only influences taste.

There is a big difference between a revolutionary aesthetic and the social reality. Politics brings aesthetics to its knees.

An excerpt of a paragraph from an epilogue:

"'Anonima does not mean anonymity within the group itself. It means, on the contrary, the recognition of individual differences (temperamental as well as ideological) among its members.' And in this the group reflects a spirit of pluralism and individualism in harmony with the pluralism and individualism that, in theory at least, have been so characteristic of the American tradition."

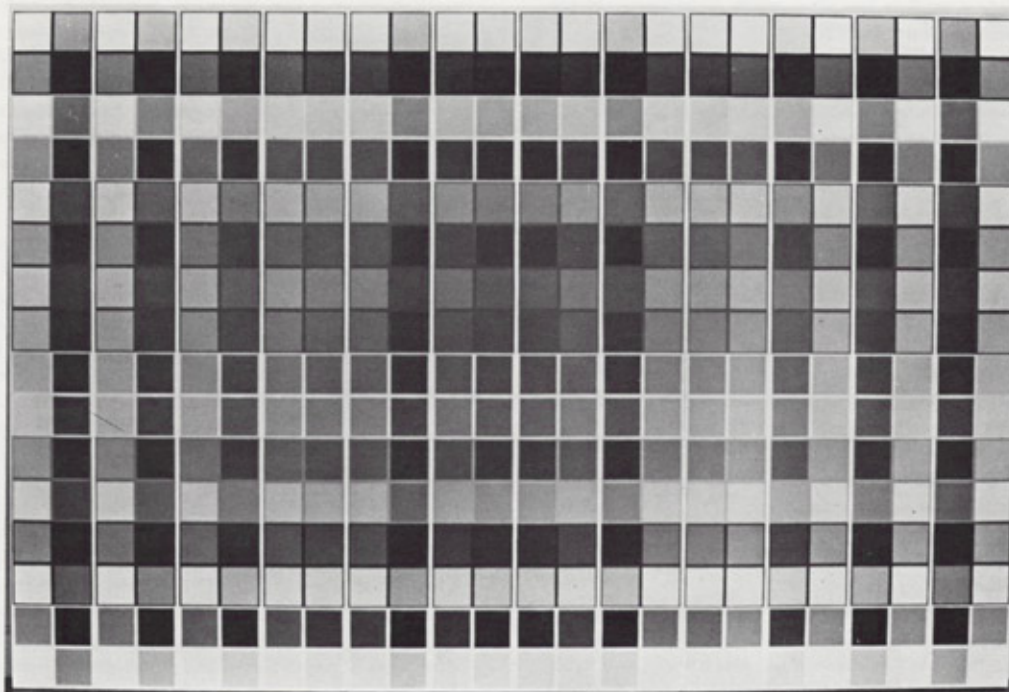
Quoted from *Socialism and American Art*, pp. 146-47, Donald D. Egbert, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1967.

Anonima Group Statements for May 1968

AN ANSWER TO A YOUNGER PAINTER'S REMARKS OF MAY 1966 IN THE MAY OF 1968, (the subject of this reply is American Painting and a very provocative paper written by Gerald Herdman in 1966.)

One wonders about giving Stella any credit for the reassessment of the surface. Who is truly central to that issue? An American in 1960? Perhaps you have to go back to Mondrian, to Malevich, to Picasso, to Cezanne, even, I would suggest, to Manet and Delacroix. These are the central figures through which Seitz and Fried and others distilled it for Stella, as an issue . . .

Anonima's special emphasis on the use of distal cues comes at a curious time when other artists are talking about the removal of "illusion" from their work. They would of course equate any spatial implication as an illusion, a term that is loaded in favor of the connotation of a misperception, a false and incongruent reading of the situation. Already ethically, if not morally, to be avoided. But these implications exist in any visual field and to use the word "illusion" is to continue to create false fences between the physical object, the physiological receiving apparatus and the physiological phenomena. An impossible task, perhaps even for the most rigorous physicist, physiologist or psychologist. Frank Stella did not reassess the surface of Abstract Expressionist painting, he simply tried to provide a counter aesthetic alternative. When they were pushing and pulling, he coasted. When they dripped, or slashed or splattered, he cleaned house. When they made variation the key, he opened up with repetition. Perhaps it was Manet, or later Cezanne, that really reassessed the surface for the 20th century, for they really were clear about laying the paint on the surface . . .



Mieczkowski, *Brightness Ratio Series*, 1967-68

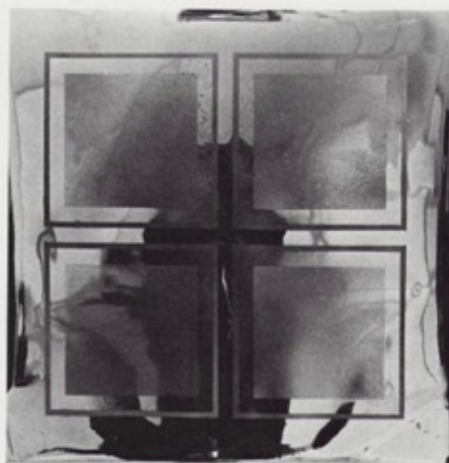
1969

Henry P. Raleigh, "Anonima Group," *Leonardo*. V. 2 (1969), pp. 423-443.

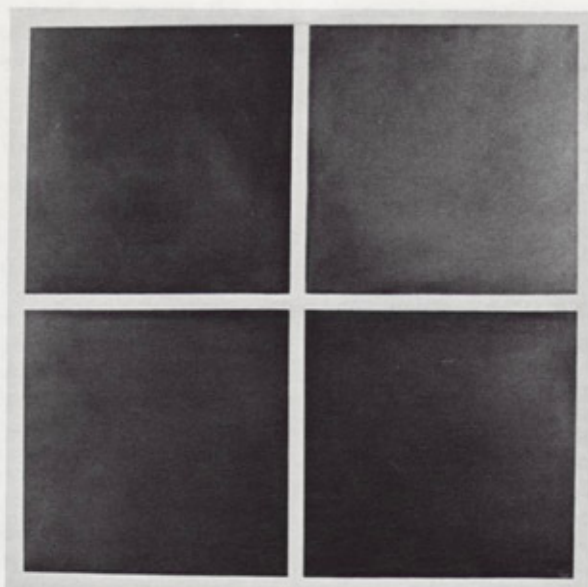
FEBRUARY Anonima Gallery Show: R. Amend, G. Williams, J. Cooper
 MARCH *Minority Report #1*, Anonima Group statement with G. Herdman,
 read to Howard Wise at Howard Wise Gallery.

APRIL *Anonima Group Exhibit: Brightness-Ration*. Anonima Gallery, 40 W.
 28th St., New York.

MAY *Minority Report #2*, Anonima Group statement with G. Herdman, in
Documenta I (Art Workers Coalition) Museum of Modern Protest.



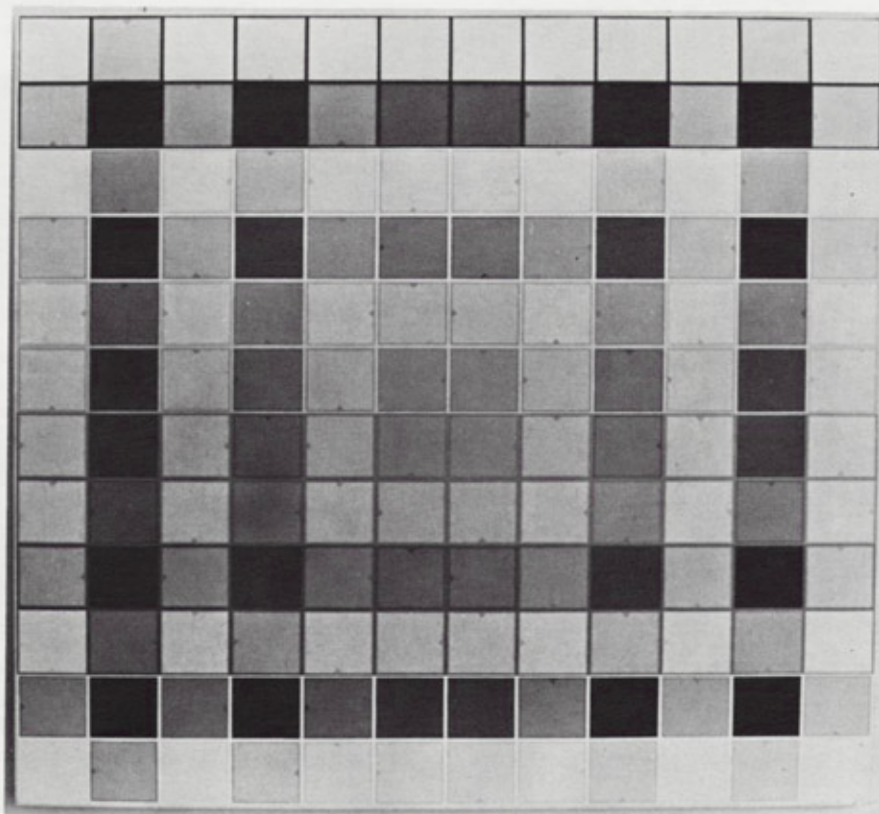
Hewitt, *Light and Shade Series on Mylar*, 1970



Hewitt, 100 Acres, 1971

1970

APRIL *Anonima Group Exhibit: Overlap, Size-Change, Brightness-Ratio*
New York (with G. Herdman). SUNY at New Paltz, New York.



Mieczkowski, Enigma Variohous #1, 1971

The contemporary way has become more and more an art made from the inside and art from the experts. If the other generations learned from each other (certainly they were more well acquainted than we are) they learned through and by themselves in the diffuse culture, if not, they at least inherited it from their mother's side. I have always wondered about the idea of painting as expertise, painting that has inside or privileged information . . .

It has to be quite clear that the roots and models of the "new" American painting are in the Europeans — Masson, Breton, Matta, Duchamp, Man Ray, Albers, Moholy, and Mondrian — who finally are also the roots of the most incisive art that has existed in our culture. It is incisive because it has cut through the belligerence of the patronage . . .

To stress minimal spatial complexity is to ask a purely European question, the question from Kant, to Gestalt psychology to Albers. Is less more? That is, is the notion of summing up through categories really sweeping the bits into one bag? Or is it not possible to build complexities into a work by planning relationships, in fact, to a degree anticipating them? The new warfare need not be the necessary preparatory strategical parallel to the present conflict in culture, yet it should not be disregarded as a possible alternative . . .

To open the space was not to empty it as many of the critics and painters have said. It was simply a reduction, as assertion of fundamental or "simple" relationships. More than one critic has used the notion of rejective rather than reductive to stress the clear positive act of concentration, instead of the simple act of reducing.

Hewitt (unpublished)

Current Statements (1971)

I am interested in the psychology of perception, especially in fields of limited visual information. Although the Anonima Group never exhibited the final annual project with the focus on light and shade, I completed several series based on this spacial cue and have included them in this exhibition. A few years ago, when the group talked about a program subsequent to the four year undertaking of 1966, it seemed then that a systematic study of color would be the next obvious project. As far back as 1943, the Committee on Colorimetry of the Optical Society of America had classified the various modes of appearance of colors and their attributes. I believed that a systematic study of these modes on two dimensional surfaces would be an absorbing and worthwhile group study. I am still interested in the possibilities of this program.

The group had its most productive, formulating and work sessions during the early summers in East Hampton and North Carolina. These were intense sessions, always in a magnificent natural environment. Looking back on these times, I think the beauty and the expansiveness of these places contributed to my focus and energy. Five summers ago, I felt it necessary to have a place in Vermont. These subsequent summers and my relocation here have given me opportunities to question the many assumptions of urban and rural culture. Being in Vermont invited an obvious chance for a change in the work and a chance to inspect cultures. It is a geographic, not an aesthetic distance in either case.

I recently asked myself, why is gardening more interesting than cultivating galleries; why is it that noticing changes in climate and season seem more absorbing than reading the ads, notices and reviews of current trends and exhibitions; why do I find talk about the natural environment, about tools and about comfortable shelter in a less sophisticated technological world more to the point than talk about the art world and especially art school politics? One answer would be to accuse myself of being a Thoreau romantic deep in the fantasies of 19th century New England, but I fondly remember beery and starry summer

night in Springs two years ago when I shouted to the Long Island marsh that Nature IS dead. Of course, what I was saying was that the working procedures and ideologies of the best of the American painters after 1950 had nothing to do with the study or the promotion of the American landscape. Indeed, Nature as an important reference and source for ideas and images in paint was a dead issue for the artists. But the soft, natural, sell of exhibitions backed by professional art teachers would have one believe there was more to the Whitney show, *Nature in Abstraction*, than a popular public theme show in the honored tradition. It took awhile, some more painting, and a fine book by Gombrich, to sort it out for me. The formal devices and schemes of art are inventions within the visual tradition rather than lessons in perception taught by Nature. Nature teaches us to rely on our own inventiveness; one of the underlying assumptions of our earlier study of perceptual systems, that the invention and generation of these visual displays could make Nature more "clear." It is true that phenomena pointedly presented in the formal garb of the work of art, do make more apparent parallel visual experience in nature. How many of us noticed the purple on Monet's backside? The moire patterns of textiles and science made more vivid what was happening driving by snow fences. One of the most important theoreticians of art, A. Moles, wrote a book in 1958, *Information Theory and Aesthetic Perception*, in which he bases many of his philosophical attitudes on his interpretation of psychology, the psychology of perception particularly.

"If what we know of the universe results from the sum of our perceptions and of our physical or intellectual reactions as a function of our experience, deterministic psychology becomes a normative science and must automatically involve a philosophic thesis concerning our knowledge of the world . . . our concept of the universe depends on the knowledge that we have of the process of perceiving it." (p. 4)

The process of perception that interests me now is not the pre-coding and uncoding of a two-dimensional information presentation into a three- (or four) dimensional implied space, but rather that process and tradition of mapping and diagramming other types of information: information about the land, water, population and cultural centers, etc. It has been noted that artists (painters especially) are notorious amateurs of other disciplines than their art. They have played with mythology, religion, philosophy, physics, mathematics, anatomy, history, psychology, optics, and more recently with technology, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and even politics. Not to mention their obvious flirtation with and historical failure in economics. With this perspective, it is not surprising to find artists in the forefront of enthusiasts of geography, geology, ecology, and the environment. If these are among the great issues of contemporary society, why must the artist neglect comment?

Another preoccupation of a number of artists in the 20th century and a central issue in the Anonima group, is the attempt to find the "least artful" solution to any work decision. The answer either bifurcates the work problem with wit, (how many Duchamps or Reinhardts in one century), or it tries to invent a series of "inevitable" choices based on propositions and a series of programmed rules. It is assumed that these rules are invented strictly for the purpose of the work or series at hand. This effort is in practice a failure in paradox. Today's "neutral" container and neutral color choice are tomorrow's popular package—everything is sold in it. Even so, the will to generate a scheme, a set of rules, an order and rationale for color and space that only contains but is not fancy, aesthetic fencing has dominated the imagination of progressive artists of this century. We see it in the valiant but vain attempts to achieve purity in color, space, movement, form, volume, spirit, self, gesture, process, perception and now pure concept or pure information. The difficulty is to avoid style, both the fashionable and alternative and the transactable personal habit. All art is negotiable as style, but the initial energy

and reason for the work always rejects choices or decisions based on the prevailing style. It is a difficult posture and even more difficult rule to adhere to in one's own work (style). With every attempt to "cut out," there is this season's local and even International Roundup. A very provincial but on target example:

"Colors for fall clothes join the ecology movement. Autumn fashion is colored 'earthy'; its intense, murky, close to much of nature's own. Look for spruce greens, earth browns, smudged berry blues, burnt oranges, sombre, muted reds. Most colors will stand alone, but some are combined with brilliant or neutral shades." (Thanks Margaret Goddard in *Window of Vermont*, p.15A, Vol. 2, No. 1)

After all, during the heyday of Perceptual Abstraction (OP-ART), Ad men were making Girdles to make you look thinner and coasters to make a short drink appear very tall.

Francis R. Hewitt

In answer to the question "does your current work relate in any way to the idea of Anonima origins or programs?", I would have to answer "Yes, it certainly does."

My recent painting which has focused primarily on the problem of size change, grew directly out of the 1967-68 phase of the Anonima program. That old program, or better, the sense of that program, will always be around in my work.

Anonima's attempt to create an alternative to the mindless pretensions of New York painting and to work and exhibit outside the commercial gallery system seems no less pertinent today than it did in 1960. (Or not pertinent at all: the "commercial and political confusion of the Art World" is much more blatant now than it was ten or even five years ago). It remains to be seen whether an individual, myself, working without the group can stay clear of the confusion.

If there was an "Anonima Idea" it was unique to the three members of the group. Our inability to accept this fact was the only weak point in the program.

In answer to the question "does your current work relate in any way to the idea of Anonima origins or programs?", I would have to answer "yes, I was always the guy standing on the side in the good suit."

Ernst Benkert

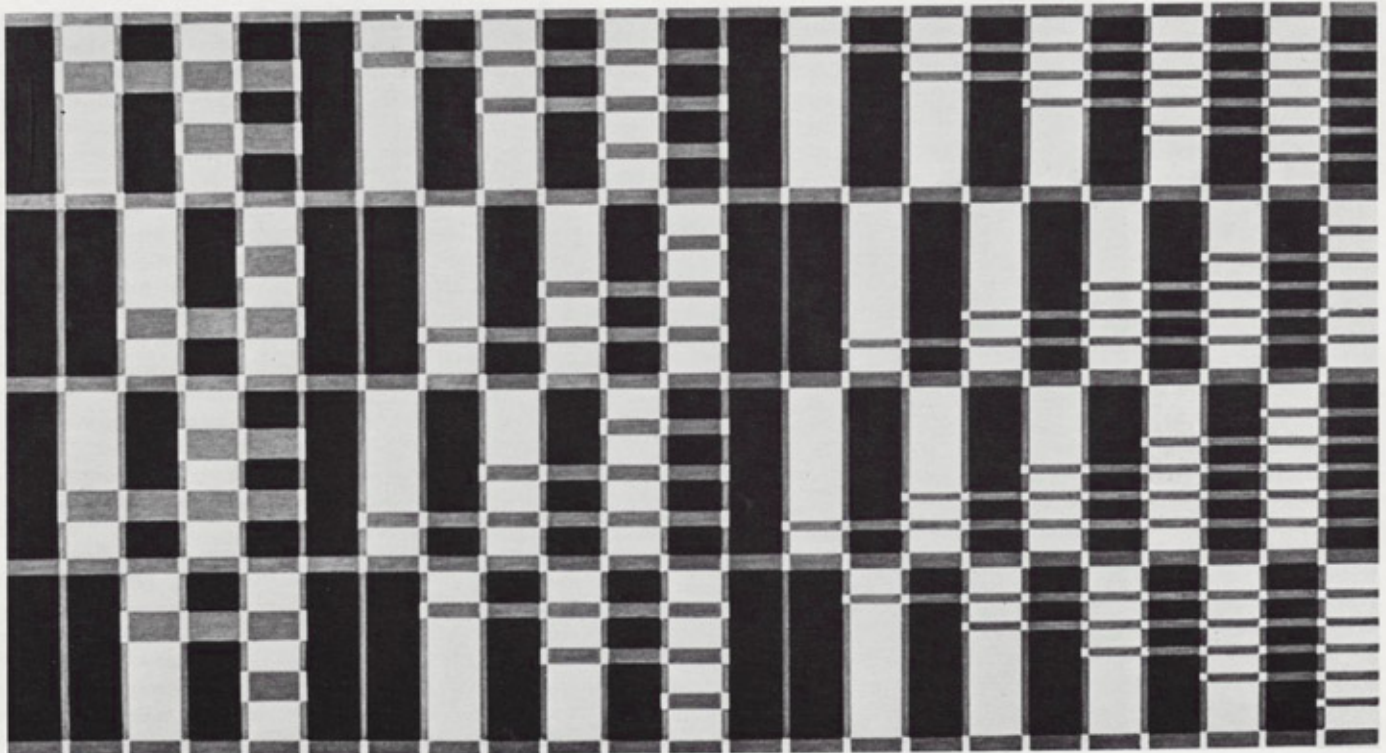
A pressing problem for young artists is the historical context in which their struggle to assert themselves takes place. It is then that the impulse to affiliate with sympathetic associates is most strong. Anonima Group grew out of such an impulse.

It was a formal answer to the problem of the need for artists to act together in the face of a negatively determined and ir-resilient situation. Anonima sought to prevail over a non-time and one of the worst places in which to try to make art: Middle America, 1960. It did that.

Initially, Anonima's painting program shared in the growing impatience with the excesses of extreme informalism that was part of the end of the fifties. Along with searching into the possibilities for painting of grids and neutral shapes, it was peculiarly obsessed with reconciling the use of certain depth cues (size, brightness-ratio, and overlap) to containment on the flat surface. That these cues did work effectively to imply depth had to be continually contradicted in order to bring the painting back into alignment with the essential flat quality of plane. In retrospect, this is what made the work interesting, particularly in the early part of the sixties.

Currently I think of the painting surface as an upright plane. I am not so prone to consider the activity of painting as flat surface work. The area between overstated painting and unassertive frontal sculpture seems most alive and is perhaps the crucial part of the change in the nature of surface art in this country.

Edwin Mieczkowski



Benkert, Woodstock Size Change, 1971

CATALOGUE

Ernst Benkert (lives in New York)

Born Chicago, 1928
Harvard B.A., 1953
Oberlin College, 1957-59
East Hampton, N.Y., 1960-61
Paris-London, 1961-62
Faculty, Pratt Inst., 1966-

1. **COMPOSITION 1960**
13" x 14" tempera on paper
Collection of the artist
2. **SPRINGS PANELS 1960**
12" x 16" tempera on paper
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Francis R. Hewitt,
East Corinth, Vermont
3. **CIRCLES 1961**
13" x 14" tempera on paper
Collection of the artist
4. **HALF INCH GRID 1962**
23" x 23" oil on canvas
Collection of the artist
5. **CIRCLES ENLARGING 1963**
18" x 24" ink on paper
Collection of the artist
6. **BARMECIDE FEAST 1964**
36" x 36" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
7. **WARSAW NO. 4 1965**
24" x 24" acrylic on masonite
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Mieczkowski, New York
8. **CIRCLE 1965**
12" x 16" ink on paper
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Francis R. Hewitt,
East Corinth, Vermont
9. **GREASY EMINENCE 1966**
12" x 12" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
10. **OVERLAP #1 1966**
14 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 23" acrylic and pencil on paper
Collection of the artist
11. **OVERLAP 1967**
36" x 36" acrylic on masonite
Collection of the artist
12. **SIZE CHANGE #1 1968**
23" x 23" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist
13. **SIZE CHANGE #2 1968**
24" x 24" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist
14. **SIZE CHANGE GRID 1968**
24" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Francis R. Hewitt,
East Corinth, Vermont
15. **LEAN SIZE CHANGE 1968**
23" x 29" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist
16. **BRIGHTNESS RATIO THREE, 1969**
48" x 48" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
17. **LIGHT AND SHADE 1970**
20" x 29" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist
18. **AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**
21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

**19. AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**

21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

**20. AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**

21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

**21. AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**

21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

**22. AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**

21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

**23. AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**

21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

**24. AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**

21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

**25. AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**

21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

**26. AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**

21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

**27. AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**

21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

**28. AMAGANSETT-WOODSTOCK
SERIES 1971**

21" x 30" acrylic on paper
Collection of the artist

Francis Hewitt (lives in Vermont)

Born Rutland, Vt., 1936
Carnegie Tech. B.F.A., 1958
Oberlin College M.A., 1960
Faculty Cleveland Institute of Art, 1960-64
Amsterdam-London, 1964-65
Visiting Lecturer Bath Academy of Art, Corsham, England, 1965
Faculty Cooper Union, N.Y., 1965-1970
Faculty, University of Vermont, 1970-

1. PROGRESSION OF PERCEPTION 1960

24" x 24" egg tempera on masonite
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Toby Kurzband, New York

2. 1 INCH GRID TESSERACT 1961

11" x 12" ink on paper
Collection of the artist

3. DOUBLE TESSERACT PLAN 1961

26" x 20" ink on paper
Collection of the artist

4. GENERATION OF THE TESSERACT 1961

17" x 15" ballpoint on paper
Collection of the artist

**5. THE LEFT HAND DOESN'T KNOW WHAT
THE RIGHT HAND IS DOING 1963**

48" x 48" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

6. TO DUMB NOT DUMB 1963

13" x 21 1/2" ink on paper
Collection of the artist

7. ILLUMINATED DISCS 1964

36" x 36" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

8. GROUP GRID 1964

36" x 36" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

9. **PIPE-UP #2 1965**
24" x 24" acrylic on masonite
Collection of the artist
10. **CHANGE PLACES-OVERLAP 1966**
24" x 24" ink on paper
Collection of the artist
11. **OVERLAP #7 1966**
48" x 48" acrylic on masonite
Collection of the artist
12. **MULLER-LYER 1968**
24" x 24" acrylic on masonite
Collection of the artist
13. **APPARENT SIZE CHANGE 1968**
24" x 24" ink on paper
Collection of the artist
14. **PHTHALOCYANINE GREEN 1969**
72" x 72" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
15. **YELLOW IN LIGHT AND SHADE 1970**
72" x 72" acrylic and oil on canvas
Collection of the artist
16. **LIGHT AND SHADE ON MYLAR 1970**
24" x 24" spray paint on mylar
Collection of the artist
17. **LIGHT AND SHADE ON MYLAR 1970**
24" x 24" spray paint on mylar
Collection of the artist
18. **LIGHT AND SHADE ON MYLAR 1970**
24" x 24" spray paint on mylar
Collection of the artist
19. **LIGHT AND SHADE ON MYLAR 1970**
24" x 24" spray paint on mylar
Collection of the artist
20. **LIGHT AND SHADE ON MYLAR 1970**
24" x 24" spray paint on mylar
Collection of the artist
21. **LIGHT AND SHADE ON MYLAR 1970**
24" x 24" spray paint on mylar
Collection of the artist
22. **LAND 1971**
29" x 29" dirt and fixative on paper
Collection of the artist
23. **ADDISON COUNTY 1971**
20" x 36" dirt and fixative on paper
Collection of the artist
24. **CORINTH 1971**
19" x 25" photolithograph with dirt
Collection of the artist
25. **EARTH CELLAR 1971**
26" x 38" earth on paper
Collection of the artist
26. **100 ACRES 1971**
72" x 72" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
27. **CORINTH TOWN 1971**
72" x 72" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
28. **ORANGE COUNTY 1971**
72" x 72" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
29. **VERMONT STATE 1971**
72" x 72" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

Edwin Mieczkowski (lives in New York)

Born Pittsburgh, Pa., 1929
Cleveland Institute of Art B.F.A., 1957
Carnegie Tech M.F.A., 1959
Lecturer Western Reserve University, 1963-66
Faculty, Cleveland Institute of Art, 1959-

1. **HARMONICA C 1960**
20" x 30" ink on paper
Collection of the artist
2. **UNTITLED DRAWING 1960**
20" x 30" ink on paper
Collection of the artist
3. **NO. 1 OF A SERIES (NO NAME) 1961**
25" x 30" ink on paper
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Francis R. Hewitt,
East Corinth, Vermont
4. **NO. 5 OF A SERIES 1961**
25" x 30" ink on paper
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Francis R. Hewitt,
East Corinth, Vermont
5. **HARD TO COME BY 1961**
36" x 36" acrylic on masonite
Collection of the artist
6. **HOMAGE TO
CHARMION VON WIEGAND 1965**
48" x 48" acrylic on masonite
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Francis R. Hewitt,
East Corinth, Vermont
7. **ISO-LOCAL 1965**
24" x 24" acrylic on masonite
Collection of the artist
8. **TOPOPATOP 1965**
24" x 24" acrylic on masonite
Collection of the artist
9. **SMALL BLOCK #2 1967**
24" x 24" acrylic on masonite
Collection of Mr. Ernst Benkert, New York
10. **SIZE SERIES 1967**
48" x 48" acrylic on masonite
Collection of the artist
11. **DRAWING FOR WALL GRADIENT 1968**
8½" x 11" acrylic on masonite
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Francis R. Hewitt,
East Corinth, Vermont
12. **WALL GRADIENT 1968**
48" x 96" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
13. **ENIGMA VARIATIONS #1 1971**
90" x 96" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
14. **ENIGMA VARIATIONS #2 1971**
90" x 96" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
15. **ENIGMA VARIATIONS #3 1971**
78" x 83" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist
16. **ONE 1971**
60" x 66" acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

