

October 27, 1960

Dear Frank,

I return your paper to you with a few picayune corrections — spelling errors circled, a few sentences crossed in-and-out, and a separate sheet with questions on a few specifics.

My big objection to the paper is that neither Russell's, or Lueberg and Blanks' theories are clearly enough presented to be of use to the average (but interested) reader. I would want more examples, among other things, or at least a more complete explanation, say, of categories of projective geometry preceding experience of space, or of the distinction between the orders of systematic geometry.

It's the old problem of knowing more than your reader, assuming too much background on his part.

The big problem again is: what is the relevance of geometry to painting? If there is something to be gained from studying it, just what part should receive attention?

Where ~~does~~ do perception & geometry

meet and mingle?

You state on page 4: "... is geometry relevant to art, yes if it deals with points that can be seen and if it formulates relations between these points with lines that can be drawn..."

Don't you mean that the linear patterns which are the result of geometric formulations may or may not ~~be~~ provide the painter with raw graphic material, pure & simple? After all, the lines which relate points will have a visual value only, once ~~after~~ the artist has made his choice; they no longer will be a map of some theoretical geometric proposition.

If this is so (it appears that way to me... I have probably misunderstood & consequently oversimplified), of what value is a theoretical understanding of Euclidean, or non-Euclidean geometry? Of what use is it once the graphic equivalents of space have been seen and "stolen"?

Perhaps <sup>some</sup> work on projective geometry and its relation to perception would clear this up. This is what you were perhaps after in a portion of your paper.

Finally — a thought — assuming the

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validity of projective geometry as a useful discipline for painters — do you mean to employ its graphic formulations to investigate perceptual distinctions, + those several distinctions (or categories) which you enumerated this summer (overlap, etc., etc.)? Will it "simply" increase the complexity of these distinctions, "play around" with them in novel ways, or lead to new categories?

Again, ~~where can we connect~~ what does projective geometry have to do with perception? Is it a geometric rationalization of perception?

Where does color "fit" in?

In my own recent work — undertaken sporadically because of frequent interruptions — I have slipped back into pos-neg relationships simply because I have never felt that I had thoroughly worked on them, much less had success with them. This is, perhaps, the lowest order in the categories.

I saw Ad Reinhardt's recent show:  
Perception by flashlight.

Once more, in a new twist, is the use of projective geometry in your case any more than a novel attempt to juggle things about (like the box-score divisions of this summer) — or is it more fundamental? (Fundamental: a principle, law, or article, which serves as the groundwork of a system; essential part).

I have the feeling sometimes that we are asking too much of painting at a theoretical level, or rather, seeking theoretical justification for its conception and existence. Heresy.

Best wishes,

Emst