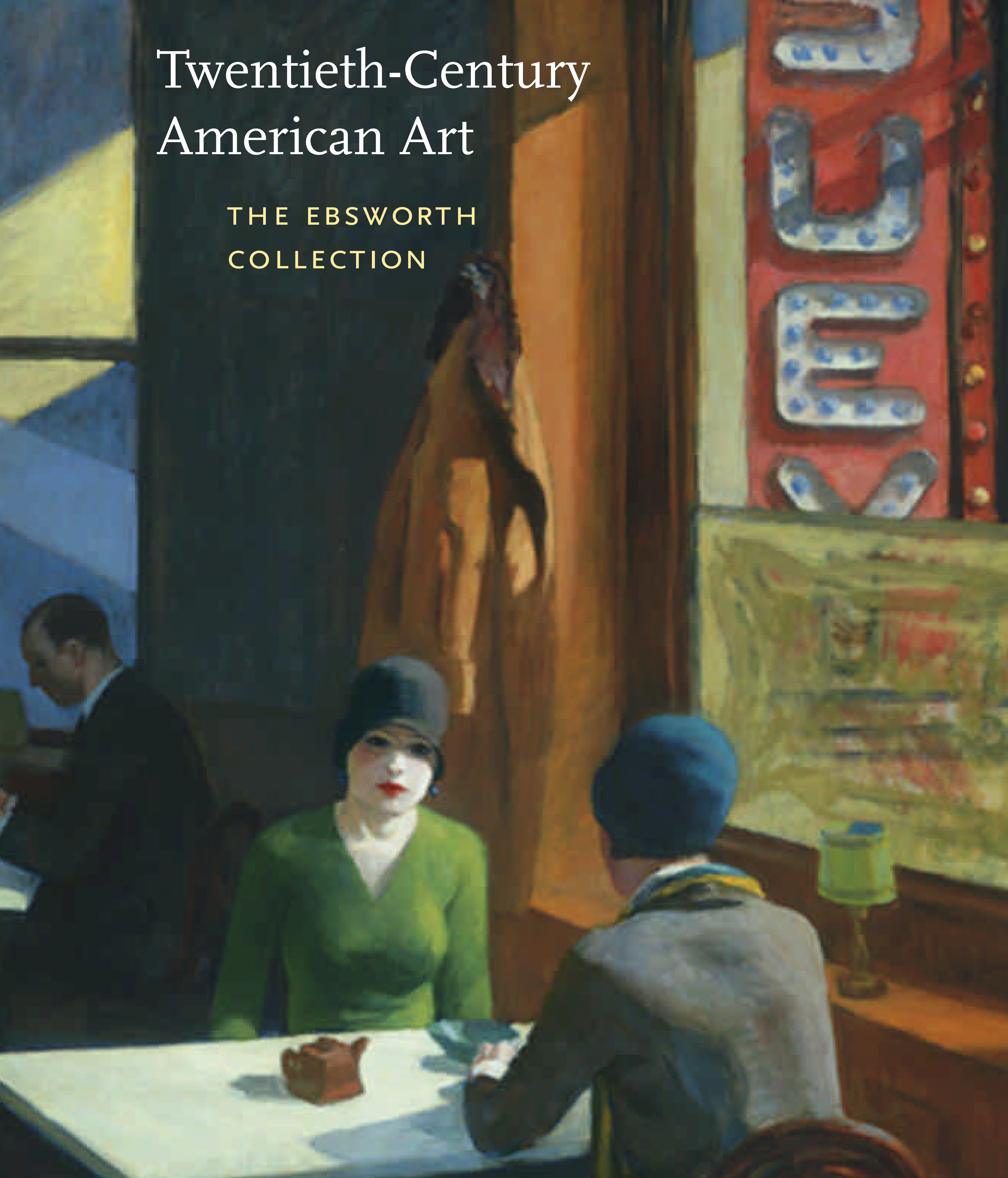

Twentieth-Century American Art

THE EBSWORTH COLLECTION

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Bruce Robertson

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY
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National Gallery of Art, Washington

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Foreword

The collection of Mr. and Mrs. Barney A. Ebsworth is internationally recognized for its superb representation of American modernist art. Primarily composed of oil paintings, it also includes a small number of exceptional works on paper and sculpture. Andrew Dasburg's spirited and colorful *Landscape,* of 1913, and David Hockney's monumental and emotionally enigmatic *Henry Geldzahler and Christopher Scott,* of 1968–1969, are among the earliest and latest paintings in the collection. Many works are well known—Edward Hopper's *Chop Suey,* Charles Sheeler's *Classic Landscape,* Willem de Kooning's *Woman as Landscape,* Georgia O'Keeffe's *Music—Pink and Blue No. 1,* and Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup with Can Opener.* Paintings by less familiar artists include George Ault's *Universal Symphony,* Byron Browne's *Classical Still Life,* Suzy Frelinghuysen's *Composition,* and Louis O. Guglielmi's *Mental Geography.* These are not only among the very best pictures of their kind, but also compelling evidence that art history sometimes overlooks many exceptional achievements. In this way the Ebsworth collection offers a rich and varied look at a dynamic era in our national art and chronicles it with admirable thoroughness.

The Ebsworths have always been steadfast friends of the Gallery, which has benefited especially from their keen interest in our twentieth-century American paintings. Barney has been a member of our Trustees' Council and co-chair of the Collectors Committee since 1996. In 1997 they gave the Gallery its first work by Pat Steir, *Or,* and in 1998 funded the purchase of a second painting by the artist, the lyrically beautiful *Curtain Waterfall.* In 1998 they made a partial and promised gift of Georgia O'Keeffe's *Black White and Blue,* one of the finest works from a remarkably rich period in her career.

Franklin Kelly, curator of American and British paintings at the National Gallery, was responsible for the selection and planning of this exhibition, which will also be seen at the Seattle Art Museum through the efforts of our colleagues, Mimi Gardner Gates, director, and Trevor Fairbrother, deputy director. That we at the National Gallery have had the pleasure of organizing this exhibition and of sharing this collection with our visitors in Washington and Seattle is thanks entirely to Barney and Pam Ebsworth. We are grateful to them for their kindness and their generosity.

Earl A. Powell III
DIRECTOR

EDWARD HOPPER
1882–1967

30 *Chop Suey*, 1929

oil on canvas
32 × 38 (81.3 × 96.5)

During the first half of the nineteenth century, paintings of rural genre scenes were the most common and familiar images of American everyday life, but following the Civil War their popularity was eclipsed by depictions of urban environments. New York City, unrivaled as the center of the American art world and unequaled in its diversity of potential subjects, became, by far, the most often painted urban scene. Artists such as William Merritt Chase portrayed the pleasures of leisurely pursuits in its parks, and Childe Hassam found pageantries of color and light in the spectacles offered by its teeming streets. It would not be until the first decade of the twentieth century that painters like Robert Henri and his followers turned their attention to the grittier and less genteel sides of American city life. Henri, John Sloan, George Luks, and others were dubbed "ashcan" painters and derided for the coarseness and vulgarity of their subjects, which were deemed wholly unsuitable for fine art. Henri also served as a key formative influence on two younger painters who studied with him at the New York School of Art, George Bellows and Edward Hopper. Both would make New York one of their principal subjects. Bellows' depictions of urban scenes, in works such as *Blue Morning* (1909, National Gallery of Art) and *Men of the Docks* (1912, Maier Museum of Art, Randolph-Macon College), matched his richly animated brushwork to the energies of his subjects. Although he was exactly the same age as Bellows, Hopper did not fully embrace the subject of the city until the 1920s. But once he did, he went on to become perhaps its greatest and most sensitive portrayer.

Chop Suey depicts an interior corner of a sparsely furnished Chinese restaurant. By 1929 such restaurants were common enough in New York to be the subject of caricature (see fig. 1). The bottom half of a neon sign visible outside a window at the right not only identifies this as a "Chop Suey House," but also locates it as a second-floor walk-up rather than a more expensive street-level establishment. Hopper and his wife Josephine ate regularly at just such a restaurant on Columbus Circle.[1]

FIG. 1. Miguel Covarrubias, *Chinoiserie*, published in "An Inclusive Tour of New York's Restaurants," *Vanity Fair* 32, 5 (July 1929), 53, Prints and Photographs Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

30 *Chop Suey*

FIG. 2. John Sloan, *Chinese Restaurant*, 1909, oil on canvas, Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Marion Stratton Gould Fund, 51.12

Although chop suey houses served a variety of Chinese dishes, their specialty was their namesake concoction, an American creation that combined a miscellany of stir-fried vegetables and meat served over steamed rice.[2]

This was not Hopper's first depiction of a New York eatery. Around 1922 he painted a comparatively bustling scene in *New York Restaurant* (Muskegon Museum of Art) and, in 1927, an image of a single woman seated at a table in *Automat* (Des Moines Art Center), where the quieter, more pensive mood is akin to that of *Chop Suey*.[3] Moreover, Hopper knew John Sloan's *Chinese Restaurant* (fig. 2) and presumably admired it as well, for it was illustrated in an article he wrote about the painter in 1927.[4] *Chop Suey* also belongs to a group of Hopper's paintings from the 1920s that focuses on architectural corners and that prominently features windows. Sometimes, as in *Apartment Houses* (1923, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts) and *Night Windows* (1928, Museum of Modern Art), the view is from the outside, with glimpses of figures who are unaware they are being observed. In other works, including *Eleven A.M.* (1926, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden), *Automat*, and *Chop Suey*, our vantage point is in the same space that the figures occupy in the paintings, but a sense of observing without being observed remains.

There has been much speculation about the meanings, both explicit and implicit, of Hopper's works, and his paintings both encourage such speculation and at the same time discourage it. Those that include figures, even solitary ones, at first may seem to offer the possibility of a narrative, or a story the viewer might be able to imagine unfolding, but they remain poised on the edge of that possibility, revealing nothing. His solitary buildings and deserted streets seem pregnant with possibilities, but remain fixed in a kind of timeless limbo, awaiting the arrival of people who might do something, but who will never come. Hopper himself was notoriously reticent about his own life and his art which, as he well knew, only served to encourage speculation about both.[5] Nevertheless, certain distinct elements recur in Hopper's urban images with sufficient frequency as to suggest that they carry consistent meaning. The spaces he depicts, whether interiors or exteriors, make reference to their opposites by the inclusion of windows. His figures, even when in the company of others, tend to be isolated, rarely touching and rarely looking at each other or at the viewer. His buildings and other structures are largely generic and anonymous, sometimes suggestive of the old, sometimes of the new, but never of the specific. He set his scenes during only a few favorite times of day, usually in the strong light of morning or afternoon, the fading hues of dusk, or the darkness of night. The sun may shine or cast shadows, but is never actually seen in skies, and there are no extremes of weather —no rain, no snow, no storms. Dirt, trash, and the other detritus of civilization are absent.

What Hopper gives us in classic works such as *Chop Suey*, then, are not portraits of the specifics of actual life in a city like New York, but rather expressions of the essential facts of urban existence as representative of the modern condition. The people in his paintings are defined not by what they do, nor by narratives they enact, but rather by the settings they inhabit. They are either inside buildings or outside them—the only choices they are offered by the city that surrounds them—but are separated from the other space by only thin panes of glass. Hopper's city is a vast warren of spaces enclosed and defined by buildings. People may have escaped the crowded streets into the quiet corner of a restaurant or bar—the kind of space Hopper called "a brooding and silent interior in this vast city of ours"—but the respite can only be temporary.[6] Hopper's imagery, as Linda Nochlin has observed, is an imagery of alienation, alienation from a shared historic past, from shared community, and from self.[7] It is an alienation of the individual who may be surrounded by crowds of other individuals, but who remains alone. And it is the great power of Hopper's works that when confronted by them, we cannot remain detached and unaffected by the emotional effects of such alienation. As Brian O'Doherty has noted: "The slow

and relentless way in which Mr. Hopper's pictures invade one's inmost thoughts, where they become facsimiles, as it were, of our private everyday myths, is in itself, an uncanny osmosis."[8] Hopper's refusal to set up specific narratives within his paintings was a conscious strategy, a leaving open of psychological space into which the viewer, whether knowingly or not, is inexorably drawn to the point of self-identification. His paintings are compelling not because they tell the stories of other lives with the ironic detachment that has so often served chroniclers of modern life, but because they resonate with shared and mutually understood experience. Long after many other images of the period have lost their currency and receded into the historic or the quaint, Hopper's city scenes continue to impress with the power of their relevance.

Hopper was famously unhelpful to those who wished to study him and his art, and he wholly discounted having ever been influenced by anything or anyone. The role he chose was that of the artist as stony Yankee pragmatist, the proverbial man for whom deeds (i.e., paintings) spoke louder than words. And as his reputation as America's premier realist grew in the 1940s and 1950s, he came to represent the antithesis of that other indelible type of twentieth-century American artist, the action painter, personified, of course, by Jackson Pollock. In this guise, the assumption was that Hopper could not possibly have tolerated abstract painting, much less admit that principles of abstract design played a role in his own art. But paintings like *Chop Suey*, with its stark geometries, simplified forms, and strong colors, belie that view, achieving a potent beauty that exists independently of the things they describe. The art historian Lloyd Goodrich once told Hopper that he had convincingly compared one of his paintings to one by Mondrian, to which the artist replied, "You kill me."[9] Just what Hopper's verbal response meant may be open to interpretation, but pictorial evidence, like the striking pattern of lights and darks visible through the rear window in *Chop Suey*, leaves little doubt that he well understood the possibilities of pure color and form. FK

NOTES

1. Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* (New York, 1995), 173, 221.
2. The name was derived from the Cantonese words *shap* (miscellaneous) and *sui* (bits).
3. Gail Levin has also noted that restaurant subjects appear in a number of Hopper's earlier magazine illustrations; see *Edward Hopper as Illustrator* (New York and London, 1979), 44, 50.
4. Edward Hopper, "John Sloan and the Philadelphians," *The Arts* 11 (April 1927), 169–178; Sloan's painting is illustrated on 175.
5. See Levin 1979, xi–xvii.
6. Hopper 1927, 174, describing the scene in a print by Sloan entitled *McSorley's Back Room*.
7. Linda Nochlin, "Edward Hopper and the Imagery of Alienation," *Art Journal* 41 (1981), 136–141.
8. Brian O'Doherty, "Portrait: Edward Hopper," *Art in America* 7 (1968), 76.
9. Quoted in James R. Mellow, "The World of Edward Hopper," *New York Times Magazine*, 5 September 1971, 18.

GASTON LACHAISE
1882–1935

37 *Two Floating Nude Acrobats*, 1922

parcel-gilt bronze
7¾ × 11¾ × 4 (19.7 × 29.9 × 10.2)

38 *Back of a Walking Woman*, c. 1922

bronze
16½ × 7 × 3 (41.9 × 17.8 × 7.6)

39 *Mask*, 1924

bronze washed with nickel and brass
6 × 5 × 4 (15.2 × 12.7 × 10.2)

40 *Mask*, 1928

bronze
8¼ × 5½ × 3½ (21 × 14 × 8.9)

Gaston Lachaise was the son of a cabinetmaker and began carving at a young age under his father's instruction. His early career was a successful one: pursuing a formal artistic education at the Académie Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he was born and raised, he exhibited at the official Salon des Artistes Françaises throughout his student years. Sometime between 1902 and 1904, his life and art took a dramatic turn. During this period, Lachaise became infatuated with Isabel Dutaud Nagle, an American who was visiting Paris from Boston with her husband and child. A large portion of his subsequent career would be obsessively devoted to immortalizing this woman in stone and bronze. In 1906, the artist followed Nagle to Boston, where he worked for the sculptor Henry Hudson Kitson. He moved to New York with Kitson in 1912, later joining the studio of Paul Manship. Enjoying a certain amount of increased prosperity, Lachaise became a U.S. citizen in 1916 and married Isabel Nagle, who had divorced her husband, the following year.

Lachaise's oeuvre can be divided into categories according to subject matter, including female nudes, which predominate by far; portraits; and commissioned decorative pieces, which Lachaise placed in a class well below his other work. In sculpture and drawings devoted to the female nude, Lachaise invented his own canon of proportions: sinuously ample bodies with swollen breasts, buttocks, hips, and belly; tapering limbs; and diminutive head, hands, and feet. Characterized by streamlined forms, polished surfaces, and a demeanor of serene poise, these works of sculpture were, nonetheless, conceived as idols of sensuality. This ambiguity was captured by E. E. Cummings, writing about Lachaise in 1920, who remarked on "the sumptuousness of certain of his perfectly sensuous exquisitely modulated vaselike nudes. . . ."[1] In fact, the model for this billowing body type was Lachaise's wife, whom the artist addressed as an archetypal object of devotion and desire. Isabel, he explained in 1928, was "the primary inspiration which awakened my vision and the leading influence that has directed my forces. I refer to this person by the word 'Woman.'" Accounting for the development of the female nude as a motif in his work, he described how this figure "'Woman'. . . began to move vigorously, robustly, walking, alert, lightly, radiating sex and soul."[2] Lachaise's conception of the female body would culminate in an astonishing series of expressionistic sculpture that dates from the last five years of his life (he died in 1935), in which he employed dramatic anatomical contortions and exaggerations in order to represent the nude as a symbolic sexual object. These works have been compared to the "venuses" of prehistoric art.[3] The nudes of the 1920s mythologize women through more idealized means.

One of the most remarkable qualities of Lachaise's classic-period sculpture is its relationship to gravity. Despite their massive bulk, the upright figures often stand lightly on the ground. The artist's most celebrated nude, *Standing Woman* (1912–1927, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo), is subtitled "Elevation," a reference that both identifies this aspect of Lachaise's work and transforms it into a symbolic attribute. *Two Floating Nude Acrobats* (Cat. 37), from 1922, belongs to a separate body of work based on dancers, circus acrobats, and vaudeville performers,[4] subjects that had also enthralled Elie Nadelman, whose streamlined figures probably influenced him.[5] From these performers, Lachaise derived unconventional poses and a gravity-defying air. In a number of the works, reclining figures leave the ground and move—or levitate—through open space, their bulk now conveying an impression of surprising buoyancy. The most celebrated of these is the monumental *Floating Figure* of 1927, a cast of which is in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. *Two Floating Nude Acrobats* is a rare group piece from this period and a striking demonstration of Lachaise's airborne choreography. In this work, the two

37 *Two Floating Nude Acrobats*

FIG. 1. Gaston Lachaise, *Dolphin Fountain*, 1924, bronze, Whitney Museum of American Art, Gift of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, 31.41

FIG. 2. Gaston Lachaise, *Walking Woman*, 1922, Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire, Gift of Dr. Isadore and Lucille Zimmerman, 1982.26

figures, which are attached at only one point, form an asymmetrical pyramid that simultaneously conveys an impression of stability and lift. The figures are individually cast, and Lachaise reconfigured them in a separate version of the piece, with the horizontal lower acrobat now "moving" on an upward diagonal. The present example, in which the upper acrobat appears to be "riding" the lower one like a wave, is a less strained representation of drifting motion. Its undulating rhythms—a play of outstretched arms and legs—resemble a very different multifigure piece from the period, Lachaise's *Dolphin Fountain* from 1924 (fig. 1), one of the artist's numerous commissioned decorations. The balletic pantomime of the two figures also closely recalls the gesture depicted in Lachaise's *Dusk*, a small bas-relief from about 1917, which was the prototype for the artist's hovering nudes.

The stylistic and thematic relationship of Lachaise and Nadelman is especially clear in Lachaise's *Back of a Walking Woman* (Cat. 38), a unique cast, which is a reduced and simplified version of a plaster figure that the artist created in 1922. This piece belongs to a lineage of statuettes depicting draped and clothed women—already reflecting Isabel's body type—that date back to Lachaise's early works in Paris, which are variously indebted to Rodin and Maillol. While earlier representations of the clothed figure are wrapped in neoclassical drapery and other vaguely exotic costumes, *Back of a Walking Woman* is striking for its obvious depiction of contemporary urban fashion, in which it joins a handful of other small works by the artist created between 1918 and 1922, as well as several later full-length portraits.[6] Lachaise has transformed his mannequin into a clean, machine-age silhouette, recalling Nadelman's figures in contemporary dress (and reminding us that Lachaise was a connoisseur of newspaper images of the urban scene in New York);[7] unlike Nadelman's work, however, anatomy swells from underneath the garment. Lachaise has also eliminated the arms and feet, thereby achieving a "vaselike" clarity of form that is heightened by the inherent simplicity of the back view and the generalizing effect of the costume. The closest equivalent is Lachaise's *Walking Woman*, from the same date, which is a complete figure in contemporary dress (fig. 2). Swinging arms make *Walking Woman* decidedly less elegant and, curiously, less well resolved; otherwise, the Ebsworth piece could almost be described as the back view of this figure. In *Back of a Walking Woman*, the figure's stride is accented by the hem of the dress, which swings to one side. The posture is a jauntily dynamic counterpart to the classical contrapposto that is struck by so many of Lachaise's earlier draped nudes.

Lachaise imbued his portrait heads with a higher degree of realism than his nudes and other figures, so much so that portraiture stylistically stands apart in his oeuvre. He produced portraits throughout his career, and his subjects included family members as well as

38 *Back of a Walking Woman*

39 *Mask*

40 *Mask*

FIG. 3. Gaston Lachaise, *Portrait of Marie Pierce*, 1935, bronze, cast; plate, nickel, The Edward and Tullah Hanley Memorial Gift to the People of Denver and the Area, Denver Art Museum collection

friends and supporters, many of whom were important cultural figures of the period, among them Marianne Moore, George L. K. Morris, Edward Warburg, Edgar Varèse, Georgia O'Keeffe, Alfred Stieglitz, and E. E. Cummings. Like his decorative commissions, Lachaise's portraits were a somewhat reliable source of income for the artist. The genre was, however, one to which he brought psychological insight, for which Jean-Antoine Houdon and Auguste Rodin, among others, were acknowledged historical precursors. Lachaise also applied an intense preoccupation with form and technique, creating, in certain cases, numerous variants of a given portrait in divers media as well as in degree of stylization. Initial portraits in clay and plaster often required dozens of sittings.[8]

Lachaise's "masks" are extremely subtle examples of his portrait manner. The *Mask* of about 1924 (Cat. 39), in nickel-plated bronze, is one of several mask portraits of Marie Pierce, Isabel Nagle's niece, including a larger version executed in alabaster (The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University). The masks followed several plaster heads that the artist produced beginning in 1921; Lachaise also created a bust-length mask of Marie Pierce in bronze (fig. 3), which was cast from one of the plasters.[9] In both works, simplified features and the absence of a hairline represent an increasingly reductive approach to the portrait, which grows further removed from the sitter as the series progresses. In the Ebsworth *Mask*, however, Lachaise has created soft variations in tone, from silver gray to bronze, a polychrome effect that he employed more crudely during this period in *Standing Woman*; here the patination is modulated with exquisite delicacy, evoking—without actually describing—the expressive pliancy of muscle and skin. The second Ebsworth *Mask* (Cat. 40), from about 1928, might also be a variant of the face from a specific portrait head, although the prototype has yet to be identified. With lowered eyelids and archaic features, it also recalls the generalized physiognomy of the Buddha as depicted in ancient Indian sculpture, which Lachaise greatly admired.[10] Executed in bronze with a dark patina, *Mask* is nearly identical to a lead cast version in the collection of the Cincinnati Art Museum.[11] Like the mask portrait of Marie Pierce, it is attached to the base at its chin, transforming the ovoid face into a poised, autonomous shape, an effect which is related to Constantin Brancusi's *Sleeping Muse* series, in which heads rest on their bases as independent sculptural forms. JW

NOTES

1. Gaston Lachaise, "Creative Act: A Comment on My Sculpture," *Creative Art* (August 1928), xxiii.
2. E. E. Cummings, "Gaston Lachaise," *The Dial* (February 1920), 197.
3. For a bold appreciation of the late works, see Louise Bourgeois, "Obsession," *Artforum* (April 1992), 85–87.
4. Gerald Nordland, *Gaston Lachaise: The Man and Work* (New York, 1974), 126–137.
5. Gerald Nordland, "Gaston Lachaise: An Introduction," in *Gaston Lachaise 1882–1935* [exh. cat., Los Angeles County Museum of Art] (Los Angeles, 1963), n.p.
6. Portraits in contemporary dress include the full-length *Hildegarde Lasell Watson* (1925, Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester) and *Georgette Ouzounoff* (1932, Museum of Modern Art).
7. Lincoln Kirstein, "Gaston Lachaise," in *Gaston Lachaise Retrospective Exhibition* [exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art] (New York, 1935), 15.
8. Carolyn Kinder Carr, "Gaston Lachaise: Portrait Sculpture," in *Gaston Lachaise: Portrait Sculpture* [exh. cat., National Portrait Gallery] (Washington, 1985), 19.
9. Carr 1985, 12–14.
10. Barbara Rose, "Gaston Lachaise and the Heroic Ideal," in *Gaston Lachaise: Sculpture* [exh. cat., Salander-O'Reilly Galleries] (New York, 1991), 13.
11. *Lines of Different Character: American Art from 1727 to 1947* [exh. cat., Hirschl & Adler Galleries] (New York, 1983), 93.

JOAN MITCHELL
1926–1992

45 *12 Hawks at 3 O'Clock*, 1960

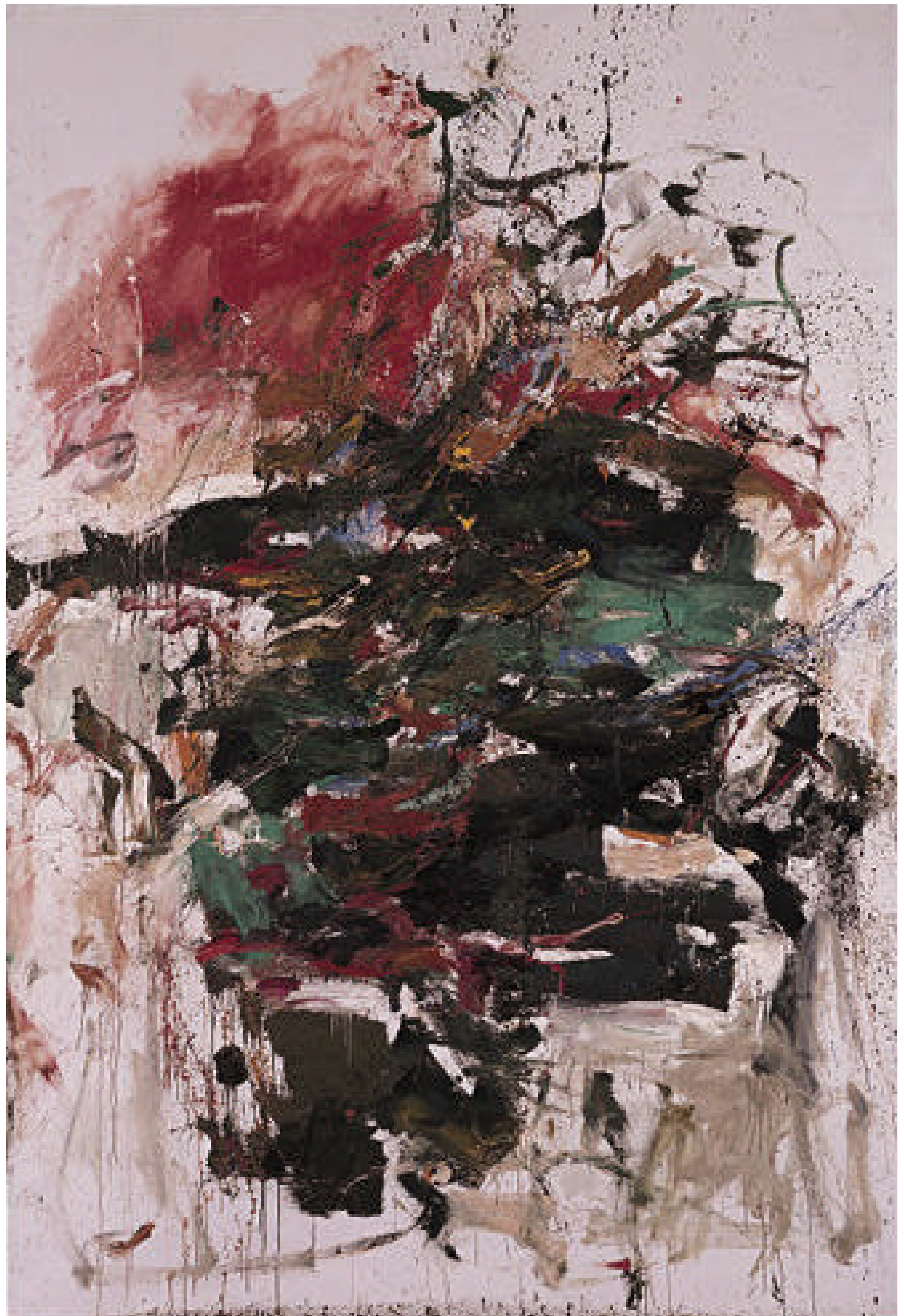
oil on canvas
116¼ × 78¾ (295.3 × 200)

Joan Mitchell achieved early critical success within the context of the New York School when she exhibited in the fabled "Ninth Street Show" of 1951.[1] After responding to the formidable achievements of the so-called first generation of abstract expressionists, Mitchell emerged in the mid-1950s with her own painterly nonrepresentational style. While Mitchell's early paintings alluded to Arshile Gorky and Willem de Kooning's quasi-cubist structures, these references ultimately gave way to her own triumphant abstract compositions within the decade. Mitchell's stylistic independence was further strengthened by her move from New York to Paris in 1959.

In 1960, after a year in her studio on rue Frémicourt, Mitchell painted *12 Hawks at 3 O'Clock*, a work which deftly exemplifies her ability to evoke landscape even while remaining within the resolute confines of abstraction. Mitchell, who shared the abstract expressionists' concern with space, acknowledged that an important source and stimulus for the emotional content of her canvases was, indeed, the landscape. She stated, "I paint from remembered landscapes that I carry with me—and remembered feelings of them, which of course become transformed. I could certainly never mirror nature. I would like to paint what it leaves me with."[2] To create such powerful sensations on canvas, Mitchell mined the depths of her memory and worked out her compositions using spirited arm-length brushstrokes on the canvas. Mitchell sometimes conceived titles for her works after their completion, often referring to a memory of a feeling based on an actual experience. *12 Hawks at 3 O'Clock* conjures a specific subject at a specific moment in time, while strictly avoiding a literal depiction. The title, like the canvas itself, is a poetic allusion: the rosy orb evokes a sun in the afternoon sky, while the dark brushstrokes imply a cluster of hawks.[3]

As with *12 Hawks*, several paintings from the early 1960s use a contrasting palette of cool greens and blues set against warm tones and punctuated with bright red and orange accents. Aside from the adept use of color, the Ebsworth painting also confronts various formal issues on a grand scale, particularly the tension between the frenzy of colored brushstrokes and the placid white ground. The result is an impassioned painting energized by a flurry of color and a tangle of bold, feathery dashes.

FIG. 1. Joan Mitchell, *Skyes*, 1960–1961, oil on canvas, private collection



45 *12 Hawks at 3 O'Clock*

At the edges of the central mass, sinewy splashes of paint animate the surrounding white ground. This seeming spontaneity would have undoubtedly resonated with the painter Sam Francis, the previous owner of *12 Hawks*.

This painting prefigures a closely related work from the same time, *Skyes* (fig. 1). The basic palette and composition virtually mirror *12 Hawks*, though here the rosy form shifts from upper left in the Ebsworth painting to upper right. The predominantly green and black horizontal and diagonal swaths in *12 Hawks* also presage the dense masses that emerged in her so-called dark paintings of 1964, which marked a time of loss for Mitchell, whose father died in 1963 and mother began a long battle with cancer.

In 1967, Mitchell relocated to the French countryside in Vétheuil where she maintained her primary residence until her death in 1992. There the artist largely worked in isolation with her beloved dogs as her only constant companions. Although she returned to New York regularly, and visited friends in Paris, such as writer Samuel Beckett, Mitchell maintained a notoriously fierce independence, not unlike that she claimed throughout her artistic career. MD

NOTES

1. The "Ninth Street Show" was organized in conjunction with The Artists' Club, a group formed in 1948 that became a primary forum for the abstract expressionists through the 1950s.
2. Joan Mitchell in John I. H. Baur, *Nature in Abstraction: The Relation of Abstract Painting and Sculpture to Nature in Twentieth-Century American Art* [exh. cat., The Whitney Museum of American Art] (New York, 1958), 75.
3. The title of at least one other painting by Mitchell, *14 O'Clock* (1959), specifies time.

CHARLES SHEELER
1883–1965

57 *Classic Landscape*, 1928

watercolor, gouache, and graphite on paper
8 13/16 × 11 15/16 (22.4 × 30.3)

58 *Classic Landscape*, 1931

oil on canvas
25 × 32¼ (63.5 × 81.9)

Charles Sheeler was a master of both painting and photography, and his work in each medium influenced and shaped his work in the other. But Sheeler also recognized that there was a fundamental difference in the creative processes of each activity. As he observed in 1937, "Photography is nature seen from the eyes outward, painting from the eyes inward. Photography records inalterably the single image while painting records a plurality of images willfully directed by the artist."[1]

In 1927, Sheeler went to the Ford Motor Company's River Rouge plant near Detroit on a photographic commission. The sprawling facility, covering more than two thousand acres and employing more than seventy-five thousand workers, was at the time the largest and most technically advanced industrial complex in existence.[2] The Detroit architect Albert Kahn, a pioneer of modern factory design, was responsible for most of the plant's structures. Virtually self-sufficient and self-contained, the Rouge brought together on one site all the operations necessary to assemble automobiles. It was there, beginning in 1927, that Ford produced its Model A, successor to the famed Model T, fifteen million of which had been built since mass production had begun in 1913. Ford's investment in the Model A and the Rouge plant was enormous, and, facing increasing competition from General Motors, the company undertook an aggressive advertising campaign in support of the new vehicle and its corporate image. N. W. Ayer and Son of Philadelphia handled the campaign and Vaughn Flannery, the firm's art director, convinced Ford to commission a series of photographs of the Rouge that would stand as a creative portrait of American industry.[3] It was Flannery who recommended Sheeler, already well known for his photographs of still lifes; New York buildings; Bucks County, Pennsylvania, interiors and exteriors; and fashion and portrait photography for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*.[4]

FIG. 1. Charles Sheeler, *River Rouge Industrial Plant*, 1928, graphite and watercolor, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Gift of G. David Thompson (above)

FIG. 2. Charles Sheeler, *Salvage Ship—Ford Plant*, 1927, gelatin silver print, The Lane Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (right)

Sheeler arrived at the River Rouge plant late in October 1927 and immediately declared the subject "incomparably the most thrilling I have had to work with."[5] The photographs that he would complete over the next six weeks are justly considered among his greatest achievements in the medium. But his experiences at the plant had another result, one that was slower in developing, but ultimately of greater and more profound effect on his art. As Sheeler explained: "I was out there on a mission of photography. Period. And when I got there, I took a chance on opening the other eye and so then I thought maybe some pictures could be pulled out. But I had to come home, and it was several years later that they had really digested and they started coming out."[6] The "other eye" Sheeler opened while working at the Rouge was that of the painter, and with that eye he was able to see the potential that the compositions he was framing photographically held for paintings. In 1928 he produced two small watercolors of Rouge subjects, *River Rouge Industrial Plant* (fig. 1), which reproduced the upper center of his photograph *Salvage Ship—Ford Plant* (fig. 2), and *Classic Landscape* (Cat.

57 *Classic Landscape*

57), also presumably based on photographs, although none is known of this view today. Throughout his career Sheeler made many fine works on paper, but his preferred media were pencil, conté crayon, gouache, or tempera rather than watercolor. If the two 1928 Rouge watercolors were based directly on photographs, perhaps the artist was experimenting with how best to "pull out" pictures from them. The following year, Sheeler used one of the photographs he shot in 1928 of the German ocean liner *S.S. Majestic* as his "blueprint" in creating the oil *Upper Deck* (1929, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University).[7] He now believed he had found the means of fusing precise visual realism with powerful formal abstraction. As he said: "This is what I have been getting ready for. I had come to feel that a picture could have incorporated in it the structural design implied in abstraction and be presented in a wholly realistic manner."[8]

With this newly won mastery of process came a new sense of purpose, and Sheeler now returned to his River Rouge photographs. Between 1930 and 1936 he created a stunning series of oil paintings of the plant: *American Landscape* (fig. 3), *Classic Landscape* (Cat. 58), *River Rouge Plant* (fig. 4), and *City Interior* (fig. 5).[9] In the last-named painting, which depicts a

FIG. 3. Charles Sheeler, *American Landscape*, 1930, oil on canvas, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (above, left)

FIG. 4. Charles Sheeler, *River Rouge Plant*, 1932, oil on canvas, Whitney Museum of American Art, Purchase, 32.43 (above, right)

FIG. 5. Charles Sheeler, *City Interior*, 1936, aqueous adhesive and oil on composition board (masonite), Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts, Elizabeth M. Sawyer Fund in memory of Jonathan and Elizabeth M. Sawyer (left)

58 *Classic Landscape*

FIG. 6. Ford Rouge Cement Plant, 1945, from the collections of Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village and Ford Motor Company

scene in the area of the plant's huge blast furnaces, Sheeler portrayed a dense concentration of structures and forms evocative, as the title suggests, of an urban area. *American Landscape* and *Classic Landscape* are more openly composed and expansive. The area in the complex they—and *River Rouge Plant*—depict is near the cement plant, with its distinctive landmarks, a single, tall smokestack and cement storage silos (fig. 6). Cement, a by-product of the manufacturing process, was created using slag—impurities skimmed off the top of molten iron—that was cooled and then screened and crushed.[10]

Both versions of *Classic Landscape* show the cement plant from a vantage point on the High Line railroad track looking north. At the left and in the center distance are the large bins for storing coal, ore, and limestone. The multi-roofed building at upper right is the slag screen house; beyond is the long, low roof of the cement plant, running across almost the entire background to its terminus at the boat slip (see fig. 4). In the center distance are the six stacks of powerhouse 3. Sheeler expanded the composition in all four directions for the oil, with significant results. In the watercolor the right side of the slag screen house and the railroad tracks are cropped by the edge of the paper, the cement plant smokestack runs almost to the very top of the sheet, and the left side of the composition stops just before the stacks of the glass plant would be visible. In the oil, Sheeler moved the point of view back slightly, achieving a more spacious composition and diminishing the sense of photographic cropping evident in the watercolor. The watercolor seems a more literal record of a section of a specific place ("the single image," to use Sheeler's words), whereas the oil ("a plurality of images willfully directed by the artist") presents a self-contained and integral reality of its own, complete without any reference to the world outside its borders.

Although the enlargement of the composition was perhaps Sheeler's most significant alteration in translating the watercolor into the oil, the many other subtle changes, adjustments, and additions he made are evidence of a painstaking process. Among the additions are three rivet heads forming an inverted isosceles triangle on the second cross tie from the bottom; a board walkway extending from the bottom right corner; a second crossbar supporting the cables running parallel to the tracks; a loaded rail car stopped by the slag screen house; two small cube-shaped structures at the bottom right of the silos; two support towers for the long projecting building in front of the silos; the two smokestacks of the glass plant; and additional windows at the top left of the silos and on the shadowed facade of the building at left center. In the painting's sky Sheeler eliminated the smoke around the stacks of power plant 3, added a streaming cloud of smoke coming from the cement plant stack, and a great triangular wedge of billowing clouds. Sheeler also adjusted the shadows throughout the painting, changing the more rounded forms visible in the watercolor into crisply delineated straight edges.

Through these various adjustments and changes Sheeler tightened the already strong geometry evident in the watercolor into a world based on three simple shapes: triangle, rectangle, and cylinder. The only elements present that do not precisely conform to one of these shapes—the piles in the storage bins and the clouds in the sky—are organic rather than man-made. Yet they, too, are ultimately subsumed by geometry, for the group of bins in perspective and the swath of clouds form two great triangles that echo each other in reverse. In *Classic Landscape*, Sheeler created his most elegant proof of what he had asserted just two years earlier, "that a picture could have incorporated in it the structural design implied in abstraction and be presented in a wholly realistic manner."

Classic Landscape is, of course, more than simply an aesthetic demonstration piece, for its subject, the modern industrial landscape, embraced a number of meanings. Sheeler's photographs of the Rouge plant mainly centered on the manufacturing processes of the plant, on its functions and its purposes. That is hardly surprising given their origins in the commission from Ford. But in selecting subjects for paintings he was free to do as he

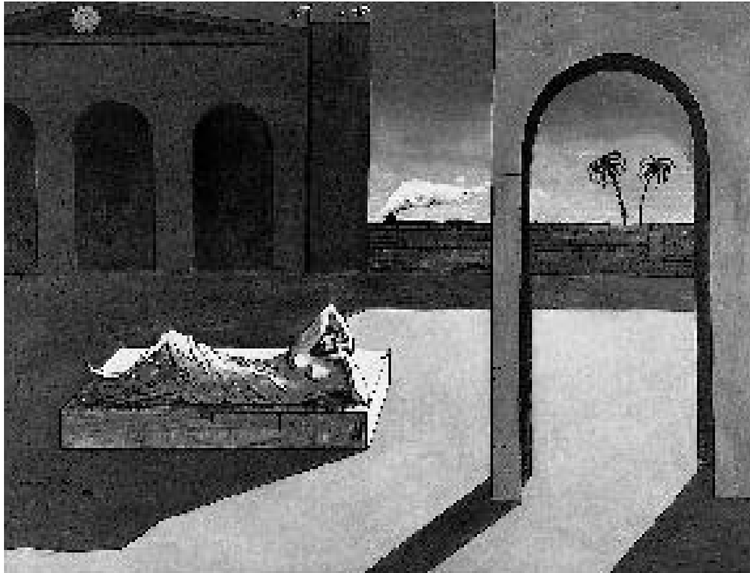


FIG. 7. Giorgio de Chirico, *The Soothsayer's Recompense*, 1913, oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection

wished, so it is significant that he chose not to depict scenes that had to do with the production of automobiles, the main purpose of the Rouge. Rather, he selected a more anonymous scene, not tied to a specific place or use, but representative generally of the landscape of industry. That, in part, explains his use in the painting's title of the word "classic," with its connotations of typical or standard. But "classic," of course, also evokes the culture of ancient Greece and Rome, and Sheeler surely intended that association as well. In that light, *Classic Landscape*, a world of clarity, precision, and order, could be seen as a modern equivalent of the highest achievements of the classical past. Indeed, as has often been pointed out, the silos of the cement plant suggest the forms of a Greek Doric temple.[11] In this juxtaposition of the modern and the ancient (if only by implication), *Classic Landscape* reminds one of the early "metaphysical" cityscapes of the Italian surrealist Giorgio de Chirico. Paintings by de Chirico like *The Soothsayer's Recompense* (fig. 7) and *The Arrival* (1912–1913, The Barnes Foundation), with their dramatically receding perspectives, stark shadows, sharply delineated forms, eerie emptiness, and smoking machines played off against classical buildings, may well have influenced Sheeler in the Rouge paintings.[12] But whereas de Chirico's fantasies are tinged with nostalgia for the past and uneasiness about the potential inadequacies of the present, Sheeler's real American scene implies a more harmonious accommodation of past and present.

Indeed, for Sheeler the issue was clearly not that the silos *looked* like an ancient temple, but that they did *because* they were the result of similar principles of design that were attuned to form and function rather than to superficial style. In a 1925 essay he observed that the foundation of Greek art lay in its "perfect adjustment of concrete form to abstract thought." As he further observed: "as great purity of plastic expression may be achieved through the medium of objective forms as has been thought to be obtainable by some of our present day artists, by means of a purely abstract presentation of forms."[13]

Sheeler was not, of course, alone in such reasoning and in seeing its relevance to his own time. In 1927, Le Corbusier's *Vers Une Architecture*, first published in 1923 in French, appeared in an English edition as *Towards a New Architecture*. Sheeler very likely knew the book.[14] Moreover, it may well have been influential in leading Vaughn Flannery to commission the Rouge photographs, for Le Corbusier's book was full of praise for American industrial architecture.[15] *Towards a New Architecture* opens with a section entitled "The Engineer's Aesthetic and Architecture," in which Le Corbusier rejects the dominance of style in determining architectural form and stresses instead three essential principles: "MASS...the element by which our senses perceive and measure and are most fully affected. SURFACE... the envelope of the mass and which can diminish or enlarge the sensation the latter gives us. PLAN...the generator both of mass and surface and...that by which the whole is irrevocably fixed."[16] As he continued: "Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light. Our eyes are made to see forms in light; light and shade reveal these forms; cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders or pyramids are the great primary forms which light reveals to advantage; the image of these is distinct and tangible within us and without ambiguity. It is for that reason that these are *beautiful forms, the most beautiful forms*."[17] For Le Corbusier history offered ample evidence: "Egyptian, Greek or Roman architecture is an architecture of prisms, cubes

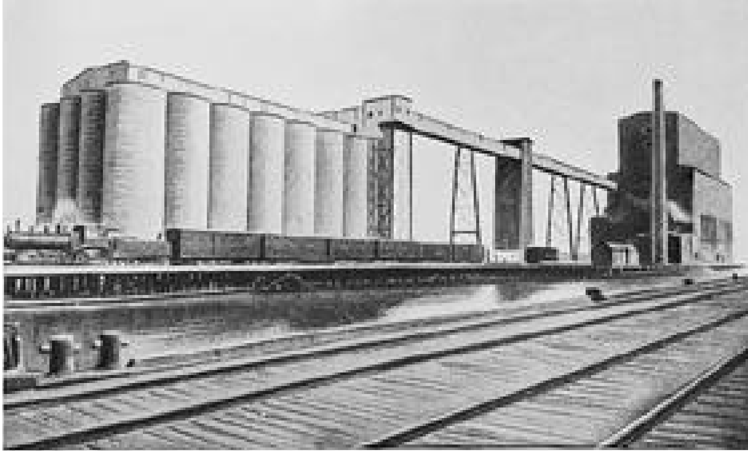


FIG. 8. From Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York, 1927)

and cylinders, pyramids or spheres: the Pyramids, the Temple of Luxor, the Parthenon, the Coliseum, Hadrian's Villa."[18] But when he surveyed the buildings of his own time Le Corbusier found that engineers, not architects, were the ones who understood these principles:

> Not in the pursuit of an architectural idea, but simply guided by the results of calculation (derived from the principles which govern our universe) and the conception of A LIVING ORGANISM, the ENGINEERS of to-day make use of the primary elements and, by co-ordinating them in accordance with the rules, provoke in us architectural emotions and thus make the work of man ring in unison with the universal order.
>
> Thus we have the American grain elevators and factories, the magnificent FIRST-FRUITS of the new age. THE AMERICAN ENGINEERS OVERWHELM WITH THEIR CALCULATIONS OUR EXPIRING ARCHITECTURE.[19]

Le Corbusier's ideas were much influenced by the achievements of modernist painting in the first decades of the twentieth century, and he recognized what he called "the vital change brought about by cubism and later researches...."[20] His identification of architecture's fundamental forms brings to mind not only the works of Picasso and Braque, but also recalls Cézanne's advice to "treat nature by the means of the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, everything brought into proper perspective...."[21] Cézanne, and later Picasso and Braque, were crucial catalysts for Sheeler as he moved from the rather conventional manner of painting he learned from his teacher William Merritt Chase, so Le Corbusier's thoughts must have had particular appeal for him. And it is likely, too, that Sheeler took special notice of the illustrations in *Towards a New Architecture*, several of which depicted structures remarkably similar to those he would paint in *Classic Landscape* (see fig. 8). This would suggest, then, that at the time he painted *Classic Landscape* Sheeler must have shared Le Corbusier's favorable and optimistic view of the potential such commercial structures held for inspiring the development of a new and more humane functional architecture. Sheeler also identified industrial scenes as the loci of a new kind of secular spirituality. As he said in an oft-quoted remark: "it may be true, as has been said, that our factories are our substitutes for religious expression."[22]

The iconic power and special importance of *Classic Landscape* were recognized from the time of its first exhibition at Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery in New York in 1931. The following year it was purchased by Edsel Ford, making it the only one of Sheeler's Rouge paintings to be owned by the Ford family.[23] As its exhibition record indicates, *Classic Landscape* in the years since has been one of the most widely shown of all American twentieth-century paintings. It has also long been central to virtually every discussion of an American style known as precisionism, even though the definition and use of that term have been the subject of wide and continuous scholarly debate.[24] Like so many other art historical labels, including impressionism and cubism, precisionism functions best as an umbrella term under which a number of artists (in the Ebsworth collection, for example, George Ault, Francis Criss, Charles Demuth, Preston Dickinson, and Miklos Suba, in addition to Sheeler) with similar aesthetic sensibilities may be grouped. Attempts to hone the definition to the point where it can be used consistently to identify what is or is not a precisionist painting or who was or was not a precisionist inevitably become uselessly hobbled by restrictions, exceptions, and complications. Moreover, many of Sheeler's and other American artists' works have affinities with, and were doubtless influenced by, works from abroad, whether the paintings of the German *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists, the French purists, or even the Russian constructivists.

In the end, of course, the exceptional power and haunting beauty of *Classic Landscape* are due not to the sources and influences behind its creation or the meanings it may convey, important as all of those may be. Like so many truly great works of art it is perfect and complete in itself, requiring neither additions nor deletions, nor reference to anything but itself. And Sheeler knew perfectly well just how removed what he had created was from the actualities of the real world. This was art, not life. When asked why he had not included people in *Classic Landscape*, he tellingly replied:

"Well, it's my illustration of what a beautiful world it would be if there were no people in it."[25] Sheeler's friend the poet William Carlos Williams also understood what he had achieved. *Classic Landscape*, in his words, was a "separate reality."[26] FK

NOTES

1. Carol Troyen and Erica E. Hirshler, *Charles Sheeler: Paintings and Drawings* [exh. cat., Museum of Fine Arts] (Boston, 1987), 1.
2. Mary Jane Jacob and Linda Downs, preface to *The Rouge: The Image of Industry in the Art of Charles Sheeler and Diego Rivera* [exh. cat., Detroit Institute of Arts] (Detroit, 1978), 7.
3. Mary Jane Jacob in Detroit 1978, 11.
4. See Troyen and Hirshler 1987.
5. Sheeler to Arensberg, 25 October 1927, Arensberg Archives, quoted in Theodore E. Stebbins Jr. and Norman Keyes Jr., *Charles Sheeler: The Photographs* [exh. cat., Museum of Fine Arts] (Boston, 1987), 25.
6. Charles Sheeler interview with Bartlett Cowdrey, 9 December 1958, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, quoted in Troyen and Hirshler 1987, 116.
7. Charles Sheeler interview with Martin Friedman, 18 June 1959, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, quoted in Troyen and Hirshler 1987, 115.
8. Troyen and Hirshler 1987, 118.
9. During this same period Sheeler also produced a number of superb conté crayon drawings based on his photographs of the plant. A fifth oil derived from a Rouge photograph, *Industrial Forms* (1947, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), was painted in the more abstract, simplified style Sheeler employed during the late 1940s (see entry for Cat. 60).
10. Detroit 1978, 25, 32–34.
11. See, e.g., Susan Fillin Yeh, exhibition review of "The Rouge," *Arts Magazine* 53 (November 1978), 8: "the industrial version of an ancient Greek temple"; and Karen Lucic, *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 13: "suggesting an austere doric temple. . . ." Sheeler himself observed: "the grain elevator [*sic*], well, it looked classic to me, naturally, that's the reason I called it that" (from Cowdrey interview).
12. According to Julia May Boddewyn, "The First American Collectors of de Chirico," in *Giorgio de Chirico and America*, ed. Emily Braun [exh. cat., Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter College] (New York, 1996), 49, 55, Sheeler's friends Louise and Walter Arensberg did not acquire *The Soothsayer's Recompense* until 1932. However, Sheeler could certainly have seen *The Arrival*, which Albert C. Barnes acquired in 1923, because the artist and Vaughn Flannery had visited the Barnes collection together several times; see Susan Fillin Yeh, "Charles Sheeler, Industry, Fashion, and the Vanguard," *Arts Magazine* 54 (February 1980), 156. Moreover, de Chirico's works were reproduced in numerous art periodicals during the 1920s: see, for example, Jacques Mauny, "Paris Letter," *The Arts* 12 (August 1927), 106–108, which includes a reproduction of *The Departure of the Poet* (1913, private collection; also known as *Joys and Enigmas of a Strange Hour*), which is very similar to *The Soothsayer's Recompense.*
13. Charles Sheeler, "Notes on an Exhibition of Greek Art," *The Arts* 7 (March 1925), 153.
14. Susan Fillin Yeh, "Charles Sheeler's 'Upper Deck,'" *Arts Magazine* 53 (January 1979), 93, notes Le Corbusier's discussion of ocean liners in the book as of likely influence on Sheeler's decision to paint *Upper Deck* (1929, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University).
15. A number of illustrations in the book, for example, *40,000 Kilowatt Turbine for Electricity* (p. 249), *Steel Construction* (p. 253), and *Ventilators* (p. 261), are suggestively similar to some of the photographs Sheeler made at the Rouge plant.
16. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London, 1927), 21.
17. Le Corbusier 1927, 31.
18. Le Corbusier 1927, 31.
19. Le Corbusier 1927, 33.
20. Le Corbusier 1927, 23.
21. Letter to Emile Bernard, 15 April 1904, reprinted in *Paul Cézanne Letters*, ed. John Rewald (New York, 1976), 301. This well-known letter was first published in 1907: Emile Bernard, "Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne et lettres inédites," *Mercure de France*, 1 and 15 October 1907; see *Cézanne Letters* 1976, 11.
22. Quoted in Constance Rourke, *Charles Sheeler, Artist in the American Tradition* (New York, 1938), 130.
23. Troyen and Hirshler 1987, 120, citing a letter from Halpert to Edmund Gurry, 18 June 1932.
24. For an overview of conflicting views of the term, see Rick Stewart, "Charles Sheeler, William Carlos Williams, and Precisionism: A Redefinition," *Arts Magazine* 58 (November 1983), 100–114. Sheeler and his friend Williams, according to Stewart (p. 108), avoided using the term, being adverse to attaching names to anything.
25. Interview with Martin Friedman, 18 June 1959, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, quoted in Lucic 1991, 107.
26. Quoted in Stewart 1983, 109, citing James Guimond, *The Art of William Carlos Williams* (Urbana, Ill., 1968), 100.

DAVID SMITH
1906–1965

62 *Untitled (The Billiard Players)*, 1936

oil on canvas
47 × 52 (119.4 × 132.1)

"I wanted to be a painter....I've never given it up....—even if I'm having trouble with a sculpture—I always paint my troubles out,"[1] David Smith wrote. Even after he was recognized as one of the most important American sculptors of the twentieth century, Smith insisted that he "belonged with painters."[2] Throughout his formative years, his chief interest was in painting, and until the end of his life, Smith drew extensively. He enjoyed the freedom drawing allowed in contrast with the limitations gravity and material resistance impose in the making of a three-dimensional piece. "A sculpture is a thing, an object," he said. "A painting is an illusion."[3]

Born in Decatur, Indiana, in 1906, Smith moved to New York in 1926 with the intention of becoming a painter. He studied for five years at the Art Students League, with John Sloan and especially with Jan Matulka, who introduced him to cubism and the work of Picasso, Mondrian, and Kandinsky. Through his friendship with Stuart Davis and John Graham, who were both regularly going to Paris in the 1920s, and by poring over such French magazines as *Cahiers d'Art*, Smith became well acquainted with the most recent artistic developments in Europe. Picasso's parallel work in painting and sculpture of the late 1920s and early 1930s had an important influence on his evolution in both media. Although Smith made his first experiments in sculpture with assemblages of found objects in 1931, it is only in 1935 that he decided on his vocation. He later recalled in a letter to the painter Jean Xceron, "Remember May 1935 when we walked down 57th Street,...how you influenced me to concentrate on sculpture. I'm of course forever glad that you did, it's more my energy, though I make 200 color drawings a year and sometimes painting....But I paint or draw as a sculptor, I have no split identity as I did in 1935."[4]

Untitled (The Billiard Players), probably painted in the months following Smith's return from a year-long trip to Europe, is highly indebted to Picasso, especially his large interior scenes of 1927–1928, such as *Painter and Model* (fig. 1).[5] These postcubist paintings combine a black linear scaffolding with flat, rectangular, and curvilinear areas of solid color. A similar combination dominates Smith's painting. Like in Picasso's work, although the composition is mostly abstract, a few elements—a

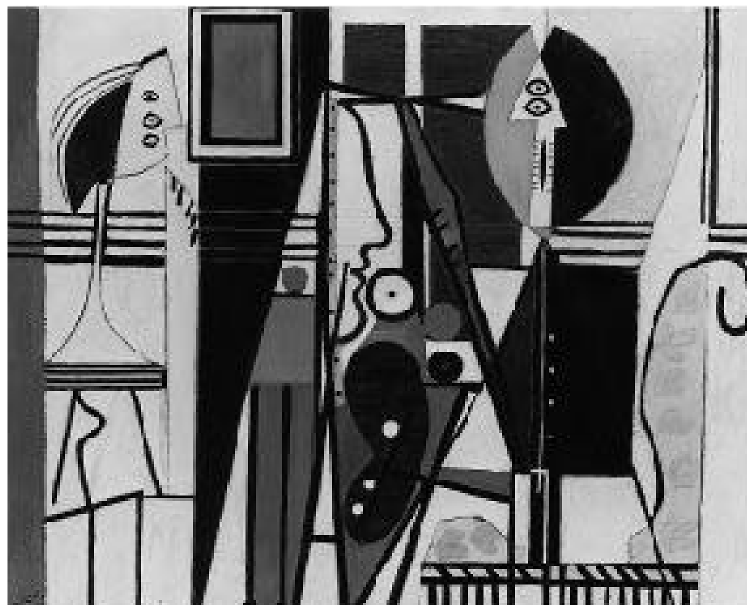
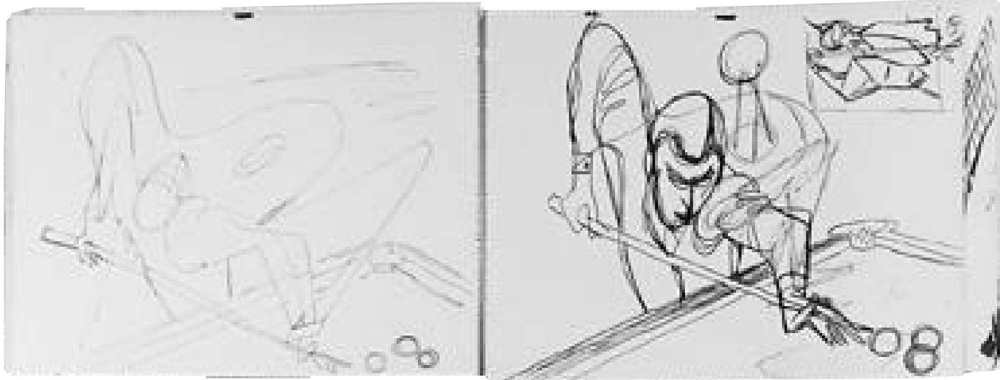
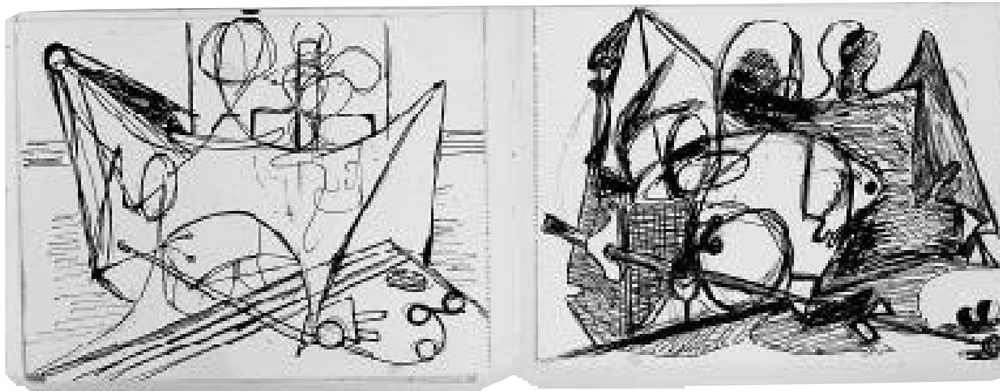


FIG. 1. Pablo Picasso, *Painter and Model*, 1928, oil on canvas, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection

62 *Untitled (The Billiard Players)*





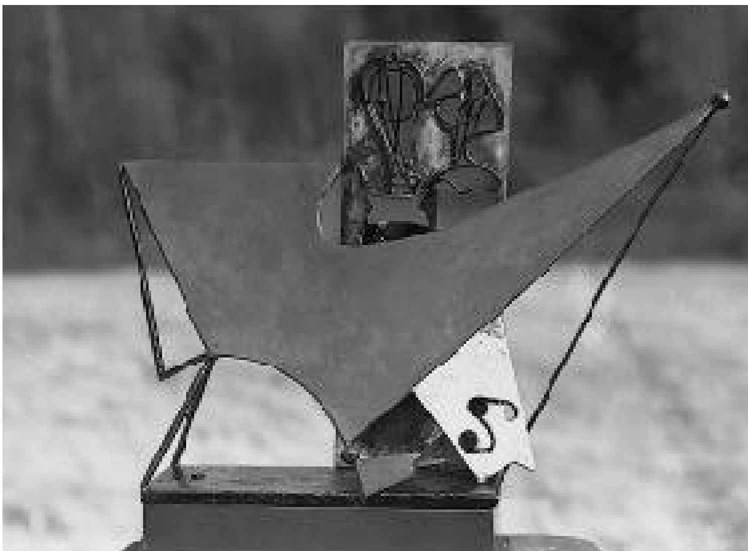


FIG. 2. David Smith, notebook drawings, c. 1935, Art © Estate of David Smith/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

FIG. 3. David Smith, *Billiard Player Construction*, 1937, iron and encaustic, Art © Estate of David Smith/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

profile, a head—refer to the real world. Smith's progressive abstraction from reality can be observed in a series of drawings of billiard players made at the same time as the painting (fig. 2). There Smith transformed the figure into a complex design of interlocking forms fusing man, table, and surrounding space.

The subject has been related to Smith's own frequent visits to Brooklyn Heights billiard parlors with his friend and neighbor Adolph Gottlieb in the early 1930s.[6] An artist with Smith's sense of spatial relations would certainly have been sensitive to the metaphorical connection between the geometric precision of billiard playing and the composition of a painting, with its careful balance of lines and shapes across the canvas. Smith's particular interest in billiards is borne out by the fact that he kept in his papers an illustrated article clipped from *Life* about the player Willy Hoppe.[7]

Smith also treated the subject in sculpture, notably in *Billiard Player Construction* (fig. 3) of 1937.[8] Like the painting, the sculpture combines linear and planar elements. The motif of the little sphere at the extremity of a triangular shape to the left of one of the drawings, in the sculpture, and in the upper part of the painting—perhaps a visualization of the ball at the apex of the angles of its trajectory—can be traced to Picasso's wire constructions of 1928, such as his maquettes for a monument to Guillaume Apollinaire. These constructions, which Kahnweiler famously described as "drawing in space,"[9] are closely related to Picasso's contemporary paintings of interiors. A similar dialogue between painting and sculpture obtains in Smith's work. The figure of *Billiard Player Construction* bears a definite similarity to what can be identified as a standing figure on the left of the canvas. Both painting and sculpture present an interplay of surface and depth—actual in the sculpture and illusionistic in the painting, in which the illusion of depth appears in the suggestion of the corner of a room on the upper right, the rectangular volume in the

center foreground, and the use of strong obliques creating effects of recession in space. The frontal orientation and shallow depth of the sculpture recall its origin in painting, as does the importance given to the planar elements. The comparison between *Untitled (Billiard Players)* and *Billiard Player Construction* shows how Smith's sculpture evolved as an assemblage of surfaces by his transposing to three dimensions the play between surface and depth that he explored in painting.[10] Eventually, the increasing use of open forms in his welded metal sculpture allowed Smith to reduce the constraints of gravity. In his impossibly light constructions of the 1940s and 1950s he achieved in three dimensions the spatial illusion that seemed to be the prerogative of painting. ID

NOTES

1. Interview with David Sylvester, New York, 16 June 1961, published in *Living Arts* (April 1964). Reprinted in *David Smith*, ed. Garnett McCoy (New York, 1973), 172.
2. *David Smith* 1973, 174.
3. "The New Sculpture," paper delivered at a symposium held at the Museum of Modern Art on 21 February 1952, reprinted in *David Smith* 1973, 82.
4. Letter of 7 February 1956, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Xceron Papers, reel 3482, frame 856.
5. The painting was reproduced in two important New York publications in 1936, the catalogue of the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* (which Smith did not see because he was in Europe), and Julien Levy's *Surrealism*, where it was one of three Picasso paintings illustrated.
6. See Karen Wilkin, *David Smith: The Formative Years* [exh. cat., The Edmonton Art Gallery] (Edmonton, 1981), 20.
7. Wilkin 1981, 20.
8. According to Miranda McClintic, between 1935 and 1946 Smith produced seven paintings and four sculptures of billiard players, in addition to numerous drawings. *David Smith, Painter, Sculptor, Draftsman* [exh. cat., Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden] (Washington, 1982), 132.
9. Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, *The Sculptures of Picasso* (London, 1949), n.p.
10. On Smith's sculpture perceived in terms of extended and interconnected surfaces visible from a fixed point, rather than around a core, see Rosalind Krauss, *Terminal Iron Works: The Sculpture of David Smith* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 36.