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THE INFLUENCE OF ORIENTAL THOUGHT  
ON POSTWAR AMERICAN PAINTING AND  
SCULPTURE

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to shed further light on the content of the (largely abstract) painting and sculpture produced by the generation of American artists coming to maturity in the 1940's and 1950's. An examination is made of the relationship between art and the realm of ideas, specifically through a study of the influence of Oriental metaphysics and aesthetics, which are seen to have had a wide ranging and important effect on artists and their work. A broad focus is taken and the influence of Eastern thought on a wide variety of artists is examined: Tobey, Graves, Noguchi, Lassaw, Reinhardt, Stamos, Motherwell, Francis, Lippold, Lipton, Pollock, Jenkins, Andre and Onslow-Ford are amongst those considered. Oriental influences on Masson are also discussed, by way of comparison.

The role played by specific texts and commentators as sources of artists' knowledge of the Orient is investigated, and particular attention is paid to Fenollosa, Coomaraswamy, Herrigel, Jung, Suzuki, Watts, the I Ching, and the Tao Te Ching. The role of John Cage in transmitting Eastern concepts to avant-garde artists is also discussed.

A particular concern of this thesis is the way in which Oriental concepts have affected artists' views of the creative process, and a discussion of changed attitudes concerning the function of art is also made.

Some repercussions of an interest in the Oriental world view are traced on the formal language of artists' work. A relationship is seen to exist, for example, between an interest in the concept of the Void and the use of 'empty' or unbounded space. Similarly, the 'all-over' or 'network' nature of some artists' work is related to the 'continuum' nature of the Oriental world view, and the abandonment of solid form to its dynamic quality.

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In the preparation of this thesis I have been helped enormously by a large number of people, and I would like to record here my deepest gratitude for all the hospitality that I received during my visits to the United States, and for the time so many have made to discuss with me the topic of my research. I hope I will be forgiven if I let the footnotes of this text stand as the record both of my debts, and of those to whom these debts are owed. Mention needs to be made here, however, of certain debts that will not be evident from the text itself. I would particularly like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr John Golding, for the help and inspiration he has given me. I would also like to record my gratitude to those who taught me as an undergraduate at University College, London. Helen Weston, William Vaughan, John McLean and David Davies gave me especial encouragement. The Ballard and Sussman families gave me extensive hospitality during my stays in the States, as did David Dawes. Particular help with obtaining photos was given by Ibram Lassaw, Gordon Onslow-Ford, and Marshall and Helen Hatch. Joanna Bates has typed this manuscript with care and efficiency.

During a part of the period in which this thesis was researched and written I was the recipient of a Major State Studentship from the Department of Education and Science, without which I would not have been able to undertake this project.

I would like to dedicate this book to my mother and my brother, and to the memory of my father.

## PREFACE TO THE GARLAND EDITION

The text which follows is in all substantial respects the same as that which was submitted to the Courtauld Institute of Art in the Autumn of 1982 as my PhD Thesis.

Some alterations have occurred, but there are only two notable additions to the body of the text. Excerpts have been included from an interview conducted by the author with Paul Jenkins. This interview took place in 1979, but the passages used here are from a version revised by the artist in 1986. A third appendix has also been added, with information concerning Agnes Martin, who escaped mention in the original thesis.

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of modern Western art has been significantly affected in a variety of ways by the impact of non-Western cultures. From Van Gogh and his contemporaries' study of the Japanese print, to the fascination of Picasso and Matisse with African art or the Surrealist infatuation with Oceania, a wide ranging and fruitful responsiveness to alien cultures can be seen amongst artists. The background to these encounters is the rapid increase in communication which technological change has brought, making contact between cultures more common, and the idea of a world culture seem feasible<sup>1</sup>. Forces intrinsic to Western culture were also playing a part - there has been for many artists and intellectuals over the last century a feeling that Western civilization has reached a crisis point, and a new openness to external sources has been a result of this loss of confidence.

Initially it was the exotic appeal of unfamiliar cultures which accounted for the interest they generated amongst artists - it is our very distance from Japanese culture which gives, for example, Whistler's 'Princess from the Land of Porcelain' (1864) its appeal. A more significant type of borrowing occurs in a work such as Gauguin's 'Vision after the Sermon' (1888), where the formal qualities of Japanese prints provide a stimulus for transformations in his style, whilst the subject matter of the painting betrays no evidence of his interest in that culture. The present study attempts to show an even more fundamental type of influence, one which is expressed not just on a level of subject matter or of style, but in terms of a basic change in attitudes to creative activity. The influence on modern American art has not just been from Eastern art, but more importantly from Eastern philosophy and the Eastern world view as well. It is this interest in the realm of ideas and attitudes which will be considered in the following pages, the question of an influence from Oriental art only being discussed where art provides a medium through which these ideas are transmitted, or where such a discussion is useful in providing background evidence of an interest in things Eastern.

It is my contention that the influence of Oriental thought was a significant factor in the development of American painting and sculpture, an assertion which, whilst it has been made by other commentators<sup>2</sup> (often in relation to the work of one artist only), has never been examined in detail. That the encounter with Oriental cultures is a meeting of two sophisticated traditions makes it all the more interesting to consider, and distinguishes it from the trend of primitivism in modern art which has been the motivation behind much exploration of non-Western cultures. American artists from the 1940's were not the first modernists to learn from Oriental philosophy, and Kandinsky, amongst others, was touched by it. However, the Americans engaged in a deeper study of a wider variety of Eastern traditions (with farther reaching effects on their art) than artists of previous generations. Whilst there was a contemporary interest in the East amongst European artists (Masson, Michaux, Bissier and Alechensky amongst them) the geographical position of the United States, with one coast facing Europe and the other the Far East, made America the key location for the meeting of East and West. Further from the roots of Western thought and art, a synthesis was more easily achieved than on the other side of the Atlantic.

Just because the influence on American art which will be examined here was of a more fundamental kind than had resulted from previous encounters with other cultures, it will be less easy to demonstrate objectively in a straightforward way. Mere borrowings of subject matter or formal devices can be clearly pointed out, but the influence of philosophical concepts occurs at a level below the 'surface' of art, although we shall see that these influences will have repercussions on the 'grammar' of artists' formal language. Cases of unassimilated influence (of whatever kind) are more easy to document, and have often drawn art historical interest, but they represent less important events in aesthetic terms. True creative artists tend to respond to influences in a more complex way than that suggested by the mechanistic model of 'stimulus - response' which seems to underly a lot of art historical thinking on this subject. The present study attempts to suggest that many artists have succeeded in synthesizing Oriental concepts with

Western artistic traditions, rather than merely imitating Oriental forms or accepting Eastern ideas wholesale. When this less simplistic approach to the question of influence is adopted, the explanation that changes in an artist's work are due to a particular influence will not be felt to be a denigration of that artist's creative talents. Response to an influence can itself be a creative act, and surely the acceptance of an influence can only occur if there is already something sympathetic to it in oneself<sup>3</sup>.

Formalist critics, such as Greenberg and Fried, have determined to a great extent the way in which post-war American art has been viewed. A purpose of this study is to attempt, in a small way, to redress the imbalance that has occurred, and to place greater emphasis on an examination of the dimension of meaning in the works of art, and the ways in which the forms (and changes in styles) reflect the content, and changes in the content. The world of art is not seen as hermetically closed, but open to the realm of ideas. An examination of the influence of aspects of the Oriental world view is an attempt to consider the way in which these two worlds interact, and to present this interaction in terms of the broad picture as well as describing the specific processes whereby individual artists become aware of and use Oriental concepts.

There are several consequences of these intentions for the form of the thesis. Firstly, in the broad time span it will consider in order to understand how the influence develops. The chronological limits will not be rigid, and although the mid-1940's to the mid-1960's will be the main focus of our concern, we will pay attention to earlier events such as Tobey's trip to the Far East during the 1930's, and consider late works by artists whose careers fall largely within our dates. The wide variety of artists discussed (not all of them major figures in their own right)<sup>4</sup> is a further consequence of the desire to present an overall picture, as is the thematic approach which will be adopted. Although some of the 'feel' of individual artists' work will of necessity be lost, it is felt that this method offers more advantages than disadvantages. The concern with the content of art which this thesis will display will manifest itself in an emphasis on the importance of considering artists' own statements about their work. I feel that insufficient attention has been paid to the actual intentions of the artists I will be treating,

and whilst these statements must not be read uncritically, I believe they provide invaluable evidence concerning the nature of the Oriental influence which is not available from other sources.

The first section of the thesis will consider specific sources of Oriental influence. Following this will be a discussion of the way in which Eastern concepts have affected artists' attitudes towards the creative process, and their views on the function of art. The remaining part of the thesis will be given over to an account of the manner in which some aspects of the Oriental world view<sup>5</sup> have had an impact on the 'language' of forms in painting and sculpture. Whilst a division in this manner does, I feel, aid the presentation of the thesis, there are many ways in which the separate sections will be seen to overlap, giving differing perspectives on the same themes and thereby confirming the depth of artists' interest in the Orient.

CHAPTER ONEFENOLLOSA AND EARLY AMERICAN INTEREST IN THE ORIENT

This chapter and that which follows will introduce some of the particular sources - either Oriental texts or the work of specific interpreters - through which American artists gained awareness of Eastern thought. The intention is not to provide an exhaustive treatment, but to give some idea of the specific 'texture' of the three major traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism and to point out the different ways in which Oriental thought is represented by various commentators. Where possible, influences from specific traditions, texts or interpreters on particular artists will be noted, since future chapters will often emphasize the underlying similarity of the different traditions and discuss general 'Oriental' traits. Further discussion of sources will, however, occur at appropriate stages of the thesis.

Many aspects of modern American art can be seen to display a continuity with European modernism. The following chapter will (amongst other subjects) discuss the impact of Oriental thought on Surrealism in order to examine the extent to which an historical continuity can be seen. This chapter, however, will begin with a brief consideration of the degree to which roots can be traced of a specifically American interest in the East.

An attraction in the American arts towards the Orient can be traced back as early as Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, who were all responsive to Hindu thought <sup>1</sup>. More recent influences from the East must be evaluated against this knowledge than an early assimilation had already occurred. Whilst it would be a digression to consider this prior influence further here, it should be noted that some more recent visual artists (for example, Lassaw) were not unaware of the work of Thoreau and of its parallels with the Orient.

American philosophers, such as William James and Santayana also show respect for Oriental thought and an interest can be traced in writers such as Lafcadio Hearn, author of Gleanings in Buddha Fields (1897). A key figure however - and the one we shall concentrate upon in our investigation of early American interest in the Orient - is Ernest

Fenollosa's writings, which drew upon his personal experiences of the Far East, are responsible for a quantum leap in the West's appreciation of the art of that area. Previously the interest of Western artists in Chinese and Japanese art had centred on its exotic appeal and decorative use, or had been concerned with exploiting the formal qualities of popular prints. Fenollosa lays the way open for a more fruitful encounter by concerning himself with the high art, not only of Japan but of China too. He places the works of art within the context of the metaphysics and aesthetics of their culture, hence revealing the depth of meaning they convey. His work put America ahead of Europe in the understanding of Oriental art, making it a more likely place for a fusion of Eastern and Western trends to take place - a fusion which he himself predicts.

The aspects of Far Eastern aesthetics which Fenollosa emphasizes in his writings would have enhanced its appeal to modernist artists. He stresses, for example, the abstractness of Japanese art.

The Japanese [Fenollosa is reported as saying in an 1892 Boston lecture] .. would just as lief at first see a picture upside down; that is they admire beauty of line and colour in art, rather than .. merely depicting nature <sup>2</sup>.

The role of spontaneity, a quality he finds in Far Eastern painting, is given particular attention in Fenollosa's aesthetic. His feeling was that art students should be encouraged to undertake original creative work from the beginning, rather than graduating to it after proficiency in copying had been achieved. Fenollosa also emphasized linearity, another factor which, like spontaneity, was to prove important to certain later trends in American art where Oriental ideas played a part. His writings were not to be without influence on these tendencies <sup>3</sup>. Ezra Pound, himself influenced by Fenollosa's ideas, <sup>4</sup> comments upon his role as a pioneer.

His mind was constantly filled with parallels and comparisons between Eastern and Western art ..... he looked to an American Renaissance .... In his search through unknown art, Fenollosa,



coming upon unknown motives and principles unrecognized in the West, was already led into many modes of thought since fruitful in 'new' Western painting and poetry ... He was a forerunner without knowing it and without being known as such <sup>5</sup>,

This statement, made in 1916, has become even more true in the light of subsequent developments in American art.

There is at least some evidence available which gives concrete support to the suggestion that American artists of following generations were aware of, and affected by, Fenollosa's writings. His study 'Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art' stands out as the major early introduction to Far Eastern painting, and it would therefore be natural that artists should turn to it when seeking information on the art of those cultures. Reinhardt, for example, includes it in a reading list he prepared for his students at Brooklyn College. Graves had read this work <sup>6</sup>, as had Max Weber several years earlier <sup>7</sup>. Stamos was also familiar with 'Epochs ...' and we can assume that it was instrumental in the development of his acknowledged interest in Far Eastern painting. Fenollosa's essay, 'The Chinese Character as a medium in poetry' also created an impression on Stamos who could see links between the ideas expressed in it and the automatist and calligraphic trends visible in American art of his own age (see below, page 200). Amongst other artists who show awareness of Fenollosa's ideas are Tobey and MacDonald-Wright (who includes him in a list of art writers whom he appreciates but does not necessarily agree with).

Fenollosa's ideas reached artists not only through their contact with his books, but by less direct channels. Arthur Dow, collaborator with Fenollosa and author of 'Composition' (1899), turned his theories on art derived from a study of oriental models into a system of art education. Dow's efforts as an art educator - he became head of the Fine Arts department at Columbia Teachers College - were to take Fenollosa's ideas into the mainstream of American art teaching. Tomlin's high school teacher, for one, was influenced by Dow, and this may have been a factor in the artist's willingness to adopt a calligraphic style.

As early as 1893 Dow had written on the theme 'A note on Japanese Art and what the American Artist may learn therefrom' and in a 1915 address to the American Federation of Arts (two years after the Armory Show) he defended modernism in art and aligned the Oriental with it as factors for change in American art:

I regret the persistence of ... academism in America and sincerely hope that this association will not permit it to have full sway over proposed new college courses. Japanese art has done much towards breaking the hold of this tyranny, the incoming Chinese art will do more, but it may remain for modernist art to set us free<sup>8</sup>.

Two pioneers of modern American painting can be personally associated with Dow. Georgia O'Keeffe met Alan Bement, an advocate of Dow's methods in 1912, and studied under Dow for two years from 1914 at the Teachers College, Columbia. Her early linear, monochrome brush experiments seem to echo similar qualities in the Far Eastern aesthetics, and a love of Chinese art has been attested to by the artist<sup>9</sup>. Max Weber also took Dow's course in design at the Pratt Institute, entering in 1898. The photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn, another student of Dow, emphasizes the Oriental qualities he learnt to appreciate in Dow's classes:

I learnt many things at this school, not the least an appreciation of what the Orient has to offer in terms of simplicity and directness in composition. [Coburn feels that all his work] .. has been influenced to a large extent and beneficially by this Oriental background, and I am deeply grateful to Arthur Dow<sup>10</sup>.

Fenollosa's effect on American art was also felt through the impact of the collections of Oriental art he helped assemble, which gave American artists access to the best collections in the West. In 1890 he became the first curator of the Japanese collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, many of the works being those he had personally purchased in the East. Amongst the artists for whom this collection was to become

significant we can mention Morris Graves, who made a special visit to Boston in the late 1940's (see below, page 41). For John McLaughlin the Boston collection played a crucial role.

To me the essential difference in [sic] Japanese art and that of the West became apparent many years ago when I frequented the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. I could not resist making comparisons between the superb works of the Japanese masters and those of the West <sup>11</sup>.

Ossorio remembers "the extraordinary collection at the Boston Museum" from the time he studied at Harvard, whilst Masson visited the Oriental art collection at Boston at the end of 1942. He had found it very difficult to see Chinese painting in Paris, being forced to rely on illustrations in German and Scandinavian books. Thus the visit was to have a great impact on him, being a key catalyst of the 'Oriental' phase which was later to occur in his work <sup>12</sup>.

Fenollosa also had a hand in the development of the Freer collection, donated to the Smithsonian in 1906. He advised Charles Freer in assembling the collection, selling him works of his own. The collection, consisting of Japanese paintings and pottery, together with the work of Whistler, was unusual for the time in not paying attention to European art. Tobey <sup>13</sup>, Graves and Onslow-Ford <sup>14</sup> are amongst the artists who made use of this collection, whilst Stamos visited it several times during the mid to late 1940's when his style was being crystallized.

#### ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

Ananda Coomaraswamy stands out as one of the principal interpreters of Oriental aesthetics to a Western audience. It is from his perspective that many American artists first became acquainted with Hindu theories of art, a perspective which attributes great importance to the relationship between art and the underlying metaphysical system and which is particularly well expressed in his discussion of the links between the theory of

Indian art and the concepts of yoga philosophy. While the quality and range of his scholarship is indisputable, the fact that relatively few serious scholars were providing the West with an understanding of Oriental aesthetics at the time ('The Transformation of Nature in Art' was first published by the Harvard University Press in 1934) may have meant that artists reading his works were unaware of the controversial nature of his perspective. Coomaraswamy's understanding of the nature of art places him at odds with the illusionistic tradition that can be said to have dominated Western art since the Renaissance <sup>15</sup>, as well as with theories of art which regard its role as the idealization of reality <sup>16</sup>. This, together with his clarity in probing the relationship between artistic creativity and the inner life of the psyche, as understood in Oriental aesthetics, accounts for his popularity with the avant-garde.

Throughout his life Coomaraswamy had maintained links, albeit selectively, with the world of practising artists. Whilst in England, for example, he had come to know William Rothenstein, and through Rothenstein he met Eric Gill with whom he formed a lifelong friendship. Evaluating the importance of Coomaraswamy's influence for him in his autobiography, Gill writes:

I can only say that I believe that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art and life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding <sup>17</sup>.

In America, Coomaraswamy became curator of the collection of Oriental art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (the post first held by Fenollosa) and had many avenues of contact with the American art world. Exchanges of correspondence took place with Hilla Rebay <sup>18</sup> and with Meyer Schapiro <sup>19</sup>. Dorothy Norman, writer on art and myth from a viewpoint sympathetic to Jung, knew Coomaraswamy and had many conversations with him <sup>20</sup>. Since she was acquainted with Stieglitz, Graves, Ossorio and others in the New York art world, she may well have been responsible for making artists aware of his ideas.

Whilst Coomaraswamy's antipathy to Renaissance traditions would have appealed to the avant-garde, he was on the whole disapproving of modern, and especially abstract, art. He writes:

The very term modern art is an absurdity. The notion that one should attempt to be original in art is sheer nonsense<sup>21</sup>...  
 Abstract art is not an iconography of transcendental forms,<sup>22</sup>  
 but the realistic picture of a disintegrated personality.

This critique of modernism was not the stumbling block it might have been for artists attempting to apply Coomaraswamy's ideas to their work, since it played a minor part in his theorizing. In fact the traditionalist bias of his writing left artists free to apply his notions to modern art in their own terms.

This lack of sympathy with modern art did not prevent Coomaraswamy from playing an active role in acquiring in 1924 a collection of Stieglitz prints for the Boston Museum<sup>23</sup>. Although acquainted earlier, Coomaraswamy and Stieglitz first met at length in early March 1923. They were to remain in touch throughout their lives. Writing to Stieglitz on 4th March 1923, Coomaraswamy praises his work:

I have never before had a good opportunity to see your photographs: they were quite a revelation and are totally different from all others<sup>24</sup>.

Stieglitz was to give Coomaraswamy an appreciation of the latter's own photography<sup>25</sup>, and was to receive a copy of The Dance of Siva and another of his books<sup>26</sup>, indicating that the aesthete's writings on Oriental art and thought would have been known to him, and possibly to other artists in his circle. This is certainly the case with Georgia O'Keeffe. Her interest in Oriental art is attested to, and she apparently kept an eye out for Coomaraswamy's essays on art as they appeared. They had certainly met by November 1923<sup>27</sup>.

Although there are other ways in which we can document a link between Coomaraswamy and the American art world - he owned a Demuth watercolour, for instance, and was a partner in the 'Orientalia' bookshop in New York (frequented by Stamos amongst others) - the main channel of his influence was through his writings rather than through personal contacts. To show the wide range of visual artists (as well as those in other media) who were acquainted with his interpretations of Oriental aesthetics it might be useful to make a brief list here of those who are known to have read or owned his books - no doubt there were many others: Lassaw, Lippold <sup>28</sup>, Noguchi <sup>29</sup>, MacDonald-Wright <sup>30</sup>, Tobey, Graves, Guy Anderson (another Seattle painter), Ossorio <sup>31</sup>, Reinhardt <sup>32</sup>, O'Keeffe and Onslow-Ford; the Europeans Ittens, Gliezes and Gill; and from other arts Stieglitz, Cage, Bernard Leach <sup>33</sup>, and Martha Graham.

The most influential of Coomaraswamy's books was undoubtedly 'The Transformation of Nature in Art'. In this book he discusses various aspects of Oriental aesthetics, but concentrates particularly on Indian art. The latter is discussed in relation to yoga philosophy and other concepts found in Hindu texts. Parallels between the traditional Oriental idea of art's function and those of mediaeval Europe are made through a study of Meister Eckhart's writings. Amongst those artists which we can state with certainty have read (or at least owned) this work are Tobey <sup>34</sup>, Graves, Ossorio <sup>35</sup>, Lippold, Lassaw <sup>36</sup>, MacDonald-Wright and Reinhardt, together with the French painter Gliezes <sup>37</sup> and the English artist Eric Gill.

Composer John Cage had also read this book, and he regards it as Coomaraswamy's most important <sup>38</sup>. It played a key role in helping him formulate his aesthetic, through which its ideas were transmitted to a number of visual artists.

One idea which Cage takes from this sources is Coomaraswamy's description of the notion of the 'permanent emotions', as understood in Indian aesthetics. He acknowledges his source:

After reading the works of Ananda K Coomaraswamy I decided to attempt the expression in music of the 'permanent emotions' of Indian tradition: the heroic, the erotic, the wondrous, the mirthful, sorrow, fear, anger, the odious, and their common tendency towards tranquillity <sup>39</sup>.

Cage claims that 'Sonatas and Interludes' was a result of this interest. In interview he discusses further 'that marvellous listing of the emotions . I've never found a better listing of them, and certainly I haven't found that psychiatrists or Western philosophers understand the emotions as well as the Indians did. I've never found a superior discussion of the emotions to that in Coomaraswamy' <sup>40</sup> Another idea Cage takes from Coomaraswamy which we might mention here is 'the Indian idea (and Japanese Zen too) of the seasons. Creation, Preservation, Destruction, Quiescence' <sup>41</sup> This idea led to 'The Seasons' which was performed in 1947 to the choreography of Merce Cunningham and with design by Noguchi.

The discussion of the idea of the 'permanent emotions' provides us with an example of the way in which Cage acted as a channel for the transmission of Coomaraswamy's ideas to visual artists. Lippold describes the interest he took in Hindu philosophy as a result of Cage's encouragement:

When I met him I was fascinated by his interest in Hindu affairs [Lippold had already obtained some recordings of Hindu music] ... He described to me the structure of classical Hindu art and it sounded exactly like what I was involved with in my work - we got on very, very well with this <sup>42</sup>.

Of 'Five Variations within a Sphere' (various metals, 3 to 12" diameter, 1947), Lippold says:

I made them because John had told me about Hindu classical laws of form and work. He said there are four bright emotions and four dark emotions which in Hindu art all have their symbolic representation, and the whole problem of composition is simply to put these together in various quantities like a recipe and get the final feeling you want. These are only general qualities and they're not labelled by such complex things as love or hate which are

combinations of these things. And then he said there's a ninth one - tranquillity - which, according to classical Hindu laws, never occurs in life but only in art ... John described it, I thought it was an enchanting idea. I decided that I would make pieces all related in structure, but each having a different quality. That's what these five little pieces are <sup>43</sup>.

Perhaps the key concept in 'The Transformation of Nature in Art' certainly as far as artists appear to have been concerned, is contained in the following typification of Oriental art, given on page 11:

Asiatic art is ideal in the mathematical sense: like Nature ('natura naturans') not in appearance (viz. that of 'ens natura') but in operation.

Whilst this statement is somewhat open-ended and capable of being interpreted by artists in their own way, its implication in terms of Coomaraswamy's aesthetic is that the task of art is not illusionism. Rather than attempting to capture the outward forms of nature the artist should attempt to harmonize himself with its dynamic character, following in his creative process the same pattern that nature takes (according to the Oriental world view) in generating her forms. The process of a work's creation is given a greater emphasis in this way of thinking about art, (as we shall note further below in Chapter Three).

Cage picks upon this particular statement as a sort of talisman, and his interest in it is a source of the awareness of it shown by artists in his circle. He writes:

I have for many years accepted ..... the doctrine about Art, Occidental and Oriental, set forth by Ananda K Coomaraswamy in his book 'The Transformation of Nature in Art' that the function of Art is to imitate Nature in her manner of operation <sup>44</sup>. I used that [this phrase of Coomaraswamy's] as a test, in so far as I could, of my work <sup>45</sup>.



Cage's cultivation of chance (which we will examine below, page 126), and indeed the whole attitude he takes towards the creative process, can be seen as an attempt to make the evolution of his works conform to the patterns of growth attributed to nature by Oriental philosophy.

Lippold singles out this same statement for special comment, clearly having been made aware of it by Cage:

Ananda Coomaraswamy has written 'Art imitates nature, not in outward appearances, but in its method of operation'. To which John Cage ... has added 'How does nature operate, well or badly? Nature just operates; neither is the answer. And that is what we imitate. When it is snowing well here, it is drying up badly some place else' <sup>46</sup>.

Both Lippold and Cage are using Coomaraswamy's statement as a justification for abandoning choices and preferences in the working process.

Rauschenberg may also have been made aware of this concept of Coomaraswamy's by Cage, with whom he has been closely associated. His 'Dirt Painting: For John Cage' (1953) which contained real plants needing to be watered seems to almost literally reflect this idea of art imitating nature in her processes of operation, an interpretation which is supported by the work's having been dedicated to Cage.

Lassaw also knows of this dictum <sup>47</sup> which may have encouraged his avoidance of illusionism in his art and Motherwell also appears to allude to it <sup>48</sup>. Onslow-Ford, another abstract artist, seems to be invoking Coomaraswamy's statement in his rejection of illusionism. He writes:

A painter cannot hope to compete with the fruits of nature by trying to imitate them, but he can follow nature's process and create with her aid his own fruits <sup>49</sup>.

This emphasis on participating in the processes of nature (as understood by the Oriental philosophies) during the creative process will be seen (below, especially page 89, and page 90) as characterizing the attitude of Onslow-Ford and Lassaw to their work. Morris Graves,

whilst not painting in an abstract style, also eschews illusionism, and seems to rely on Coomaraswamy's authority to justify his position. The following statement from his application for a Guggenheim grant (November 1945) is made in the context of a discussion of the importance he attaches to Asiatic art as an influence on the direction of his own artistic quest, and is followed by other statements which clearly show the influence of Coomaraswamy's writings: Western painting, for Graves, in using the outward forms of nature, is 'too frequently and too feebly only re-stating what the surface of nature looks like [Graves's underlining]. Recent developments in modern painting and other sciences have indicated how the mind and how nature operate'<sup>50</sup>.

Coomaraswamy, as a traditionalist, does not believe in artistic progress, and spurns (as we have noted above, page 32) notions of originality and personal expression. This position is certainly at odds with the major tendencies of modern art but some artists do show a sympathy with the idea that the artist should adopt an attitude of anonymity, especially when this is understood as referring to the subjective stance the artist should adopt during the creative process, an attitude of impersonality (see below, page 88). Coomaraswamy's own formulation of this idea can be seen as a source for artists, perhaps influencing Reinhardt for example. Certainly Graves's comments on anonymity (discussed below, page 94) would be informed by his reading of Coomaraswamy. Lippold also parallels Coomaraswamy in praising the lack of individuality and novelty in traditional Oriental and Mediaeval European artists:

There was no great invention amongst all the sculptors of the Middle Ages, there was no great individuality even in the early Renaissance, or ... in the Orient. When a culture is a very clear, tight culture, there's no room for variation from it, or invention, but wonderful things are done under those conditions.

Lippold contrasts this view of the artists's role to that of the modern age, in which originality is expected:

We have not only to express ideas or give form to them but today we are also expected to create a philosophy and then illustrate it, and this has given artists, I feel, a false idea of their own importance, and has given to the world a false idea of the artist as more than a craftsman<sup>51</sup>.

In 'The Transformation of Nature in Art' a parallel is pointed out between Oriental aesthetics and those of Mediaeval Europe. Several artists show by their statements that they have been made aware of this similarity by Coomaraswamy. Lippold's comments above on the aesthetic of traditional cultures are applied by the artist to both East and West, and Cage reveals that his awareness of Eckhardt's writings is owed to Coomaraswamy<sup>52</sup>.

Ossorio explains that his knowledge of Oriental art came through his interest in Mediaeval European art, and via Coomaraswamy's pointing out of the parallels. An influence from Oriental art came about "through ... an influence of pre-gothic European art, and then through a general investigation of periods that thought in similar terms about the subject matter, the position ... the whole question of is art a superstition or a way of life, ... it was in that sense very much directed by the writings of a man like Coomaraswamy"<sup>53</sup>.

I think there's no doubt that [there exists] parallels between Romanesque and the classic early Buddhists, or the sculpture of Nara and the early Gothic sculpture<sup>54</sup>.

From this position, Ossorio came to see that it would be possible to reinterpret the Oriental aesthetic in relation to the aims of modern Western artists:

It soon dawned on me that if that was true then, it could also be true, in a totally different way, with a dissimilar iconography, in our own era. This, of course, did not happen immediately, it happened over a period of years and it happened to me ... after meeting with people like Dubuffet and Pollock<sup>55</sup>.

Tobey also notes the similarities between Mediaeval European and Oriental art and Coomaraswamy can be conjectured as having provided his source. In a February 1953 letter to his dealer, Marion Willard, he writes:

I wouldn't mind revisiting the old beauties of Europe, although my tendencies tend toward the Orient, or if in Europe in the Mediaeval where the two strains and attitudes meet in the abstraction of the human and divine ideas. Bodhisattvas and Saints, of Gothic so similar in conception - not super-human, as an Oriental said, but non-human, yet not mechanical <sup>56</sup>.

Coomaraswamy's discussion of anonymity showed him as denigrating the elitist view of the artist's role which was the heritage of Romantic individualism in modern art. He furthers this attack in another way in 'The Transformation of Nature in Art' by proposing that all human activities have a creative dimension, that art is only one avenue in which this creative faculty is made manifest. 'The artist [he writes, page 64] is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist'. This idea is known to Reinhardt, who talks of 'the realization that the artist was not a special kind of human being, but that every person was a special kind of artist. Aesthetic values were found to be around in all activities'<sup>57</sup>. Cage's notion that the composer should not impose a score on the orchestra, but allow the musicians a role in determining the final work seems related to this idea that creativity is shared by all, which also seems to have influenced Noguchi (see page 117). Eric Gill apparently liked to quote this statement, and Onslow-Ford also repeats the idea (without acknowledging its source) in 'Painting in the Instant' . 'Every man is at heart a special artist' he states, listing everyday activities - cooking, gardening, building - as art forms. He feels 'All activities could become an art again <sup>58</sup>'. 'The Transformation of Nature in Art' again provides a source, On page 9 Coomaraswamy informs the reader that Indian aesthetics makes no 'distinction of kind as between fine and decorative, free or servile, art ... Indian literature provides us with numerous lists of the eighteen or more professional arts (silpa) and the sixty-four avocational arts (kala); and these embrace every kind of skilled

activity, from music, painting and weaving to horsemanship, cookery and the practice of magic, without distinction of rank, all being equally of angelic origin'.

Despite an apparent discrepancy of number, Coomaraswamy can also be seen as providing the source of a statement of Morris Graves's which sees painting as just one amongst many arts:

That magnificent, ancient and enlightened civilization of India specifically names more than eighty-five Arts - cooking, wheelmaking, carpentry, gardening, love, weaning the child, et cetera. For them, these activities demand the discipline and concentration necessary to perform a work of art <sup>59</sup>.

In a similar statement, Sam Francis says:

If there are three hundred and sixty schools of wisdom,  
I choose art <sup>60</sup>.

Coomaraswamy's view of art is closely linked to his understanding of yoga philosophy. He follows Indian aesthetics in seeing the process of artistic creation as following the same pattern as the processes of yogic meditation and devotion, indeed borrowing yoga's specialized techniques of visualization and its cultivation of an attitude of absorption and identification. Inspiration is to be sought in a trance-like state of one-pointedness. Discussing the procedure of the Indian icon-maker (page 5) he writes that 'the mind "pro-duces" or "draws" (akarṣati) this form to itself, as though from a great distance. Ultimately, that is, from Heaven, where the types of art exist in formal operation; immediately, from "the immanent space in the heart" (āntar-hṛdaya-ākāśa), the common focus (samstāva, "concord") of seer and seen, at which place the only possible experience of reality takes place. The true-knowledge-purity-aspect (Jñāna-sattva-rūpa) thus conceived and inwardly known (antar-jñeya) reveals itself against the ideal space (ākāśa) like a reflection (pratibimbavat) or as if seen in a dream (svapnavat). The imager must realize a complete-self-identification with it ..... the form thus known in an act of

non-differentiation, being held in view as long as may be necessary ... is the model from which he proceeds to execution in stone, pigment or other material'.

Morris Graves was deeply influenced by Coomaraswamy's discussion of the use of yogic visualization techniques, and based his attitude to the creative process on it. He was certainly aware of these ideas by 1945, when he writes about 'that ultimate creative technique of apprehending the forms of nature within "Ideal Space" ... that profound and natural space of the mind'. He feels that authentic and vital imagery can only come from this source:

Images from this space can so penetrate and clarify the individual psyche that the experiencing of a work of art strikes into the soul of the observer, rather than only sensuously occupying the eye .... or inducing the desire to 'own' the work of art to enhance the sensations of the ego <sup>61</sup>.

Elsewhere in the same statement he more directly displays that he is discussing the Oriental method. He writes:

The artists of Asia have spiritually-realized form, rather than aesthetically-invented or limited form.

Graves describes three kinds of 'space' <sup>62</sup> to which an artist might go for inspiration, this 'Ideal space' being described as the 'space of consciousness', the one 'in which form occurs' and which should be every artist's goal. We have already noted (Page 37 and note 15 ) Graves's rejection of illusionism, which he sees as a search for inspiration in the first of these three spaces - 'phenomenal space'. Surrealistic, oneiric imagery, lacking in universality in Graves's estimation, comes from the second - 'mental space'. Graves claimed this scheme was outlined to him by Coomaraswamy in conversation, during the visit Graves made to him at Boston in 1947 whilst on a Guggenheim grant <sup>63</sup>. He felt these distinctions were 'the only sound basis for a valid art criticism' <sup>64</sup>.

There is a discussion by Graves of his ideas concerning the 'three spaces' in a letter to Mel Kohler of 1950, and it would be useful to make an extended quotation from it at this point <sup>65</sup>.

The observer must be mindful of the simple fact that there are three 'spaces':

Phenomenal Space (the world of nature, of phenomena), the space 'outside' of us;  
Mental Space, the space within which dreams occur, and the images of the imagination take shape;  
Space of Consciousness, the space within which is 'revealed' (made visible upon subtle levels of the mind), the abstract principles of the origin, operation, and ultimate experience of consciousness.

It is from this space of consciousness that comes the universally significant images and symbols of the greatest of religious works of art.

The observer can readily see from which 'space' an artist has taken his ideas and forms.

The observer is only cheating himself out of the fullest enjoyment of and information from a painting if he makes the foolish demand that the painting function within a 'space' from which it did not originate.

The majority of artists along with the majority of laymen have either no inclination to understand their own ability to segregate these 'spaces' - and be informed by them - or they enjoy the confusion and unintelligibility which results from blindly mixing these three spaces.

This faculty of visualization which Graves employs in his works he terms the 'inner eye'. References to it occur in the titles of works which have relied on this visionary source of subject matter

for example Little Known bird of the Inner Eye (tempera, 24 20 3/4 x 36 5/8", 1941 collection M O M A, New York). He describes the nature of these 'Inner Eye' images in the following way:

The images seen within the space of the inner eye are as clear as 'seeing stars' before your eyes if you get up suddenly. It is certain that they are subjective, yet there is the absolute feeling that they are outside around your head. This is the nearest analogy to the spatializing of the inner eye <sup>66</sup>.

The non-naturalistic luminosity in these works (for example, Bird in the Spirit, tempera, 24 x 30", 1943, collection Metropolitan Museum, New York) is a stylistic consequence of Graves's mode of seeking inspiration as is the heightened range of colours. The spatial void which often forms a background to the imagery in these works, (for example, Consciousness achieving the form of a Crane, 1945, collection Seattle Art Museum) symbolically conveys an idea of the unbounded 'space' of consciousness, the mental 'emptiness' against which the image is visualized and from which it is conceived as having appeared (see above, page 41). A statement by Coomaraswamy may be related to Graves's use of this 'unbounded' format. He writes:

In Western art the picture is generally conceived as seen in a frame or through a window ... but the Oriental image really exists only in our mind and heart and is thence projected or reflected onto space <sup>67</sup>.

At Chartres, which he visited in 1948, Graves tries to apply Coomaraswamy's ideas about space to this masterpiece of Mediaeval European art. He describes the space seen through the windows from inside as 'a mental space', 'immeasurable' <sup>68</sup>. He even attempts, (despite the shortcomings he felt it had) to interpret Surrealism in the same way. The use of expansive space in Surrealist painting is seen as having a similar intention to that which he himself confesses:

Vast spaces and beaches are not backdrops for objects - they are mental-spiritual experiences - even if some of the painters seem hopelessly lost in poetic language <sup>69</sup>.



LAO TZU

The 'Tao Te Ching', attributed to the semi-legendary figure of Lao Tzu, is the classic text of Taoist philosophy. American artists could have become familiar with it through the great number of translations which are available. Amongst the artists whom we can state with certainty have been acquainted with this work can be numbered the following: Lassaw, Pousette-Dart <sup>70</sup>, Lipton, Reinhardt, Jenkins, Stamos, Andre, Tobey, Pollock <sup>71</sup>, Ferren <sup>72</sup>, MacDonald-Wright <sup>73</sup> and Onslow-Ford <sup>74</sup>. Figures in related fields who were familiar with it include John Cage <sup>75</sup> and Frank Lloyd Wright. Unlike certain other texts which were not obtainable in translation till recent times, the Tao Te Ching would have been available to previous generations of artists, and it was known to Ittens, as well as to the Dadaists Tzara, Arp and Hausmann, amongst other modernists.

An emphasis on not interfering with the processes of Nature is found in all of the Oriental philosophies, but this attitude of passivity is especially a keynote of Taoism. It can be viewed as a 'Nature' philosophy, in contrast to the other major system of Chinese thought - Confucianism - whose concern is rather with man's active, social responsibilities. In the Tao Te Ching this stress on passivity ('Wu-Wei' - not doing) is ever-present:

Better stop short than fill to the brim  
 Oversharpen the blade, and the edge will soon blunt  
 Amass a store of gold and jade, and no one can protect it  
 Claim wealth and titles, and disaster will follow <sup>76</sup>.

Sometimes the statement of this position verges on caricature:

Give up sainthood, renounce wisdom, and it will be a hundred times better for everyone <sup>77</sup>.

This mental attitude, as we shall see below, was found to be attractive to certain American artists, who attempted to adopt it during their process of working. Amongst those for whom the Taoist

formulation of the idea may have been particularly important are Reinhardt, Noguchi, Andre and Lassaw. Lassaw notes in his diary Lao Tzu's statement 'abandon in order to obtain',<sup>78</sup> which conveys the spirit of the Tao's philosophy. Carl Andre, (not surprisingly since he is a sculptor), responds particularly to the metaphor of the 'uncarved block' which Lao Tzu uses to express the idea of passivity and simplicity. This symbol is found in the fifteenth chapter where the 'ancient masters' are described as 'simple, like uncarved blocks of wood', and again in the twenty-eight chapter where the reader is exhorted to 'return to the state of the uncarved block'. It is referred to by Andre in the title of his work 'The Way North, East, South, West (Uncarved blocks), Western Red cedar, 5 units, each 12 x 12 x 36", 1975, collection the artist. Andre states that 'after I stopped carving I discovered the texts of Lao Tze and was reassured by them'. While admitting that 'the 'Way' pieces do refer to Lao Tze' he denies then that his initial decision to abandon carving was made as a result of reading the Tao Te Ching<sup>79</sup>. It seems clear however that his later works (and those later works of Noguchi in which carving is limited and the stone's original quality is retained) were informed by the views of Lao Tzu as expressed in the passages concerning the 'uncarved block', and others where a similar passivity is encouraged<sup>80</sup>.

The 'Tao', the 'Way' (as it literally means) is the central concept of Taoism, and hence of the Tao Te Ching. Watts explains 'Tao' as 'the indefinable, concrete process of the world'<sup>81</sup>, but while the word has several shades of philosophic meaning, it can sometimes be seen as referring to the unmanifest 'Void' which is understood as underlying phenomenal experience according to all the major Oriental philosophies. 'Tao is the source of the ten thousand things'<sup>82</sup> (that is, of the diverse phenomena of manifest reality), yet in itself it is beyond the realm of the senses or the intellect - 'the Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao'<sup>83</sup>. As we shall see below (Chapter Five), the Concept of the Void proved to be very important for several American artists, and the writings of Lao Tzu can be regarded as a major source of their awareness<sup>84</sup>.

One key passage in the Tao Te Ching brings out this idea of an unmanifest dimension of existence which gives birth to and nourishes manifest creation:

Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub;  
 It is the center hole that makes it useful.  
 Shape clay into a vessel;  
 It is the space within that makes it useful.  
 Cut doors and windows for a room;  
 It is the holes which make it useful.  
 Therefore profit comes from what is there;  
 Usefulness from what is not there.

This particular set of images from the eleventh chapter seems to have sparked the imagination of several artists. Tobey, for example, writes:

The old Japan with its Zen teaching and philosophy of Taoism found that what was in the empty cup was more palatable than what was in the full one. That is, the circle of emptiness freed by the imagination permitted one to reach a state of mind which released one from having to consider someone else's ideas<sup>85</sup>.

Paul Jenkins quotes the same statement (altering the metaphor slightly) to throw light on his use of areas of empty space in paintings. Emptiness is not associated with vacuity, but with the 'fullness' of the Void:

Zen masters made their emptiness full. Less means full like the empty spaces between the spokes of the wheel, without which there is no energy or substance. Limitation, I mean aesthetic limitation, allows the artist to fill the canvas. Now that goes back to Taoism where the significance of the wheel was that the space between the spokes made the thing charged with energy. That empty space is not empty. It serves an energy function which makes the invisible visible<sup>86</sup>.

Onslow-Ford can also be seen as referring to this statement when he writes 'just as we take advantage of what is, we should recognise the usefulness of what is not'<sup>87</sup>.

It is interesting to note that the same metaphors found in Lao Tzu by painters were given a sympathetic ear in the other arts. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright applies one of the metaphors (again it is slightly rephrased) in a literal way in this discussion of his aesthetic:

Lao Tzu was the man ... who first declared that the reality of the building did not consist of four walls and a roof, but in the space within - to be lived in - and that's our organic architecture today <sup>88</sup>.

Wright came across this notion of Lao Tzu's in Okakura Kakuzo's 'The Book of Tea', but whilst he feels that his 'gospel of Organic architecture ... has more in common with Oriental thought than it has with any other thing the West has ever confessed' <sup>89</sup>, he claims that he only became aware of the Oriental parallels after he had discovered the principles for himself.

Seymour Lipton's 'Hub' (35 x 25 x 14", 1975) may recall Lao Tzu's metaphor, which appears to have been influential on another (very different) sculptor, Carl Andre. The lines we have quoted have been described as his favorite passage from the Tao Te Ching <sup>90</sup>. For the sake of completeness we can note that they were also chosen by Ittens to open a students' exhibition as early as 1918 <sup>91</sup>.

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A further passage from the Tao Te Ching which struck a chord with an artist is the statement 'the five colours blind the eye' (Chapter 12) which is quoted by Reinhardt as if it were a denial of the field of the senses <sup>92</sup>. One is reminded of his late (almost black) canvases, in which colour has been virtually eliminated. Reinhardt came to regard the effects of colour as uncontrollable, and hence eliminated it from his work in favour of black, which he looked upon as a non-colour. The hypothesis that his reading of the Tao Te Ching was a factor in the transformation his art undertook is given further weight by the fact that this book uses metaphors of darkness to describe the Tao. It is described as 'through and through mysterious and dark', and elsewhere as 'dim and dark, showing no outward form'. Both these formulations can be found as quotations in Reinhardt's notes.

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HERRIGEL

Eugen Herrigel's 'Zen in the Art of Archery', first published in America in 1953, by Pantheon Books, can be counted as one of the most significant sources whereby the philosophy of Zen was transmitted to American artists. Because of the relatively late date of its publication, Herrigel's book could not have functioned as an introduction to Zen for artists of the Abstract Expressionists' generation, but its popularity in the art world appears to have been immediate. Herrigel explains the concepts of Zen by recounting his experiences whilst learning archery in Japan, and this way of treating philosophical matters with reference to a practical skill made his book particularly accessible to artists, who rapidly discovered an application of its ideas to their own situation. Several artists appear to have been encouraged by a reading of Herrigel into adopting a new attitude to the creative process, emphasizing qualities of spontaneity, effortlessness and a close identification with the work. This influence will be examined in context in a following chapter <sup>93</sup>.

Amongst those artists who can be shown through documentary evidence to have read Herrigel's book, or at least owned it - most certainly there are many others - are the following: Noguchi, Tobey, Jenkins, Stamos, Pollock <sup>94</sup>, Motherwell <sup>95</sup>, Lee Mullican <sup>96</sup>, Masson <sup>97</sup> Braque <sup>98</sup> and Alan Davie <sup>99</sup>.

Noguchi's sculpture 'The Bow' (Siena marble and black petit granite, 54" high, c 1970, collection the artist) appears to recall Herrigel's book, which we know he was aware of <sup>100</sup>. The Sculptor's knowledge of archery as a Zen art would however predate the publication of this book - a photograph reproduced in Sam Hunter (Isamu Noguchi, New York, 1978, Page 28 ) shows Noguchi as a child in Japan watching archery practice take place.

In a Spring 1958 letter, Tobey wrote to Leonard Elmhirst:

I have been reading Herrigel's 'Zen in the Art of Archery' - you no doubt know it - but what a lesson in deflation <sup>101</sup>.

A friend of the artist, Wesley Wehr, attests to Tobey's interest in Herrigel, and dates his awareness of it to about 1956 or 1957 <sup>102</sup>. He remembers being given the book by Tobey around 1957, and believes that Tobey gave several copies to different friends. Seattle painter Paul Horiuchi certainly recalls receiving a copy. Like Noguchi, Tobey had a prior awareness of the relationship between archery and Zen. During his stay in Japan he visited an archery school, and notes how cheaply he would have been able to study there in a letter to Dorothy Elmhurst <sup>103</sup>. 140

It was grand sitting in the large mat covered room watching the archers shoot through the sunlit court at a target under a roofed wall 100 yards away. The style impressed me.

Paul Jenkins's 'The Archer' (1955, mixed media on canvas, 51 x 31", collection Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo), in which it is possible to distinguish a figure in profile, perhaps holding a bow (the dark vertical form on the left hand side) is a further work inspired in its subject matter by Herrigel, to whom the title of a later work Phenomena Zen Bow String (1969, acrylic on canvas, 64 ½ x 38", collection Brayton Wilbur, Jr., California) also refers. Jenkins is quoted by Albert Elsen <sup>104</sup> as saying: 56 60

The archer brings to mind certain haunting meanings for me when I read Zen in the Art of Archery, the idea of embracing the target rather than trying to conquer it with a fixed-point attitude.

### THE 'I CHING'

The 'I Ching', or 'Book of Changes', is intended to function as an oracle, but it also provides profound insights into the assumptions of Chinese philosophy. Artists using this book would have turned particularly to the Richard Wilhelm translation (published in English in 1950) which contains an important foreword by C G Jung. The 'I Ching' would have been a major source whereby artists became acquainted with the world view of constant flux to which the Chinese

ascribed, being regarded as a tool by which one might harmonize one's actions with this cosmic rhythm. The aspect of the Oriental world view which this book particularly brings out is its attitude to chance - to consult the oracle one is required to throw yarrow sticks and observe the random pattern of their fall. As will become clear in a discussion below (Chapter Three, page 124) several artists who introduced chance aspects into their creative process did so in response to an acquaintance with the philosophy contained within this book, which views apparently chance events as in fact the expression of a more inclusive natural order. Amongst others, this work was known to Lippold, Tobey<sup>105</sup>, Francis<sup>106</sup>, Jenkins<sup>107</sup>, Graves, Johns, Onslow-Ford<sup>108</sup>, Andre<sup>109</sup>, Serra<sup>110</sup>, Kaprow<sup>111</sup>, McCracken<sup>112</sup>, Brecht, Alfred Jensen, Walter de Maria, Von Wiegand<sup>113</sup>, and Ferren<sup>114</sup>.

#### WALEY, BINYON, AND OTHER SOURCES

Two early English interpreters of the Orient whose work was widely read amongst American artists are Arthur Waley and Lawrence Binyon. Waley's work had been read by Stamos<sup>115</sup>, Jenkins<sup>116</sup>, Lassaw, Reinhardt<sup>117</sup>, Onslow-Ford<sup>118</sup>, MacDonald Wright<sup>119</sup> and Masson<sup>120</sup>. At one point he had an association to Dartington Hall and it is not impossible that Tobey might have met him there at a date sometime after the publication of his pamphlet 'Zen Buddhism and its relation to Art' (London, 1922). Lawrence Binyon's most influential work was 'The Flight of the Dragon' (London, 1911) which provides an introduction to the aesthetic of Chinese painting. Motherwell<sup>121</sup>, Baziotes, MacDonald-Wright<sup>122</sup>, Stamos<sup>123</sup> and Tobey<sup>124</sup> knew his work, whilst Noguchi had met him during an early trip to England<sup>125</sup>. Binyon's relationship to modern art was a long-standing one - he knew Ezra Pound, Leo Stein and Percy Wyndham Lewis. Pound quotes from 'The Flight of the Dragon', in 'Blast No 2', the Vorticist publication<sup>126</sup>. Other interpreters of Oriental thought who can be mentioned as influential include Alfred Salmony, with whom Reinhardt studied Oriental art from 1944 and Thomas Merton, a life long friend of that painter from his college days and known also to the artist Ulfert Wilke<sup>127</sup>. His early autobiography, 'The Seven Story Mountain', had a place on

Pollock's bookshelf, and he contributed pieces to the avant-garde magazine 'Tiger's Eye'. R H Blyth's translations of Haiku, the publication of which began in 1947, were known to Lassaw, Cage<sup>128</sup>, Onslow-Ford<sup>129</sup>, and almost certainly to Andre<sup>130</sup>, amongst others. Cage<sup>131</sup>, Pollock<sup>132</sup>, and Guston had attended lectures by Krishnamurti, whose ideas were known to Tobey<sup>133</sup>, Nevelson<sup>134</sup> and perhaps Graves<sup>135</sup>. Cage<sup>136</sup>, Graves<sup>137</sup> and Onslow-Ford<sup>138</sup> were aware of Ramakrishna's ideas, which had been made popular by the publication of the 'Gospel of Ramakrishna' as early as 1907. Numerous other books on Oriental philosophy - either translations of Eastern texts or works of interpretation - were of course known to artists, and proved influential on their art. Mention of these works will be made at suitable points in the following chapters, in relation to individual artists.



CHAPTER TWO

SURREALISM AND THE ORIENT

In order to provide an historical perspective on the role which Oriental ideas play in relation to American art, it will be useful to consider the impact of those ideas on Dada and Surrealism. By examining briefly the eastern influences on Surrealism - the most important movement in modern art in the period immediately preceding the emergence of the New York school - we will add a greater definition to our discussion of the response which American artists make. The influence on the Surrealists, where it is present, will be seen to be much less thoroughgoing than that which we are charting on the Americans, but the extent to which the modernist tradition had already been permeated by Oriental ideas needs to be suggested.

Several figures associated with Dada can be shown to have an awareness of Oriental thought. Arp, who was acquainted with the 'Tao Te Ching', also illustrated an edition of the Bhagavad Gita in 1914, whilst Michel Seuphor showed an interest in Chuang-Tzu as a young man, and later chose the title 'Circle et Carré' in recognition of his involvement with Chinese thought <sup>1</sup>. Van Doesburg, writing in 1923, invokes an Oriental precedent to justify Dada:

When one reads in the Upanishads ... that the universe is like a tree whose roots grow into the sky and whose top grows into the earth, one is full of admiration ... but when we say nowadays that Dada is a bird with four legs, a square without corners, then this is the sheerest nonsense! This is Dada! <sup>2</sup>.

Comparisons between Dada and Oriental thought are also drawn by several other participants. Huelsenbeck, for instance, stated in 1920:

Dada is the American side of Buddhism, it raves because it knows how to be silent, it acts because it is in a state of rest.

Tzara likewise refers to Buddhism as a predecessor of Dada in a comment made in 1922, bringing attention to yet another way in which the parallel with Oriental ideas can be made:

Dada is not at all modern. It is more in the nature of a return to an almost Buddhist religion of indifference<sup>3</sup>.

Breton makes a comparison at a rather later date:

Tell me [he writes in a letter of 1952 to Picabia], was not Dada perhaps, at the best, a flake of Zen, wafted as far as ourselves<sup>4</sup>.

Amongst specific sources for Surrealist painters' knowledge of the Orient, two in particular deserve mention. George Duthuit's 'Chinese Mysticism and Modern Painting', published in 1936, constitutes perhaps the earliest sustained attempt to relate the two areas of experience mentioned in the title. The work of a number of artists is discussed (including that of Matisse, Picasso, Masson, Miro, Cézanne and Whistler) and parallels between Chinese philosophy and Surrealist tenets are exhibited. Duthuit seems to be taking his lead from the first of Hsieh Ho's principles—that the artist must capture and express 'Ch'i', the creative energy of life. Duthuit writes:

There exists, for the painter, a spiritual power which communicates life and meaning to material forms ... he must attain this power before taking part himself in the elaboration of forms<sup>5</sup>.

Duthuit was the son-in-law of Matisse, and knew both Miro and Masson, (whom he had met in 1930) amongst other artists. It seems certain that he would have discussed with them the ideas he was formulating for his book.

Kuni Matsuo provides a second source from which Oriental ideas may have permeated the Surrealist circle. In 1930 he co-authored with E Steinilber-Oberlin 'Les Sectes Bouddhiques Japonaises' (Crès, Paris) which introduced the ideas of Zen and other Japanese sects of Buddhism.

Like Duthuit, Matsuo was a part of the art world - he was responsible for organizing the first Surrealist exhibition in Japan (1932-3). Masson met Matsuo the year his book was published and he describes the occasion in an interview with Takemoto, pointing out that it provided him with his introduction to Zen:

I was educated or informed - by Kuninosuke Matsuo. He came to see me in 1930 ... he remarked to me 'I would like to speak to you about Zen because I think it would interest you'. I had never heard of it. I was only aware of Buddhism in general terms.

Masson reveals that he had Matsuo's book 'a long time and, through it, I was a little orientated towards Zen'<sup>6</sup>.

Masson and Miro are the most important of the artists associated with Surrealism who display an interest in the Orient during the main phase of that movement. Miro has referred to the Chinese as the 'great lords of the mind'<sup>7</sup> and in 1929 Leiris was to note parallels between his work and certain aspects of Tibetan mysticism<sup>8</sup>. Further indications of the ways in which Eastern influences have infiltrated the work of these two artists will be given below<sup>9</sup> and Oriental thought will be shown to have become especially important for Masson in his post-Surrealist phase.

It is not only amongst Surrealist artists that an awareness of the Orient can be found. As early as 1924 Breton was able to write:

Orient of anger and of pearls! ..... you who are the shining image of my dispossession, Orient, beautiful bird of prey and of innocence, I implore you from the depths of the kingdom of shadows<sup>10</sup>.

The second Surrealist manifesto marks a move to a position more compatible with the Orient, and a non-dualistic perspective is suggested by Breton which could have drawn from Eastern sources.

Breton talks of a 'mental vantage point from which life and death, the real and the imaginery, past and future, communicable and incommunicable, high and low, will no longer be perceived as contradictories'<sup>11</sup>. The third issue of 'La Révolution Surréaliste' (April 1925) also shows Surrealism taking an interest in the East. In it can be found Artaud's 'letter to the Dahli Lhama' and 'letter to the Buddhist schools', for example.

The most striking Oriental parallels to Surrealism are to be found in Zen. A non-rational basis is shared,<sup>12</sup> bizarre juxtapositions of images being employed in both Zen and Surrealist practice with the aim of producing a mental transformation, albeit for different purposes. The many examples of this Surrealist practice in both poetry and the visual arts can be compared to such Zen statements as this reply to the question 'what would you say when both the mind and its objects are forgotten?' which runs 'A three legged toad carries a huge elephant on its back'<sup>13</sup>.

Dada and Surrealist artists frequently make a calculated attempt to shock the spectator in an effort to disrupt established patterns of response. Duchamp's exhibition of a urinal could be compared in its intent to the action of the Zen master in the following anecdote told by Suzuki:

Shih-Kung Hsi-Tsang of Fu-Chou, who was one of the great disciples of Ma-tsu of the Tang dynasty, wishing to see what understanding of Zen his head monk had, proposed this question: 'Can you take hold of vacant space?'. The monk replied: 'Yes, master!' 'How do you proceed?' was the demand of the master. The monk thereupon, extending his arm, made a grasp at empty space. Remarked the master: 'How can you take hold of space that way?' 'How then?' retorted the monk. No sooner was this said than the master grabbed the monk's nose and pulled it hard. The monk cried aloud, saying 'This is altogether too hard, you will pull it out!' The master concluded: 'In no other way can you take hold of empty space!'<sup>14</sup>.

Breton shows his awareness of this parallel of method between Zen on the one hand and Dada and Surrealism on the other in a letter of 1952 in which he comments, in fact, upon this same anecdote:

In the true Zen tradition [he writes to Picabia], you have dealt out a number of attacks with your stick, and when I think of all those noses you have stretched and sharpened in certain of your paintings I have no doubt that you achieved your results by pulling them as violently as did Shih-kung Hsi-tsang of Foochow to oblige their possessors to 'seize empty space', that is to say, to see a little further than the ends of their noses<sup>15</sup>.

A disregard for authority and precedent is another quality which Zen and Surrealism share. 'The spiritual message of Zen painting' according to Masson has been that 'that which goes counter to the prevailing taste is ... the most precious of things'<sup>16</sup>. The entry on Zen in the 'Dictionnaire Abrégé du Surréalisme' (Paris, 1938) consists of an iconoclastic statement by Rinzai, that if one meets the Buddha on the road, one should kill him.

When Surrealism first made an impact on the New York art world, it was represented as more biased towards the Orient than perhaps it really had been. Julian Levy's book 'Surrealism' (New York, 1936) quotes (p 5) from the 'Tibetan Path of Knowledge' (London, 1935), and makes an attempt to relate the Surrealist concern with dreams to strands of Oriental thought. Surrealism, Levy claims, attempts to discover and explore the 'more real than real world behind the real', continuing:

Indian philosophy has long taught that DREAM and REALITY are similar and unreal. In 'The Yoga of the Dream State' it is written, 'the initial comprehension of the dream referreth to resolving to maintain unbroken continuity of consciousness throughout both the waking state and the dream state. In other words, under all conditions during the day hold to the concept that all things are of the substance of dreams and that thou must realize their true nature'.

John Cage, who played an important role as theoretician in the New York art world at a slightly later date, also clearly saw, and commented upon, the links between Surrealism, Dada and the East:

One of the liveliest lectures I ever heard was given by Nancy Wilson Ross at the Cornish School in Seattle. It was called 'Zen Buddhism and Dada'. It is possible to make a connection between the two, but neither Dada nor Zen is a fixed tangible. They change and in quite different ways in different places and times, they invigorate action <sup>17</sup>.

Despite the role played by the commentators whom we have just mentioned, there does not appear however to have been a major heritage of Oriental influence from Surrealism to American art. This can be said to be due to the Oriental philosophies being (despite the parallels we have noted here) in essence irreconcilable with Surrealist beliefs and thus only assimilable to them in a piecemeal way. Surrealism was able to make use of diverse and contradictory sources because it never developed a systematic theoretical base. Although some artists involved with Surrealism, such as Masson and Onslow-Ford, did become deeply involved with Oriental thought, they did so only after they had to all intents and purposes abandoned Surrealism - their developed interest was not possible within its confines.

Whereas the major Oriental philosophies are all essentially non-dualistic, Surrealism is basically related to the dualistic trend that can be found in Western philosophy, and in particular to Freud's expression of this in terms of the dichotomy between the conscious mind and the id. Surrealism accepts this split, 'taking sides' (unlike Freud) with the unconscious, which is seen as irrational but poetically rich. This viewpoint is very different to the holistic one of the Orient, in which the psyche is seen as orderly and creative, the conscious and the unconscious being aspects of a larger whole <sup>18</sup>. In Zen the use of an element of the absurd and of attempts to shock are intended to loosen the grasp of the rational mind in order that a wider (ultimately more integrated) perspective might emerge, whereas in the Surrealist employment of these techniques the overthrow of the rational mind is the goal in itself.

JUNG AS INTERPRETER OF THE ORIENT

When he presented Eastern concepts Jung tended to 'water-down' and Westernize them, but his writings were to make certain Oriental ideas accessible to artists, and provided an introduction which inspired some artists towards a deeper study of Oriental philosophy. The importance of Jung is underlined when we consider the wide range of American artists in the period we are discussing who were familiar with his work, in contrast to the relatively limited interest which the Surrealist generation showed in him <sup>19</sup>. Amongst the artists who are known to have read Jung, been aware of his ideas or at least owned books by him we can list the following: Pollock, Reinhardt, Gottlieb, Graves <sup>20</sup>, Lassaw, Macdonald-Wright <sup>21</sup>, Jenkins, Onslow-Ford, Lippold, Motherwell <sup>22</sup>, Rothko, Tobey <sup>23</sup>, Baziotes <sup>24</sup>, Krassner, Roszak, Graham, Ossorio, Francis, McCracken, Mullican <sup>25</sup>, Smith and Pousette-Dart. Artists who have had contacts with Jungian therapists include Pollock <sup>26</sup>, Francis <sup>27</sup> and Jenkins <sup>28</sup>.

Much has already been written about the influence of Jung on American art. In Pollock's case, for example, a great deal of attention has been paid to the possibility of an influence on his iconography from the illustrations to 'Symbols of Transformation'. I believe the importance of this book (which consists largely of an examination of the case history of a Miss Miller) has been greatly overestimated - compared, say, to the importance of 'Psychology and Alchemy' <sup>29</sup> - and I do not consider that specific iconographic borrowings constitute a major way in which Jung's influence was felt. Rather, certain key concepts - such as that of the 'collective unconscious' - proved of use to artists who interpreted them in their own way. It is the general metaphysical framework of Jung's theories which proved attractive, rather than the details of his psychological hypotheses. Several areas of Jung's explorations had an impact on American artists, largely in the 1940's, but also during the 1950's. Both his discussion of alchemy and his interest in primitive myths (especially those of the American Indians) were fruitful aspects of his thought. It is not possible in the present context to enter into a comprehensive evaluation of Jung's influence or even to present a balanced introduction to his theories - the following discussion will concentrate solely on the way in which Jung's writings acted as a source of Oriental ideas and planted seeds of an interest in the East.

It should be noted that Jung's importance to artists was enhanced by his willingness to consider the phenomenon of art in his theories, and to encourage the use of art in the therapeutic process. In 'Modern Man in Search of a Soul' (London, 1933, Page 237) he even ascribes to art a pioneering role in sensing the spirit of the age. He writes:

Art has a way of anticipating future changes in man's fundamental outlook and expressionistic art has taken this subjective turn well in advance of the more general change.

Jung's interest in art was one of the factors which caused Lassaw to respond to him <sup>30</sup>, and Richard Pousette-Dart, whilst disclaiming a study of Jung, admits to responding sympathetically to his statements on art <sup>31</sup>. Paul Jenkins, discussing Jungian therapy, states: 'Psychologically speaking, I think it's the most viable form of self-investigation because it relates perfectly to anyone who has a creative necessity'. <sup>32</sup>

In contrast to the dualistic world view inherent in Freud's theories (which is carried over into Surrealist thinking about the psyche) Jung presents a picture of wholeness in his description of the mind which is closer to the model of the Oriental philosophies and which was developed (in part) through a study of them. As in those philosophies, Jung's psychological system views the mind as orderly and creative, whereas by contrast Freud sees a constant battle between the ego and the id. Jung points out this difference himself:

For Freud it [the unconscious] is essentially an appendage of consciousness, in which all the individual's incompatibilities are heaped up. For me the unconscious is a collective psychic disposition, creative in character <sup>33</sup>.

By moving beyond a dualistic vision in his psychological writing, Jung provides a framework within which the concepts of Oriental thought can be made accessible to a Western audience, his writings providing a 'half-way house' by means of which artists moved to an appreciation of these philosophies in a purer form.



Jung himself points to the East as a possible source of inspiration. Speaking of 'the Eastern mind' he says 'its influence upon us we cannot as yet measure. Let us beware of underestimating it!' <sup>34</sup> In terms of his theory, a resurgence of interest in the East is seen as a natural compensatory process in the collective psyche counteracting the sterile materialism of the Western environment:

We do not yet realize that while we are turning upside down the material world of the East with our technical proficiency, the East with its psychic proficiency is throwing our spiritual world in confusion ... psychoanalysis itself [is] only a beginner's attempt compared to what is an immemorial art in the East <sup>35</sup>.

Describing the difference between Eastern and Western viewpoints, Jung emphasizes the Oriental belief in a 'ground' underlying phenomenal experience and the relativity the East ascribes to the latter.

Western man is held in thrall by the 'ten thousand things', he sees only particulars, he is ego-bound and thing-bound and unaware of the deep root of all being. Eastern man, on the other hand, experiences the world of particulars, and even his own ego, like a dream; he is rooted essentially in the 'Ground' which attracts him so powerfully that his relations with the world are relativized to a degree that is often incomprehensible to us <sup>36</sup>.

One concept of Jung's which may have acted as a bridge between the more familiar terminology of psychoanalysis and the less accessible ideas of Oriental metaphysics is his notion of the 'collective unconscious', which is a 'universal' mind considered to underlie the individual consciousness. It is not possible to examine here the extent to which Jung is indebted to Oriental sources for this concept, one of the most familiar in his theory - there are certainly ways in which it can be distinguished from Eastern notions and these will be considered below - the important point is that there are broad similarities between the idea of the 'collective unconscious' and the Oriental idea of an unmanifest dimension of reality underlying

the mind which at the same time underlies the whole of manifest creation. Jung himself attempts to find parallels in the East for this notion: 'Our concept of the "collective unconscious" would be the European equivalent of Buddhi, the enlightened mind' he claims <sup>37</sup>. To Jung, the collective unconscious is seen as a repository of archetypal psychological symbols, having a universal human relevance beyond barriers of culture. Acceptance by artists of this aspect of Jung's theory may have been responsible for a willingness to look (amongst other places) to Eastern culture and art for psychological truths (expressed in symbolic terms) that were relevant to their own situation -- and to use these Eastern symbols in their own art. Theodore Roszak seems to be referring to this concept of Jung's when he writes:

If perhaps some way we can realize that the dreams of a Chinese are the dreams of a Yankee, then we will regard them in a different light. The most important thing of all to me ... is that if we can reach a common denominator of understanding and experiencing a common myth, we will also break down the limitations of the basis upon which common religious experience rests <sup>38</sup>.

Ossorio, talking of the Christian symbolism used in his decorations of a church in the Phillipines, describes it as 'a latent, almost Jungian content'. The concept of the collective unconscious seems to be the means whereby Ossorio is made aware of the fundamental similarities between artistic symbols from the East and the West:

Actually, Christian symbolism, all symbolism, is universal in that sense, the Buddha is universal, the minor Bodhisattvas are saints, they all apply to the same human situation <sup>39</sup>.

Seymour Lipton's interest in Oriental art, in particular early Chinese bronzes, may have been encouraged by a reading of Jung and of Joseph Campbell, who often refer to this area of the world to illustrate the theory of the universal nature of symbolism. Lipton talks of the 'universality of art', and refers to his 'love for the bronzes of the Shang and Chou dynasties of China'. His interest is not a purely formal one, and the mythologies embodied in these works

are also important to him: the attraction of these bronzes lies in 'their authority, dignity, clarity, joining abstract form and nature in truly great art where myth, ritual and aesthetics are become one'<sup>40</sup>. Graves shares Lipton's interest in Chinese bronzes, and his willingness to use symbols from Eastern mythologies (for example, the 'Vajra' symbol he employs in several works) may also have been encouraged by Jung's views on the collective nature of religious symbolism.

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Jung describes his therapeutic process as one of individuation, which is characterized by a move from an identification with the ego to a broader acceptance of the contents of the psyche, an identification with the archetype of the 'Self'. Broad parallels can be drawn with the process of yoga, and Jung himself points these out. This idea - central in Eastern thinking - that the ego, one's sense of being an individual, separate centre of action, is only a fragment of the whole personality will be shown below (Chapter Three, pages 86-97) to have greatly affected American artists' attitudes to the creative process, and Jung can be seen as one of the sources whereby artists were introduced to it.

Jung's expression of this idea is given, for example, in 'Psychology and Alchemy', page 481. He talks of the need to 'repudiate the arrogant claim of the conscious mind to be the whole of the psyche'.

It seems to me of some importance that a few individuals, or people individually, should begin to understand that there are contents which do not belong to the ego-personality, but which must be ascribed to a psychic non-ego.

Lassaw transcribes this second quotation verbatim in a handwritten note (Lassaw Papers, Archives of American Art), indicating the importance Jung's formulation may have had for him. Onslow-Ford also quotes two passages from Jung in his notebooks (Onslow-Ford Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington DC) which encapsulate the same point:

Certainly the ego and its will have a great part to play in life; but what the ego wills is subject in the highest degree to the interference, in ways in which the ego is usually unaware, of the autonomy and numinosity of archetypal processes. The crucial

insight [is] that there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their "own life" ... when you see people in a room, you would not think that you had made those people, or that you were responsible for them.

The archetype of the 'Self' is the central one to Jung's theory, but there are several other collective 'imprints' that he believes to exist in the psyche. Amongst these the 'Anima' is prominent, and it is particularly relevant to a discussion of art since it corresponds to the idea of the 'muse', the feminine personification of the creative principle. Several American artists were aware of the 'Anima' concept but in the case of Lassaw one may speculate that it served as a useful means whereby related Oriental concepts were grasped. Certainly he is aware of the parallel with Eastern ideas. Lassaw writes:

Carl Jung discovered the existence of the 'anima' as part of the unconscious. This 'anima' is of female gender. In the Chinese Tao Te Ching, I found this most interesting parallel: 'The Valley Spirit never dies/ It is named the Mysterious female/ And the doorway of the Mysterious Female/Is the base from which heaven and earth spring/It is there within us all the while,/Draw upon it as you will/It never runs dry'<sup>41</sup>.

Onslow-Ford, who shows awareness of the 'anima' concept, transcribing in his notes passages from Jung concerning it, is also aware of this passage from the Tao Te Ching. 'When I am inspired by nature [he writes] it usually is in terms of the dark mysterious female'. The Painter and the Muse (1943, oil on canvas, 93 3/4" x 49 1/2", collection the artist) and other similar works may relate to his interest in these ideas. 113

A further archetypal symbol which Jung isolates is the 'mandala'. Unlike other archetypes, which he presents as personifications, it takes the form (interestingly for artists) of an abstract pattern, generally assuming a circular form or having a quaternary structure. For Jung, the mandala serves as a means to symbolically express the integration of the different aspects of the psyche, which it represents in its structure. 'Unless everything deceives us [Jung writes, concerning the significance of mandalas] they signify nothing less than a psychic centre of the personality not to be identified with the ego'<sup>42</sup>.

Although he regards it as having a universal nature, pointing out its appearance in the art of all cultures, the conscious creation of mandala images belongs to the Eastern traditions and in particular to Buddhism, and it is the Oriental word which Jung adopts for the concept. Oriental sources, rather than his own clinical experiences, seem to have played an especially important role in the development of this area of his thought, and his writings on mandalas would have been a means whereby this aspect of Oriental thought could have been made accessible to artists. Jung's first published work on mandalas was in his introduction to Wilhelm's translation of the Chinese text 'The Golden Flower', and thus the Oriental context would have been emphasized in the minds of readers. 163

The influence of mandalas on American artists, which will now be considered, is an issue which cannot be completely contained within the boundaries of a discussion of Jung's influence - artists could have known Oriental mandalas directly. However, Jung's writings are important since they present mandalas in a context in which they are understood as having a psychological function, not merely a visual one.

Mandala-like images occur in several of Graves' works, of different periods. 'Mid-Century Hibernation' (tempera, 1954, collection Seattle Art Museum), for example, displays the distinctive circular form of mandalas in the curled body of the animal, which also recalls the Chinese 'yin/yang' symbol. Drawings of a later date, (for example, 'Pebble Pond Mandala, Taos New Mexico', collection Henry Gallery, University of Washington), show Graves more explicitly exploring the abstract form of the mandala in images composed of concentric circles. His 'Black Buddha Mandala' (1944, collection Helen and Marshall Hatch, Seattle) has both the circular and four-fold aspects which Jung identifies in mandalas, and its Oriental subject matter underlies the artist's awareness of the roots which the Jungian concept has in Eastern traditions. Graves was inspired to paint this mandala by a vivid dream he had experienced whilst staying as a guest at the studio of a friend (Mischa Dolnicoff) who had studied Vendanta, thus indicating that he was aware of the Jungian understanding that the mandala is an expression of psychic truths, as well as the Oriental view that mandalas should first be visualized, then executed. The 41 45 42

four outside circles show symbolic images of growth (from bud to blossoming and seeding). The central circle contains an image of a black Buddha, which has been covered over by Graves with a circle of rice paper, because he felt the image to have too personal a meaning to reveal.

The paintings of Paul Jenkins often contain circular forms which can be related to the artist's interest in mandalas. 'Magic Circle' (oil and chrysochrome, 1955, 37 x 33" collection Pierre Lamaroux, Paris) is an early example of this - 'magic circle' is another name Jung uses for the mandala. A statement made by Jenkins reveals Jung as the source of the artist's interest in mandalas. Despite the fact that the statement was made in conversation it bears a striking similarity to the passage on mandalas in 'Psychology and Alchemy' quoted above (page 62):

One thing ... which fascinated me about that impulse to paint the circle, draw the circle, be within a circle, is what Carl Gustav Jung pointed out as doing the mandala, which is the area of the psychic non-ego. In this involvement, sometimes there is a possibility to get a 'take' on what's going on inside of you psychically <sup>43</sup>.

Like Jung, Jenkins seems to feel that the widespread appearance of the mandala form is evidence that it reflects a universal mental characteristic:

Everybody draws circles, children draw circles, primitive tribes drew circles, sophisticated architects have done labyrinths that go back to primeaval times.... What does it mean, I think, but finding some kind of psychic order within the disorder <sup>44</sup>.

Jenkins claims that the period he spent in Jungian psychotherapy had direct consequences for his creative work, and one such consequence was a desire to create mandalas. 'Meditation Mandala Sundial' was a result. As the title suggests, Jenkins was considering the mandala image in the same way as it is treated in the Orient - as an object for mental concentration. Awareness of the Jungian view of the mandala was leading to an investigation of the original Eastern context.

Many American artists use mandala forms in their works, and it would be useful here to consider some of them briefly.

A work of Lassaw's from 1949 is entitled 'Mandala' (16 x 12 x 12"). 65 This plexiglass sculpture gains its title because of the end view which displays the same fourfold structure of many mandalas.

Reinhardt's later works often have cross-shaped images, sharing this quaternary structure which Jung isolates as a characteristic of the mandala. Dale Mc Conathy, on visiting Reinhardt's studio, noted a fascination with Mandalas on the artist's part.

Le panneau d'affichage au dessus du bureau de son atelier était couvert de variantes de ces motifs. Interrogé à ce sujet, il avouait que leur présence envahissante et leur réapparition constante dans l'art était quelque chose qui lui plaisait <sup>45</sup>.

Reinhardt claims that he finds Jung's psychological writings 'trop religieux', but a link between his interest in mandalas and that interpreter is at least jokingly acknowledged in the punning title of his cartoon for Art News (May 1956, page 36). 'A Portend of the Artist as a Yhung Mandala', in which he explores the 'cosmology' of the art world.

Other artists who employ mandala images in their work include Charmion Von Wiegand (eg 'Mandala' watercolour, 1957 and 'The Secret Mandala', gouache, 1967), John Ferren (eg 'Red with Violet and Green Mandala' 1966) and John Mc Cracken (eg 'Mandala IX', oil on canvas 72 x 72", 1972). Sam Francis also began making paintings with a mandala format in 1972 (for example, 'Untitled (Mandala)', acrylic, 36½ x 35 7/8" 1975 collection the artist) a development in his art which can be related to his contact with a Jungian analyst from the Autumn of 1971.

As we have already noted, Jung sees the mandala as adopting either a circular or a fourfold structure (or as combining the two). The fourfold structure of the mandala reflects, in Jung's view, the presence in the mind of four distinguishable psychological functions - thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition - which must be brought into harmony for a balanced psyche to exist<sup>46</sup>. By examining the 'quaternity' in certain artists' works, we will be able to find further evidence that will tie their awareness of the mandala image to Jung.

Pollock's 'Sketch for a crucifixion' (1939-40, collection Lee Krassner Pollock) has the four psychological functions just described noted at 90° intervals around the central sketch, each associated with a colour. The colour symbolism corresponds to that which Jung himself describes<sup>47</sup>: yellow = intuition, blue = thinking, green = sensation, red = feeling. The sketch itself has qualities which relate it to the 'fourness' of the mandala - there are four figures present, and the cross itself is of course a mandala image. Pollock was apparently encouraged by Henderson, his Jungian analyst, to create mandala images, and this sketch seems to belong to that period.

Ossorio also created a work which relates to Jung's fourfold analysis of psychological functions. His 'Quaternity' (reproduced J Dubuffet, 'Peintures Initiatiques d'Alfonso Ossorio', plate 33) depicts in the corners the four figures of God the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost and the devil the centre of the image being taken up by a feminine figure. This Christian (if deeply heretical) fourfold symbolism can be directly traced to Jung. An illustration on page 175



of 'Psychology and Alchemy' shows the same translation of the four functions into religious symbolism. Elsewhere Jung writes 'I cannot refrain from calling attention to the interesting fact that whereas the central Christian symbolism is a trinity, the formula presented by the unconscious is a quaternity' <sup>48</sup> Jung postulates the devil as the fourth member.

'Quaternity' is also the title of a Lassaw sculpture in bronze alloys (7' 8" x 50" x 28", 1956-8, collection Samuel M Kootz). Onslow-Ford as well notes in his sketchbook that 'the self usually expresses itself in some kind of fourfold structure'. According to an acknowledgement in 'Painting in the Instant' Onslow-Ford owes his introduction to mandalas to Dr Friederick Spiegelberg, an author who has written on Oriental philosophy.

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Although Oriental sources may have influenced Jung's evolution of concepts such as the 'collective unconscious' which have served to lead artists towards a deeper interest in Eastern thought, there are also aspects of his writing where his involvement with the East is more openly expressed.

An example is his introduction to Richard Wilhelm's translation, 'The I Ching or Book of Changes' (N Y and London, 1950). This rendering of the I Ching is considered an authoritative one, and many of the artists who became interested in the I Ching would have been familiar with it, and hence with Jung's ideas on Chinese philosophy expressed in the introduction and which we will refer to below (Page 125). Californian sculptor, John Mc Cracken, for example, explicitly acknowledges this introduction of Jung's as a source whereby he became acquainted with Oriental ideas.

Of earlier date, and therefore likely to have been of more seminal importance, was Jung's introduction to Wilhelm's translation of a Taoist alchemical text 'The Secret of the Golden Flower' (London, 1931). Lassaw had read this work soon after its publication whilst a student (c 1931) at City College New York <sup>49</sup>. It is mentioned in his daybooks of the late 1940's, and is still (1979) to be

found on the bookshelf of his studio. Reinhardt transcribes a passage from it in his notes (Reinhardt Papers, Archives of American Art) 'When purpose has been used to achieve purposelessness, the thing has been grasped'. E Langhorne ('A Jungian Interpretation of Jackson Pollock's Art Through 1946', PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania 1977, page 158) informs us that David Smith and others at the Art Students League had read the book in the late 1930's and early 1940's, and goes further to suggest an influence on Pollock. She feels the Yellow Flower in Pollock's 'Moon Woman' (oil, 69 x 43" collection Peggy Guggenheim Foundation, Venice) is the 'Golden Flower' of the Chinese text. A more conclusive case can be made with respect to Charmion Von Wiegand - her oil 'Golden Flower' of 1952 undoubtedly takes its title from that of the book. Marion Willard, New York dealer of Tobey and Graves had also read the book at an early date, and may have discussed it with those artists. John Mc Cracken notes it as a source of information about Oriental ideas, which he feels have been 'a significant influence on my work':

A lot of it [Oriental philosophy] ... came through Jung ... examples being his introductions to the 'I-Ching' and 'Secret of the Golden Flower', but I read a lot of his other stuff <sup>50</sup>.

It should be stressed that artists became aware of Jung's ideas not only by encountering his own writings, but also through the work of other scholars. Amongst these, Joseph Campbell has in particular been responsible for bringing Jungian ideas to a wider audience though his studies of myth and symbol in the religions and cultures of the world. Campbell is best known for 'The Hero with a Thousand Faces' (New York 1953) which displays a clear Jungian emphasis and for his editorship of H Zimmer's 'Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization' (New York, 1946), in which his interest in the Orient is manifested.

Campbell is particularly important for American artists since he lives in New York and has been involved with the art world there, maintaining friendships with several artists. John Cage recalls that Campbell was present at the artists' club when he gave his important

'Lecture on Nothing', in which he introduced Zen ideas<sup>51</sup>. Lassaw, who has several of Campbell's books on his studio shelves, remembers on one occasion having dinner with him and Alan Watts after a lecture the latter had given in New York during the 1950's<sup>52</sup>. Paul Jenkins has maintained a close relationship with Campbell, who advised him where to go on his first visit to Japan<sup>53</sup>. 'Mythic Image One' (ink on paper, 1974) was created by Jenkins to illustrate (page 276-7) Campbell's book 'The Mythic Image' (Princeton, 1974)<sup>54</sup> and Jenkins has also apparently contributed work for use in mythic dance creations by Jean Erdman (Mrs J Campbell).

A specific borrowing from an Oriental source for which Campbell is responsible is identifiable in the case of Morris Graves. The title of his painting 'Each time you carry me this way' (sumi ink and gold 25 x 43", 1953. Collection Mr and Mrs J S Schramm, Burlington, Iowa) refers directly (as Nancy Wilson Ross<sup>55</sup> has pointed out) to the words spoken in a Hindu myth on the theme of the cyclical quality of life as told in 'Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization'<sup>56</sup>. Guy Anderson, a Seattle painter, discussing Graves and his links with the Orient, says 'we were all reading people like Joseph Campbell and Heinrich Zimmer'<sup>57</sup>.

Campbell's writings must be considered an important avenue through which Pollock could have been acquainted with Jungian ideas, albeit at a later date in his career than that at which he might have found them useful as an iconographical source. Amongst the books by Campbell he owned are 'Hero with a Thousand Faces' (1949), Zimmer's 'The King and the Corpse', (edited by Campbell, 1947), J Campbell and Henry Robinson's 'Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake' (1944), and perhaps most importantly in the context of our present concerns, 'Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization' (H Zimmer, ed. Campbell, 1947)

We have seen, then, the extent to which Jung provides an introduction to Oriental ideas for a number of artists. It is important to note, however, that Oriental philosophical concepts cannot be fully understood in a Jungian framework. Artists taking a detailed interest in these concepts would need to move beyond the 'stepping stone' which Jung provided.

A broad parallel between Jung's idea of the 'collective unconscious' and the Oriental idea of a universal 'ground' of being underlying the personality has been pointed out above (page 61) but a closer examination will reveal crucial differences. This universal 'ground' - the 'void' - is conceived of as existing 'prior' to the evolution of the forms of the phenomenal world. Or in terms of personal experience, as existing beyond (and before) thought. The texts of Zen Buddhism, yoga philosophy etc., describe the possibility of gaining direct intuition of this state, rather than of merely acquiring an intellectual impression of it. Jung, however, feels that the psyche's depths can only be known through symbols, (archetypes), and not directly. He writes:

Every spiritual happening is a picture and an imagination; were this not so, there could be no consciousness, and no phenomenality of the occurrence <sup>58</sup>.

Whereas Zen talks of 'direct seeing' of 'things in themselves', and yoga philosophy describes a state of 'samadhi' in which thought and all mental imagery are abandoned, Jung's position is that consciousness must always be 'consciousness of' something <sup>59</sup>.

Jung's value as an interpreter of Oriental philosophy is, therefore, in the final analysis, a limited one. His emphasis on myth and symbol and the introspective, unwordly perspective he takes on Oriental philosophy place him closer, perhaps, to Hindu thought, (where symbol and ritual are given a role in meditation, and where the goal is inner absorption, 'samadhi') than to Zen (which eschews the symbol in favour of direct experience, and where the goal is 'satori' or outer absorption), although in both traditions the 'goal' is ultimately to transcend thought, symbol, or image. Joseph Campbell expresses in 'The Hero with a Thousand Faces' (page 258) this idea that there is a further depth to the psyche which cannot be contacted through symbols:

Myth is but the penultimate; the ultimate is openness - that void, or being, beyond the categories - into which the mind must plunge alone and be dissolved.

Jung's theories were very important for American artists, especially during the 1940's when Pollock, Rothko, Gottlieb and others created works with a symbolic dimension. It was also important for artists such as Graves whose interest in the Orient expressed itself through an art of a symbolic nature. However, it was not possible for Jung's theories to provide a philosophical justification for an art of pure abstraction. Oriental philosophy and in particular Zen was by contrast, able to do this, since it acknowledged the possibility of 'abstract' experience, that is, experience unmediated by a language of symbols.

It is this interest in Zen, most prominent in a slightly later period than that which saw a pronounced interest in Jung, which we shall be giving our attention to in the immediately following pages. Just as Jung's idea of a collective mythology appealed to artists because it held out a promise to uncover 'deeper' levels of the psyche than those revealed by the Surrealist/Freudian preoccupation with personal dream imagery, so Jungian ideas were themselves abandoned in favour of those which appeared to offer a chance to take a further step in uncovering the mysteries of the psyche.

#### BEYOND SYMBOLS IN ART

Other factors than an interest in Zen and Oriental philosophy played a part, of course, in the change from a symbolic to a more purely abstract style which can be seen in several artists' work. Newman and Rothko, for instance, both effected this transformation and although their art displays a concern with the 'transcendental', no significant interest in Oriental thought seems to have been present. Nevertheless, for certain artists a contact with Zen and other schools of Eastern philosophy was certainly important in this way. The following chapters on artists' attitudes to the creative process (Chapter Three) and on the importance of the concept of the 'Void' (Chapter Five) will give different perspectives on a number of artists who show an interest in the Oriental view that reality can be experienced directly and not through symbols.

We can illustrate briefly the way in which Zen helped provide a rationale for a non-symbolic art by looking at some comments by Lassaw. He expresses dissatisfaction with art which only refers indirectly to reality (by means of symbols or illusionistic conventions):

The representation is NOT the REALITY. It does not satisfy me, it is too far away.

In his own work he attempts to begin from a different standpoint:

The sculpture itself is REALITY, not an interpretation of reality<sup>60</sup>.

A direct experience of reality is possible, he feels, and the following statement (in which a reference to the Zen concept of 'tathata' is made) betrays the Oriental sources of his idea:

Do not lose touch with concrete reality. Heaven is right here and now - we usually manage to be somewhere else. We are continually engaged in clouding over the intense fresh direct experience of form, colour, sound - what [sic] is called thusness or Tathata in Sanskrit - into signs, symbols, abstractions of our invention. We do not see things as they are in themselves.

Describing his working process, Lassaw writes:

When working on a piece of sculpture I see only the immediate reality of the particular forms and colours that confront me. The 'THUSNESS' or in Sanskrit 'TATHATA'. Concepts and associations fade away.

Lassaw's abstract style and adoption of a three-dimensional medium are the logical corollary of his philosophical position.

One way to look at the transformation from a symbolic to a non-symbolic, more purely abstract, art is to consider it as representing a change in the function of art. The elimination of symbols can be

seen as an abandonment of the communicative function of art. Instead of serving to transmit 'information' of some kind, acting as a medium for self-expression, art has the function of transforming the spectator and the artist. This new role for art, as expressed in the work of several American painters and sculptors, is examined below (Chapter Four) and the part played by Oriental ideas in producing the change is considered.

A trend can be distinguished in much 20th century art away from a public, accessible iconography towards a more personal and hermetic imagery, and for some artists a crisis occurred over the question of whether communication through art was possible. One of the attractions of Zen for some artists may have been the way in which it could help them transcend this impasse. Whereas in other Buddhist traditions emphasis is placed on the sutras (the written records of Buddhist doctrine) for the transmission of the philosophy to the next generation, in Zen they are regarded as secondary and the transfer of the essential message is claimed to occur in a non-symbolic manner, by 'direct pointing' ('Chih-Chih')<sup>61</sup>. The Zen master, using various means such as the 'mondo' or the 'koan', directly demonstrates the essence of Zen, transmitting its experiential core rather than symbolically or intellectually expressing its theory<sup>62</sup>. As Onslow-Ford suggests, 'Zen is not a body of tradition about knowing, but the act of cognition itself'<sup>63</sup>.

Cage, whose ideas are important for many artists, refers to a crisis he felt concerning the function of the arts, and which he surmounted by responding to Oriental sources. He felt that what he had been taught - 'that a composer should have something to say' - no longer made sense, 'so I searched for another reason for composing than the usual idea of communication'<sup>64</sup>. Through a contact with Oriental musician Gita Sarabhai he was to develop a new view of music's function. 'They taught us art was self-expression [he writes later]. You had to have "something to say". They were wrong: you don't have to say anything. Art's self-alteration'<sup>65</sup>.

Amongst visual artists who discover a role for art other than communication, and who appear to derive support from Oriental precedents in this Carl Andre can be mentioned. 'Although art can be

used to communicate, I do not believe that art is a form of communication' he writes, adding 'If people have messages for me I would much rather that they gave them to me directly' <sup>66</sup>. Andre's views on the function of art, together with similar viewpoints expressed by John Mc Laughlin and John Mc Cracken, will be discussed below (Chapter Four).

Ad Reinhardt's late works approach, in their simplicity and abstractness, an elimination of symbol and hence of communication. As we shall note in the following chapters, Oriental concepts were a major influence on these near-monochrome canvases.

Thomas Merton, a close friend of Reinhardt and one of the channels through which he was made aware of Eastern philosophy, writes that in the West 'nothing is allowed just to be and to mean itself: everything has to mysteriously signify something else', whereas 'the most contemplative art forms of Japan are traditionally considered to be not simply manifestations or symbolic representations of religious belief, appropriate for use in communal worship. They are above all intimately associated with the contemplative intuition of a fundamental truth in an experience that is basically religious and even in a certain sense "mystical"' <sup>67</sup>.

Reinhardt's personal acceptance of this idea that art should not involve symbolic communication is revealed by a letter to Merton wherein he counsels him to 'fall into the iconoclast tradition' (Merton's words). Unlike Merton (and, incidentally, unlike Far Eastern art) Reinhardt associates the desire to confront reality directly with an abstract style. Merton writes in reply to Reinhardt:

I think it is an affectation from the religious viewpoint, to hold that statues are a distraction. Nothing is a distraction or everything is a distraction. Who is there to be distracted? <sup>68</sup>

Merton is here proposing an attitude closer to Zen, and more completely non-dualistic. His final question is meant to make the point that the 'enlightened' man would be indifferent to images, having no ego to be distracted. Reinhardt fails to perceive this point and in his reply writes:



Who is to be distracted? you ask of Statues? People. Distracted from 'reality'. People don't face reality, I guess. Nobody knows what's real. In art, we know that realism (according to the Hindu?) is one of the fifty-seven varieties of decoration<sup>69</sup>.

Although Reinhardt at times attacks symbolism in art, his aesthetic admits of a certain ambivalence. Whereas he sometimes describes his paintings in his notes as iconoclastic, he also refers to them on other occasions as icons. He never completely abandons imagery and therefore a communicative role in his art, although reducing the visible content to a near minimum. In one sense his works can be seen as objects for contemplation, and in another can be seen as images of the 'Void' of Oriental mysticism. The former aspect of Reinhardt's (and other artists') work will be explored in Chapter Four, the latter in Chapter Five. The apparent logical contradiction then, which will be perceived between those sections of the thesis which consider art as non symbolic and those which treat the influence of Oriental concepts on the imagery of art, is a response to the ambivalence displayed by the artists themselves. If the reader accepts the commonly held (Western) view that experience (and hence art) is always mediated through symbols, then he may regard the ambivalence of artists as stemming from an inevitable failure of attempts to create a non-symbolic art, an art that can be experienced directly.

Cage betrays a similar ambivalence to Reinhardt. He wishes the spectator to approach his music directly (as sounds, not as notes), yet there is a survival of 'illusionism' through the way in which the Oriental world view is 'mirrored' in various formal characteristics of his work, for example, his use of silence (see below, Chapter Five). We have already noted Cage's approval of Coomaraswamy's idea that art should imitate nature in her manner of operation, and this implies some 'coding' in the art work of information about the world.

#### ZEN AND AMERICAN ART - SOME GENERAL POINTS

Although the influence of Zen on particular American artists will be referred to frequently in the following chapters, it will be useful here to emphasize some general points concerning artists' awareness of it.

It should be noted that Zen was not merely an interest of isolated artists, but (certainly as far as the New York art world was concerned) became a topic of general discussion between painters and sculptors. John Ferren recalls:

Everyone was interested in Zen in the forties and the early fifties. It ran around the artists' circles a great deal because it had an element of spontaneity in it and was anti-intellectual and that was part of the temper of the time <sup>70</sup>.

Ferren remembers discussions on Zen at the (Eighth Street) Artists' Club in New York, and James Brooks confirms this:

Zen came in pretty strong to the Club and a good many members were receptive to it because it emphasized the pure confrontation of things rather than intellectualization .... There was a deep felt need to confront things in a purer way, without bias, or as innocently as could be done ... Zen did take quite a hold, or rather we had a great many talks about it. A great many people were interested in it. I certainly was at the time ... I think it affected us all .... in our general attitude, whether we thought that we accepted it or not <sup>71</sup>.

In addition to general discussions at the Club, several specific talks on Zen were given there. Lassaw, for instance, presented one on 17th December 195(4?) in which he included readings from Suzuki's works. Sabro Hasegawa <sup>72</sup> also gave a talk on Zen which is remembered by Guston <sup>73</sup> and which took place in the mid-fifties. Cage gave his 'Lecture on Something' at the Eighth Street Club (probably in 1949) and later took part in a panel discussion on Zen to which Lassaw was another contributor. Earlier - probably in the same year - Cage had given his 'Lecture on Nothing' at Studio 35 <sup>74</sup>.

'It Is', the journal of the New York avant-garde, records a continued interest in Zen in the later 1950's. In issue four Harry Holtzman (an associate of Mondrian) writes of 'the extraordinary resurgence and spread of interest in the most complete secular culture in human evolution, the Buddhist; and in particular ... the Mahayana and Zen' <sup>75</sup>. Issue five (Spring 1960) contains an article by Zen master

Hoseki Shin'ichi Hisamatsu entitled 'Seven Characteristics of Zen Art'.

Because Zen has several unique qualities which distinguish it from other Oriental metaphysical systems, it will be useful to consider here some of the reasons why it might have proved of particular interest to American artists at that time.

In contrast to Hindu thought and other philosophies of the East, Zen has no religious or otherworldly qualities in the ordinary sense. It is more outward - directed, more concerned with the concrete, more orientated towards activity. Suzuki, in fact, characterizes Zen as 'radical empiricism' <sup>76</sup>.

These active and positivistic qualities of Zen may account in part for its appeal to artists. Lassaw, for example, notes that 'Zen has a dynamic viewpoint in distinction to Indian thought' <sup>77</sup> and claims that 'Zen people rarely use the word "spiritual" because there is a dualistic implication in that - the opposite is material or physical as if one was higher than the other' <sup>78</sup>. There is a quality of pragmatism in Zen which is attractive to Lassaw:

What I feel particularly about Zen is that it's very much in keeping with modern science and modern art. I felt that they all seemed to go together - this pragmatism that you find in modern art whether it works or not, direct appeal to the human mind: science where everything must be proven and that it really is so because it works, because you could detect it, or measure it ... and Zen where they're involved with immediate reality, perceptible reality, and not so much pie in the sky as many other religions are involved with <sup>79</sup>.

The active, 'applied' emphasis of Zen philosophy has resulted in Japan in close links with the arts, as Suzuki shows in Zen and Japanese Culture. It is often studied, not in isolation, but through the 'medium' of calligraphy, archery, or other activities. Thus there are precedents for Western artists to follow in choosing to relate Zen to their creative endeavours.

By the 1940's most American artists had become disillusioned with attempts to accommodate their art to socio-political philosophies. This was partly due to events which seemed to discredit those philosophies themselves (the Nazi-Soviet pact, for instance), but also because artistic creativity seemed to be restrained by such ideologies which reserved only an illustrative, ultimately, propagandist role for painting and sculpture. Zen proved to be an 'acceptable' philosophical interest partly because it did not require artists to limit their art in this way - art is seen as embodying Zen just by pursuing its own ends to the full. The non-dogmatic nature of Zen made it attractive to the individualism of the modern Western artist.

In fact, rather than merely avoiding dogma, Zen positively attacks the role it plays in other systems, placing an emphasis on personal experience rather than on authority. This anarchic quality of Zen would have recommended itself to avant-garde artists, themselves concerned with overthrowing received conventions. Lassaw certainly feels this was true in his case. He recalls:

I went to [Suzuki's] lectures for about three semesters and read all his books. I still remember many things that he said that are not in any of his books, just certain memorable phrases. One of them was 'If in actual life you experience certain truths and if all the Buddhas and all the patriarchs and all the sutras as one tell you you are wrong, then you must ignore the Buddhas, the patriarchs and the sutras'. And that was just it. I mean that jibed exactly with my experience in life up to that point <sup>80</sup>.

#### SUZUKI

Daisetz T Suzuki (1870-1966) was certainly the most important interpreter of Zen as far as artists were concerned, his skill in making its potentially abstruse tenets accessible to a Western audience being largely responsible for the appeal it came to have. In his presentation of Zen he concentrates on its philosophical dimension,

and in particular its experiential, non-conceptual approach, giving less attention to ritual and devotional aspects and thus detaching it from its cultural context.

The attraction Suzuki's writings had for American artists would seem to have been due in part to the connections he demonstrates between Zen and art. Creative activity is seen as a paradigm for the Zen approach to life: 'The Zen-man is an artist to the extent that ... the Zen-man transforms his own life into a work of creation' Suzuki writes <sup>81</sup>. The picture of art which Suzuki presents is one which would have been sympathetically received by the generation of the 'Abstract Expressionists', emphasizing as it does freedom of working, an intuitive rather than an intellectual approach. Suzuki states:

The artist's world is one of free creation, and this can come only from intuitions directly and immediately rising from the is-ness of things, unhampered by senses and intellect. He creates forms and sounds out of formlessness and soundlessness. To this extent, the artist's world coincides with that of Zen <sup>82</sup>.

An extended metaphor in which the Zen approach to life is likened to the process of artistic creation is worth quoting here, since there are specific similarities to the method employed by several painters. Suzuki advocates a fast, intuitive method of working, and one in which reworking is eschewed. He regards this as coming closest to the spirit of Zen:

Life delineates itself on a canvas called time; and time never repeats, once gone forever gone; and so is an act, once done, it is never undone. Life is a sumiye painting, which must be executed once and for all time and without hesitation, without intellection, and no corrections are permissible or possible. Life is not like an oil painting, which can be rubbed out and done over time and again until the artist is satisfied. With the sumiye painting any brushstrokes painted over a second time results in a smudge; the life has left it. All corrections show when the ink dries. So is life. We can never retract what we have once committed to deeds ... <sup>83</sup>.

Suzuki's writings, which began to become available in English language editions from an early date <sup>84</sup>, were known to a large number of American artists. Amongst those who had awareness of them are Tobey <sup>85</sup>, Stamos <sup>86</sup>, Reinhardt <sup>87</sup>, Lassaw, Guston, Macdonald-Wright <sup>88</sup>, Onslow-Ford <sup>89</sup>, Philip Pavia <sup>90</sup>, George Brecht, Rudolph Ray <sup>91</sup>, and Lee Mullican <sup>92</sup>. Masson <sup>93</sup> and Braque <sup>94</sup> also knew Suzuki's works as did John Cage, André Breton <sup>95</sup> and Bernard Leach <sup>96</sup>, three figures working in other media who have close links with visual artists.

American artists' awareness of Suzuki's ideas was not, however, solely derived from a reading of his books, personal contacts were also important. Noguchi, for example, met him several times <sup>97</sup>. Suzuki spent a significant period of his later life in the United States, thus providing for several artists a living link with Zen traditions. He lectured in the States in 1936, and made New York his base for a time after 1951, living for a while at West 94th Street. He lectured at Columbia University for a number of years and it was there that certain artists had the opportunity to hear him talk. Lassaw and Guston both went to these lectures, as did John Cage and Ad Reinhardt. Lesser known artists (such as Sari Dienes) also attended, along with gallery owner Betty Parsons <sup>98</sup> and composer Earle Brown <sup>99</sup>. Apparently the classes were an attraction to intellectuals from various fields - Cage remembers for instance the presence of several psychiatrists in the audience <sup>100</sup>. Suzuki's classes were given once a week, on Fridays, and took a lecture format, time being given over to questions afterwards. Although some students were taking the course for credit, members of the public were free to attend on a more informal basis.

There is some doubt as to the exact dates during which Suzuki taught at Columbia. The 'Columbia Directory' lists him as 'Associate Professor of Religion' for the sessions between 1952-3 and 1956-7 and Lassaw's statement that he studied with Suzuki between 1953 and 1955 <sup>101</sup> is congruent with this. Whilst Cage and Lassaw both recall each other's presence in the classes, Cage dates his study with Suzuki earlier, in the late 1940's <sup>102</sup>. Documentary evidence tends to suggest the later date as correct, thus making the interest in Zen largely a 1950's phenomenon, but the earlier date makes more sense in terms of the

evolution of Cage's music and aesthetics, which display an awareness of Zen prior to 1953. The possibility that Suzuki had lectured earlier than 1953 must therefore not be eliminated altogether.

Guston's first real contact with Suzuki's ideas was through his lectures, rather than his books, which on the whole he did not read till later. He recalls going to about three of Suzuki's lectures and being very impressed by them<sup>103</sup>. Writing in 1979, Guston comments upon his interest in Suzuki in clear terms:

Let me say that since 1948 up until now, and more than ever - my reading of Zen has been intense. The ideas as expressed by Suzuki have always been an ideal for me in painting<sup>104</sup>.

The ways in which Zen may have influenced Guston are considered in the following chapter, where an elaboration of this theme is more apposite.

Lassaw's attendance at Suzuki's lectures over several years amounted to a systematic study of Zen philosophy. Whilst Suzuki did not provide Lassaw's introduction to Oriental philosophy, he seems to have occasioned the artist's most thorough consideration of it. Lassaw's response in his art and his creative philosophy will be illustrated on several occasions in the following pages.

Cage's study with Suzuki is important in the present context because he transmits his interest in Zen to artists in his circle. His writings contain many anecdotes about, and quotations from, Suzuki, and his influential aesthetic is indebted in key areas to Zen, as we shall see. Cage notes that Suzuki's lectures often appeared incomprehensible at first, and that their influence on his work was not immediate, but delayed:

Very often I would listen to the entire lecture and have no idea whatsoever what he was talking about.

There were different things that I couldn't understand when he was saying them and then I found that when I was walking in the woods or doing something else and not even thinking about them ... then the whole thing seemed to clear up<sup>105</sup>.

Like Lassaw, Cage does not recall Suzuki talking a great deal about the arts in his lectures. However, he recalls Suzuki's response on one occasion when he broached the subject:

I once asked him what he would have to say about music, and he said 'I don't know anything about the arts'. And then later I came across his book about the arts ['Zen and Japanese Culture'] and ... I recognised his answer was a Zen answer. I was hoping you see for some kind of approval from him, and he didn't wish to give it. The approval had to come from me <sup>106</sup>.

#### ALAN WATTS

Alan Watts, although much of his writing is in a popularizing vein, deserves mention as a commentator on Zen who has been widely read amongst American artists interested in the Orient. Stamos <sup>107</sup>, Guston <sup>108</sup>, Macdonald-Wright. Onslow-Ford, Lassaw, Hedda Sterne, Paul Jenkins <sup>109</sup> and Reinhardt <sup>110</sup>, show an awareness of Watts's work. In addition to his many books, Watts also made radio broadcasts. Onslow-Ford has mentioned hearing these, and Lassaw has a collection of tapes made by Watts, which includes some recordings of broadcasts <sup>111</sup>. Carl Andre remembers that he 'heard some koans read by Alan Watts over the radio in the 1950's' <sup>112</sup>.

As in the case of Suzuki, personal contacts with artists were also a means whereby ideas were transmitted.

Lassaw has read Watts's works carefully and extensively, and owns many of his books <sup>113</sup>. In 1968 he stated: 'The writings of Alan Watts were ... of great interest to me and continue to interest me' <sup>114</sup>. The sculptor also attended lectures given by Watts in New York during the 1950's, and recalls going to dinner with Watts and Joseph Campbell after one such occasion. Watts was to visit Lassaw's studio in New York during this period, and they met again when Lassaw was teaching in California. Watts's wife has also been a house guest in East Hampton.



Onslow-Ford credits Watts with introducing him to Oriental philosophy. 'I met Alan Watts at the Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco (1949). He introduced me to Buddhism. He was an excellent scholar'<sup>115</sup>. Watts took over Onslow-Ford's houseboat studio in Sausalito, and a friendship developed which may have been encouraged by their shared English birth. For about a year, Onslow-Ford states, he and Watts met regularly in an attempt to co-author a never completed book.

Like Lassaw, Cage also attended lectures by Watts in New York, although by that time his interest in Zen was already well established through his contact with Suzuki. Of his acquaintanceship with Watts, Cage notes:

When we first met we got along very well, then when he came to hear the music, he said it's not necessary to have this kind of music, you can have it perfectly well out of doors without having a concert ... and then when I wrote 'Silence' Alan Watts wrote me a letter telling me how much he liked it, and the next thing I knew he was coming to the concerts and enjoying them!'<sup>116</sup>

Personal contacts between Watts and other artists and figures in the art world can be traced, which although perhaps more fleeting, may nevertheless be significant. When Watts worked at the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco there was a weekly faculty colloquium which he reports 'became an event increasingly attractive to San Francisco artists and intellectuals'<sup>117</sup>. Amongst the artists Watts claims had attended the colloquium are Tobey<sup>118</sup>, Onslow-Ford, Lee Mullican<sup>119</sup> and Jean Varda<sup>120</sup>. Artist Sabro Hasegawa was a fellow faculty member from 1954.

CHAPTER THREEORIENTAL INFLUENCES ON ARTISTS'  
ATTITUDES TO THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Whilst stylistic or iconographic changes can be clearly seen in an artist's work, and therefore discussed objectively, alterations in attitude to the creative process cannot be directly read from the works themselves, and in discussing them we must lean heavily on statements made by the artists. . Despite the difficulties involved however, such a discussion is of great importance - the artist's view of the creative process is central to his activity, and whilst it cannot be said to directly determine style, it does have important repercussions on it in many cases. In the following pages I wish to show the extent to which Oriental attitudes towards the creative process have affected the thinking, and therefore the practice, of some American artists.

In general terms, the Oriental view of the creative process can be distinguished by the emphasis it places on a passive state of the conscious will. The faculty of rational thought and the 'ego', the individual's sense of his separate identity, are to be in abeyance, an integrated state of mind being considered the ideal one for creative activity. Control of the creative process is seen as vested in 'Nature', which is identified with the artist's inner Self, his 'true' cosmic identity.

In order to present the clearest possible picture of the way in which American artists have responded to Eastern ideas concerning the creative process, it is proposed to consider the interaction which took place from a number of different viewpoints. This chapter, then, will consist of a series of sections in which different aspects of Oriental aesthetics and metaphysics will be examined for their influence on the Americans, and although there will certainly be a degree of overlap, the reiteration of information concerning artists' interest in Eastern ideas should be taken not as repetition, but as displaying the depth of their involvement.

The first aspect of the Oriental view I wish to consider is its emphasis that creative activity should take place from a state of inner passivity, an ego-transcending level of awareness where 'Nature', the cosmos as a whole, is seen as the active agent. The artist is required to trust in the correctness of the universal processes and the work appears to 'create itself' without the intervention of his conscious will.

This incitement to adopt an attitude of passivity is encountered very strongly in the 'Tao Te Ching', which counsels us to 'know the value of non-action' <sup>1</sup>;

In pursuit of Tao, everyday something is dropped.  
Less and less is done until non-action is achieved.  
When nothing is done, nothing is left undone <sup>2</sup>.

The same idea can also be found in the 'Bhagavad Gita', v,8-9:

The man who is united with the Divine and knows the truth thinks "I do nothing at all" for in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, walking, sleeping, breathing ... he holds that only the senses are occupied with the objects of the senses <sup>3</sup>.

In all the yogic techniques of Hinduism, as well as in the various Buddhist meditations, the goal is the abandonment of attachment to the 'ego', the individual ego being regarded by all the Oriental philosophies as only a part of the mind, and action (of any kind) in a state of identification with it is seen as blinkered and inevitably only partially successful.

The Chinese story of the painter Wu Tao-tzu who disappeared into a landscape he had painted can be seen on one level as a metaphor of the annihilation of the artist's individuality in the perfected creative act. This particular Oriental source for the concept of an ego-free creative process was known to several American artists <sup>4</sup>. Stamos apparently enjoyed recounting this story <sup>5</sup> and Lassaw's interest in it is also attested to <sup>6</sup>.

Onslow-Ford refers to the tale in 'Creation' (page 98), and appears to be alluding to it in a passage in 'Painting in the Instant' where he discusses how the painter should prepare himself for work:

The painter first gives his attention to the simplification of his life to essentials ... in short, he prepares a place in which he can disappear<sup>7</sup>.

Reinhardt also mentions the story<sup>8</sup>, and it can be interpreted in relation to other statements he makes which emphasize a view of the creative process in which a transcendence of the ego is sought. In one passage, for instance, he comments:

One lives after ... one has been painted out, after the paintings have been painted out<sup>9</sup>.

Such a statement can be taken as throwing light on Reinhardt's mode of working in his later, near-monochrome canvases where brushstrokes are used to cancel out previous brushstrokes so that no personal gestures are left in the completed work, no traces of the artist's individuality. The virtually unmodulated surface of the final painting provides a visual corrolary to the settled state of mind sought by the Orient, in which the traces of attachment to individuality are erased and the impersonality of the Absolute prevails. For Reinhardt, individuality has no place in the highest art, and he informs us of this in terms which strongly recall the Buddhist descriptions of Nirvana as a state of non-attachment:

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There is nothing in the purest art to pin down and point out. Nothing is attached to any miserable creature or jolly soul, or to any kind of special space or "out of joint" time, or to any pleasure or pain<sup>10</sup>.

The Taoist notion of 'non-action' ('Wu-wei') was certainly known to Reinhardt since it is referred to in his notes. The passivity, the 'making over' of activity to 'Nature' ('Tao') appears to be an aspect of the 'Tao Te Ching' which interested him, the following quotation being amongst those which he transcribed from that book.

By letting go, it all gets done.  
 The world is won by those who let it go!  
 But when you try to try  
 the world is then beyond the winning.<sup>11</sup>

Reinhardt's writings emphasize his admiration for anonymity in art, and this can be seen as a further revelation of a desire to curtail the role of the ego in the creative process, to eliminate 'self-expression'. Classical Oriental art is particularly admired for the quality of anonymity it displays:

The intensity, consciousness and perfection of Asiatic art comes only from repetitiousness and sameness, just as true originality exists only where all artists work in the same traditions<sup>12</sup>.

Reinhardt's adoption of a standard formula in his own late work seems an attempt to imitate Oriental models and their method of eliminating the personal in art, recalling the continuity between traditional representations of the Buddha image from different periods which he discusses in 'Timeless in Asia'.

Tobey delineates an attitude to the creative process in which passivity is emphasized, and credits Oriental sources with inspiring him. He notes a discussion with his friend Takizaki, a Zen master, in which the latter advised him to 'let Nature take over in your work'. Tobey paraphrases this as an injunction to 'get out of the way'<sup>13</sup>, that is, to prevent the ego from obstructing the spontaneous flow of Nature's creativity. In interview with Seitz Tobey mentions this idea again, once more revealing its Oriental source. 'To cease to control, to allow Nature to enter. This is the old Japanese idea'<sup>14</sup> he states. A letter of January 1953 to Marion Willard indicates that this approach was beginning to crystallize for Tobey prior to his contact with Takizaki. 'The cultivated ones' (the Japanese) he wrote 'are not wrong when they speak of the philosophy of the quiet lake (inner) and let Nature take the brush'<sup>15</sup>.

Sculptor Ibram Lassaw accepts the Eastern notion that the ego is not the 'author' of action, that it represents only a part of the personality:

The Ego consciousness alone is without roots. It is completely incapable of more than a superficial grasp of reality. The automatic way makes us aware to thatness or suchness of each individual happening <sup>16</sup>.

Lassaw's reference here to the 'automatic' way must not be taken as implying any similarity to Surrealist method. As he argues elsewhere, 'when we try to express our unconscious we only succeed in being self-conscious' <sup>17</sup>. What is being proposed here is not the dualistic view of the psyche held by the Surrealists, but the holistic view of the Oriental philosophers in which all aspects of the mind are allowed to play a part once the obstruction of the ego has been removed. Whilst for Lassaw 'the work of art is a "happening" somewhat independent of my conscious will', 'the conscious mind is undoubtedly a participant in the process' <sup>18</sup>.

Instead of a mode of creativity, then, where the ego plays a dominant role, Nature is allowed to act unhindered in accordance with its own essentially orderly, intelligent and creative character. 'I trust the universal process that's going on' <sup>19</sup> Lassaw writes. The artist, in a state of mental acquiescence, is viewed as identified with the creative forces of life - which from the Oriental standpoint are seen as being in constant activity in the present in contrast to the Christian/Judaic description of Creation as having occurred all at once at the beginning of time. 'The general feeling is that we are participating in the creation of the universe' <sup>20</sup> Lassaw states, adding that 'this ordinary life is at the same moment divine life' <sup>21</sup>. One reason why this identification of artistic creation and cosmic manifestation is easy for Lassaw to make is that he regards 'all creation as a kind of divine work of art' <sup>22</sup>. Another factor is his acceptance of the non-dualistic philosophy of Zen which regards the divine and human realms as identical. He quotes Suzuki's affirmation of this - 'Is there anything more important than seeing the divine in our everyday life?' <sup>23</sup> - and his statement on 'ordinary life' and 'divine' life is itself a paraphrase of the Zen maxim which runs: 'This very earth is the Lotus Land of purity and this body the body of Buddha' <sup>24</sup>. This equation which occurs in Zen between everyday or worldly activities

and the supernatural realm is illustrated clearly in the words of the poet P'ang-yun 'Miraculous power and marvellous activity - Drawing water and hewing wood!' <sup>25</sup>. Lassaw comments upon this statement, making a connection to his activity as an artist:

Of course, the moment of working on a piece of sculpture, the arena of action itself, is also like drawing water and carrying fuel <sup>26</sup>.

Gordon Onslow-Ford shares with Lassaw this view that artistic creation is a means of participating in cosmic creation, and again Oriental philosophy provides the source of the idea. He talks of 'the elixir of participating in creation' <sup>27</sup> and describes the ego-transcending state in which Nature's creative spirit is allowed full expression:

The role of the artist is to become part of Nature. His work goes beyond the expression of the appearance of things into the spirit which makes the sun shine, the earth turn and the seasons follow each other <sup>28</sup>.

The state of mind Onslow-Ford seeks for working appears very similar to Zen descriptions of 'satori':

In the instant there is a coincidence of events - wind blowing, grass growing, brush strokes appearing <sup>29</sup>.

The mind is identified with the whole field of phenomena, no special emphasis being placed on those events that are normally considered within the control of the ego:

The self is found in what happens. A painting, a book, a sunrise are not things that the painter makes. They are experiences that happen <sup>30</sup>.

An attitude of passivity during the creative process is constantly emphasized by Onslow-Ford in his writings. At one point he notes 'the Zen principle of "MUGA" (it is not I that am doing this)' <sup>31</sup>

and elsewhere he asserts:

In the act of painting the painter has no mind of his own.  
The painting is made by society, and more profoundly yet  
by Nature <sup>32</sup>.

The effortlessness of the working process as it is here described is in sharp contrast to the sense of struggle often associated with it in the West. Onslow-Ford feels that good paintings are done with ease, and only bad paintings are difficult to accomplish <sup>33</sup>.

The writings of John Cage, which have proved immensely important for many American artists, also counsel an inner passivity during the creative process as the most effective means of accomplishing the task in hand:

Activity within inactivity. That is to say: If I am not doing anything, acting is going on anyway. A haiku says this (describing the situation of a farmer taking a nap): by going to sleep, I pound the rice <sup>34</sup>.

Cage traces back the idea that the ego needs to be integrated into the totality of 'Nature', of the 'Self', to a lecture given by Suzuki:

The lecture that Suzuki gave that impressed me very, very much was the one in which he went to the blackboard and drew an oval-like shape on the board. And halfway up the left hand side he put two parallel lines. And he said this whole [oval] is an image of the structure of the mind, and those two parallel lines are the ego. And the ego has the capacity to cut itself off from its experience, whether it comes through the senses or in through the dreams, and what Zen would like is that the ego not cut itself off, but flow with its experience, which is full circle. I thought that was so beautiful, but I've told you so briefly, and he took two hours to explain <sup>35</sup>.



Another anecdote makes a similar point:

One evening Morton Feldman said that when he composed he was dead; this recalls to me the statement of my father ... who says that he does his best work when he is sound asleep. The two suggest the 'deep sleep' of Indian mental practice. The ego no longer blocks action. A fluency obtains which is characteristic of nature <sup>36</sup>.

Amongst those artists for whom John Cage may have provided an introduction to Oriental conceptions of the creative process can be counted Philip Guston. According to Dore Ashton, he had met and discussed Zen with Cage in 1948 <sup>37</sup>. Guston himself acknowledges his contact with Cage's ideas:

I believe it was John Cage who once told me 'When you start working, everybody is in your studio - the past, your friends, enemies, the art world, and above all, your own ideas - all are there. But as you continue painting, they start leaving, one by one, and you are left completely alone. Then, if you're lucky, even you leave <sup>38</sup>.

The idea being expressed here is clearly that the process of painting requires a loss of ego, and perhaps an allusion to the story of Wu Tao-tzu is intended.

Guston expresses the idea that the work of art comes into being 'through' the artist <sup>39</sup> rather than the process of creation being under his conscious control. He talks of moving during the creation of the work 'towards a state of unfreedom where only certain things can happen' - 'a moment arrives when the air of the arbitrary vanishes, and the paint falls into positions that feel destined' <sup>40</sup>. This feeling of the work making itself, as it were, occurs when the ego has been transcended:

The point you are working towards is that you didn't do it. You have to work to achieve a kind of nonentity, although its not anonymous <sup>41</sup>.

The consideration of the issues being discussed here was certainly not idle speculation as far as Guston was concerned. The 'moral' issue of the authenticity of the creative process was a central one to him: 'The ethics involved in "seeing" as one is painting - the purity of the act, so to speak - is more actual to me than preassumed images or ideas of picture structure' <sup>42</sup> he claimed, 'What is seen and called the picture is what remains - an evidence' <sup>43</sup>. The impulse to paint, Guston feels (both for himself and other artists of the post-war era) lay in a desire to discover whether 'the act of creation was still possible. Whether it was just possible ... I felt as if I were talking to myself, having a dialectical monologue with myself to see if I could create' <sup>44</sup>. 'The question is: Can there be any art at all? Maybe this is the content of modern art' <sup>45</sup>. Along with other artists of that generation, Guston is here expressing a dissatisfaction with purely pictorial goals in art and turning to face what could be called 'meta-plastic' <sup>46</sup> issues. Attitudes towards the creative process are in flux - partly as a result of the influence of the Orient being considered here - and artists' preoccupation with these matters has permeated their work, affecting style and even on occasions subject matter.

A familiarity with Zen and Taoist traditions <sup>47</sup> has led Noguchi to a view of the creative process which emphasizes ego-transcendence. 'I feel the more one loses oneself, the more one is oneself' <sup>48</sup> he states. Noguchi often allows the stones he uses in his sculptures to substantially retain their original natural form with only minimal working or 'interference' <sup>104</sup> from the artist's hand and will. Rather than artistic creation serving to provide (as in the archetypal Western view) an opportunity for man to display his control over materials, imposing order on 'formless' nature, an attitude of responsiveness, of working with nature, prevails. Noguchi claims that he 'learns from' the stone <sup>49</sup>.

The example of classical Oriental art was important in suggesting to Noguchi ways in which this passive attitude to the creative process might be expressed in his work. The Zen gardens of Japan and their use of found stones, for instance, had a profound effect both on Noguchi's own gardens and on his sculpture (see Appendix 1). As a youth in Japan Noguchi had been apprenticed by his mother to a cabinet maker <sup>50</sup>, and he had absorbed the attitude of the Japanese joiners, who eschew the use of glue or other means of forcefully imposing a unity on their materials. 'I dislike gluing parts together', Noguchi states, 'I'm leery of welding and pasting. It implies taking an unfair advantage of nature' <sup>51</sup>. The consequence <sup>of this attitude</sup> can be seen

in works of various dates, for example Gunas' (1948, marble), and 'Humpty Dumpty' (1946, Ribbon slate, 58 3/4 x 20 3/4 x 18", collection Whitney Museum of American Art). Carl Andre has also displayed an interest in Japanese carpentry that has encouraged his decision to abandon construction in his works. He writes:

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in the 1950's and early 1960's I was greatly moved by photographs of the carpentry of Japanese temples and classic houses.

Knowledge of an Oriental precedent is regarded by Andre <sup>52</sup> not as the cause of his shift in style, but as a confirmation of a pre-existing tendency:

That my works have for many years been unjoined did not derive from Japanese art but certainly was reinforced by it <sup>53</sup>.

Morris Graves ties his advocacy of an anegetic mode of creativity directly to Oriental models:

I seek to move away from that Western Aesthetic which emphasizes personalized expression forms, without a profound content to support them ... to move away from exhibitionism called self-expression, towards the Eastern arts' basis of consideration of metaphysical perceptions which produce creative painting as a record ... and outflowing ... of religious experience <sup>54</sup>.

The ego-transcending state is also described under the mantle of a discussion of anonymity in art, a concern which Graves no doubt derived from his reading of Coomaraswamy:

Anonymity is a state of mind I very much respect. What is wrong with being after one's own image in this sense is that our culture has taught us to individually coddle and own it <sup>55</sup>.

The point Graves is making is that a concern with originality and personal expression leads to an attachment in the artist, which is avoided when impersonal subject matter is used. Graves does at times attempt to use

in his paintings the recurrent symbols of Oriental art, but when he does so (see 'What does it now pillar apart', tempera, 194(7?)) it is in an intensely personal way. We should assume, then, that Graves, to the extent he is applying this idea of anonymity to himself, is referring to an inner attitude of detachment. This passive state is also being referred to when he says 'I admire all artists who let the painting paint itself' <sup>56</sup>.

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Richard Lippold places the same emphasis on passivity, identifying the source of the creative impulse as lying beyond the ego:

The energy that we know and that we use as creative people does not come from ourselves, it comes from something else, and I don't know what that is ... all religions identify it is some way, but I ... think its just part of all the universal forces' <sup>57</sup>.

It was whilst working on 'New Moonlight' that Lippold came to regard the creative process in this way:

What it revealed to me was that something could come through someone that had its own existence in which neither my nature nor my desire nor my personality nor myself was the important aspect <sup>58</sup>.

This attitude to creativity differs from the common Western view that the genesis of a work of art involves an inner struggle:

I don't think it's a struggle with myself. I'm convinced, and I know this from looking at historical verifications ... that the work that is significant is work that exists apart from the artist <sup>59</sup>.

To Lippold, the modern European view of art as self-expression is an anomaly:

I don't believe in that. This is the artist as Romantic and comes entirely out of the last hundred and fifty years or so of isolation of the artists. <sup>60</sup>

Lippold contrasts this attitude to that of the Middle Ages and of the Orient. As with Graves's discussion of anonymity we can see the writings of Coomaraswamy standing behind this statement:

I'm sure no artist would have said that in the Middle Ages or early Renaissance or in the Orient ... In sculpture, the carvers of Chartres or of Angkor Wat wouldn't have had such concepts. They weren't free to have them, they were so much a part of a tight society that dictated everything - their forms - and established a philosophy for them <sup>61</sup>.

Paul Jenkins, discussing Herrigel's statement that 'the shot will only go smoothly when it takes the archer himself by surprise' <sup>62</sup>, notes:

You have to put yourself in the position where, in the Western way of thinking, the 'Thou' works. Where something is also working through you, and you become, not a medium or an agent or hypnotised, you enter an awareness from within and without. There's so much you don't know, but if you let the unknown enter you ... <sup>63</sup>.

Jenkins does not like the use of the word 'passive' to describe this state of awareness, since it can be misinterpreted by the Western mind as meaning limpid inactivity rather than dynamic energy:

That is not passivity. It might be interpreted as such [by the Westerner] but it is allowing something to happen so that you can come into full being ... All these great Kendo fighters who make one movement with a sword and that's it - they're not passive <sup>64</sup>.

For Pousette-Dart, creativity comes from the inner Self, which is identified ultimately with God. The artist's own role is a passive one, the painting 'grows and evolves of its own accord, has a transcendental logic and a logic of its own structure and counterpoint. I am then as a witness to my own birth or a vigilant helper always in contact ... until the work ... is born to its own self-being, becomes a thing within itself' <sup>65</sup>.

This view corresponds closely to the Oriental understanding which we have seen to be so fruitful for many other American artists. Pousette-Dart denies that the Orient has been the direct source of these ideas in his own case, claiming to have come to them through his own intuitive investigations. However, the possibility remains that his early reading of Oriental texts may have helped provide the paradigm within which his own subjective insights could be ordered<sup>66</sup>.

The second aspect of the Oriental attitude towards the creative process which will be considered is its description of the state of mind to be cultivated prior to commencing work. The emphasis is placed on attaining a meditative calm, an inner silence, as most conducive to creative activity, and this state is identical to that sought in yogic and other mental disciplines, where a mind empty of thought is regarded as the most propitious for action of any kind. Just as - in the Oriental cosmologies - form is seen as arising from the Void, so thoughts are regarded as being 'born' from an inner emptiness, and thus the cultivation of a state of silence prior to working is seen as a natural strategy for attuning oneself to the source of creativity.

Herrigel provides several examples of this Oriental injunction to contact an inner silence before the creative act in his description of the frame of mind required by the archer (regarded by Herrigel as an artist):

It is necessary for the archer to become, in spite of himself, an unmoved centre. Then comes the supreme and ultimate miracle, art becomes 'artless', shooting becomes not shooting, a shooting without bow and arrow<sup>67</sup>. Out of the fullness of ... presence of mind, disturbed by no ulterior motive, the artist who is released from all detachment must practice his art<sup>68</sup>.

The clearest pronouncements concerning this aspect of the Oriental view of creativity, and perhaps those most influential on the thinking of American artists, come from the Chinese artists and aestheticians. Several examples can be found from different epochs which display the same essential attitude:

It is indeed in a state of emptiness and tranquillity that most ideas are conceived<sup>69</sup>.

When the painter takes up the brush he must be absolutely quiet, serene, peaceful and collected, and shut out all vulgar emotions. He must sit down in silence before the white silk scroll and control his vital energy<sup>70</sup>.

An oft-quoted precept of Chuang-Tzu can be regarded as one of the earliest expressions of the view communicated here. His observation that 'the painter takes off his clothes and sits cross-legged'<sup>71</sup> clearly indicates the adoption of a meditative posture.

Tobey uses similar descriptions to the Chinese aestheticians in delineating the frame of mind he attempts to gain prior to painting. In his article on 'Japanese Traditions and American Art' he writes:

A state of mind is the first preparation and from this the action proceeds. Peace of mind is another ideal, perhaps the ideal to be sought for in painting, and certainly preparatory to the act<sup>72</sup>.

Elsewhere he emphasizes the same attitude when he notes that 'painting should come through the avenues of meditation rather than the canals of action'<sup>73</sup>.

It is in the context of discussing his interest in Herrigel that Tobey notes the importance of an 'empty' mind. In this case it is not solely the creative process which is being described, the frame of mind is held as necessary for a clear experience of reality at any time:

As to reality - well all I know is that it is something given, but we've got to be empty and want to experience it<sup>74</sup>.

The same emphasis on ridding the mind of thoughts occurs in a description Tobey makes of his working method in a letter to Ulfert Wilke:

I have no system - ... when I paint I first have to arouse myself and get into a state - forget all things if possible to make a union with what I am doing and the less I think of it, the paintings and myself, the better the result<sup>75</sup>.

All the above statements by Tobey come from around the time (c 1957 onwards) <sup>76</sup> when his interest in Zen was being renewed, and thus relate most closely to his working method at that time. However, many aspects of Tobey's approach to his painting were affected deeply by his visit to the Orient in 1934 (see Appendix 2) and the seeds of ideas that find full expression later were planted at that time. Tobey was certainly made aware during this trip of the importance placed in the Orient on cultivating the correct state of mind prior to working, and he describes in his 'diary' notes the abbot of the Zen monastery which he visited using the chanting of a sutra as if to prepare himself to write:

The sutra was being sung between writings. Whenever he is compelled from within to write, the sutras are sung. I felt as though he was preparing himself for the power to be released.

Tobey makes a connection to his own situation as an artist.

I wondered when again artists might take advantage of such conditions for the gathering of their inner forces <sup>77</sup>.

Onslow-Ford also appears to be echoing the advice of the Chinese writers when he asserts that 'the preparation of the painter should be to acquire a state of inner peace' <sup>78</sup>. He believes that 'the more the depths of the mind are plumbed, the more abundantly they produce' <sup>79</sup> and thus he counsels:

Cultivate the ground of your garden. The ground that can not be seen, and see what appears <sup>80</sup>.

The mind has to be brought to a state of emptiness, beyond thought, and it is in that identification with the Void that the creative impulse occurs:

Inspiration is the sudden clearing of the mind propitious for creation. The clear mind may be induced by relaxing, by simplifying life to the barest essentials, by slowing down thoughts until a state of emptiness is induced or it may come at any moment out of the blue <sup>81</sup>.



By contrast, 'if the mind is filled with fears, doubts or ulterior motives while painting, it is the fears, doubts, or ulterior motives that become apparent ... if the mind is buzzing with recent activities, the surface is agitated, the depths are clouded'<sup>82</sup>.

The 'open mind', another term Onslow-Ford uses to describe this mode of awareness, is seen as the only state wherein true originality can enter the work, since it is the only occasion when the mind is not focused on a content that is already known. He writes that 'the Unknown manifests itself through the open mind':<sup>83</sup>

In his meditation the painter explores the jungles, the deserts and the spaces of the mind. He goes through chaos, danger and delight. But it is in the clear place, the open place, that something appears that was not there before<sup>84</sup>.

The consequence of Onslow-Ford's attitude is a rejection of the associational methods of Surrealism, which necessarily start from some beginning data.

Several other artists talk about the importance for working of a state of mind in which thoughts are absent. Noguchi has discussed how in the process of making his sculptures he attempts to work without thinking,<sup>85</sup> and the 'directness' of Zen is the probable source of the idea in his case. Lassaw too notes Zen's emphasis on a state of mind where thought is in abeyance, although he is not only talking about the creative process. In explaining the Zen concept of 'tathata' - direct seeing of reality without conceptualization - he quotes the Bible by way of contrast: "In the beginning was the word" - well this is before that<sup>86</sup>. Curiously enough, Onslow-Ford uses a similar way of describing emptiness as 'prior' to forms: 'In the beginning was the word, before that the Void'<sup>87</sup>. Cage also notes an attainment of silence and a transcending of thought as necessary to creative tasks:

What I think and what I feel can be my inspiration but it is then also my pair of blinkers. To see one must go beyond the imagination and for that one must stand absolutely still as though in the centre of a leap<sup>88</sup>.

Lippold makes a similar point about the limiting effect thought has on one's frame of mind, with implications that could affect the creative process:

As we use words, they imply just the opposite from a fluid state of awareness. To say that we have categories of experience is already to deny the No-hierarchy of the total self<sup>89</sup>.

The importance of acquiring an inner silence prior to the creative act is acknowledged by Graves when he notes that 'Zen stresses the meditative, stilling the surface of the mind and letting the inner surface bloom'<sup>90</sup>. Rollin Crampton also talks of the way in which he attempts to induce a frame of mind suitable for painting: 'A mood may be induced through the reading and study of the Bhagavad Gita or the Upanishads'<sup>91</sup>. Crampton also refers to 'the voice of the silence'<sup>92</sup> a term he derives from Blavatsky.

The influence of the aspect of the Oriental approach we have been considering here was not limited to American artists. Some comments by Masson, whose interest in the East has been long-standing, will serve to illustrate this:

A la suite de la contemplation sereine qui amene le vide, vient la vision<sup>93</sup>

Waiting for revelation demands a state of emptiness, not of superstition or of preparation<sup>94</sup>.

The Oriental source of this attitude is clearly revealed by Masson when he notes:

To create a void in the self, first condition, in the Chinese aesthetic, of the act of painting<sup>95</sup>.

In the previous section of the discussion, the emphasis has been placed on descriptions of the inner state of mind of the artist, and it is now proposed to consider the way in which the mind is perceived as relating to the external world during the creative process. In the

Oriental view, the relationship to be sought between the artist and his external subject matter or materials is one of complete harmony, and this attitude of oneness with nature is expressed in varying ways. Firstly, it is seen in an injunction to the artist that he should identify himself with the object being depicted. This identification should be so complete that his sense of separate identity disappears. Herrigel provides an important illustration of this idea when he considers how the insights he has derived from his study of archery as a Zen discipline can be applied to painting. He writes:

The painter's instruction might be: spend ten years observing bamboos, become a bamboo yourself, then forget everything and - paint <sup>96</sup>.

A more generalized identification with the process of working, an absorption in the task at hand, is also described in the Oriental literature. Herrigel again provides an illustration of this, describing his state of mind following his mastery of the technique of archery:

Bow, arrow, goal and ego, all melt into one another, so that I can no longer separate them <sup>97</sup>.

The self is lost in an outward engagement with the action. Coomaraswamy gives an example from Indian tradition when he quotes Shankaracharya's metaphor of the arrow maker 'who perceives nothing beyond his work when he is buried in it' <sup>98</sup>. Kuo Hsi, the Chinese landscape painter, also emphasizes the absorption in nature he practices for his craft:

When I am responsive and at one with my surroundings, and have achieved perfect coordination of mind and hand, then I start to paint freely and expertly <sup>99</sup>.

Several American artists responded to the story of the painter 'becoming' the bamboo, which we have quoted here from Herrigel. Stamos, who admired the landscape artists of China and Japan and attempted to apply their lessons to his own work, retells the story almost word for word <sup>100</sup>. This excerpt is taken from his unpublished lecture 'Why Nature in Art' delivered in 1954 - the year after Pantheon published an English language translation of Herrigel:

To achieve the inner vision the Eastern artist tried to become the object itself. In other words if a painter is involved with bamboos he draws bamboos for ten years, eventually becomes a bamboo, and then forgets all about the bamboo he is drawing <sup>101</sup>.

Macdonald-Wright also sympathetically notes the identification with the subject that occurs in Chinese painting:

By banishing the duality of the painted and the painter, the [Chinese] artist assured himself that he had become that which he expressed <sup>102</sup>.

In his unpublished manuscript 'Beyond Aesthetics' he elaborates on this point, explaining that a 'willed concentration on an object' is the means to bring about this state:

The condition is not a believed in identity, it is an accepted mental attitude that seems to become that which it contemplates <sup>103</sup>.

Gordon Washburn, writing of the painter Kenzo Okada, sees him as trying to transcend distinctions between subject and object by an act of identification. Okada sees a precedent for this attitude in Japanese traditions:

In ancient days, Okada declares, the Japanese did not like to distinguish between subject and object, suppressing the use of 'I' and 'you' - words that tend to separate the individual from his fellows and from the rest of nature <sup>104</sup>.

It is interesting to note that the concept which we have been discussing here remained fertile for an artist of a later generation, albeit in a form stripped of its mystical implications. Philip Pearlstein had studied Chinese landscape painting and was impressed by aspects of its aesthetic. Although much of what he learned was of a technical nature, he states:

One thing that did come through, which I think I use now, is the idea of identification with the model - you become the thing in order to draw it. Well, you don't have to become it, but you certainly have to pay very close attention to it <sup>105</sup>.

An attitude of attentiveness and absorption during the creative process is displayed by Pollock in an oft-quoted statement, and it is interesting to speculate whether awareness of Oriental precedents was important in his case, given his known interest in the East <sup>106</sup>. 'It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess' <sup>107</sup> he writes, describing a state of identification with the process as a precondition for success. During the time when he is working there is no critical evaluation, no standing back: 'when I am in my painting I am not aware of what I'm doing' <sup>108</sup>. Attention and a sense of 'identification' are the key concepts expressed in two similar statements by Onslow-Ford which bear inclusion in this discussion since they undoubtedly reflect his interest in the Orient:

Painting in the Instant is an expression of unity, there is identity with all that happens <sup>109</sup>.

Painting in the Instant happens with full attention while in a state of mind that corresponds to deep sleep <sup>110</sup>.

For Guston, a precondition of the success of a painting is the attainment of a state which closely resembles 'satori', the Zen term describing a feeling of complete union with nature. He talks about a particular moment in the process of working when this new awareness arises, and sees everything done up to this point as purely preliminary, although necessary to induce the change in vision. This altered state has to be reached anew in each painting - it has the quality of unwilld spontaneity which one associates with the satori experience, and is not a 'trick' which can be learnt.

The role of attention in bringing about this state is emphasized by Guston (just as it is by Onslow-Ford):

To get into this state, this other world - demands extreme attention, so that things can happen. It's a state where you can catch it or miss it <sup>111</sup>.

The state is described as one where the artist 'sees', and it is Zen's innocent perception of things as they are which he seems to be talking about:

The only morality in painting revolves around the moment when you are permitted to 'see' and the painting takes over. You can't jump the gun <sup>112</sup>.

Guston's insistence on the importance of a preparatory period of work before this transformation of awareness can occur is significant. In discussing his interest in Zen, the artist has noted that one of the ideas that impressed him was the notion that satori doesn't come without preparation <sup>113</sup>.

The aspect of the Oriental view of the creative process which we will consider next is its emphasis on going beyond a trust in rationality during the working process. This is expressed as an attempt to avoid planning, preconceptions, intentions, will: A spontaneous, innocent, intuitive approach is counselled by way of contrast.

The primacy of rationality in Western philosophy is not echoed in its Oriental counterparts. Experiential knowledge, at once pragmatic and mystical, is accorded a much higher place than intellectual knowledge which is seen as of necessity limited in its perspective, since it requires the reduction of experience to a symbolic language. Ramakrishna makes the point that knowledge is beyond reasoning, <sup>114</sup> and he is only echoing older formulations in the Hindu tradition when he asserts this - the Chandogya Upanishad, for example, claims that 'meditation is in truth higher than thought' <sup>115</sup>. Zen, with its emphasis on non-rational, direct means of transmitting its insights provides us with perhaps the most thoroughgoing expression of this attitude amongst the Oriental systems. According to Hsi Yun 'those who seek the goal through intellection are like the fur (many) and those who obtain intuitive knowledge of the way like the horns (few)' <sup>116</sup>.

Injunctions to adopt a frame of mind in which intentions and preconceptions are not allowed to dominate action occur in all the major Eastern metaphysical and aesthetic systems. The inhibiting role that they play is described with direct reference to the visual arts by Chang Yen-Yüan:

He who deliberates and moves the brush intent on making a picture, misses ... the art of painting, while he who cogitates and moves the brush without such intentions, reaches the art of painting <sup>117</sup>.

Chang K'eng (in his treatise 'Kuo Ch'ao Hua Ch'eng Lu') considers the same issue:

What is the expression without attention? It is to concentrate the soul, to fix the thoughts, to direct the regard, to turn the wrist; at the start one has no intention of doing it, but suddenly it is like that <sup>118</sup>.

Herrigel reinforces the picture we have received from these Chinese authorities by his statement that 'the right art ... is purposeless, aimless' <sup>119</sup>.

The elimination of discrimination, of likes and dislikes, is a further way in which the abandonment of emphasis on rationality occurs in the East, the goal being an attempt to relinquish 'attachment' to the ever-changing aspects of external life, identified by the Buddha as the source of all suffering. Huang-Po counsels that one should imitate the sands of the river Ganges in their indifference between filth and perfume <sup>120</sup> (ie ugliness and beauty), and a further illustration of this precept from the Zen tradition is given in the words of an early poem:

The perfect Way is without difficulty,  
save that it avoids picking and choosing.  
Only when you stop liking and disliking  
will all be clearly understood <sup>121</sup>

When intentions and preconceptions are eliminated, spontaneity becomes the dominant mode of creativity. This is the way in which Nature is seen as working in the Oriental world view - 'The Tao's principle is spontaneity' <sup>122</sup>, Lao Tzu informs us. Watts uses a Tibetan poem to illustrate this, pointing out that every event comes of itself from the Void 'as from the surface of a clear lake there leaps suddenly a fish' <sup>123</sup>.

Applications of this principle of spontaneity to human action are common in Oriental texts. Suzuki writes:

There is something divine in being spontaneous and not being hampered by human conventionalities and their artificial hypocrisies. There is something direct and fresh in this lack of restraint by anything human, which suggests a divine freedom and creativity. Nature never deliberates, it acts directly out of its own heart <sup>124</sup>.

Herrigel's discussion of archery reveals the same principle. 'The shot will go smoothly when it takes the archer himself by surprise', he writes <sup>125</sup>.

In China, four categories of painter are generally distinguished and the category of 'spontaneous' ('i') painters is generally regarded the most highly. Huang Hsiu-fu discusses it:

The spontaneous style of painting is the most difficult. Those who follow it are unskilled in the way of compasses and squares for drawing circles and squares. They scorn refinement and minuteness of the colouring and make the forms in an abridged manner. They grasp the self-existent, which cannot be imitated, and give the unexpected. Therefore this is called the spontaneous manner <sup>126</sup>.

'The method which consists in following no method is the perfect method' according to Tao-Chi <sup>127</sup>, and the closely related idea that the essence of the painter's skill could not be learnt from a study of precedents is another incitement to a spontaneous style. Meng-tzu conveys this idea when he states that 'to imitate the drawing of the old masters is like attaching oneself to the dust and dirt, or like taking husks and chaff instead of the grain. It is not the true thing' <sup>128</sup>. Naturally such discussions as these would be of great interest to the avant-garde artist, to whom rules would be anathema.

John Cage, as an interpreter of Oriental concepts to American avant-garde artists, helps through his writings to undermine the role the West has given to rational thought in the creative process. He does so in a very rational way:



In view ... of a totality of possibilities, no knowing action is commensurate, since the character of the knowledge acted upon prohibits all but some eventualities. From a realist position, such action, though cautious, hopeful and generally entered into, is unsuitable.

For Cage, spontaneous, innocent action must replace this pointless premeditation:

An experimental action, generated by a mind as empty as it was before it became one, thus in accord with the possibility of no matter what, is ... practical. It does not move in terms of approximations and errors, as 'informed' action by its nature must, for no mental images of what would happen are set up before hand, it sees things directly as they are <sup>129</sup>.

Intentions concerning the direction a work should take are considered by Cage as inhibitions to the flowering of its potential. 'Art is very beautiful when it gets free of the intentions and of the control of the ego', he claims <sup>130</sup>. This desire to reduce the role of the intellect in the creative process is usually expressed by Cage in terms of a need to transcend discrimination during the evolution of the work. Even before meeting Suzuki Cage had 'the need to separate my work from my likes and dislikes' and he feels any kind of preference for something as more beautiful than something else 'is unnecessary' <sup>131</sup>. The Oriental source for this attitude is freely revealed in Cage's case. He quotes the passage in Huang-Po which we have noted above - 'imitate the sands of the Ganges who are not pleased by perfume or who are not disgusted by filth' - and discloses its importance to him when he comments:

This is almost the basis of Oriental philosophy, and could be the basis of any useful ethic we are going to make for a global village. We are going to have to get over the need for likes and dislikes <sup>132</sup>.

Cage's attempts to transcend discrimination had far-reaching effects on the form which his work took. 'Musical' and 'non-musical' sounds are allowed to coexist, and no order is imposed upon the sounds since any hierarchy would involve an exercise of intellect and taste. Cage explains:

I had ... taken steps to make a music that was just sounds, sounds free of judgements about whether they were 'musical' or not, sounds free of memory and taste (likes and dislikes), sounds free of fixed relations between two or more of them (musical syntax) <sup>133</sup>.

It should perhaps be pointed out that this interpretation of, and extrapolation from, the Oriental doctrine of non-attachment is personal to Cage. The stylistic consequences he draws from it are by no means inevitable, and certainly differ from those which can be found in Eastern art and music.

Richard Lippold holds ideas about transcending taste and conscious aesthetic decisions that reveal he has responded to Oriental thought. Without doubt his long friendship with Cage provided the context in which these ideas were moulded, and Cage was probably the source for much of Lippold's information about the East <sup>134</sup>.

Lippold, in fact, quotes a statement by Cage to the effect that nature is neither good nor bad - 'when it is snowing well here, it is drying up badly some place else' - and then counsels the artist to adopt this attitude of even-mindedness in the working process:

It is difficult for any human being, artist or not, to effect such a disinterest towards the forces of nature and the storms of his personal life, ... yet this is precisely what the creative individual must learn to do at least in his work <sup>135</sup>.

In place of a judgemental attitude, an 'innocence' of vision is seen by Lippold as most propitious - not just for the artist but for the spectator as well:

[He recommends] simply forgetting what you have been told not to feel or think about in visual, human and social relationships, as hazardous to your comfortable well-being. Most concisely [one should start] being aware of the immediate present, what the Orient calls the 'Now-moment'. In terms of the senses, this means seeing every form of natural and man-made objects as if for the first time ... it means rediscovering all the subtleties of form, space, texture, colour, and all their relationships - in all objects and to all events, private and social - as if in a state of revelation <sup>136</sup>.

On several different occasions, Guston talks of eliminating intentions from the working process, and it can be suggested that Oriental ideas have influenced his thinking in this area.

Guston regards the exercise of will as inappropriate in the creative process:

To will a new form is unacceptable; because will builds distortion. Desire too, is incomplete and arbitrary. These strategies, however intimate they may become, must ... be removed <sup>137</sup>.

Personal choices and preferences are seen as getting in the way of the spontaneous outflow of creativity. The statement by Guston which we have quoted above (page 92 ) about people 'leaving your studio' as you work is in part an expression of the same idea of abandoning preconceptions, in this case represented by the ideas of others. Guston explains himself that 'people represent ideas' in that statement - 'you have to paint them out' he says 'You know, "Get out!"' <sup>138</sup>.

The elimination of intentions in the working process and the attainment of a state of mind where the will is in abeyance are goals that have consequences for the style of Guston's paintings. The formal corollary to the elimination of preconceptions is a continuing process of erasures of, and alterations to, the marks already on the canvas. Habitual formal configurations, 'easy' preconceived compositions, which represent for Guston 'the weight of the familiar' <sup>139</sup>, are eliminated

in order to make way for the unexpected. These events in the evolution of the painting 'represent erasures of notions and of good intentions. Knowledge of what you thought you knew, but really don't know' <sup>140</sup>. 'There comes a point of existing for a long time in a negative state, when you are willing to eliminate things that have been looking good all the time', Guston explains. The paintings in which this way of working is used display as a consequence a build up of paint on the surface, and are executed in a painterly style capable of accommodating the alterations which must occur. Forms are not sharply contoured, since they must remain open to modification. Geometry is absent because it would of necessity imply planning and the intrusion of the intellect. Structure is not imposed or constructed in a Cubist sense, but discovered in the process of working, seeming to have a quality of dynamic equilibrium rather than static completeness. The abstract nature of the works in which this attitude to creativity is first displayed is also a result of the artist's attempt to transcend preconceptions - representational forms would have a too powerful association to the already known and hence prevent the achievement of an open, unfocused state of mind in which the element of the unexpected could arise. The need to follow the given form of a motif could also be seen as a hindrance to spontaneity. These formal qualities can be seen in almost all the paintings of Guston's abstract phase, which lasted approximately from 1950 until 1967, but an example would be 'Fable' (1956-7, oil on canvas, 65 x 76", collection University Gallery of Art, St Louis, Missouri). The use of black and white in 'New Place' (1964, oil on canvas 76 x 80", collection San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) is typical of works from the sixties in its reduction of colour range, and the greys which predominate were produced in the process of erasure and alteration which has been described above. Comparison of either of these works with, for example, 'Porch No 2' (1947, oil on canvas, 62½ x 43 1/8", collection Munson-Williams - Proctor Institute, Utica), will reveal the extent of the transformation in Guston's style.

It would be useful to consider further Guston's view of the creative process in order to clarify our understanding of the points which have been made so far. Guston describes his process of establishing the forms in his paintings as an attempt to get beyond

'diagramming'. This term sums up his attitude towards an intellectual approach to the creation and placement of forms, where preconception and control predominate. It has associations with linear outlining and rational placement of forms in relation to one another, qualities which are absent in Guston's work, where 'malleable' areas of paint without rigid internal structure are the basis of the composition. Naturally, no preliminary work or visualization can occur in this mode of working - 'today it is impossible to act as if pre-imaging is possible' Guston writes:

Many works of the past (and of the present) complete what they announce they are going to do, to our increasing boredom <sup>141</sup>.

Guston talks of 'corporeality' as the goal he seeks in his art, opposing it to 'diagramming' and talking of 'the narrow passage from a diagramming to that other state - a corporeality' <sup>142</sup>. 'Diagramming' represents a state where the canvas is just 'inert matter, inert paint', whereas 'corporeality' refers to a work which has become 'active, moving, living'. The painting is seen as having a life of its own: 'I do have a faith that it is possible to make a living thing, not a diagram of what I have been thinking' <sup>143</sup>. It is the period spent working the surface of the painting that is the key to moving beyond 'diagramming'. This period has been variously described as one in which intentions are erased, in which the ego is transcended, in which direct 'seeing' is brought about, and Guston also talks about it as one in which the forms 'become known'. This 'knowing' is an experiential learning about the form in the process of developing it on the canvas, and is the means whereby the preconceived ideas about its placement are left behind. Guston writes:

Where do you put a form? It will move all around, bellow out and shrink, and sometimes it winds up where it was in the first place. But at the end, it feels different, and it had to make the voyage. <sup>144</sup>

Elsewhere he notes:

You can't put the image there [its final position] in the beginning because you simply haven't experienced anything of it. That's the reason. The thing is worked until it finds this special place <sup>145</sup>.

The absence of will, of intention in the creative process can be described as the cultivation of an 'innocent' state of mind. Guston describes this state in a way which delineates its parallels with, and possible source in, Oriental philosophy. He talks of 'a condition of not knowing' which is 'not a state of ignorance, but a state of knowing the only thing you can know at the time - and that is what is concrete'. He is describing Zen's concept of an innocent vision which cognizes the world directly, without thought, in its suchness ('tathata'). The innocent vision he describes has nothing to do with primitivism. In the Rosenberg interview he specifically denies that interpretation of his remark that he wanted to be 'like the first painter'. In saying that he imagines 'wanting to paint as a caveman would, when nothing had existed before' he is not expressing a desire to paint without technical mastery, but from a state of mind in which memories of past art are not present. Only in this innocent frame of mind can the unwilled event occur, according to the Oriental texts. The form is 'recognized only as it comes into existence' <sup>146</sup> is Guston's expression of this spontaneous mode.

Guston also describes spontaneity in terms of the speed of working. He writes:

In my way of working I work to eliminate the distance or the time between my thinking and doing <sup>147</sup>

'White Painting I' (1951, oil on canvas, 57 7/8 x 61 7/8", collection San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) - a work which was completed in one hour - can be seen as the beginning of this tendency in Guston's art. The Cubistic structure of earlier works (such as 'Porch No 2;' 47 1947) with the balancing and adjustments it requires would naturally have inhibited speed and spontaneity, and so has been abandoned. A freer brushstroke, with a dynamic life of its own is also allowed into Guston's work by this change of approach to the creative process. 48

Onslow-Ford parallels Guston in advocating the abandonment of preconceptions and intentions during the working process. Again it was a study of Oriental thought, and in particular Zen, that provided the source of this idea. He sees creativity as an innate property of the mind, requiring no act of will for its manifestation: 'It is the nature of the mind to be creative, provided no fixed ideas block the way'<sup>148</sup>, he writes:

While painting, the painter does not have in mind a goal towards which to strive. He does not seek revelation <sup>149</sup>.

Like Guston, Onslow-Ford eschews any preparatory visualization of the work:

The painter has no pre-image in mind while painting. He does not know what will appear until it is down <sup>150</sup>.

Likewise, during the actual process of working, a state of indifference is maintained and no faculty of discrimination employed:

While painting the painter is not a judge - this right, that wrong. There is no choice, just the work that happens <sup>151</sup>.

Thinking inhibits direct involvement:

Thought about a situation suggests that one should do this rather than that, but there is a time lag between thought and action and this lag, no matter how slight, holds one back <sup>152</sup>.

Paalen, a close friend of Onslow-Ford and a collaborator with him in 'the Dynaton' exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1951, expresses an idea similar to those we have just noted in his essay for the catalogue of that exhibition. Similarities between their views are not surprising since they must have shared opinions in conversation, and many of Paalen's experiments are brought to fruition by Onslow-Ford. Paalen notes the value of attaining a state of mind where intentions are relinquished, and points out that a meditative abandonment of action is needed to achieve this:

Awareness of universal human concerns comes about through momentary suspense of purpose; any inclination to immediate action prevents this state of ego transcending awareness<sup>153</sup>.

Spontaneity is regarded by Onslow-Ford as arising when intentions are in abeyance. He defines it as a state of unwilled manifestation:

The spontaneous is that which happens of itself, and which grows naturally out of itself<sup>154</sup>.

Speed of working is seen as a means of overcoming the intrusion of thought (and judgement) which would inhibit spontaneity.

Liberty consists in direct action before there is time to admit evil or bad or good in the world<sup>155</sup>.

The speed of working should be faster than thought, but Onslow-Ford counsels that the gesture of the brush should not be faster than the ability of the artist's awareness to follow it. Attention must be present during the act,<sup>156</sup> in accordance with the principles of Far Eastern calligraphy which provided Onslow-Ford with his source. At times Onslow-Ford does not seem to be talking about literal speed of execution, but only about an agility of mind:

The instant does not refer to the speed of painting. An instant line may be made slowly or it may be made fast<sup>157</sup>.

Recently, however, he has indicated that he does 'equate speed of awareness with speed of execution. The speed at which one can paint has to be won through experience and practice'<sup>158</sup>. Naturally, such an equation between the subjective dimension of the creative process and an objective parameter has implications for the style of his works. The vocabulary of forms becomes limited through time to those elements that are capable of rapid execution. An examination of the paintings will reveal a predominance of calligraphic linear elements - Onslow-Ford sees the line, the circle and the dot as the fastest possible gestures. Concepts of compositional structure also of necessity move beyond the Cubist ideal of laboriously constructed relational frameworks. Colour, too, is often eliminated as a hindrance to rapid working.



Spontaneity is identified with the appearance of the new - 'when a painter paints spontaneously something never seen before appears' <sup>159</sup>. Innovation in art is therefore given a new motivation, since it is evidence of the correct attitude to creativity. This desire to transcend the already known has an influence on style in that it requires the artist to abandon realistic (and therefore familiar) motifs. 'When a painter paints an apple, he is not being spontaneous' both because he is reproducing a known form, and because the given shape of the apple requires a slower speed of execution in order to correctly render it. By the same logic, dream or visionary imagery is an unsuitable subject matter for painting, since 'immediacy is lost in giving expression to a dream experience or in getting a vision that has already appeared in the mind down on the canvas ... A dream image appears in the mind faster than it can be painted' <sup>160</sup>. The constant flux of reality can never be grasped, as realistic art intends it should be:

When a painter paints from a model, the lines chase her, but always at a distance. The only chance of catching her is to pursue her no longer <sup>161</sup>.

Noguchi regards his work as developing from his direct involvement with materials rather than as being derived from preconceived ideas, and attempts to eliminate thoughts about the work whilst he is engaged in its execution. He sees Zen as having been an influence on his abandonment of intentions during the creative process by encouraging a 'non-frontal' mode of confrontation with his materials <sup>162</sup>. Rather than making his materials passive tools to his will, acting on them with focused attention to specific creative goals (a 'frontal' orientation), he prefers to respond to them with an open awareness of their concrete qualities that may enable an unexpected avenue of working to open up. Noguchi likens this to the use of *mondos* as a means of transmitting insights in Zen, since the *mondo* does not attempt to provide a direct exact answer to the question in hand, but an 'oblique' suggestive one which is not to be understood literally. <sup>163</sup>

An innocent attitude is felt by Noguchi to be important for the creation of art. Over sophistication and too strong a desire to produce 'Art' are seen as hindrances to creativity. He gives as an

illustration of this point the calligraphy of Hakuin. Noguchi feels that Hakuin's greatness as a calligrapher was a consequence of his being an untrained amateur, a monk rather than an artist. Again this idea of 'obliqueness' is present. Noguchi notes that in the Orient everyone is (potentially) an artist. The artist is not (necessarily) a specialist, and good art is often made unintentionally by people untrained in artistic skills or sensibilities. He cites as an example the fact that some of the most highly regarded teabowls were made by Korean peasant boys.

Noguchi regards his own introduction to art (via his apprenticeship in cabinet-making) as having this oblique quality he admires. He thinks of himself as 'unschooled' in art, claiming to lack a systematic knowledge of art history, and he is against the teaching of art as a formal discipline in schools. It is clear that he applies the idea that art springs from innocence to himself in some way, and this is underlined by a memory he has of a talk with Brancusi whilst he was his student. Brancusi told him never to do a practice piece for another sculpture, not to do 'student work' but to regard himself as an artist from the very beginning, seeing the work at present being undertaken as the best he would ever do. Noguchi regards this exchange as a very important one for him and links it in his thinking with the Zen idea that one does not need to practice any technique in order to attain enlightenment, since one is already in possession of the Buddha-nature ('You are it'), one must simply act in the here and now, utilizing the potential that one already has <sup>164</sup>.

Noguchi's ideas concerning innocence in the creative process do differ slightly from those of Guston described above in that lack of artistic skill seems to be regarded as a virtue in itself by the sculptor. In essence, however, it is the need to work from an innocent, 'unknowing' frame of mind (whatever one's level of technical skill) that is paramount. Noguchi emphasizes that it is possible for a sophisticated modern artist to create innocently. He believes the continued practice of art leads the artist to a point where there is 'a given response to different situations, which is not unlike that innocence'. Noguchi seems to be recalling here Herrigel's description of the 'artless art' of the archer who has fully mastered his craft <sup>165</sup>.

When this innocence is present, a spontaneity occurs. Inspiration happens unwilling and unexpectedly - 'sudden awareness' is the term Noguchi uses to describe this experience - 'It hits you. You are hit' <sup>166</sup>. Noguchi has expressed the wish that sculpture was not so bound by inertia, that it was capable of bearing a more spontaneous expression - perhaps like that of calligraphy. Recent works in which he has engineered massive splits in the stones on which he has been working, rapidly transforming their shape, can be seen in terms of this desire for greater speed and an elimination of the gradual nature of carving which can allow time for preconceived ideas to intrude.

In an undated note Lassaw quotes a Zen statement emphasizing direct seeing without intellection:

When you want to see, see right at once, when you begin to think you miss the point. He who interprets, loses life <sup>167</sup>.

The abolition of intentions and judgements is also counselled on the grounds that they inhibit pure aesthetic appreciation:

One must have no preconceived notions or prejudices in order to encounter the beauty that is everywhere. The Zen teacher Suzuki points out that 'that which is before you is it, begin to reason about it and you fall at once into error. Only when you have understood this will you perceive your oneness with Nature' <sup>168</sup>.

Only the non-discriminating vision sees nature in its 'suchness' ('tathata') according to Lassaw, who is aware of the Zen concept of 'prajna' or intuitive knowledge - 'prajna means grasping Reality in its infinite totality' he writes in notes on the subject taken during Suzuki's classes.

In the passages which we have quoted here Lassaw is referring to the perception of art generally - both in spectator and artist - but his working process can be seen to have been affected by the same attitude. Lassaw's interest in the direct working of his materials harmonizes with his desire to prevent the intellect from dominating the creative

process. The intrusion of planning is unavoidable in the process of casting a previously made sculpture, and the discontinuousness of the process inhibits an absorption in the act of working. By contrast, the technique of welding (using predominantly linear forms) which Lassaw was amongst the first to explore in sculpture, allows adjustments while the work is in progress and enables a direct response to the way the material is handling. Spontaneity is therefore encouraged, each work being unique and unrepeatable. Lassaw has made a long study of Zen and related its insights to all aspects of his artistic endeavours, but whilst acknowledging its influence on him, he points out that he was already interested in direct methods of working in sculpture prior to his contacts with Zen. Zen's role in his case, then, was to reinforce a tendency already present in his work, and give it a philosophical articulation.

To emphasize the spontaneity and innocence he seeks in his working method, Lassaw finds the Hindu cosmological picture of the universe as manifesting 'unwilled' a useful paradigm. He writes:

In the earliest Hindu writings they speak of the creation of the world as 'lila' (play). God is playing. This creativity is all for fun, just for play, just for pleasure. My ideal in art is akin to what I perceive of this boundless creativity. It is possible to see reality with unknowing, unprejudiced, innocent eyes - to watch it exfoliating before us and within us <sup>169</sup>

Tobey describes his 'Five Dancers' (tempera, 24½ x 18 7/8"; 1947) as 148 having been painted in the spirit of Zen'. He goes on to explain that what he means by this is that it was executed in a spontaneous fashion, intellection having been circumvented: 'The doing and idea are simultaneous, as the brush moves on the surface the idea reveals itself'<sup>170</sup> Oriental sources can also be regarded as important in Okada's case in encouraging an attempt to avoid preconceptions in the creative process. He is quoted as saying that artists should create 'without knowing'. 'A nice painting is born with knowing and not knowing together', he writes <sup>171</sup>. It is clear that the aspects of Zen which have already been discussed in relation to other artists above are also applicable here.

In interview with Seldon Rodman Okada brings out again his desire to attain an innocence of mind:

I want mind be always like child's - even though I mature man.  
Serenity will bring that - if I make it <sup>172</sup>.

Such an attitude has repercussions on the artist's method of working - he eliminates preliminary sketches: 'It is better to start painting with nothing ... and let it grow' <sup>173</sup> he writes. The empty canvas becomes the physical correlative of the mind empty of preconceptions. John Ferren, another New York artist, sees Zen as having had an influence on him with 'that whole spontaneity thing, the point of getting rid of the accretion of history' <sup>174</sup>. Spontaneity is again seen as allied to an elimination of preconceptions, to an innocence of vision. West coast artist Stanton Macdonald-Wright makes a similar point, describing Zen as a means of 'stimulating the intuitive faculties and processes', eliminating preconceptions.

It serves the purpose of destroying at least for the moment the acquired, regimented and indoctrinated patterns of thought:  
In fact of destroying everything of a transient nature with which the human being has come to identify himself <sup>175</sup>.

Evidence that it is not only American artists who have been influenced by the Oriental idea of eliminating intentions from the working process is provided by Masson. He writes of 'the importance for the artist who returns to nature not to name things immediately; to remain ignorant of their meanings; then to bring them into being without wounding them'. He goes on to quote Chuang Tzu:

The greatest traveller is the man who does not know where he is going. The greatest spectator is the man who does not know what he is looking at <sup>176</sup>.

Spontaneity of technique in Masson's case also owes a debt to art inspired by Zen (or Ch'an, its Chinese predecessor), as a statement by the artist reveals:

Cracher l'encre comme les moines de la secte Tch'an, jeter son bonnet imprégné de couleur à la tête de son tableau ... <sup>177</sup>.

The absorption of the awareness in the present moment to the exclusion of all memories of the past or ideas of the future is one of the ways in which the Oriental notions of 'satori' and 'yoga' are defined. Eternity is sought in the East not in infinite duration, but in an attention to the instant, an abolition of time. In examining the influence of Oriental attitudes to the creative process on American artists it would be useful at this point to isolate descriptions where this mode of expressing the Oriental world view is present.

In Masson's conception of creativity we see a concern with this Oriental idea of absorption in the instant, as well as with the Eastern picture of the cosmos as being in a state of constant transformation. He sees his aim as being 'to paint the flux - that which is happening - but to seize it in an instant' <sup>178</sup>. In another statement he reveals that Taoist philosophy is the major influence behind this attitude:

Tao teaches that the fugacity of a reflection is a true image. Accepted fugacity of this sort is more complete than the imprint which is dead and deprived of significance. Only the instant, innocently captured, reaches the totality and makes it known <sup>179</sup>.

Talking of paintings of waterfalls, Masson emphasizes that the state of mind where one is attuned to the 'here and now' is one in which memories are absent. Once again he reveals an Oriental basis for his thinking:

The paintings of cascades ... those instants of nature in which one no longer thinks of the past or of the future, when the moment is sufficient unto itself. I think that's what Zen is <sup>180</sup>.

The notion of 'the instant' is a key one in Onslow-Ford's thinking about his art and he sees it as a state where 'time ceases' <sup>181</sup>. His awareness of this idea comes from his own involvement with Oriental philosophies, although he would probably have been aware of Masson's statements on the same theme. Onslow-Ford's emphasis on the speed of working has already been noted, and this can be seen as due to an attempt to respond in the instant, rather than over a period of time. He believes there are a variety of speeds at which spontaneous working can occur, and reserves the label of 'the instant' for the fastest of these <sup>182</sup>. Each

speed of working has its own characteristic imagery, and Onslow-Ford talks of this as representing different 'inner worlds', the instant being that 'world' which is at the deepest level of the psyche. The imagery of 'the instant' in his works is made up of lines, circles and dots, since these are 'the fastest marks that can be made' <sup>183</sup>. For Onslow-Ford, then, the attitude of mind most propitious for the creative process - an absorption in the present moment - is associated with a specific stylistic vocabulary. He believes this vocabulary to have a universal nature, regarding it as a 'discovery' rather than a personal invention. His insight about the vocabulary of line, circle, and dot is dated by Onslow-Ford to 1951 - although he had used these elements in his formal vocabulary prior to this time it was during the decade after this date that he concentrated on exploring its possibilities. 'Nocean' (1951, casein on paper, 24½ x 19", collection Robert Anthoine) is an early example of this style, whilst 'Who Lives' (Parles' paint, 77½ x 53", 1962, collection of Whitney Museum of American Art) represents a more fully developed stage in which a reduction to monochrome has occurred <sup>184</sup>.

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An identification with the 'here and now' is also seen by sculptor Richard Lippold as a precondition for artistic inspiration. Behind his statement can be seen an awareness of Zen obtained through his reading and via his friendship with John Cage. Lippold writes:

Not much is left except Now. Yet the rhythm of my breathing, the beating of my heart, the activity of my mind, are all set in motion by LIFE NOW which assails, seduces or soothes me from outside my own skin. What it sets in motion is some invisible process I cannot fully explain that results finally in an activity of my hands, out of which fall (or rise) objects of different shapes ... these objects are byproducts of my involvement in LIFE NOW <sup>185</sup>.

In the paintings of Paul Jenkins there is a quality of line which can be described as 'whiplash' - it is neither a slow constructive outlining of a form nor an organic shape with metaphorical associations of growth through time, but a rapid and decisive mark apparently unpredicted by the other elements already on the canvas. Such a line can be

seen in, for example, 'Dakota Ridge' of 1958 (oil and Chrysochrome on canvas, 50 x 64", collection Hirshhorn Museum Washington DC). In, other works, shapes - such as the poured areas of paint in 'Phenomena Reverse Spell' (1963, acrylic on canvas, 6' 5" x 9' 7 3/4", collection Hirshhorn Museum Washington DC) - have the same quality of decisive and unpredictable execution. In common with the gestural brushstrokes of Onslow-Ford, this quality of rapid, spontaneous, non cumulative movement, can be seen as an attempt to convey a sense of instant - aneousness. Just as the Zen archer, in Herrigel's description, releases the arrow in a sudden, rapid action, 'like a ripe fruit' falling from a tree <sup>186</sup> in the instant, rather than after a preparation through time - so Jenkins (who is well aware of Herrigel and of Zen) can be said to express in his works a similar look of spontaneity. One must talk of a 'look' of spontaneity since some of the gestures are actually made with considerable control being exercised. Jenkins likes his paintings to appear as if they are created in an instant, as if they express a particular moment without a sense of duration:

No matter how many times or how long I worked on a painting - and I've worked on a painting as long as two years ... even longer, and gone back to it three years later, and insisted, and kept working at it, up to the last moment it was my hope that it gives off the impression of being simultaneous and of a given moment. But sometimes it will take me a long time before I can get that result, and my artist's eye has taught me to identify when this result has been achieved <sup>187</sup>.

Lassaw's concern with 'the instant' is reflected in the titles he gives to some of his sculptures, for example, 'Maintenant' (brass and phosphor bronze, 1966) and 'Eden Now'. It is the role of art, in his estimation, to act as the means whereby an awareness of the instant can be inculcated:

A work of art has the power to transport us to the present moment. While we are absorbed in the contemplation of sculpture, painting or music we are in the present moment, the meeting place of time and eternity <sup>188</sup>.



Lassaw reveals he is acquainted with and sympathetic to, the Oriental view which sees creation as taking place in the present moment rather than as having occurred in its entirety at some distant primal time as the Genesis story claims. He writes:

Here is the creation of the world going on in front of our eyes and all around us, with all its beauty, homeliness, boredom, sweetness, terror, excitement and surprise. It's right here all the time. We have only to pay attention to Nature - Tao - the process of the universe being created and to taste it as it appears here and now <sup>189</sup>.

The abstracting mode of the intellect is the only barrier to our absorption in the instant, Lassaw asserts: 'Categories and generalizations make us blind to "now"' <sup>190</sup>.

Tobey, writing in his diary during his 1934 visit to Japan, expresses the idea that beauty is to be found in the transitory, when one is lost in the moment, and should not be expected to endure through time. He states:

All beauty is to be expressed in moments - not hours - for the intensity heightens the values of life too much to endure for a long time <sup>191</sup>.

The Zen concern with absorption in the present instant lies behind this statement, as does the more general aesthetic preference in Japan for discovering beauty in transient occurrences, such as the blossoming of plum trees so favoured by painters and poets <sup>192</sup>.

In the final section of this chapter Oriental ideas concerning the role of chance in the creative process will be examined for their influence on American artists. The intrusion of a chance element into processes is taken in the Orient as a confirmation that reality is not susceptible to comprehension solely in rational terms, and that human action is not capable of controlling it. Chance is not viewed as an enemy of rational structures, but accepted as evidence of a wider orderliness of nature beyond human control or understanding. The I-Ching, with its method of divination based upon the random results

obtained by throwing yarrow sticks, is perhaps the best example of this philosophical attitude in the Eastern world. Jung noted this aspect of the I Ching in his foreword (1949) to Wilhelm's translation, writing that 'the Chinese mind, as I see it at work in the I Ching, seems to be exclusively preoccupied with the chance aspects of events'<sup>193</sup>.

This principle of chance can also be seen to be present in Far Eastern art. The splashed ink of a Chinese or Japanese calligrapher, accepted as part of the image, can be seen as gaining its 'permission' from the same philosophical attitude that is expressed in the I Ching. Focillon discusses the role placed by chance in Oriental art in a passage quoted by Motherwell in his 'The Dada Painters and Poets' (New York, 1951). Talking of 'the resources of pure chance' Focillon writes:

In the hands of Hokusai accident is an unknown form of life, the meeting of obscure forces and clairvoyant design. Sometimes one might say that he has provoked accident with an impatient finger in order to see what it would do. This is because Hokusai belongs to a country, where, far from concealing the cracks in a broken pot by deceptive restoration, artisans underline this elegant tracery with a network of gold. Thus does the artist gracefully receive what chance gives him and places it respectfully in evidence.

This description of a repaired tea bowl may remind one of Duchamp's 'The Bride Stripped bare by her bachelors, even' (1915-1923, Museum of Art, Philadelphia) and raises the question of how much of an interest in chance procedures was already present in modern European and American art prior to an interest in Oriental sources arising. Dadaists such as Duchamp and Arp certainly displayed a great interest in the utilization of chance in the creative process, but two points must be made in evaluating this alternative source. Firstly, many American artists who use chance or uncontrolled elements in their works have little or no involvement with Dada and Surrealism - Tobey and Francis for example. Secondly, as we have seen, Dada and Surrealist artists were themselves responsive to Oriental influences. Although Duchamp denied more than once any direct involvement with Oriental thought<sup>194</sup>, Arp (whose utilization of chance went further than all the other Dadaists) was certainly aware of it.

John Cage, who has made great use of chance in his working process, draws deeply on Oriental sources. The example of his work and his theoretical justifications for it, if not the details of his method, have been very important for American artists.

From about 1950, and up to the present day, Cage has used the I Ching in order to decide questions of composition. His employment of chance in this way can be seen as an attempt to transcend the ego, the attachment to likes and dislikes. Writing in 'Silence' (page 162) he states that 'chance ... is a leap, provides a leap out of reach of one's own grasp of oneself'. Cage describes the consequences of his use of the I Ching in his work thus:

My experience has been opened to many things that I wouldn't have come across or seen otherwise, so that my tendency is to look away from the ego rather than toward it <sup>195</sup>.

He sees his utilization of the I Ching almost as a sort of yoga:

Instad of sitting cross-legged, I would use chance operations derived from the I Ching which would be my form of controlling the ego, my form of sitting cross-legged ... I've done it very strictly in all of my music and in many ways in connection with the writing <sup>196</sup>.

Cage's method of using the I Ching and of incorporating chance into his working process could be described as an 'external' means. Unlike the 'internal' use of chance which occurs in Oriental calligraphy where a spillage of ink or a dry brush produce unpredictable additions to the image, Cage's method does not involve any unconscious or intuitive element. It is a mechanical process, involving a discipline and conscious decision-making. Paradoxically, in employing chance, Cage becomes involved in a careful process of deciding what questions to allow the I Ching to answer <sup>197</sup>. On occasion - for example in allowing the imperfections on the surface of a piece of paper to determine the score of the composition - Cage does use a less 'external' means of employing chance. It is this more spontaneous approach to the use of chance which is found to be more fruitful for artists and so the influence of Cage in this area does not extend to the details of his technique <sup>198</sup>.

Discussing his use of accidental effects in painting, Tobey proposes that 'perhaps the Orient is inclusive of what we term the accidental. The accidental can lead us back towards the conscious if accepted and used, it can lead to art' <sup>199</sup>. The works by Tobey in which the splashed ink effects are most clearly exhibited are his 'sumis' of 1957 <sup>200</sup>, paintings clearly inspired by Oriental prototypes. Describing his 'sumis' to a friend, Arthur Barnett, Tobey called them works of 'imperfection' <sup>201</sup> revealing an Oriental justification for his method of working by pointing out the value attached by the Japanese to broken teabowls which have been pieced together, the marks of their fractures still visible.

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Noguchi also acknowledges a basis in the Oriental vision for the intrusions of chance which he cultivates in his work - for example when he engineers major, uncontrollable breaks in the stone on which he is working. Chance for Noguchi represents the working of nature, in which nothing (or alternatively everything) is accidental <sup>202</sup>. The ordering process of nature is regarded as being beyond rational grasp, and this can be seen as reflected (for example) in the organization of stones in Noguchi's gardens, which follow no rationally devised plan. There is a similar use of stones in the Ryoan-Ji garden in Japan, and this was a significant precedent for Noguchi. He is acquainted with a theory about Ryoan-Ji which suggests that its final design may have been the result of a mistake, that the entrance has been moved from its original site. Again there is a suggestion that aesthetic merit rests on 'chance' rather than on planning and control <sup>203</sup>.

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For Onslow-Ford, chance is an alternative method of cultivating 'the unknown' to the employment of the spontaneous brushstroke. In the first draft of 'Instant Painting' he acknowledges that chance is an operative factor in his compositional method, replacing rational organization since it reflects the orderliness of nature:

The elements of a painting are composed, if it can be called that, by trusting the first way that they fall on the paper. What happens on the paper is as right as a pattern of mushrooms in a green field <sup>204</sup>.

The use of chance does not mean the elimination of the painter's stylistic personality, in Onslow-Ford's opinion - 'one painter upsets a pot of paint in one way, another painter upsets a pot of paint in another way' he writes. Chance becomes 'the painter's signature' <sup>205</sup>.

Paul Jenkins, in talking about the role chance has played in his creative process - for example in the way veils of colour are poured onto the unstretched canvas - is careful to distinguish his attitude from a fatalistic one. He is familiar with the I Ching and seems to accept the view held by the Oriental philosophies that the individual ego is incapable of controlling its environment <sup>206</sup>, but emphasizes that one should make positive use of a situation even though it has arisen through factors beyond one's control. 'Its what you do with chance' that he considers important:

If something happens to you, how do you respond? How do you react? What is natural to you? If there's a disaster or if you've had a pinprick ... something is happening to you, you're not making it happen - it's making you happen. And so you learn to live with occurrence, and at the same time occurrence can nourish your dignity, nourish your sense of the noble in life, give it meaning. Now, the fatalistic attitude towards life is that you're either lucky or unlucky, and if you're unlucky, so much the worse for you. Now the attitude of the I Ching is quite different [from this]. If something is not going well for you they say: 'It pays to cross the great water'. What does that mean? It pays not to stand in a stationary position and go on repeating your mistakes. Now, let's say if good fortune is upon you, then do all you can to penetrate it and not just ride it out like you are on the crest of a wave. So what it really does is activate your position, be it negative or positive <sup>207</sup>.

David Smith notes in his discussion of Oriental calligraphy that the 'accidental' is really a product of a more expanded concept of order. He writes:

Every accident - which is never accident but intuitive fortune - was explained. If drops fall, they become acts of providence. If the brush flows into hair marks, such may be greater in energy <sup>208</sup>.

This approach to chance occurrences in the creative process can be seen to have informed his own drawings - the influence of Oriental calligraphy, the medium via which he seems to have become acquainted with this aspect of Far Eastern aesthetics, will be discussed in a later chapter.

In the artists we have been looking at so far in this section, there has been an association of the Oriental world view with chance, but in the case of some American artists it is linked rather with order and control. The same sources are capable of being interpreted in more than one way, and the consequent variety of styles amongst the artists who have responded to Oriental thought is the result. As we have noted already, the dichotomy between chance and order is not an insurmountable one since 'chance' occurrences are taken in the East as evidence of a wider concept of orderliness. However, in the case of Reinhardt, for example, there is a definite difference of emphasis.

Reinhardt regards a denial of the accidental as a defining characteristic of Oriental art. He writes:

Nowhere in world art has it been clearer than in Asia that anything irrational, momentary, spontaneous, accidental, or informal cannot be called serious art <sup>209</sup>.

In his canvases, with their rationally organized structure and their elimination of spontaneous gestures and uncontrolled flows of paint, Reinhardt embodies this philosophy himself, and Oriental sources can be regarded as an important influence on his thinking <sup>210</sup>. He identifies the accidental with the personal rather than with the impersonal - the arbitrary is seen as unconscious and hence linked to the Surrealist method which Reinhardt disparages. In contrast to this European tendency, he feels that in the Orient 'the forms of art are always preformed and premeditated. The creative process is always an academic routine and sacred procedure. Everything is prescribed and proscribed. Only in this way is there no grasping or clinging to anything' <sup>211</sup>.

Carl Andre parallels Reinhardt in his attempts to eliminate chance from his work and in his preference for simple, rational structures. Like Reinhardt he claims to shun innovation as an aim in art, and also quotes an Oriental authority to back up this attitude:

Kung Fu Tse was asked on his deathbed to summarize his work. He said "I have added nothing". It is not the work of poets to invent new words <sup>212</sup>.

While Andre acknowledges that chance plays a large role in life, he attempts to exclude it from his art:

My life is ruled by chance. I try to exclude everything from my art that I cannot will. There is so little in the world we can truly determine. That knowledge is not nearly so painful as the lack of that knowledge <sup>213</sup>.

His contact with the I Ching has not encouraged him to utilize chance.

In 1958 Hollis Frampton cast the I Ching for me. The last line read "The wise man does not consult oracles" <sup>214</sup>.

He contrasts his attitude to chance with that of John Cage:

Am I correct in assuming that in a general problematic of conditions determined by will he chooses to employ 'chance' procedures to determine the conditions of his work? In my case, in a general problematic of conditions determined by chance, I attempt to assert by will the conditions of my work. The difficulty of course is to ascertain what can be willed and what cannot. Mr Cage does not throw dice to select his mushrooms and I do not throw dice to make my work <sup>215</sup>.

Richard Lippold resembles Reinhardt in the emphasis he places on tradition <sup>216</sup> and in his invocation of Oriental examples to support his position. One would expect an interest in chance and the innovations to which it might lead to be incompatible with this standpoint, and indeed symmetry is an ever-present characteristic in his work. However,

Lippold is able to relate his thinking about symmetry to Cage's notions on the role of chance, with which he is familiar:

Nature loves symmetry and wants everything to be perfectly symmetrical, although accidents of chance, those things John Cage loves so much, these chance elements push it around, so we're not exactly the same one half of our face to another, but the tendency, the law is to be symmetrical, and chance violates this law. But in a sense, you can also say that chance is the law, and symmetry, or direct order, is a violation of that law, so you can work it both ways, and that has its own kind of symmetry. Now this is a philosophical or ... metaphysical description of my interest visually in symmetry <sup>217</sup>.

Lippold claims that he felt less close to Cage's interest in the Orient when the latter became interested in the Far East than when he was interested mainly in Hindu thought (in which chance plays a less important role). A story told by Cage in 'Silence' (page 66) about casting the I Ching for Lippold bears out this indication that he was not sympathetic to Cage's programmatic use of chance. It should be pointed out, however, that Lippold has utilized chance of an 'internal' type, and Cage's example may have been important in encouraging this. Describing the working process of his preparatory sketches, Lippold notes:

They're not chance in the sense that John [Cage] uses it by tossing coins or trying to remove himself from it. They are slips of the pencil or they are lines in the paper. Of course, this is what he uses too. He's written music just looking at specks on the paper ... Well, in a sense I see this too. Sometimes I see a line in the paper or something. I emphasize it, it may add something that I would never have thought of myself, or that I think is a good addition or that catches my eye because it seems it wants to be there <sup>218</sup>.



CHAPTER FOURART AS A YOGA

In our discussion of the influence of Oriental philosophies on American artists' ideas concerning the creative process we have noted in many cases that the adoption of a meditative frame of mind during the process of working has been regarded as a goal. The concentration of the yoga practitioner has been cultivated by the artist with the intention of improving the quality of his work. However, at certain points in the preceding chapter the impression may have been gained that the attainment of the yogic state was regarded as more important by some artists than the resulting painting or sculpture. The alteration of consciousness was in certain cases more of an end than a means, and the practice of art seems to be regarded as a sort of yoga technique engaged in to induce it. This point, which has been implicitly made in the foregoing pages will be explicitly considered here, and will be followed by a related discussion which will examine the way in which some artists see their works functioning as meditation objects for the spectator.

John Cage dates his first insight that the role of the arts lay in their power to induce a change of consciousness to the time of his friendship with Gita Sarabhai, an Indian musician<sup>1</sup>. Sarabhai had been told by her teacher that (in Cage's words) 'the purpose of music was to sober and quiet the mind, thus subjecting it to divine influences'. Cage explains:

Lou Harrison, another composer, who was also concerned as I was about why one would write music in this society found the same answer coming from an English composer - I don't know which one but I think it was as late as the seventeenth century. So I decided with it coming from different times and different places, that this answer was true, and so I decided to set about, to discover, what was a 'sober and quiet mind' [and] what were 'divine influences'<sup>2</sup>.

In attempting to understand this dictum, Cage translates it into the secular and non-dualistic terminology of Zen:

We learned from Oriental thought that those divine influences are, in fact, the environment in which we are. A sober and quiet mind is one in which the ego does not obstruct the fluency of the things that come in through our senses and up through our dreams.

Cage feels 'our business in living is to become fluent with the life we are living', to cultivate a sense of the oneness of life, and 'art can help this' <sup>3</sup>.

Richard Lippold has a similar view of the role of art, derived also from Sarabhai's statement. His knowledge of the dictum may have come from conversations with Cage, but his early close associations with him and Lippold's own interest in music composition at that time make it a distinct possibility that he knew Sarabhai personally. The Hindu master's statement to Sarabhai concerning the reason for composing music is quoted thus by Lippold:

Primarily it is to lead the artist, by means of a discipline, to even greater enlightenment of inner self. Of far less consequence, it is to provide the spectator with a similar experience <sup>4</sup>.

Lippold sees Oriental society as concerned, in all its aspects, with this cultivation of a higher state of awareness, writing that 'all the functions of such a society are bent toward the same service to self-enlightenment'. He displays, as does Cage, a lack of certainty about the role of the artist in the West and takes inspiration from the Oriental example, applying it to the visual arts:

This idea of the self-enlightenment function of art is a welcome one to the painter or sculptor in the West, where his function in society seems vague at best.

The view that art can be a sort of yoga seems to be echoed by Morris Graves. At one point he describes painting as 'a way of knowledge' <sup>5</sup>. Elsewhere he claims that 'the act [of painting] is a meditation in itself' <sup>6</sup>. The practice of art is seen as valuable because it produces a state of concentration analogous to that sought by the yogi:

For the devoted artist the value of the act-of-painting is its mind-concentrating power. It fills TIME by sustaining and increasing absorption in an act which can result in the maximum concentration of all the energies thereby producing an expanding skill of coordinating the faculties ... <sup>7</sup>.

An awareness of the philosophy of Karma yoga, in which activity is undertaken for the purpose of achieving a state of union with life appears to be present in Graves's statement that 'Everything is sacred. Every act is an act of worship' <sup>8</sup>.

Although Graves does seem to regard art as a type of yoga, he indicates that he feels the attainment of a full state of 'enlightenment' would take one beyond art, an idea for which Coomaraswamy provides a precedent <sup>9</sup>. For Graves 'The urge to communicate in a tangible medium is all tied up with urges of personality, ego, ambition, economy, and name fame'. He feels that if it was not for these reasons he'd 'be free to let my life be a trackless medium' <sup>10</sup>.

John Ferren holds a similar opinion that the practice of art is an inhibition to full spiritual development. He seems to acknowledge that up to a certain point, art might be a tool to encourage an opened awareness - 'the artist gets his satori and so forth in his work. In the making of his work' he claims - but he feels that the artist has of necessity to retain an element of the personal in his vision:

The artist is somehow trapped by his own sensitivity into a certain way of feeling and thinking that prohibits detachment over a certain area.

He realizes that it is necessary for a follower of Zen 'to detach yourself completely' but he feels 'the artist, if he detaches himself cuts really the root off what makes him an artist' (sic). He explains:

I think the artist is inferior in this sense. I think that it keeps him from being a saint. An artist can't be a saint. He is too linked with the physical sensation of existence <sup>11</sup>.

Louise Nevelson makes a similar distinction between artistic activity and pure contemplation in discussing her own motivation, and again Oriental thought provides the context for the discussion:

In sacred books, like the Indian philosophies, they don't feel - as long as you are labouring and working - that's the height. Its the place of contemplation ... that is where you don't have to make anything or do anything ... I could easily have moved into an area of meditation and contemplation, and that is higher according to all philosophers. But I claim physical activity teaches me so much <sup>12</sup>.

'In India, it is still considered not as an escape from reality, but as a way towards complete self-realization, to give up everything for the sake of meditation', writes Paalen in his 1951 essay for the catalogue of the Dynaton exhibition. He considers that it is necessary for the Western world to find an equivalent to this practice but does not believe that Eastern models can be copied wholesale: 'If meditation can only be achieved through imitation of Eastern ways it could never find a place in our civilization', he feels. Paalen's hope was that art would become the 'yoga' of the West:

If anything, art could provide an equivalent to what in the East is called meditation; and there is perhaps nothing we more urgently need ...

The 'Metaplastic painting' of Onslow-Ford, Mullican and Paalen, for which the essay provides a manifesto and the exhibition a platform, is seen as filling this need. According to Paalen, 'Metaplastic painting is a sort of active meditation which leads towards a new concept of reality' <sup>13</sup>. The possibilities, suggested here, are only partially worked out in Paalen's own painting, but Onslow-Ford goes on to apply this approach in a more consistent and developed manner - his discovery of Zen and Far Eastern calligraphy providing the key.

Tobey, in a talk given during 1930 to his Dartington Hall drawing class, defined 'the object of life' as 'the enlargement of consciousness' It is clear that, even at this early stage of his career, he saw art as a means whereby this could be achieved, since he told his students that 'the things you create here [in the class] will in the end help

create new and other states of consciousness within yourself' <sup>14</sup>.

The sculptor Lassaw also believes art can function as a yoga. In his notebooks he has recorded a statement which almost certainly has its source in the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita: 'You must perform every action sacramentally and be free from all attachments to results'.<sup>15</sup> He continues by commenting:

Artists can be thought of as working in their particular yoga or discipline. I do not mean the precise form as in the Hindu Yoga such as Bhakti, Raja, Karma and others, but the type of development and growth that characterizes each artist can be thought of as similar and analogous.

He sees art as a yoga without rules and strict formulas, and has no personal interest in practising these orthodox techniques <sup>16</sup>. He follows the line of thinking found in Zen that no special practice need be undertaken to cultivate enlightenment, and hence the practice of art provides a sufficient vehicle. This opinion is expressed in a notebook entry of 20th January (1958?):

mantras and tantras, meditation and concentration, they are all a cause of self-deception. Do not defile in contemplation that which is pure in its own nature. The nature of the sky is originally clear, but by gazing and gazing the sight becomes obscured. No thought, no reflection, no analysis, no cultivation, no intention, let it settle itself ... whatever you see, that is it <sup>17</sup>.

Finally, it will be useful to consider an opinion expressed by Alan Davie in order to point out that it is not only American artists who come to regard art as a means of attaining the spiritual goals described in Oriental thought. In his 'Notes by the Artist' (published in the catalogue of his Whitechapel Gallery exhibition, June 1958) he claims that 'sometimes I think I paint simply to find enlightenment and revelation. I do not practise painting as an art, and the Zen Buddhist likewise does not practise Archery as an exercise of skill but as a means to enlightenment'.

As well as feeling that art can function as a sort of yoga for the artist, some painters and sculptors feel it can perform the same role for the spectator. Oriental sources are crucial in stimulating artists to produce work with this function in mind, since there is no corresponding practice in Western art that provides a precedent.

Hindu texts contain many descriptions of the use of artistic imagery as a part of devotional and meditative rituals. The use of mandalas - visual devices for the focus of meditation - is common throughout the East and is perhaps the best example of this function of art as it is practised in the Orient. Charmion Von Wiegand, the American painter, describes the consciousness-transforming role of Tibetan art as she sees it. She regards it as 'a magic instrument deliberately designed to destroy ignorance and transform the consciousness, to bring one face to face with the reality underlying the world of appearances' <sup>18</sup>.

It should be made clear that the function of art which is being described is not that of aiding a process of 'individuation' (in the Jungian sense) via symbols, or of producing an elevation of thought through the performance of a didactic role <sup>19</sup>. It is a direct contemplative encounter with the art object which is seen as effecting the change of awareness, and the parallel is with, for example, a meditation technique in which attention is given to a mantra - the sound of the word being contemplated rather than its meaning considered.

This contemplative attitude, rarely required of the spectator in Western art, is counselled by several American artists. Lassaw, for example, regards it as the correct mode for the viewing of his sculptures <sup>20</sup>. He particularly distinguishes it from the associative mode often encouraged in relation to Surrealist art. MacDonald-Wright advises the spectator 'empty your mind and let the picture do the work' <sup>21</sup>. The Zen attitude, with its emphasis on direct seeing and its denigration of the role of thought, can be seen as lying behind the statements of both these artists. According to Zen 'to raise thoughts towards the environing objects and on these thoughts to cherish false views, this is the source of worries and imaginings' <sup>22</sup>.

The works of several American artists who create paintings or sculptures which function as stimuli to meditation have certain formal qualities in common. The appearance of these formal traits can be partly explained through the role they play in enabling the art works to perform this function. Differentiations and elaborations of form are often eliminated - simplified, abstract forms predominate. Colour is also sometimes rejected, since it could be regarded as distracting from the work's function of inducing a state of concentration.

These qualities of simplification and abstraction can be seen in the late 'monochrome' works of Ad Reinhardt. The formal reductiveness can be partly explained as an attempt by the artist to avoid giving the spectator anything to grasp hold of visually, hence enabling him the more easily to fall into a non-discriminating mode of attention such as that described in the philosophy of yoga or of Zen, and which Reinhardt himself refers to in his notes <sup>23</sup>. A spectator he feels should attempt to innocently identify with the work rather than expect to gain anything (in the form of a communication of information) from it: 130

After all, as Alan Watts said not long ago, of some other thing, this is not a situation from which there is anything to be grasped or gained - as if it were something which one approaches from outside like a pie or a barrel of beer <sup>24</sup>.

Californian painter John McLaughlin's adoption of simple, geometric, abstract forms in his works, and their reduction in many cases to black and white, can be seen as a conscious attempt to produce art objects that could function as foci for the spectator's meditation. He explains that this is the intention of his art pointing out the way in which the formal qualities that have been noted help bring this about: 89

By the use of static, two dimensional, neutral forms it is my purpose to eliminate the object (image) in an effort to achieve the totally abstract. Thus inviting contemplation beyond the limits imposed by that which is understood for its own sake ... the spectator is then free to consider his relationship to nature unencumbered by the mystery and complexities of

symbolism, emotional outpouring and the vicarious thrill of tasting particularized experience by association, and of course, without benefit of coercive argument <sup>25</sup>.

Two other artists who display similar formal reductiveness are Carl Andre and John Mc Cracken. Andre's 'The Way North, East South West, (Uncarved Blocks)' 1975, western red cedar, 5 units each 12 x 12 x 36", collection the artist and Mc Cracken's 'Untitled (Red Box)' 1968, wood, fibreglass, lacquer, 11" x 12 1/4" illustrate this quality in their respective works. In the following discussion evidence will suggest that they also regard the art object as functioning by inducing an alteration of awareness, and a context in Oriental thought will be revealed to their thinking on this point. This shared view of the function of art, derived from an awareness of Eastern precedents, can be seen as accounting in part for the stylistic similarities which have often been explained by reference to the term 'Minimalism' - a label which has also been applied to Mc Laughlin's work, and which misleadingly links together from a formalist perspective artists with varying intentions. 6 85

Several artists make it clear that they regard their work as having the function of inducing a meditative state in the spectator, and give evidence that this idea is derived from a knowledge of Oriental sources. Some statements by artists on this subject will be considered here.

Lassaw believes art can be a means to an experience of transcendence for the spectator - 'I think that art is one of the gateways to immediate comprehension of reality' he states. He feels that the appreciation of art gives a more efficacious means of inducing this 'expanded' state of awareness than nature at large provides. It is, he claims, 'easier for most people to enter this [i.e. Art's] land of non-verbal experience - of thushness- than to experience it directly from the rest of reality' <sup>26</sup>. The title of at least one work was given by Lassaw to denote his awareness of this function of art:

I have one piece called Gateless Gate which is the title of one of the Zen classics, meaning, let's say, that it's almost an aid to realizing that this is heaven <sup>27</sup>. 72



John McCracken explains in great detail that he regards his art works as meditation objects, aiding the spectator to transcend an ego-centred vision of the world:

An issue very central to my work is that of human (or psychic) self-realizing, self-transforming, self-imaging, self-illuminating. Not merely, that is, so called 'ego'-self, but the self that begins with something like ego-awareness and expands from there to fill all the space (and time) one might come to imagine. I tend to view the things I make, and also all art objects - and, as a matter of fact, all objectifications of all kinds - as concentration and meditation devices.

He describes how the formal aspect of his work is influenced by this:

I try to make things which are, on the one hand capable of drawing and sustaining one's interest, and on the other, of such a nature as to leave one free to enjoy whatever experiencing or dreaming ... or integrating - one might be inwardly inclined to do through them. I like the idea, for instance, of a person looking with such peculiar intensity at something that he finds himself seeing 'through' it, 'beyond' it. To further distil this thought, or to risk an over-idealization, it seems in my view to be a matter of perceptually touching the infinite, the total universe 'picture', through a finite device or three-dimensional object point <sup>28</sup>.

It is clear that Mc Cracken sees his works as functioning in the same way as Oriental mandalas:

I've always liked the Eastern kind of thing where you can look at anything and regard it as the center of the Universe or as leading to a grasp of the whole Universe ... Seeing a piece as an 'indestructible seed-self', or center, as it were, of a mandala, or philosopher's stone, or world egg, fits right in with my thinking <sup>29</sup>.

The 'mandala' function of his art is made more explicit in some works which appear later than his first 'Minimalist' pieces. 'Mandala IX'

(1972, oil on canvas 72 x 72") belongs to a series of paintings which adopt a format of concentric circles, echoing the appearance of Oriental mandalas.

John Mc Laughlin's views on the function of his paintings have already been noted (page 138). Like Mc Cracken he emphasizes that the work of art should not coerce a predetermined response from the spectator, but enable him to be the active agent, using the painting as an aid to contemplation:

I want to communicate only to the extent that the painting will serve to induce or intensify the viewer's natural desire for contemplation without benefit of a guiding principle. I must therefore free the viewer from the demands or special qualities imposed by the particular by omitting the image (object). This I manage by the use of neutral forms <sup>30</sup>.

Mc Laughlin found his initial inspiration for replacing the communicative role of art by this function of aiding contemplation in his study of Far Eastern painting - 'I could get into the pictures and they made me wonder who I was' he explains, whereas 'Western painters ... tried to tell me [in their canvases] who they were <sup>31</sup>.

Carl Andre (like Lassaw, Mc Cracken and Mc Laughlin) does not regard art's role as lying in a symbolic, communicative function <sup>32</sup>. Instead, he sees art as capable of changing the viewer's state of consciousness in a way that brings to mind parallels with Oriental meditation techniques - 'the experience of certain works of art does not convey a message to me but induces a change of state', he writes <sup>33</sup>. The emphasis Andre places in his works on the raw physical qualities of his materials (wood, metal brick, etc) can be seen in part as an attempt to encourage the viewer to regard them 'directly' - in their 'thusness' rather than to see them as symbols of something else. Andre seems to be discouraging an intellectual mode of response in the spectator, and emphasizing the 'concreteness' of his pieces when he says 'my work has no more idea than a tree or a rock or a mountain' <sup>34</sup>. One may usefully compare this statement with one made by Suzuki on the way in which he thinks Buddhist sculpture is to be regarded from the point of view of Zen:

As to all those images of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and Devas and other beings that one comes across in Zen temples, they are like so many pieces of wood or stone or metal; they are like the camelias, azaleas or stone lanterns in my garden <sup>35</sup>.

Morris Graves reveals that he also regards art as playing a role in consciousness-expansion: 'the value of enjoying the arts is that the energy channeled into the esthetic emotions refines and sensitizes the mind so that it can more skillfully seek and more rapidly grasp, an understanding of the Origin of Consciousness' - (i.e. 'sunyata' - the 'void' or the 'ground' of being) <sup>36</sup>. His feeling that art's role lies rather in its transforming power than in its ability to evoke a sensation of beauty is underlined when he states in his application of November 1945 for a Guggenheim grant that his aim is to 'aid in making art operative rather than only positively or negatively pleasurable' <sup>37</sup>. Writing of the works in his 1948 Willard Gallery (New York) exhibition, Graves says 'these are all forms (and paintings of forms) for meditation, form-symbols to support the mind which is engaged with the abstractions attendant upon the apprehending of God' <sup>38</sup>. It should be noted that 32  
the symbolic nature of these works - which depict ceremonial Chinese 33  
bronzes and Vajras (a traditional 'thunderbolt' symbol in Buddhist 34  
iconography) - place Graves in a different camp from the four artists 36  
whose work has been discussed immediately above. In his case it is not 37  
a direct encounter with the concrete properties of the work which is 38  
important, but an absorption in the meaning of the imagery as well. 39  
This quality of his work places Graves closer to the Hindu tradition than the iconoclasm of Zen, and indeed his interest in the writings of Coomaraswamy was strong at the time these works were created.

A general parallel has been drawn between Oriental meditative techniques and a function attributed to art by several American artists. It is possible to suggest, however, that the form of these various techniques, as well as just their goal may have had an influence on certain qualities of the art being discussed.

Certain meditation techniques involve the repetition of a 'mantra' (a sound used to aid mental concentration, eventually leading the mind to a state of 'empty' contentless awareness), and the repetition of a

single image in Reinhardt's late works may have owed something to an awareness of this Oriental practice. An abbreviated note contained in Reinhardt's papers which could just as easily be a description of a meditation technique as of his late canvases seems to support this suggestion:

Repetition of formula over over again until loses all meaning. Nothing left except monotonous disappearing image. Focus of one pointed attention. Everywhere, time, the same thing, one exercise ... <sup>39</sup>.

A charge of 'boredom' is often raised against these late works of Reinhardt, as well as against the work of 'Minimalist' artists such as Carl Andre or Robert Morris. Certainly Reinhardt regarded monotony as one of the positive virtues of Asian Art. In his case, and that of other artists, this spectator response could be seen as tolerated, even encouraged, in order to educate the viewer into a correct mental set in which there is no 'grasping', no expectations. An Oriental parallel, which might have provided a source, or a useful rationale, for this idea, is the use in Zen of the Koan. A paradoxical, 'meaningless' question (such as 'what is the sound of one hand clapping?') is taken as the focus of the aspirant's concentration until such time as a 'satori' occurs giving creative insight into the 'solution' of the koan (which then must be demonstrated to the master). This 'breakthrough' experience of satori would not have been possible if the koan had been more accesible initially, and responsive to rational analysis. When Reinhardt talks of 'forcing the spectator to penetrate beyond boredom to pure aesthetic enjoyment' he seems to be describing a similar process to this <sup>40</sup>.

Cage also considers the question of boredom as a spectator response and he explicitly acknowledges an Oriental influence on his thinking:

In Zen they say: If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, try it for eight, sixteen, thirty-two and so on. Eventually one discovers that its not boring at all but very interesting <sup>41</sup>.

Rauschenberg's attitudes may have been affected by this Oriental attitude, picked up in the course of his association with Cage - he claims (in relation to his theatrical work) that boredom as a spectator response is the result of wrong looking <sup>42</sup>.

Some Oriental meditation techniques, particularly those of Zen, do not involve the use of a mantra or other device to focus concentration but attempt instead to unfocus the mind from its normal mode of functioning by training it to accept any thought or sensation that occupies it without becoming absorbed in it. Huang-Po refers to this state of awareness when he states 'only when your minds cease dwelling upon anything whatsoever will you come to an understanding of Zen'<sup>42</sup>. Cage's musical compositions, with their acceptance of the intrusion of random environmental sounds and their unstructured form seem to parallel this type of technique. Just as this Zen meditation technique counsels the practitioner to pay attention to sensations he may experience without 'raising thoughts' towards them, so Cage wishes the listener to pay attention directly to the sounds he is creating and not to intellectualize <sup>44</sup>. Cage is aware of the parallel with Zen techniques <sup>45</sup> which were no doubt of importance in enabling him to develop his works in the way he did, and his knowledge of these techniques is attested to by Alan Watts in his autobiography. Watts writes that Cage 'had ... discovered and wanted to share the meditation process of listening to silence. This is simply to close your eyes and allow your ears to resonate with whatever sound may be happening spontaneously, making no attempt to name or identify them .... After a while one hears the sounds emerging, without course or origin, from the emptiness of silence, and so become witness to the beginnings of the Universe' <sup>46</sup>.

CHAPTER FIVETHE CONCEPT OF THE VOID IN ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHY  
AND ITS INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

The discussion in the immediately preceding sections of this thesis has centred on the role played by Oriental ideas in a transformation that took place in certain artists' understanding of the nature of their creative task. Although specific repercussions on a formal level have been pointed out where possible, we have mostly been concerned with the subjective dimension of creativity. In this Chapter, and that which follows, however, it is proposed to deal more directly with the effect that certain concepts of Oriental philosophy have had upon the actual formal appearance of the works themselves - in their treatment of space for example. It will be shown that Eastern influences have played a major role in the transformations of pictorial language which have occurred and which are incapable of complete explanation in formalist terms. The Oriental cosmological picture will be seen to have provided the subject matter for many works, and this will be shown to have affected not only the 'content' as usually understood but also the 'grammar' of the forms themselves which will be seen to shift in these (largely abstract) works to express the qualities of this new world view.

The first Oriental concept which will be considered in this way is that of the 'Void'. This notion, which is central to the understanding of other aspects of Oriental thought, occurs (under different names) in each of the three major philosophical/religious systems of the East - Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Each of these systems describe the universe of manifest, phenomenal reality as arising from and being sustained by an underlying Absolute which is itself qualityless and formless, and which we have labeled the 'Void'. This cosmological picture is paralleled on the psychological level by the idea that thought and all mental activity arise from an inner silence which is the Being, the transcendental Self, the pure form of the individual's awareness lying behind the more transitory aspects of his psychic life. It is an integral belief of each of these systems that it is possible for the individual to experience this qualityless 'ground' of his being, and that when he succeeds in effecting a union with this Void he is also experiencing the Self, the ground of the whole cosmos <sup>1</sup>.

The goal of yoga philosophy as described in Patanjali's Yogasutra is the cessation of the turnings (vritti) of the mind. This state, when the mind is free of thoughts and impressions, and thus at one with the Void, can be identified with the Hindu term 'Nirvikalpa Samadhi' or with the Buddhist label 'Nirvana'. The experience of the Void is not regarded as solely confined to such states of inner absorption, but as capable of being sustained alongside the mental activity of everyday life if the mind has been suitably trained. Similarly, on a cosmological level, it is only at the end of each era that material creation is regarded as being reabsorbed and the Void as standing alone - at other times Void and form coexist. In Zen the concepts of 'sunya' (void) and 'sunyata' (voidness) occur. From Taoism the term 'Hsu Wu' <sup>2</sup> ('great emptiness') can also be drawn to show the presence of a notion of the void in that tradition. 'Emptiness' (that is, of the content of consciousness or of form) is a common term used to describe the Void, but it should be recognized that this state is regarded as qualityless and (literally) beyond thought, and therefore all descriptions of it can only be partial - 'fullness' would be an equally applicable expression. This point is made in the Madhyamika Shastra (xv, 3):

It cannot be called Void or not void,  
 or both or neither:  
 But in order to point it out,  
 It is called 'the Void' <sup>3</sup>

An awareness of the concept of the Void as expressed in Oriental texts can be detected in several artists and it will be convenient to mention some examples here, in advance of a more general discussion of the concept's influence, in order that our understanding of the notion may be further extended.

Onslow-Ford, for example, shows that he is aware of the concept as it is expressed in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions. In his unpublished manuscript 'Instant Painting - the Way of the Painter' he talks about the 'hollow of the heart' and 'the empty space in the heart', formulations for the Void notion found in the Upanishads. In the same text he also quotes the Zen expression "No mind [wu-hsin],

deeper no-mind, great no-mind" ... the noble expression of Enlightenment of the first Zen patriarch [Bodhidharma]', which shares with the Hindu conception the idea of a 'nothingness' lying behind the manifestations of the phenomenal world.

Reinhardt also shows himself to be aware of the concept of 'Nirvana' which he defines in his notes as 'one-ness, nothingness, all-in-one, nothing'<sup>4</sup>. This state of mind in which all distinctions are transcended and thought is in abeyance also appears to be the subject of another abbreviated note:

Undifferentiated unity, oneness, no divisions, no multiplicity, no consciousness of anything, no consciousness of consciousness, all distinctions disappear in darkness ...<sup>5</sup>

The Oriental cosmology which sees creation as issuing from the Void is referred to by Reinhardt in several places - two brief notes appear to be quotations from Lao Tzu:

Formless thou art, and yet though bringest forth many forms, and then withdrawest them to thyself

differentiating itself, and yet remaining in itself undifferentiated<sup>6</sup>.

Elsewhere the Hindu formulation of this idea is referred to, and Reinhardt makes a mental link to the concerns of the artist, creation from 'nothing' being seen as a way to guarantee the originality of the work:

Hindu vision of cosmic time, cycles of world's appearance and disappearance, make something out of nothing that would stand alone, not have to lean on anything external to work<sup>7</sup>.

The concept of the Void that has been delineated here is, whilst central to Oriental thought, alien to Western thinking. Descartes and Kant, along with other European philosophers, seem to deny the possibility



(suggested in the Eastern texts) of the mind being able to be completely empty of all thought, of all content. Believing that experience must be of something, they deny the ability of the self to experience itself in a state of pure objectless awareness, the goal of the Eastern systems of meditation. The foundation of Descartes' philosophy lies in the individual's ability to think, rather than an ability to transcend thought in self-absorption. As we have seen, although deeply interested in Eastern thought, Jung takes a similar standpoint.

An attempt to discover Western precedents for the Void concept which proved so fruitful for American artists throws up few candidates. Similar conceptions to those found in Zen occur in Meister Eckhardt, but he can hardly be regarded as representative of the mainstream of European philosophical/religious ideas. Furthermore, although his writings were known to Cage, Lippold, Lassaw, Tobey, MacDonald-Wright and Reinhardt, it seems clear that this acquaintance came about because of an interest in Oriental thought and via the introductions to Eckhardt's ideas and their parallels to Oriental views provided by Coomaraswamy and Suzuki<sup>8</sup>. Mallarmé developed ideas on 'nothingness' which provide another alternative source, but he can be seen to owe a debt himself to Oriental sources<sup>9</sup>. Existentialist philosophy (one thinks, for example, of Sartre's 'Being and Nothingness') does contain a notion of a void, but this differs significantly from the Eastern one. Whereas the Orient would regard communion with the Void as a positive goal, Existentialism sees the ego as striving against nothingness, attempting to define its own meaning through creative activity<sup>10</sup>.

The 'Void' is conceived of in Oriental philosophy as being beyond description yet this qualityless state must be given attributes for it to enter the realm of discourse. Qualities of 'unboundedness' and of 'emptiness' are often ascribed to it, and it is this metaphor of a spatial type which is most suitable when the concept is to be given expression, not in words, but in art. It will indeed be seen to be the case that Chinese and Japanese painters employ spatial concepts which embody these qualities of 'unboundedness' and 'emptiness', indicating that their aesthetic reflects the importance of the notion of the Void in the world view of which they partake. It can be said that not only

does the content of art reflect the assumptions of the world view in whose context it develops, but the 'language' of the plastic elements themselves - in the present instance, the treatment of space-also mirrors (in a largely unintentional, indirect way) the presuppositions about the nature of reality which are dominant in that time and place. That this is as true of the supposedly scientific attitudes to space of the Renaissance as it is of Sung dynasty China could certainly be argued. It will be the aim of the ensuing discussion to show that American artists who became aware of the Oriental concept of the Void and attempted to give it expression in their work, also chose to do so through spatial metaphors of 'unboundedness' and 'emptiness'. Partly this was in imitation of the modes of Far Eastern painting, but American artists pushed the possibilities of this approach to space to new limits, transforming the spatial concepts they had inherited from European art. The fundamental difference between Far Eastern and American approaches to 'imaging' the Void lies in the fact that, for the latter, Oriental thought had been consciously sought out and used<sup>11</sup>, rather than providing an unconsciously observed backdrop to artistic creation, and so the symbolism in the work of American artists is largely conscious and intentional. Also, as we shall see, many American artists chose to make cosmology (or the creative process - which in the Oriental view parallels cosmological processes on an individual level) the subject matter of their works. Since the work of most of the artists which will be considered is abstract, the significance carried by the formal elements and the 'grammar' of their organization will be seen to provide the main means of transmitting meaning.

Spatial images to describe the Void occur in Hindu traditions, for example in the concept of 'Akasa' which is defined by Coomaraswamy as 'immanent space, indefinitely dimensioned, subjective space'<sup>12</sup>. Strictly speaking, this term is not meant to describe the Unmanifest Void itself, since it refers to a phenomenal experience<sup>13</sup>. However, as Merton points out<sup>14</sup>, this experience is used as a tangible internal symbol on which devotions to that which is beyond form can be focused, and in some cases the concepts do appear to merge - for example in the Chandogya Upanishad where reference is made to 'the immanent space in the heart' (antar-hrdaya-ākāśa)<sup>15</sup>.

Of greater importance to American artists have been the spatial metaphors of the Void developed in the Far East, since they gained expression in the painting of China and Japan, an important medium for the transmission of this concept to the West. Examples of the spatial metaphors that occur in the metaphysical texts ('sunyata' etc) have already been adduced, and it will be seen now that a similar symbolism is present in Chinese aesthetics. Chang Yen-yuan, for example, states:

The function of the ear ends with hearing, that of the mind with symbols or ideas, but the spirit is an emptiness ready to receive all things. Tao abides in the emptiness <sup>16</sup>.

Many writers emphasize the importance of an unbounded and empty quality of space in the Chinese aesthetic, and it is clear (although not always explicitly stated) that this stylistic trait is intended to mirror the concept of the Void <sup>17</sup>. Chang Yen-yuan may be quoted again to illustrate this emphasis, writing that 'Painting should be sought for beyond the shapes' <sup>18</sup>. Yun Shou-p'ing of the late 17th century wrote that 'modern painters apply their mind only to brush and ink, whereas the ancients applied their minds to the absence of brush and ink' <sup>19</sup>. More concrete advice is also given by the aestheticians:

The painting should be empty at the top and at the bottom and spacious at the sides, so that it looks agreeable. If the whole format is filled up, it no longer has any expression <sup>20</sup>.

Elsewhere the primacy of empty space is clearly underlined:

If the empty spaces are right, the whole body is alive, and the more such places there are, the less boring the whole thing becomes <sup>21</sup>.

It is Sung dynasty painting which most clearly illustrates the utilization of this approach to space, since it was during that period that the influence of Zen was strongest. Six Persimmons (35 x 29 cm, collection Ryuko-in Daitoku-Ji Kyoto) attributed to Mu Ch'i, a Ch'an monk of the late 13th century, is one of the bolder employments of an

unbounded, empty space.

Several painters working in America were aware of the approach to the use of space which we have described as occurring in Far Eastern art, and showed an interest in the effect it had on the organization of perspective.

Paalen, writing in 1951 (during the time he was on the American continent, and contributing to the post-Surrealist dialogue via his contacts with other artists and through 'Dyn') comments favourably that 'Chinese pictures have no central perspective, that is to say, that unification of action around a dramatic hub which Occidental painting obtained by the perspective centralization'<sup>22</sup>. Philip Pavia, New York sculptor and a founder of the Artists' Club, writing in 'It Is', the magazine of the avant-garde in Spring 1958 (No 1, page 4) talks of 'Chinese Cubism' which he feels has been an influence on abstract art:

The non-monolithic overall plane of a Chinese painting has pockets of space, contradictory to the overall light; a sort of Chinese Cubism, because of the broken duality of light and space. Chinese Cubism may not have made a new sense of measure for the modernists, but it has, when contrasted with Western practice, made the duality of light and space less fixed in its high keys and less full in its symmetrical sense. It gave a peculiar brand of courage, and it rubbed off a kind of will-for-change ambition on the abstract artists.

Reinhardt, in his notes, gives us an interesting insight into his thinking about Oriental perspective when he contrasts it with the Western (Renaissance) usage. His speculations reveal that he is aware of a relationship between the way in which space is treated and the way reality is understood in the two cultures.

These [Eastern] constructions use 'parallel' and 'reversed' perspective, the opposite of Western perspective in which things get smaller as they recede away into the distance from the onlooker who, starting with his boundless ego-self, finishes

by finding (losing?) himself at a precise vanishing point. The Eastern perspective begins with an awareness of the 'immeasurable vastness' and 'endlessness of things' out there and as things get smaller and smaller as they get closer, the viewer ends up by losing (finding?) himself in his own mind<sup>23</sup>.

The unboundedness which Reinhardt isolates here as a quality of Chinese space is augmented by the quality of emptiness. In describing Twelve Scenes from a thatched cottage by Hsia Kuei he says 'there seems to be nothing much to say, and sometimes nothing much to see' - a description which might as easily be applied to his own late works - noting that 'the nothingness to see there can be "all seen in one glance"'. He shows an awareness of the link between the use of space in Sung art and the concept of the Void which has been demonstrated above, speculating (inconclusively) whether 'the empty, quiet, pervasive, classic Sung paintings have something to do with the Ch'an "doctrine of great emptiness", the "great peace of the Buddha" and "the Tao in all things"'.<sup>24</sup>

Tobey also shows himself to be aware of the Far Eastern painters' approach to space. Speaking of the Southern Sung landscape painters he notes that 'in many ways the Oriental sacrificed much of mountain and tree to his space ... the volume of space more or less dominated the picture'<sup>25</sup>. This acquaintance with the positive role given to empty space in Oriental art was something which Tobey had acquired during his 1934 trip to China and Japan. In his diary notes, apparently written whilst in Japan, he mentions (in a discussion of his impressions concerning the Japanese vision) that the Japanese painter will depict the objects he paints 'as subjects surrounded by space - a small symbol of life in space'<sup>26</sup>. That Tobey was aware of the philosophic dimension of this way of handling space will become clear when his own work is discussed below, but it can be pointed out here that he was certainly aware at the time of his Oriental journey that attitudes to pictorial space reflected more than purely aesthetic concerns, and were related to the socio-economic environment. Shortly after leaving Japan he was quoted as saying that he believed 'the stress on the figure in Japanese art will increase as Japan becomes more industrialized. Then the space concept will decrease and Japan will tend to attach more importance to the object than the space'<sup>27</sup>.

It was not only American painters who were inspired by Oriental spatial usage. Masson admires the unbounded quality of Chinese pictorial space and shows his awareness of the symbolic overtones it carries as a representation of the living Void, in contrast to the European view of space as the passive environment in which (active) forms are placed:

The Chinese painter speaks not of space but of life force. For the European it's always a limit, for the asiatic it is (implicitly) the unlimited ... a masterpiece that touches me like no other is the portrait of Li Po by Liang K'ai. The illustrious personage strolls through space without shadow and without detail ... 28 .

Apparently, however, it was not just the example of Far Eastern painting which influenced the changing approach to space and perspective that we can see in Masson's work. The artist also credits Indian sculpture as having inspired this transformation. Speaking at the 1960 Vienna Conference of the International Association of Plastic Arts he explained:

When I was trying to break the monotony of the single focal point in my paintings I discovered Hindu sculptures, with their multiple curves, conveying the impression that the bodies were moving in harmony with the universe, with the general motion of the rivers and stars. These sculptures enabled me to infuse some of the same dynamism into my own paintings 29 .

In our attempt to establish the degree of influence which the concept of the Void has had in American art, the first artist whose work we shall examine is Sam Francis. Bright Ring Drawing (1964, Gouache, 20 27 x 41") and Berkeley (1970, Acrylic on canvas, 14 x 9', University 21 Art Museum, Berkeley) illustrate well the use of unbounded, empty space in his mature style. Space extends beyond the boundaries of the canvas, giving an impression of infinitude. Large areas of empty space dominate the composition, form being reduced to a secondary element, not ordering space but rather merely punctuating it and drawing attention to the emptiness.

Works of the early 1950's (for example, Untitled, 1950, ink 14 22½ x 17") show an unbounded quality of space. The forms, which are

translucent and mobile (rather than solid, static and architectural), extend beyond the boundary of the canvas edge. However, it is not till 1956 that empty space becomes a factor in his work, represented by the unmodulated white painted surface of the canvas. This spatial void occurs in 'Japan Line' (1957), Towards Disappearance III (1957-8 15 oil on canvas, 9' 6" x 11' 8", collection the artist) and Untitled 17 (1959, watercolour 39½" x 26½", collection Marguerite Saegesser, Palo Alto) the assymetrical placing of forms and their dynamic, fugitive nature helping to underline the positive role played by the empty white areas. The evolution in Francis's style at this time was undoubtedly related to his growing awareness of Oriental art and thought <sup>30</sup>. This came to a head in 1957 when he undertook a trip to Japan, but his interest in the Orient certainly predated this journey <sup>31</sup>.

The employment of empty space in Francis's work may have been inspired in part by the qualities he observed in Far Eastern painting, but it also seems to carry symbolic connotations which link it with the Oriental idea of the Void. The white with which Francis represents empty space evidently has metaphysical associations for him—in one poem he asks 'Are you the white from eternity' <sup>32</sup> and elsewhere he describes white as a 'ringing silence ... an endless, ultimate point at the end of your life' <sup>33</sup>. Another poem by Francis, although couched in mystical terms, seems also to be referring to the empty canvas at the beginning of the working process:

My starting point  
has no dimension  
neither in time  
neither in color  
space  
or death  
but in a unified  
even wave with intensity

Speaking of his Blue Balls series, Francis emphasizes the importance 18 of the empty white areas in his works:

What is more important in these paintings is not what is painted but what is not painted. The white is more important even than the blue <sup>34</sup>.

Francis rarely gives direct hints concerning the content of his paintings but the Blue Balls works seem to be cosmological images representing the manifestation of form from formlessness. A quotation from Blake which Francis makes appears to support this reading:

Blake said that all things are holy and that eternity is in love with the production of things. Space and the bodies in it are one and the same. The blue bodies are not shapes but are embedded things - minute particulars embedded in light <sup>35</sup>.

In some works, mainly of the mid-sixties, forms occupy only the edges of the canvas and empty space gains an even greater role in Francis's work. Its predominance is emphasized by the sheer scale of the works, which envelop the spectator's field of vision and induce a contemplative attitude. Untitled (1964, acrylic, 32 1/4 x 22 7/8 ", collection the artist), Iris (1965, acrylic on canvas, 89½ x 71", collection Peter Selz, Berkeley) and Mako (1966) represent this trend in his work. 19

Paul Jenkins is aware of the positive role that empty space, represented by the white field of the canvas, plays in his painting. Describing Phenomenon Salem Rock of 1963 (acrylic on canvas, 36 x 28 3/4", private collection), he notes that 'the whites that appear intermittently become a part of the form' <sup>36</sup>. Describing another later work he makes a related point on the importance of empty space, asserting that 'the white, or the negative space, has to read as abundantly as the positive image which is in a state of abeyance yet juxtaposed against it' <sup>37</sup>. Referring to yet another canvas, on which the only forms visible are diaphanous 'veil'-like areas against a background of empty (white) space which dominates the work, Jenkins says that it is 'a really good example of [the kind of painting of which one could say] "this is of a Zen attitude", where you are able to be filled by its very tenuousness' <sup>38</sup>. Here, then, the artist explicitly condones a link being made between the spatial mode and Oriental philosophical concepts.

The first appearance of this attitude towards space, which develops several years after Jenkins first showed an interest in Oriental thought, <sup>39</sup> occurs in the works of the Eyes of the Dove series.



Eyes of the Dove (1958, oil and chrysochrome on canvas, 40 x 30", collection the artist) utilizes empty space and this tendency becomes clearer in, for example, Phenomena After Image (1960, oil on canvas 79 x 62" Martha Jackson Gallery). Against the unchanging white ground the forms (losing their quality of substantiality) are in flux. This quality of transiency, which becomes more marked through time and which undermines any Cubistic architectural structure, can be seen as an attempt to give a cosmological dimension to the imagery, mirroring the unchanging unmanifest (Nirvana) and the ever-changing manifest (Samsara) of the Oriental world view. Phenomena Ivory (1960) and Phenomena White of Ides (1963, acrylic on canvas, 45 5/8 x 35", collection Daniel Gervis, Paris) show the artist pushing the dominance of unbounded spatial background over image to further limits, and here the calligraphic overtones of the line, recalling Chinese and Japanese brushwork, make the resonances with Oriental models more clear.

Stamos, whose interest in Oriental thought and art began in the 1940's, also adopted new attitudes to space in his work which can be attributed to this source. Speaking of the pastels exhibited in his 1943 Wakefield Gallery exhibition he noted that they were 'treated very broadly and employing space'<sup>40</sup>:

Space, empty space ... became a positive factor, no longer something not filled and left over, but something exerting an attractive power to the eye and balancing the attractive power of forms and masses ... to exert this power, space must be used broadly and with emphasis as an end in itself<sup>41</sup>.

Stamos's works of the following period do not build on this open spatial concept, being concerned with a telluric imagery of rocks, fossils, etc. but it returns in such works as Teahouse<sup>42</sup> and Good Friday Massacre (1947). A sense of unboundedness also gives the title to a more recent sequence of works, the 'Infinity' series, which Stamos begun in 1970.

This new attitude to space was not confined to painting, but developed contemporaneously in sculpture, as the work of Ibram Lassaw will illustrate. Again Oriental philosophy was one of the sources of the interest in empty space, an alien quality to the traditions of

Western sculpture, based as they are on mass. In Lassaw's case, the exploration of the possibilities of space as the primary aesthetic means was a conscious aim, a direction which he claims to have formulated by the mid-1930's and followed ever since<sup>43</sup>. Early works such as Mandala (1949 16 x 12 x 12") illustrate this concern with space, and his mature works (e.g. Milky Way, 1950, 4' high, and The Clouds of Magellan, 1953, various metals, 52 x 70 x 18½", collection MOMA) show his abandonment of solid form in favour of an art based upon linear networks of welded metal in which empty space plays a dominant role. Empty space exists within the network of forms, which do not provide an impassible barrier between exterior and interior, and thus there is a continuity with the unbounded space of the environment, which the sculptor sees as a direct extension of the space of his work. A parallel can be drawn with the implicit extension of space beyond the boundary of the canvas in paintings such as Sam Francis's Berkeley, an infinite quality being present in both.

Lassaw acknowledges that his detailed study of Oriental philosophy, begun in the late 1940's, whilst not being the cause of his interest in space, reinforced it and gave it an articulated philosophical basis. He is certainly aware of the symbolism attached to space in the Oriental world view. In a diary note of May 4th, 1954 he writes: 'The Buddha is space. Space is both infinite and finite. Sunyata - Emptiness is space'<sup>44</sup>. Whilst Lassaw eschews any symbolism in his works, and claims his titles are given for identification purposes only, one can see his works in a general sense as cosmological images, attempting to reflect in some way the 'shape' of the universe. It is in this respect that the Oriental metaphysical symbolism of space should be considered in relation to his work. A work which might illustrate this connection between his work and Oriental concepts is Akasa (1954, bronze and flourite crystal, 22" high), which takes as its title a spatial metaphor for the Void which we have already mentioned.

Paalen, working away from New York and in comparative isolation from other artists whose work is being discussed here, came to adopt a broadly similar attitude to space, again with the apparent help of Oriental examples. His metaphysical concept of the 'Dynaton', despite

its Greek name, appears to be identical to the Oriental 'Void'. It is regarded as having the quality of unboundedness, and as being the source of all manifest creation, which it contains within itself in a potential state, since it is 'a limitless continuum in which all forms of reality are potentially implicit'<sup>45</sup>. It is transcendental to time and place:

the potential continuum, the Dynaton itself does not 'contain' nor is contained nor 'located' because the very concepts of containing and location apply only to occurrences within the space-time continuum<sup>46</sup>.

A quality of 'immortality', of unchangingness, thus applies to it:

Even life and death are only life and death we know of, but nothing final in the Dynaton<sup>47</sup>.

From describing this metaphysical concept Paalen moves to a consideration of how it might be expressed in terms of the language of painting. He feels that by a 'fuller awareness of human restrictions and human liberty of choice [that is, a fuller comprehension of the nature of the cosmos as expressed in the Dynaton principle] we reach a sense of cosmic freedom'. Paalen believes that 'this freedom becomes manifest in painting as a new sense of space'. This 'new sense of space' is an emphasis on the quality of unboundedness ascribed to the Dynaton - 'In the language of painting, space is not bound to dimensional measure'. For Paalen, neither the concept nor the means for its expression on an artistic level are present in Western traditions; thus Surrealism and 'plastic puritanism' (Mondrian) are rejected along with the Renaissance spatial paradigm, and as we noted above (page 151) a consideration is made of the possibilities of Chinese painting. This Far Eastern influence may also have been supplemented by an awareness of the Hindu 'Akasha' concept<sup>48</sup>, which could have been the source of the idea of boundless 'inner space' which Paalen brings into his discussion - he sees painting as 'the adventure into an inner space which can not be measured by yardsticks nor light-years'.

The expression of these speculations in Paalen's own work can be seen in Space Unbound (1941, oil on canvas, 45 x 57"). As the title suggests, an unboundedness of space is achieved, the canvas edge no

longer framing space, the forms appearing to continue beyond it. The distinction between background space and foreground image is transcended as the forms take on a fluidity and lack of structure, merging with the spatial continuum in sharp distinction to works of the earlier 'Cycladic' period.

This painting greatly impressed Onslow-Ford who was aware of the novelty of its spatial treatment and of the cosmological nature of its imagery<sup>49</sup>. To him it suggested 'a sea of space or a vision of primordial matter (not as a transitory state of world stuff in the past, but as a condition that underlies appearances here and now)'<sup>50</sup>. In this work, Onslow-Ford felt, Paalen had found 'a world without a background', that he had transcended 'the hard-edged tensions between figure and background [which had] comprised a duality, now there is a unity'. The implication appears to be that this is a philosophical as well as a spatial unity.

Onslow-Ford was later to apply this same spatial treatment in his own work, the influence of Paalen being combined with and extended by his own interest in Oriental thought and art. Voyager in Space (1970, 53 1/4 x 71 1/2", acrylic on linen) shows a fully developed example of this mode, in which forms become part of a spatial continuum and a sense of unboundedness is present. This goal is postulated in Painting in the Instant (page 49):

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The relationship of elements and space are enigmatic; background-foreground, near-far no longer apply. All is close. The whole if FULL.

That this use of space is not to be interpreted from a formalist viewpoint is indicated by the cosmological nature of the subject matter which the title reveals, and which is also hinted at by the associations with comets and spiral nebulae that can be read into the forms.

Like Paalen, Onslow-Ford talks of 'inner space', and again the Hindu concept of 'Akasha' might be considered to be behind this application of a spatial metaphor to the mind's subjective experience in a meditative state. Onslow-Ford certainly seems to be invoking the Oriental Void concept when he writes:

To have experience and knowledge of the inner worlds [which he sees as the source of his subject matter] one must be oblivious of the body. The mind must become aware of itself - occupy and become the great spaces - the mind's eye seeing and seen <sup>51</sup>.

The greater sense of unboundedness, and the utilization of empty space which we have seen as developing in Onslow-Ford's painting can be regarded as an attempt to give expression to the qualities of the Void in his work, and not as an autonomous formal development. His awareness of the Void idea has been pointed out above (page 146 ), and so need not be established again here.

Being aware that the Void is beyond description, Onslow-Ford does not attempt to make it the direct subject of his imagery. He realises that the 'formless' cannot be given form - 'the painter can never arrive at painting the empty mind [the state in which the mind is free of intellection and is attuned to the Void]. Once a mark appears, it is an image'. He feels 'It is not the painter's function to bask in emptiness and to try and paint no-image' - according to Zen the Void cannot be 'grasped' by the conscious intellect <sup>52</sup> - 'the point of the empty mind is to catch something'.

Onslow-Ford points out the difference between his approach to the Void and that of the Chinese artists:

Where my painting differs from the Chinese is that there is no emptiness. The goings on may be rarified but they are there to be seen everywhere.

Form has a place in his work, as well as empty space. He expresses this idea that he paints not the self-absorbed Void but the Void alongside its manifestations in the phrase 'the Void gnashes its teeth'.<sup>53</sup> 'Fullness' rather than pure emptiness thus becomes the symbolism in his works that the Void inspires - a fullness of both space and form. He writes:

Those with experience of meditation speak of the nature of the inner worlds as being 'empty' or 'void', and as being formless ..

On the canvas, for the painter, emptiness becomes a space  
that is full, and formlessness is manifest in structure and form <sup>54</sup>.

Who lives (1962, Parles paint, 77½ x 53", collection Whitney Museum) 115  
exemplifies this imagery of fullness, and can also be said to image  
the Void in another way - its reduction to black and white. At one  
point in his notes Onslow-Ford writes that 'the word Void to me  
suggests black, but through my painting I know the Void is black and  
white'. The use of these two non-colours can be seen as symbolic of  
the Void's containment of opposites (emptiness and fullness, etc).  
White forms are spawned against black backgrounds, and black forms  
against white ones.

Paalen and Onslow-Ford are not alone in invoking the idea of  
'inner space', the concept is also employed by Tobey. Writing to his  
dealer Marion Willard, he states that 'the dimension that counts for  
the creative person is the space he creates within himself'. As with  
Paalen and Onslow-Ford, the implication is that this is an unbounded  
space, an apprehension of the infinite by subjective cognition -  
'this inner space is closer to the infinite than the other, and it is  
the privilege of a balanced mind - a search for equilibrium is essential -  
to be as aware of inner space as of outer' <sup>55</sup>. The most likely source  
of this idea in Tobey would be Morris Graves, whose similar ideas about  
inner space, (derived from Coomaraswamy's discussion of 'Akasa') have  
been discussed above (page 41 ) <sup>56</sup>.

We have already noted Tobey's awareness of the use of space in  
Far Eastern painting, and this was his first and most important  
introduction to an open spatial treatment. Tobey attributes his  
Chinese painter friend, Teng Kwei with having shown him the limitations  
of the Western way of using space, based as it is on structured and  
measured dimensions. Kwei's sumi work 'destroyed architectural space  
for me' he claims <sup>57</sup>. The openness of space which occurred in  
Broadway Norm (1935, tempera, 13 1/8 x 9 1/4", collection Mrs C E Harper) 142  
permeating and surrounding the linear network - and which became a part  
of his established formal language in such later works as Written over  
the Plains, (1959, tempera on paper, 12½ x 9 3/4", Seattle Art Museum) 157  
can be strongly contrasted to the ordered spatial arrangement of  
Middle West (1929, oil, 37 3/4 x 59 3/4", Seattle Art Museum) in which 132

the vanishing point is clearly emphasized. The use of the white of the paper surface to represent an unbounded space in front of which the forms are placed occurs in Tobey's sumi works of 1957, which see him at his closest to Oriental models. Some earlier works in which the white of the empty paper is allowed to play a part, for example Seated Japanese Figure (1934, ink, 14 3/4 x 11 1/2, Seattle Art Museum), do not carry the resonance of metaphysical meaning that is present in many Japanese and Chinese works, or in certain of Tobey's 'Sumis'. In this relatively slight work completed during his trip to Japan the form remains dominant and central, as in the formal Japanese portraits it recalls, attracting the viewer's attention rather than leading it into a contemplation of the emptiness of space.

In his interview with William Seitz, Tobey states:

The canvas today is so often not used as a limitation, it's used as something which something passes over into the vision and out again. We use the word continuum also which I think is an Oriental idea.

In this unbounded spatial concept of Tobey's, the edge of the canvas is not regarded as important, and form is thus not arranged with respect to its presence. Contrasting his work to that of Mathieu in this respect, Tobey states that 'It [the format] impinges on him, I pay no attention to it' <sup>58</sup>.

It is very rare in Tobey's work for empty space to be made the subject of a painting to the virtual exclusion of form, but this does occur in isolated works around 1960 in the period following on from the Sumis and from his most intense study of Zen - indicating that the concept of the Void may be the inspiration. Void II (1960, tempera, 6 3/4 x 4 7/8") is an example of such a work. For the most part, however, he steers away from a depiction of emptiness alone - 'the cult of space can become as dull as that of the object' <sup>59</sup> he was to write to Marion Willard - and his imagery is largely of formlessness and forms, nirvana and samsara. His imagery, like Onslow-Ford, is usually of 'fullness', mirroring the Void as the source of forms, containing the concrete manifestations of the objective world in a

potential state. Tobey notes that 'Scientists say that there is no such thing as empty space. It's all loaded with life ... teeming with electrical energy, potential sights and silent sounds, spores, seeds and God knows what' <sup>60</sup>. An earlier image of Tobey's which deals with this theme of the Void as the source of forms is Void devouring the Gadget Era (1942, tempera, 21½ x 29 3/8"). It may be taken as a depiction of our present age of 'materialism' being destroyed and reabsorbed into nothingness in the apocalypse of 'Kali Yuga'.

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The most thoroughgoing advocate of the concepts of 'emptiness' and 'nothingness' and the necessity of their expression in the languages of the arts has been John Cage. His 'Lecture on Nothing' and 'Lecture on Something' delivered to the New York 'Artists' Club' represent only two formal occasions on which these Oriental concepts received an airing by him in the context of the art world <sup>61</sup>. The following expression of his aesthetic is typical of the emphasis Cage places on spatial emptiness, and reveals its Oriental source:

It is ... space and emptiness that is finally urgently necessary at this point in history (not the sounds that happen in it - or their relationships) (not the stones - thinking of a Japanese stone garden - or their relationships but the emptiness of the sand which needs the stones anywhere in the space in order to be empty) <sup>62</sup>.

It will be noted that his emphasis on space is not a denial of form, which needs to be present to 'point out' emptiness, but it is a denial of structure. Cage's argument with the highly structured music of Serialism is that 'there is not enough of nothing in it' <sup>63</sup>.

This empty space is expressed by Cage in his own work by means of silence, which provides the 'ground' in which sounds occur. Silence is allowed expression as a positive element, and is not used, as in Western music, merely to indicate the relationship between sounds. The most extreme case occurs in 4' 33", which consists entirely of silence. Meditation techniques in which all mental contents are deliberately eliminated in order to facilitate communion with the Void provide a possible source for this work, but there are other Oriental precedents



which can be considered as well and which Cage is equally aware of. For instance, the 'flower sermon' of the Buddha, in which he is claimed to have transmitted the experience of enlightenment to a disciple Mahakasyapa by holding up a flower and remaining silent. The 'thunderous silence' with which Vimalakirti answered a question about the nature of the Void is also brought to mind <sup>64</sup>.

4' 33" can be compared, however, to Cage's other works which contain sounds as well as silence. In this work it is the environmental sounds which fill the role of providing a complement, since Cage allows their intrusions. Like Onslow-Ford, Cage does not attempt to directly produce an image of the Void through complete emptiness, and he shares the idea which Onslow-Ford and Tobey express, that there is no such thing as a vacuum. 'There is no such thing as empty space or an empty time [he states]. There is always something to see, something to hear' <sup>65</sup>.

Rauschenberg's 'White Paintings', (for example White Painting, 1951 126 72 x 128") express in visual terms the imagery of emptiness which Cage achieved in 4' 33". Rauschenberg created these works whilst he was at Black Mountain College, at the same time as Cage was there, and the two became friends <sup>66</sup>. The question therefore arises of a possible Oriental influence in Rauschenberg's case, transmitted through Cage. Cage has pointed out that Rauschenberg's works predated his first performance of 4' 33" and encouraged him to give it, but he also reveals that he had carried around the idea of performing it for some time prior to doing so, and had discussed his intention <sup>67</sup>. Thus the question of an influence cannot be ruled out. Cage feels that Rauschenberg wasn't involved in Zen at that time <sup>68</sup>, and the answer may be that although a wider basis of motivations were at play initially <sup>69</sup>, Rauschenberg did come to view the implications of his discoveries in terms of Cage's aesthetic. One can see, for example, a remarkable similarity between Cage's acceptance of environmental sounds and Rauschenberg's acceptance of shadows. Rauschenberg accepted, as Cage has been seen to, that there is no such thing as pure emptiness <sup>70</sup>. Cage himself certainly saw the emptiness and the (soon to reappear) forms of Rauschenberg's art in metaphysical terms - the Buddhist Nirvana and Samsara. Comparing Tobey and Rauschenberg's reintroduction of recognizable

forms after producing abstract and empty works, he says 'I preferred Bob Rauschenberg's method of reinstating the relative. Tobey's was very awkward' <sup>71</sup>.

Richard Lippold was closely associated with Cage during the early years of his career as a sculptor, and his use of space may also owe a debt to Cage and the Oriental ideas the latter articulated into an aesthetic, although Lippold claims that his interest in space had been with him since childhood <sup>72</sup>. Certainly they discussed their shared interest in this area. Lippold recalls that Cage 'was always talking about the spaces in music and I was always talking about the silence of art, of sculpture - so we almost interchanged language' <sup>73</sup>. The influence of Cage was all the more likely to have been fruitful since Lippold himself composed music at the time they first came to know each other. It is interesting to note that Lippold's musical compositions apparently took on the same 'spatial' quality as Cage's <sup>74</sup>.

Empty space featured as a positive element in Lippold's sculptures from the very beginning. The linear network of wire to which form is usually reduced creates a continuum of empty space both inside and outside the sculpture, the environmental space becoming an important part of the work <sup>75</sup>. 74

Titles such as Sun given by Lippold to his works indicate that he attributes cosmological associations to his subject matter. A metaphysical dimension to his thinking about space is revealed in a typescript entitled 'Structure is Illusion' <sup>76</sup>, which can be regarded as throwing light on the meaning he attributes to space in his sculpture. Although he claims this analysis to be based on scientific findings rather than 'the currently fashionable mystique of Zen Buddhism', it is clear that his cosmological image of a void which is the source of manifest reality - which may be seen at the same time as both empty and full - goes beyond purely physical models to an approximation of the Oriental world-view:

We have come, since my childhood, from the 'knowledge' that we are chemically ninety-five percent water to the 'certainty' that we are physically one hundred percent 'empty' space!

No sooner has all matter, all identity of place and time ... vanished into the greater 'void' of space alone, identified with its virginal non-being (admittedly a very comforting thought, because we are blameless if non-existent), but science now suspects, by observing nature's penchant for symmetry, that space cannot be empty or virginal [a conclusion that we have also seen Cage, Rauschenberg, Onslow-Ford and Tobey arrive at and express in their work]. Apparently it seems 'empty' only because of our meagre access to its 'total' properties ... Again we are confronted with a new version of a familiar duality: all or nothing.

Paradoxical as it may seem, he feels these opposing terms can describe the same reality: 'But are they alternatives? Is perhaps "all" also "nothing", and "nothing" also "all"'. This philosophical speculation, which has apparently fascinated him on other occasions <sup>77</sup>, can be seen as providing a rationale for his use of structured, symmetrical form in his works, (a trait which might at first seem at odds with his interest in empty space), since it brings the concepts of fullness and emptiness into harmony.

The tight interlocking structure of forms which occurs in some of Reinhardt's early canvases (e.g. Number 30, 1938, oil on canvas, 40½ x 42½", collection Whitney Museum) shows his allegiance to modes derived from De Stijl and Synthetic Cubism. In other works, however, the sense of a structural grid disappears and a more unbounded space occurs (e.g. Abstract Painting No 7A, 1953, oil on canvas, 108 x 46", collection Mr & Mrs Ben Heller). Rather than the elements of the composition being 'knitted' together in the flat plane of the surface, an 'all-over' quality is evoked. The forms no longer interlock in a structural role, defining pictorial space, but appear to float in an open and undefined spatial environment. The influence of Oriental ideas of space, which Reinhardt has already been shown to be aware of, was undoubtedly an important factor behind these works. In Untitled (1948-9, oil on canvas, 51 x 21", collection Bernar Venet, New York) the parallel with Oriental art becomes clearer since the empty space is represented by the white of the canvas, thus echoing Far Eastern practice. Here the geometrical shapes have been replaced by black calligraphic elements, the solidity and 'permanence' of form

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thus being eliminated. The vertical, scroll-like, format also recalls the art of China and Japan and Reinhardt has referred to these canvases as his 'Chinese verticals' <sup>78</sup>.

It is not only through this open quality of space that we see Reinhardt making accommodation to the Oriental concept of the Void. He also approaches it by means of the quality of 'emptiness' which he creates through the elimination of the image in his work - the reduction of forms and the minimizing of tonal differences. His late works have a rigid symmetrical structure, but the importance of the boundaries between forms is undermined by the narrowness of the tonal range, thus creating an ambiguity of space and a sense of emptiness. The 'emptiness' and 'formlessness' of these late works recall Oriental descriptions of the Void, the latter quality being referred to, for example, in the phrase 'the finest has no shape' <sup>79</sup>, one of many characterizations of the Void found in Reinhardt's writings. Reinhardt's statement that he makes 'paintings about nothing' can be interpreted, not as nihilism, but as an indication that his paintings are about 'no-thing-ness', that which is beyond forms.

The concept of the qualityless Void was important to other painters producing monochrome or near-monochrome works, indicating that this formal goal was for many artists who achieved it a response to a new concept which required a novel means of expression, rather than an exercise in formalist reductivism. Rollin Crampton was perhaps the first American painter to produce a monochrome painting empty of imagery and it is therefore especially interesting to see that he may have been inspired by the Void concept. A press release issued by MOMA on the occasion of their exhibition 'Recent Acquisitions' 1970 notes that, in response to a question asking whether his painting Premise (c 1950-51, oil on canvas, 50 1/8 x 36", MOMA) had any special symbolic significance, Crampton had replied that 'the direct simplicity, the devotion and the calm of Buddhism' was being referred to in this dark, empty work <sup>80</sup>. Another, later, example of a monochrome work in which Oriental associations can be found is Dan Flavin's Icon IV (The Pure Land) (1962). The empty whiteness of this work was apparently a reference to the use of white in Chinese funerals - the work commemorates the death of his brother. The 'Pure Land' of the title is the Buddhist heaven, a concept which approximates to the Void <sup>81</sup>.

John Mc Laughlin directly relates the use he made of empty space in his works to Oriental precedents, seeing it as a way to get beyond the particular and the finite to an appreciation of the unbounded Void. He states:

My earliest concern with space in painting was that used by Japanese painters of centuries ago and described by Sesshu as the 'Marvellous Void'. Marvellous, I feel, because silence draws one beyond the suffocating finality of the particular <sup>82</sup>.

Mc Laughlin feels Sesshu achieved this goal 'by using large areas of empty space, and also minimizing the insistence of the objects which make up the composition by rendering them somewhat obliquely. In other words the viewer was not confronted by any obtrusive object to contend with'. This same quality can be seen in Mc Laughlin's own work where empty space often predominates and the 'insistence' of objects is counteracted by their reduction to basic, abstract, geometric shapes.

Noguchi has created a number of works over the years which adopt a pierced circular shape and the utilization of empty space as a prominent component of these works gives them an association to the Oriental concept of the 'Void'. The Ring (1948, granite) is one of the earliest pieces of this type, which recurs again in Black Sun (1969, Brazilian Marble, collection Seattle Art Museum). Later works of this kind refer to the idea of the 'Void' in their titles, for example, Energy Void (1971, granite, approximately 10' high, collection the artist), and The Void (1970, portuguese rose aurora, collection the artist), in which empty space is given a more prominent role than previously. The associations which Noguchi feels these works convey to him seem to pinpoint the Oriental idea of the Void as the underlying influence, although the sculptures should not be seen as an attempt to illustrate this concept. Describing some of the symbolism he feels is inherent in the circular form in his Beinecke sculpture garden, Yale), Noguchi states:

The circle is zero, the decimal zero or the zero of nothingness from which we come, to which we return. The hole is the abyss, the mirror, or the question mark <sup>83</sup>.

Certain parallels in Far Eastern art can be found for this way of representing the Void. The freehand brush drawing of a circle ('Enso') is a common practice amongst Zen calligraphers, (Jiun, Torei, Bankei, etc) where this association to the void is certainly present. Magic Ring (1969, Persian travertine, approximate diameter 97½", collection the artist) particularly recalls these brush images, the incompleteness of the circle echoing the eccentric and often discontinuous forms of the calligraphy. Works by several other American artists, such as Jenkins<sup>84</sup> and Graves<sup>85</sup> can be related to this same calligraphic imagery, and whilst it led to no direct parallels in his own work, it can be noted that Tobey, when in Japan, was given a sumi painting of a circle on which to meditate<sup>86</sup>. Less significant, perhaps, but worth mentioning as another Far Eastern source for Noguchi's imagery in his 'Void' works are the small, pierced jade circles that are amongst the oldest non-utilitarian stone artifacts to have been found in China<sup>87</sup>. These ritual objects also appear to have been an inspiration to Pousette-Dart<sup>88</sup>.

Motherwell makes use of the empty white of the canvas as a positive element of the design in his series of 'Elegies', for example in Elegy to the Spanish Republic (1953-4, Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo) and his awareness of Oriental art and aesthetics from the 1940's must be considered as one of the factors 'permitting' this. However, in this work there is not really a sense of unbounded space, the white areas becoming a part of a flat, two-dimensional design. Motherwell himself acknowledges that space in his works of this era was usually either a shallow depth or a wall-like flatness<sup>89</sup>. Later works, for example the Lyric Suite or the Samurai paintings<sup>90</sup> have a more open sense of space. The 'Open' series typifies this unbounded quality which Motherwell again acknowledges, and here form is radically reduced (e.g. White on Tan 1970, acrylic and charcoal on cardboard, 13½ x 17½", collection the artist) making space the central subject and introducing a contemplative feel. Motherwell's comment that 'the problem is more nearly how not to lessen the original virginal loveliness of the canvas'<sup>91</sup> would appear to be relevant to very sparse works such as these. The interest in Zen which Motherwell developed in the 1960's<sup>92</sup> can be seen as a contributing factor in this transformation of spatial treatment, an increased calligraphic quality which occurs in some works compounding this suggestion of an Oriental influence. Whilst not commenting specifically on the suggestion

that the space in his later works might carry some of the philosophical associations which it does in Far Eastern art, Motherwell is willing to admit that his attitudes to space are influenced by more than purely formal considerations. He links, for example, the enclosed 'walled-in' feel of Little Spanish Prison to the 'suffocating' feeling which he claims oppressed him at that time. Similarly he conjectures that one factor involved in the introduction of a more open space in his later work was his move to the countryside <sup>93</sup>.

In Motherwell's case it is particularly difficult to evaluate the influence of Oriental attitudes to space. Because of the academic background with which he came to art, and his wide-ranging reading, there are many other alternative sources which must be considered. In particular, the strong links he retained with European cultural traditions need to be examined.

Both Kandinsky's comments about the empty canvas <sup>94</sup> and Mallarmé's innovatory typographical layout in Coup de Dés (which utilizes empty areas of the page to add to the effect of the poem) may have affected Motherwell's thinking <sup>95</sup>. Furthermore, Existentialist philosophy may have made a contribution. In one place, Motherwell talks of a 'fearful void', something to be grappled with rather than accepted, and this has Existentialist overtones. Similar associations occur in another statement which speaks of 'the primary sense of gulf, an abyss, a void between one's lonely self and the world' <sup>96</sup>.

There is a considerable difference between Zen and Existentialist attitudes to the concept of 'voidness', and it may seem unlikely that the same artist could be interested in both of them. Their coexistence can partly be explained by introducing a temporal dimension - Existentialist ideas perhaps predominating in earlier works, Oriental ideas in later ones. More importantly though, it must be pointed out that it is possible for an ambivalence to exist on the level of artistic symbolism that would be contradictory if expressed in logical terms. The way in which Motherwell makes use of his reading in relation to his art is very personal. He reads widely but quickly, retaining an intuitive feel of what he has perused rather than a knowledge of details, and thus different intellectual sources may be synthesized and used for his

own ends, Existentialist concepts being conflated with a mysticism of an Oriental type. The range of the sources we have considered here is in any case less wide than it at first might appear, since both Kandinsky<sup>97</sup> and Mallarmé have absorbed influences from Oriental thought, and are examples of the way in which the Orient had already infiltrated the mainstream of the European Avant-garde.

The discussion in this section has shown the wide variety of styles adopted by artists whose spatial notions have been influenced by the Oriental concept of the Void. A brief mention can also be made of two radically different artists to further emphasize the range of styles that have resulted from this contact. Stanton MacDonald-Wright, who had made a long study of Zen and Oriental thought in general, felt that it was only his treatment of space which had been transformed as a result: 'My present formal composition aside from a greater spatial conception, remains occidental'<sup>98</sup>. This unboundedness of space, in which form floats weightlessly and without an architectural structure, can be seen in Introspection (1963-4, oil, 60 x 35", collection Rose Fried Gallery). A much earlier work, Far Country Synchrony (1920, oil, 32 x 25 3/4", Detroit Institute of Arts) also shows a breakup of single-point perspective with an openness of space and a dissolution of form characteristic of Sung Landscapes, which he admired<sup>99</sup>. Carl Andre, whose interest in the Orient has already been attested to, states:

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I work at the speed of the things around me which slows me down because my mind is always trying to fill the empty spaces which ought to be void<sup>100</sup>.

Empty space expresses itself in his work through the sparsity of the distribution of forms. Space can be seen as the subject matter of many of his pieces, the forms (as in Lever, 1966, 4 1/2 x 8 1/8 x 348 1/2") serving only to articulate the empty space of the environment, and not attempting to monopolize the spectator's attention<sup>101</sup>.

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Harold Rosenberg's essay for the catalogue of the 1949 'Intrasubjectivists' exhibition shows the place which the 'Void' concept had established in discussions about painting at this early date. The views expressed may have been derived from his discussions with artists, possibly echoing the concerns they had indicated<sup>102</sup>. In his text,



Rosenberg links the idea of 'nothingness' to 'space', the choice of metaphor that we have noted many American artists making to express this notion of the Void. Rosenberg writes:

The modern painter is not inspired by anything visible ... he begins with nothingness. That is the only thing he copies. The rest he invents. The nothing the painter begins with is known as space. Space is simple: it is merely the canvas before it has been painted ... When the spectator recognizes the nothingness copied by the modern painter, the latter's work becomes just as intelligible as the earlier painting ... Naturally ... there is no use looking for silos or Madonnas. They have all melted into the void. But ... the void itself, you have that, just as surely as your grandfather had a sun-specked lawn.

Masson, whose work we have been discussing in order to provide a perspective on American art, and to note parallels with European responses to the Orient, makes adjustments in his approach to space in reaction to Eastern influences. The paintings of his naturalistic landscape phase (e.g. River in Autumn, 1950, oil, 21 1/4 x 25 9/16", collection Galerie Louise Leiris, Paris) have an open quality of space which breaks up perspective. The example of Zen landscape painting must be taken as having provided the direct source here.

When Masson returns to a more abstract style he retains a sense of unbounded space, and the Oriental notion of the Void provides his subject matter, being expressed through this quality. In Abyss (1955, 82 oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 28 3/4", collection Arturo Schwartz, Milan) form is fragmented and the eye is encouraged to move over the surface, a single focal point being abandoned. The spatial void is 'accepted' in this work, the forms communing with it rather than attempting to fill it - 'Masson has tamed his old abyss' wrote Limbour in 1956<sup>103</sup>. Masson makes it clear himself that the notion of the Void had become an important one in relation to his art<sup>104</sup>, and points out that he had the idea of the (Taoist) Void 'constantly in mind while conceiving ... my picture called Abyss'<sup>105</sup>. Talking in 1969, he says:

Most of my thoughts revolve on the concept of Nothingness, since without Nothingness one cannot ask questions about Existence. People who don't think about Nothingness, don't think. They are not born until they have a feeling of Nothingness<sup>106</sup>.

Aware of a European conception of 'nothingness' which goes back to the Romantics, through Mallarmé and others, he emphasizes that the Oriental conception ('le vide') has nothing to do with the Western idea ('du néant'):<sup>107</sup>

The Void - emptiness - is fullness; that which we call emptiness is for them [the Japanese] fullness, ... The fullness of being<sup>108</sup>.

CHAPTER SIXTHE 'CONTINUUM' - THE INFLUENCE OF FURTHER ASPECTS OF THE  
ORIENTAL COSMOLOGICAL PICTURE ON THE FORMAL LANGUAGE OF  
AMERICAN ART

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The Oriental world view divides reality into an unchanging, unmanifest aspect and an ever-changing, manifest aspect - this distinction being reflected, for example, in the Buddhist concepts of 'Nirvana' and 'Samsara'. This unmanifest aspect, which we have termed 'the Void', has been shown in the previous chapter to have had an influence on many artists, being responsible for changes in the treatment of space. The manifest, relative aspect of reality (as understood in the cosmologies of the Orient) also found an expression in the formal language of these same artists, and its influence will be considered in the present chapter. Changes in the formal language cannot be explained purely in formalist terms, but are attempts to reflect in art the adoption of a new cosmological paradigm, a new way of seeing reality derived in the case of many artists from Oriental sources.

The phenomenal dimension of reality is the most amenable to expression in art, since the latter is by its nature concerned with forms - the difficulties faced by artists attempting to create images of the 'Void' which is considered to be qualityless and beyond form have already been noted. Some of the ways in which the Oriental view of the relative aspect of life has found expression in art have already been pointed out in the previous chapter, in relation to the discussion of space - an emphasis on the transitoriness, the insubstantiality of form has been noted, and an abandonment of structured composition in the Cubist, architectural, sense. That some data relevant to the present discussion has already been introduced underlines that just as the distinction between Void and form is regarded as ultimately non-existent, so the distinction between changes in spatial treatment to represent the Void and changes in the vocabulary of form to represent the relative aspect of life is not an absolute one, they are aspects of a single new world-image.

The phenomenal aspect of reality is characterized in the Eastern world view as in constant flux, as lacking in any permanent essence. The manifest world, arising from the unmanifest Void and eventually being reabsorbed into it, has no substantiality of itself. Unlike the world-view of classical physics which sees matter as real and indestructible, composed of distinct and irreducible elements (i.e. atoms) which are combined in definite structures as the 'building blocks' of larger forms, the Oriental world view places an emphasis not on 'things' but on 'process'. It regards our perception of separate entities and structures persisting through time as resting on a false idea - an illusion ('maya') similar to that which we succumb when we regard a ripple on a lake as a body of water actually moving across the surface. Rather than emphasizing separation of forms, interconnectedness and wholeness are stressed. The Buddhist concept of 'Samsara', the 'round of birth-and-death' embodies this idea that the material world is in constant flux, having no permanent form, and can be translated literally as meaning 'incessantly in motion'. According to the Buddha 'all compounded things are impermanent'<sup>1</sup>. The same image of flux is found in Hindu cosmology, which sees the three 'gunas' as giving rise to the whole of phenomenal nature by their dynamic interaction. This philosophical perspective is personified in the dance of Shiva who in his motion is constantly creating and destroying all the forms of life. Similar ideas are found in Taoist philosophy, the concept of the 'Tao' itself being a dynamic one. Flux is also central to the I Ching, the 'Book of Changes', which sees all events in nature as deriving from the dynamic interaction of 'yin' and 'yang', the two complementary primal forces.

In this chapter I shall use the term 'continuum' to identify the Oriental conceptions of material reality which have been briefly introduced here, thus underlining their common perspective and avoiding the particular metaphysical/religious overtones and differences of detail found in the less neutral words employed by the philosophies themselves. Our treatment of the influence of this aspect of the Oriental world-view on American artists will be in two parts. The first will lay more emphasis on the 'wholeness' aspect of the Continuum concept, and include a discussion of the contrasting attitudes to the

question of man's relationship to nature in East and West, the second will emphasise the dynamic nature of that world view, and discuss the effect that this had on the treatment of form and the use of line. Firstly, however, we will introduce one specific formulation of a continuum philosophy found in the Orient in order to move the discussion beyond the generalities to which it has so far been confined, and to provide an opportunity to introduce the continuum concept as an influence on style, showing the link that exists between this philosophical paradigm and the compositional principles of certain artists.

The concept with which we will introduce the idea of the continuum is that contained in the Dharmadhatu doctrine, which is found in the Avatamsaka Sutra of Mahayana Buddhism. Expressed in the words of Alan Watts, this is the perception 'that each single form, just as it is, is the void and that, further, the uniqueness of each form arises from the fact that it exists in relation to every other form'<sup>2</sup>. A visual image given in the sutra to illustrate this vision of the universe describes it as 'a vast network of gems or crystals, like a spider's web at dawn, in which each gem reflects all the others'. Interconnectedness is thus emphasized in the Dharmadhatu doctrine and this is expressed in the principle 'between thing and thing no obstruction' ('Shih shih wu ai') which is part of a fourfold classification of the Dharmadhatu. John Cage discusses this concept of interpenetration which he learnt from Suzuki. In Silence (page 46) he writes:

Interpenetration means that each one of these most honoured ones of all [i.e. the Buddha] is moving out in all directions penetrating and being penetrated by every other one no matter what the time or what the space ... each and everything in all of time and space is related to each and every other thing in all of time and space.

Cage also notes the concept of 'unimpededness' ('li shih wu ai'), another of the classifications of the Dharmadhatu:

Unimpededness is seeing that in all of space every thing and each human being is at the center and furthermore that each being at the center is the most honoured one of all.

This concept Cage claims was one of the two most important that he acquired during his study with Suzuki. 'That was very important to me in my work' he states, summarizing the image which he explicitly acknowledges as the Dharmadhatu, describing it in terms similar to Watts:

The image of creation that he gave us was not of its having one centre but that of each element of creation being at the centre, so that there was a multiplicity of centres in interpenetration, rather than a separation and a single centre <sup>3</sup>.

In his aesthetic, Cage translates this concept into a desire to abandon any focus, any single centre. A variety of sound sources, for example, may produce a different mix for members of the same audience. 'Everyone is in the best seat' Cage comments upon this occurrence, recalling his statement on 'unimpededness'. Writing on the visual arts, Cage advocates a similar abandonment of a single focal area in favour of an 'all over' approach. The 'Dharmadhatu' idea also helped Cage come to terms with the role of symbols, which he had abandoned in his disillusion with the communicative role of art, yet which played an important role in the thinking of Coomaraswamy and Ramakrishna to which he was indebted. Cage is able to accept the role of symbolism in an expanded sense:

If you see that everything is at the centre, and there is interpenetration, then ... everything illustrates everything else, wouldn't you say? And its only our ignorance that doesn't recognize that <sup>4</sup>.

Lassaw is certainly also aware of the Dharmadhatu doctrine, since he gives one of his sculptures the title Dharmadhatu (bronze, 1975, 38 x 20 x 13½"). Lassaw's titles are not descriptive, but a general reference can be assumed to the network nature of this (and other) works, to the interconnectedness of parts which he emphasizes as a characteristic of many of his sculptures as well as of his philosophy. Both Suzuki and Watts may be regarded as possible sources for the Dharmadhatu concept in Lassaw's case.

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In several statements it is clear that Lassaw sees the universe as a 'continuum'. His view is undoubtedly derived in large part from

his awareness of Oriental thought, the Dharmadhatu doctrine being one formulation of the continuum world view that is to be found in the East. Process and interconnectedness are emphasized in Lassaw's world view at the expense of static order and the isolation of parts:

In the back of my mind is the idea of a process going on, a continuum of forces in space. It seems that a 'space field' is at work, a field which comprehends a relationship of forces and interplay of forces <sup>5</sup>.

Lassaw makes a conscious connection between this continuum world picture and the formal qualities emphasized in his works (such as The Clouds of Magellan, 1953, various metals, 52 x 70 x 18½", collection MOMA) making it clear that he sees them as reflecting in their formal language the structural patterns of nature. In a passage in his notes he discusses the relationship between this (Oriental) continuum world view and the new paradigm of representation he sees being developed by his contemporaries, emphasizing a connection, albeit perhaps unconscious in the case of some artists: 67

In the contemporary art scene the newest direction that has grown in the last few years is variously referred to as "all-over" art or art of the "continuum," etc. The manifestations of this direction are seen in works in which the attention and interest of the spectator is dispersed to all the areas of the canvas and throughout the 3D space in the case of a piece of sculpture. This event seems to me to be of profound significance. It expresses a great change in the artist's view of man's place in the scheme of things. I do not mean to imply that many of the artists working in this direction are consciously and deliberately setting out to communicate any particular doctrine or philosophy. I mean that the basic assumption, the things we do not talk about, the ground of our daily lives has been gradually changing from that of the past. In most works of art we assume an object or objects and a background. In this art-direction there is no object and no background. Everything is important. Everything plays a part in the whole. These concepts of the structure of nature are the background of much of the recent directions in art <sup>6</sup>.

Returning from this more general discussion of the continuum world-view to a consideration of the influence of the Dharmadhatu doctrine, we can see the non-hierarchical, non-focused compositions of Onslow-Ford as reflecting its principle of unimpededness ('li shih wu ai'). The formulation, as expressed by Watts or by Cage, is echoed in Onslow-Ford's statement about his compositions - 'each mark as it appears no matter where on the paper is always at the very heart of the painting'<sup>7</sup>. The Dharmadhatu doctrine, and particularly its emphasis on interconnectedness, also appears to be recalled by Onslow-Ford when he states that 'each individual part [of the image] seems a whole in itself, yet related to every other individual - free, yet in union. The new world starts with a whole, builds with wholes to create a whole'<sup>8</sup>.

An evolution of a continuum image - which would fit the description provided by Lassaw as well as those of the artist himself - can be seen in Onslow-Ford's work if we compare an earlier painting such as The Circuit, 1942, oil on canvas, 38½ x 50" with later ones such as 112  
Who Lives (1962, Parles' paint, collection Whitney Museum) or Speedwell 115  
(1975, acrylic on canvas, 76½ x 96 1/4"). Onslow-Ford describes this 118  
transformation in his own words:

Objects merge and mix, boundaries blur. A ground underlying extremes begins to come through ... the world flows, it floats, forms interpenetrate. There is a tendency towards transparency .. background and foreground play with each other<sup>9</sup>.

Objects can no longer be treated separately, they have to be treated in the context of the whole world<sup>10</sup>.

Like Lassaw, it is clear Onslow-Ford is attempting to mirror in his formal language the continuum world-view he has derived from the Orient. 'There is a relation between the structure of a painting and the nature of the world' he notes<sup>11</sup>.

Having introduced the continuum concept and seen some examples of its influence on the language of form, it is proposed now to examine the emphasis on 'wholeness' contained in the continuum world-view and note the influence from this aspect of it on the style of various artists. This emphasis on wholeness in the Oriental world view contrasts



with the dualism, the emphasis on the separation of things which characterizes the Western philosophical and scientific picture. It is expressed in art by means of various formal traits. These include an emphasis on interconnectedness of formal elements, an 'all-over' surface with a homogeneity of gesture or formal unit, the abolition of a fixed focal point, an abandonment of distinctions between figure and background or foreground and distance, the elimination of a horizon line or an orientation to gravity. The new visual paradigm which embodies these traits has been described in formalist terms (by Greenberg, for example), but it is best regarded in the case of many artists as representing a new way of seeing the world, and one in which Oriental thought has played an important part. The differences between this paradigm and that of the Renaissance tradition are not merely to be understood in formalist terms, a dimension of meaning is carried by the plastic elements and their arrangement. The latter's emphasis on the separation of forms, the distinction between figure and background, and a composition based on a structure of parts rather than a homogeneous whole reflect its different underlying world view.

Evidence of the difference between the dualistic Western world view and the holistic Oriental view is revealed in a consideration of their respective attitudes to the relationship of man to nature. The Western attitude emphasizes control over nature, and hence a duality, a separation, whereas the Eastern attitude emphasizes communion and hence wholeness. In the following artist by artist discussion of the influence of the wholeness aspect of the continuum concept, reference will be made to artists' attitudes to this issue and further evidence of a sympathetic response to Oriental ideas will be displayed.

Lassaw distinguishes different attitudes to nature and describes their influence on artistic expression<sup>12</sup>. The first orientation he notes is the primitive one of fear and appropriation. The second is 'conquest of nature'. In this attitude a dualism is present: 'Nature was still outside of ourselves. It was a setting for man's actions'. He illustrates this attitude to nature in art by reference to Giotto's work, where landscape is not valued for its own sake, but provides a background for the activity of the figures. Lassaw identifies this attitude with the Western world view - 'The Judeo-Christian world sees

nature as the enemy to be conquered, as the temptress who seduces the soul away from the divine'. The third attitude is that in which man and nature are identified, and he sees this as lying behind recent art: 'to me the "all-over" type of art seems to have as a basic assumption that man is a part of nature'. This notion is the one to which he adheres and which he feels has influenced his work - 'it is impossible for me to separate my philosophy of art from my total orientation towards existence'. He describes this holistic philosophy thus:

I feel myself inextricably interwoven both outwardly and inwardly in all events of the universe. There is a growing sense of identification with and participation in the universal process .. the universe is an organism of which all things or events are necessary and complementary, the one to the other <sup>13</sup>.

His own sculpture, for example The Clouds of Magellan or Milky Way (1950, 4' high), emphasizes the same property of interconnectedness, elements being linked to one another in a non-hierarchical network.

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An 'all-over' quality is present, a homogeneity of treatment and a lack of focal emphasis bringing this about. A distinction between object and background is eliminated in the holistic nature of these images. Their sense of representing a whole rather than a fragment is underlined by the fact that there does not appear to be any pull of gravity on the forms in these works, they do not appear to be acted upon by exterior forces. This sense of wholeness is further underlined in recent (1979) works by the disappearance not only of a base but also of fixed orientation to the surface on which they rest, there being thus no 'top' or 'bottom'.

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The emphasis on wholeness and interconnectedness found in this continuum world view and in the sculptures which express its qualities are largely a reflection in Lassaw's case of the study he has made of Oriental cosmology. We have already noted (page 176 ) the stress placed upon interconnectedness in the Dharmadhātu doctrine, and Lassaw's awareness of this, but the same emphasis can be seen throughout Eastern philosophy. Joseph Needham sees it as a characteristic of the Chinese perspective, endorsing the opinion of modern Chinese philosopher Chang Tung-Sun that while European philosophy tended to find

reality in substance. Chinese philosophy tended to find it in relation' <sup>14</sup>. In Hindu philosophy a similar emphasis on interconnectedness is found. Action is regarded as having an effect on everything in creation, the complex network of karma (cause and effect) being considered inaccessible to linear understanding.

Although Oriental thought provides the major source of Lassaw's 'continuum' world view and imagery, he does see his ideas on wholeness and interrelatedness confirmed in modern scientific cosmology - he notes for example that science has shown that the chemical elements that make up the human body might have originally come from a star <sup>15</sup>. Lippold employs a similar image to describe his process-orientated world view:

You are part of the process, that universal process, what happens to a star happens to me, what happens to a black hole in the sky happens to me <sup>16</sup>.

The homogeneousness of the universe is stressed in his way of looking at things:

You can take any material in the world apart and restructure it as something else using the same basic material, if you break it down fine enough. So you can take a brick from that fireplace and break it down and put it back together again (if you have the skill and the knowledge) as an ear. Take me apart and make me into that brick.

In the world picture that emerges from these speculations, the Western rationalist view which places man above nature is transcended. 'The idea that man is the centre of the universe, [that] he's a God-given special entity' has, Lippold feels, been 'destroyed totally in this century ... These things have shrunk, or should have shrunk our egos so fantastically since the Renaissance that we no longer strut around thinking we're the kings of the universe because we're not'. A larger conception of wholeness is the result of this insight which 'forces one to find security somewhere else ... it forces you to find security in universal principles'. Oriental thought and art, which Lippold describes as 'very agreeable to me', provided one source of his non-dualistic perspective:

All my life, and especially at ... the beginning of my career; I found what little I knew of Oriental philosophy and certainly of Oriental art ... that I responded emphatically to the Oriental attitude that there is no difference between what we call the spirit and the flesh. We are a total entity.

The unity of man and nature in a larger whole is emphasized by several artists who do not draw upon this insight to create 'continuum' images. Their views may be mentioned here, however, to show the widespread adoption of this attitude and the indebtedness to Oriental sources which is so often the case. David Smith, for example, makes a similar differentiation to Lassaw between the attitude of communion with nature (which he associates with the Orient) and the attitude of control, which he relates to Western traditions:

Nature does not have in it a god of wrath, jealousy or - moral authority. To [the artist] nature is visual, personal. He meets it with an inner feeling of acceptance, for he is a sensual part of it. He does not presume to judge it, he is integrated with it harmoniously and intensely - which may relate him more closely to ancient, pagan or Oriental religions than to Christianity<sup>17</sup>.

Stamos also characterizes the Western approach to nature as involving an attitude of control and domination: 'Western man regards himself as Lord of the manor, center of the universe. For him nature exists to serve him alone'. Stamos contrasts this with the attitude of the Far Eastern artist which transcends the human perspective:

It is not man's earthly surroundings tamed to his desires that inspires the artist, but it is the universe in its wholeness and its freedom<sup>18</sup>.

John Mc Laughlin makes a related distinction between Eastern and Western art in discussing the influence of the former on his own attitude as a painter,

To me the striking difference between traditional Eastern and Western art is that the Japanese for example were concerned

with the notion of man living at one with nature as opposed to the Westerner who is bent upon displaying his mastery over nature<sup>19</sup>.

The Western attitude to nature of control and manipulation is expressed in the work of De Kooning, where forms (for example, the figural elements in Pink Angel (c1947, oil on canvas, 52 x 40") are distorted or rearranged for the artist's own ends. In contrast with the Eastern vision which sees nature in its own 'suchness', as 'alive', this vision sees a duality between animate and inanimate and views nature only instrumentally. De Kooning is aware of this distinction himself:

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Although I ... don't care for all the pots and pans in the paintings of the burghers [i.e. Dutch seventeenth century painting] I do like the idea that they - the pots and pans, I mean - are always in relation to man. They have no soul of their own, like they seem to have in the Orient. For us, they have no character, we can do anything we please with them<sup>20</sup>.

The structure of a De Kooning painting, which retains Cubist (and ultimately Renaissance) elements seems to reflect predominantly the Western view we have been discussing that nature is without innate order, which it is the task of man to provide. There is a feeling when looking at a work such as Pink Angel that the forms and their relationships are clearly the result of the organizing power of a human intellect working against the natural inertia of matter to forge a whole from disparate parts. One does not feel the illusion that the patterning of forms is the result of natural forces. This latter effect is perhaps more closely approximated to in some works by Sam Francis, whose view of nature contrasts with that of De Kooning (or Cézanne, or Western art in general):

The Universe itself is not formless. There is a total chain of order which is not man-directed<sup>21</sup>.

Francis's vision of nature emphasizes wholeness and interconnection. Man is one part of this network:

Everything in nature affects me. Every person I meet affects me. Everything in my environment affects me ... I see everything related rather than in parts <sup>22</sup>.

The imagery in his paintings reflects this vision, but in Francis's case and indeed in that of other artists, the continuum world view is not always represented by an imagery of interconnected parts, such as we have seen in the work of Lassaw, but by a separation of forms. 21

Although this mode of organization may at first appear to imply an atomistic vision, in fact it represents a valid alternative visual expression of the 'continuum' idea, and one which has precedents in Far Eastern art. The rationale behind this approach to composition is that if everything is to be considered as related to everything else, then there is no need to visually demonstrate connections. The Dharmadhatu doctrine makes the point that the consideration of things in themselves is not in conflict with the understanding that they are interrelated. Examples of this type of compositional structure in Oriental art are the arrangement of isolated rocks in the Ryoan-Ji temple garden <sup>23</sup> and the placement of forms in Mu Ch'i's Persimmons 106 (late 13th century, 35 x 29 cm). The forms of this latter work are not gesturally related or brought together by a structural principle in contrast to say, a Picasso Cubist still life (e.g. Guitar, Glass and Bottle, 1913, 18 3/4 x 24 3/8", collection Tate Gallery) or even Raphael's Death of Ananias. Since interconnectedness is understood to exist already, it does not have to be imposed by the artist <sup>24</sup>. 121

Sculptor John Mc Cracken describes the consequences for his work of a shift to a non-dualistic vision of reality in which interconnectedness rather than separation is the keynote:

What emerges is the concept of a new reality, one which is more tangible, accessible and immediate, yet more complex and involved. To me, it has to do with the breakdown of a compartmentalized, dualistic universe and the gradual realization of a 'oneness', in which everything is organically related and interdependent with everything. The physical elements the sculptor has now to consider as part of his work are vastly expanded. Rather than putting together little pockets of activity, he focuses, orders and reshapes environmental energy <sup>25</sup>.

As a result of acknowledging the continuum world-view Mc Cracken starts treating environmental space as part of his work, utilizing a further means of expressing this way of seeing reality than we have already noted in other artists.

Tobey shows an awareness of the alienation of Western man from nature. In the diary of his Oriental trip he discusses this, showing how his exposure to Chinese and Japanese attitudes had heightened by contrast his consciousness of the duality in the Western vision. He notes (page 13) man's absorption in the world he had made to the exclusion of the natural one, with 'thousands of things of our own invention occupying us'. Nature, when it does intrude, is taken for granted, the animal life of the countryside being 'more or less accepted as a matter of fact'. Zoos represent the conquered nature preferred by modern man:

In cages of our own making and set apart we can visit the animal life - mostly the ferocious kind which it took valour to capture.

Tobey contrasts this to the open attitude to nature which he sees in the Japanese vision. 'It is the awareness of nature and everything which she manifests which seems to characterize the Japanese spirit', he writes (page 18). This vision is of nature in a cosmic aspect - 'an awareness to the smallest detail of her vastness as though the whole were contained therein'. A postcard from Japan sent to Leonard Elmhirst underlines the communion between man and nature Tobey found in the Orient: 'Man and Nature seemed to have reached an equilibrium in Nara where I spent all of today' he wrote <sup>26</sup>.

The unified perspective Tobey hints at here is expressed in the 'continuum' style of his mature works, for example, Written over the plains No. 2 (1959, tempera on paper, 12½ x 9 3/4", collection Seattle Art Museum), or Untitled (1959, tempera, 19½ x 11"). A horizon or a duality of image and background are eliminated in favour of a network of interconnected linear elements with no focal centre <sup>27</sup>. Tobey was probably the first painter to achieve this all-over image and thus the importance of Oriental sources in causing this transformation of visual paradigm - given his profound interest in them - must not be underestimated.

Morris Graves has employed a variant of Tobey's 'white writing' technique to create images. Again the artist's intention seems to be to express a philosophical idea of 'wholeness', and once more this can be traced to Oriental sources<sup>28</sup>. Graves shared Tobey's interest in the Orient<sup>29</sup> and they would have had many opportunities to discuss Eastern philosophy together. An example of this type of work by Graves is Journey (1943, tempera on paper, 26 x 30", collection Benjamin Baldwin, New York). The similar treatment of the image and the ground, which are joined by a unifying line and a shared sense of transparency, creates this continuum sense. Describing Journey, Graves underlines this homogeneity, this wholeness: 25

I think the picture states it. The substance we believe we're travelling over and the substance we are are identical.

The 'process' nature of the Oriental world view (the topic which we shall discuss in the next section of our examination of the continuum concept's influence) is also expressed in this work:

It's a rather rough and at the same time rhythmically flowing environment<sup>30</sup>.

Kenneth Callahan, another Seattle painter, produces similar continuum images, for example in Rocks and People (1945-6, tempera on gessoed panel, 22 3/4 x 26 1/4", collection Seattle Art Museum) and The Seventh Day (1952-3, tempera on board) - the latter bearing stylistic comparison to works by Graves such as Little Known Bird of the Inner Eye (1941, tempera, 20 3/4 x 36 5/8", collection MOMA), employing a similar jagged linear web and glowing 'visionary' light. Callahan's philosophy of the unity of man and nature, derived at least in part from his awareness of Oriental thought and Far Eastern landscape painting<sup>31</sup>, lies behind his choice of this stylistic type: 10 11 24

Man with his ego vainly struggles to establish himself as the 'I' against a background of animal, mineral nature-world-God. The unity always prevails. Man in the individual ego is obliterated after his moment of consciousness in this unity, just as an individual rock or tree or sun-beam or wolf. The energy basis, spirit basis, remains concrete, real, eternal<sup>32</sup>.



The visual interconnectedness of parts in his paintings is an expression of a similar idea on a philosophic level: 'Man, nature, the universe and the spirit are all basically inevitably inter-related' he writes <sup>33</sup>.

The second aspect of the 'continuum' world view of the Orient which we will consider is its dynamic nature. We have already noted (page 175) that the Oriental philosophies attribute to manifest reality the quality of being in constant flux, of lacking permanent form and structure. To expand a little on this point here, and to remind the reader of this aspect of the Oriental world view we can quote a statement by Ashvaghosha which asserts the principle that there are no underlying 'building blocks' of matter:

When we divide some gross (or Composite) matter, we can reduce it to atoms. But as the atoms will also be subject to further division, all forms of material existence, whether gross or fine, are nothing but the shadow of particularization and we cannot ascribe any degree of (absolute and independent) reality to them <sup>34</sup>.

The Buddhist world view sees not substance but perpetual activity - Suzuki writes that 'The Buddhist conception of "things" as Samskara (or sankhara), that is, as "deeds", or "events", make it clear that Buddhists understand our experience in terms of time and movement' <sup>35</sup>.

Artists who have expressed the 'continuum' nature of the Oriental world view in their art have generally made accommodation to this process aspect of it by abolishing solid form and rigidly structured composition. An increased dynamism is introduced to their work, often by means of a use of line as a major element of design in place of enclosed form. The change in attitude regarding the role of line, and the influence from the Orient which is displayed in this, will be considered shortly but the immediately following discussion will concentrate on the way treatment of form (and compositional structure) has altered to express an Orient-derived cosmology. The concern with monumentality of form and with the search for enduring essences which have occupied Western artists will be seen to be a reflection of the underlying assumptions of Western philosophy, and their rejection will be seen to lead artists away from the static, the opaque and a sense of solid mass.

This transformation in treatment of form as a result of contact with Oriental thought occurs quite clearly in the work of Mark Tobey.

Early work by Tobey often has a strong sense of mass. Form has, 133  
for example in Middle West (1929, oil, 17½ x 21 5/8", collection Seattle 132  
Art Museum), been clearly modelled to emphasize its 3-dimensional  
solidity. The world depicted is a static one - all moving or changing  
elements have been removed in an attempt to reduce things to their  
monumental aspect. Viola Patterson, a Seattle artist and friend of  
Tobey who took some lessons from him soon after he began teaching at  
the Cornish School recalls that he emphasized to her the importance of  
capturing volume <sup>36</sup>.

Lessons in Chinese brushwork from his friend Teng Kwei provided  
Tobey's first contact with Oriental attitudes to form and their expression  
in art. An immediate transformation in his vision was the result:  
'I came out and I saw a tree and the tree was no longer a solid' <sup>37</sup>.  
The dynamic calligraphic line of the Far East was the means whereby this  
change of perspective from the solid and the static was achieved, and  
Tobey developed, as we shall see in the next section of our discussion  
(page 209 ) a similar use of line in his own work.

Tobey's experiences whilst in the Far East were to make him more  
deeply aware of the lack of interest in solidity of form in Oriental  
aesthetics, and he noted that this led to a preference for certain types  
of subject matter. He wrote:

The Chinese are not figure or nude conscious - perhaps with  
the appearance of the SOLIDE in China this will come. If  
modern ways, building and nationalism are to appear - the  
aesthetic tendencies will be towards the body or solid <sup>38</sup>.

The influence of Kwei also played a part in encouraging Tobey  
beyond a concern with static subject matter by making him aware of the  
dynamic vision of Life found in the Orient. Tobey recalls in 1934  
(during his Orient visit) an earlier conversation with Kwei:

But why my Chinese friend says in viewing a fish painting ... do  
Western artists only paint a fish after it is dead? That was six  
years ago, I couldn't answer him then except to say Oh- still

life, I guess. But he answers, And what is still life but  
a rather dead way of looking at life <sup>39</sup>.

The actual experience of the bustling street life of Oriental cities such as Shanghai also seem to have played a role in Tobey's shift towards a dynamic, flux-orientated vision of life. The following description is typical of several he made of his experience, both at the time and in recollection:

Thousands of Chinese characters are turning and twisting <sup>40</sup>, in every door is a shop. The rickshaws jostle the vendors, their backs hung with incredible loads. The narrow streets are alive in a way Broadway isn't alive ... The human energy spills itself into multiple forms, writhes, sweats, and strains every muscle towards the day's bowl of rice <sup>41</sup>.

Even at the time Tobey was wondering how he might translate these experiences into art. Speaking of Shanghai he wrote 'The language, the beautiful character writing, the unconventionality of life everywhere - God! I wonder what I can do about it' <sup>42</sup>.

It is not surprising in view of the deep impact that Shanghai made on Tobey that the first work in which he created a 'continuum' image was given a cityscape title - Broadway Norm (1935, tempera, 13 1/8 x 9 1/4", collection Mrs Carol Ely Harper). Solidity of form, a sense of mass, is abolished here in favour of an imagery of flux, and later works develop the possibilities of this 'breakthrough' image, embodying the same dynamic quality. The non-static nature of Tobey's new imagery is revealed in his choice of titles: Form Follows Man, Transition to Forms (1942) and Drift of Summer (1942) are three examples chosen from many similar ones. The 'all-over' nature of these continuum works also contributes to their dynamism, since the eye is kept constantly in motion. Tobey explains that 'you are not allowed to rest on anything: you're bounced off it or you have to keep moving with it' <sup>43</sup>.

A quality of transiency and a lack of corporeality of form is further conveyed by Tobey through his choice of media. The fluidity of tempera, which he favours, contrasts with the opacity of oil paint. It is quite possible that the reliance on water-based mediums in Far Eastern painting influenced Tobey in extending his commitment to tempera.

Certainly he shows an awareness of the associations the different media carry, and the antipathy between oil and an Oriental approach to form is explicitly stated. Writing to Feininger about some experiments in oil he has undertaken, Tobey states:

It seems to me that after they are done, they seemed to be restricted in their ability to breathe, which doesn't occur in more responsive mediums. Perhaps we are more Oriental than we know, and want those qualities of organically and sensitively felt structures to remain and not to be so overloaded with flesh <sup>44</sup>.

Talking in interview with William Seitz, Tobey discusses his stylistic evolution, laying emphasis on the transcending of solid form we have been describing. A 'continuum' image of interpenetrating lines which transcends the duality of enclosed form and space is recognised as the result. He speaks of the 'feeling that in some way I had to demolish form. I didn't want finalities anymore, I wanted endless extension. I needed to establish a more vibratory experience - breaking up the forms into smaller forms which later on became, what shall I say, just space attempts. I could not stand the separation between space and finitudes anymore. I had to demolish it somehow, and the only way I could demolish it was excessive interpenetration, rivers of lines and movable focus' <sup>45</sup>. Elsewhere interpenetration and the 'demolition' of form are mentioned again - he talks of 'the interpenetration of the spaces, the dematerialization of form by space penetration' <sup>46</sup>, again linking changes of attitude towards form with changes in treatment of space. A dynamic imagery without solid enclosed form is implied by Tobey's statement 'I want vibration in it' <sup>47</sup> and it is clear that such an imagery is an attempt to reflect the nature of manifest reality as seen in the Oriental world view: Everything that exists, every human being, is a vibration Tobey claims, echoing the non-substantiality that it describes.

Western attitudes to form, including those of the Cubists, are rejected by Tobey even though he credits his 'personal discovery of Cubism' with being an important factor in his breakthrough. He sees

the Cubist world-view as essentially conservative:

I grow less sympathetic with Picasso. One cannot be satisfied with Picasso. One must see more and more. There is something significant lacking.

The 'lack' for Tobey is the dualism created by the solidity of form, which was retained despite the fragmentation it underwent. He regards modelling as the source of the problem:

The problem lies with chiaroscuro. Because of our reliance on it we are led to build form. We build this and then we build that. What we build here then regulates that which we build over there ... it accommodated cast shadow. It allowed the artist to assert physicality by having light strike against something dark which was held up against it <sup>48</sup>.

As we shall see in the following section of this chapter, Masson's encounter with Oriental calligraphy encouraged him to adopt an imagery of dynamic flux in his works. In the landscapes which he painted when first becoming strongly interested in accommodating his work to the Oriental vision, it was however light rather than line which became the means which dissolved form. Distinctions between the solid and the transient were eliminated by the common treatment both received, the effect of light being to fragment mass and move the emphasis away from corporeality. 'Real light dissolves architecture, it breaks into all mass' he writes <sup>49</sup>. The atmospheric treatment of certain Far Eastern landscapes where the solid forms of the hills are broken up by the clouds which are given equal weight of treatment - was certainly one of the visual influences Masson was responding to at that time. It is clear that behind this change in the 'grammar' of his visual language was a desire that his art should reflect the Oriental world view. This cosmology does not attempt to deny the world of forms, but merely to change our way of relating to it so that we no longer act under the impression that it is solid and permanent. The change that is required to take place is seen as being in our perception of things, rather than involving the things themselves. It is this aspect of the Oriental attitude to form which attracts Masson, who quotes Chuang Tzu: 'Vaincre mais ne pas blesser les choses'. <sup>50</sup>.

In our discussion of the Dharmadhatu doctrine, and in describing Oriental influences on his attitude towards the creative process, we have seen that Lassaw favours a process world view in which the emphasis is on dynamic forces rather than static objects. This world view, as he acknowledges, is expressed in his sculpture through the replacement of solid form by a linear network which is permeated by space:

As to the influence in "space" sculpture the idea of reality as process and relationship rather than "solid permanent mass" has become a basic assumption <sup>51</sup>.

Static, solid sculptures and a search for perfection of form are seen by Lassaw as reflecting the assumptions underlying the Western world-view:

The Greco-Roman idealistic philosophy is one of static, eternal truths, perfection - sculpture tends to be static and monolithic, a closed system.

This tradition is rejected by Lassaw, his feeling being that the 'European tradition is now dying, its Platonic, Aristotelian and Roman bases have become ineffectual in the comprehension of the world today'.

Lippold, like Lassaw, eschews solid mass in his work, and this tendency can be seen from his very beginnings as a sculptor. 'I never carved ... stone or wood ... I never modelled. Solid materials didn't seem to be interesting to me' he states <sup>52</sup>, this abolition of mass in his works being a concomitant to the emphasis on space his sculptures display. Behind this elimination of solid 'things' as the subject matter of his work is a 'process' world view, and Oriental philosophy can be seen as providing the major source of this. The Oriental view that the existence of discrete entities is merely an illusion - an idea Lippold could have been acquainted with by Cage <sup>53</sup> - is present in the following statement:

Everything in our awareness of life - objects, feelings, thoughts - even life itself - apparently comes into being and goes out of being by illusion. If there is no real continuity or action

per se, only the illusion of temporary existence or momentary change due to the relationship of one structure to another, then individual 'things', whether material, spatial, temporal, or energetic, have no meaning except in their effect on one another <sup>54</sup>.

This idea that form and pattern are unreal and do not exist in reality itself is repeated elsewhere - Lippold's statement that 'structure is illusion' <sup>55</sup> conveys this.

Lippold gives other perspectives on a 'process' world view in his writings. He mentions, for example, the constantly self-renewing universe as understood by the Orient and by Meister Eckhardt <sup>56</sup>. A reference to the idea of yin and yang found in Chinese philosophy - where the constant flux of manifest creation is seen as stemming from the interactions of two complementary forces - seems to be present in another idea he expresses on several occasions:

In the tension of opposites, which is how I see nature operating all the time, situations are set up which create by greater or lesser tensions contradictions that give rise to all of the operations of nature and of human activity <sup>57</sup>.

Elsewhere he talks of 'the truly symmetrical nature of peace of mind. Tranquility resides, and can only reside, in the tensions of opposites in equilibrium' <sup>58</sup>. Lippold here reveals that the idea of polarities he is describing is a metaphysical as much as a scientific notion, and one in which the emphasis is on an underlying wholeness and not on a destructive battle between irreconcilable forces.

The move beyond an atomistic world view to a way of seeing in which the characteristics of a field or continuum are considered rather than those of discrete entities is something which occurs in recent science, for example in Quantum theory. A consideration of the importance of this source as an alternative to Eastern thought must therefore be made, and it is convenient to do so at this point since Lippold is certainly aware of recent scientific discoveries. He claims to 'learn a great deal from science' and does not see art and science as contradictory to one another:

The creative process is the same in all fields ... to say that science and art are not related or that they fight each other and that you must not trust science - I don't harbour such resentments <sup>59</sup>.

It appears that in Lippold's case influences from science and from Oriental sources coexist. He is aware of the similarities between them, <sup>are predated by Oriental philosophy He sees modern science</sup> accepting that many insights of modern science <sup>^</sup> as approaching the domain of metaphysics:

I'm delighted that science has become more mystical. It's a justification for the validity of science. The deeper they go the more mysterious they find it ... a lot of scientists talk about the mystery of science and its become an awareness of the same kind of mystery that religions are involved in <sup>60</sup>.

Science is leading to a rapprochement with Oriental wisdom, 'the mind of western man, by means of science, is being led inevitably towards a meeting with the no-mind of the pure Zen Buddhist doctrine of the Orient' <sup>61</sup>.

Lassaw is also aware of modern scientific thought and its parallels to Eastern metaphysics <sup>62</sup>. In his case the latter source was almost certainly the first and most important one. We are already aware of the detailed study Lassaw made of Zen and other Eastern traditions, which presented the process world view in a more elaborated, subjective and accessible way than did modern physics. Cage too is cognizant of the similarities between Oriental thought and modern science, and in his case as well we can see the former influence as prior and predominant. Cage pinpoints the role which John Blofeld's introduction to 'The Huang Po Doctrine of No-Mind' (a classic Zen text) played in making him aware of the scientific parallels. 'It was so important to me because it related the philosophy of Zen Buddhism to modern scientific research' he states <sup>63</sup>.

This pattern in which parallels in science are noted after an immersion in Oriental metaphysics is again seen with Morris Graves, whose stance of romantic isolationism would have initially placed him in an antipathetic position to scientific rationalism. Like Lippold, he sees science becoming more mystical:



Definitions have been lost, and science has spilled over into metaphysics. The quality of consciousness that is essential for the kind of concentration that scientists are engaged in opens up other areas of consciousness, and it is in these dimensions that the most open-minded scientists have decided they want to grow <sup>64</sup>.

The suggestion we have made that Lippold's 'process world-view' was influenced by an awareness of the Chinese philosophy of 'yin' and 'yang' may also be applied to his contemporary and fellow sculptor, Seymour Lipton. The concept of polarities, of the harmonization of opposites, can be seen at work in his sculpture on the compositional level, and also on the thematic level (in his attempt to combine organic and mechanical elements, for example) <sup>65</sup>. In this picture of dynamic flux rather than static order, the yin/yang concept plays a part. 'The Taoist fusion of yin and yang has always seemed right' <sup>66</sup> Lipton indicates, acknowledging it as one of the sources of his thinking. The yin/yang notion is apparently one of the ideas behind Lipton's Wheel (1965, bronze on Monel metal, height 35") which also carries 78 associations of the Buddhist 'Wheel of Life' (and the wheel of St Catherine) <sup>67</sup>. The treatment of form in his works emphasizes his dynamic vision of reality, and is at odds with the search for static, idealized form in much of Western art. Lipton differentiates his approach from that of Mondrian, for example. He feels that more than reduced 'Platonic' essences of form are needed to convey meaning in art <sup>68</sup>. He does not seek a 'quiet peaceful order' <sup>69</sup>.

As Rowley explains in Principles of Chinese Painting the idea of opposites (derived from yin and yang) is developed in Chinese aesthetics into a compositional notion, expressed in the opposing qualities of expansion and gathering up. This principle, which seems alien to Western art, is picked up by Lipton, here discussing his own approach to composition:

The concept of centrifugal movement, of ever-opening vistas, every-widening experience, but always controlled through centripetal movements of containment <sup>70</sup>.

Another Chinese source is acknowledged by Lipton as a further influence upon his thinking about polarities in relation to his art:

The Wen Fu of Lu Chi during the Han period discussing in poetry the principle of the "Double Harness" is important to me as the wedding of polarities in creativity <sup>71</sup>.

Baziotes is aware of the flux and transiency of form noted in the Oriental philosophies and reflected in their art. 'Chinese painting is a flow of atmosphere and a drifting of form in this atmosphere' he states. 'Its always in flux, representing the Oriental idea that things may be and then again may not' <sup>72</sup>. The fluidity and absence of rationally conceived compositional structure in his own works, for example Mirage, (1960, oil on canvas, 48 x 36") may have owed a debt to this Oriental vision of reality. Baziotes's feeling is that 'European art is intellectually solid and positive' whereas 'Chinese art is uncertain and relative' and it seems clear that his own work approaches the latter of the two definitions. The attitude to form and structure seen in Baziotes's later paintings coexists with an attitude towards space which emphasizes unboundedness and relative sparseness. 'I love the mysterious in painting, the stillness and silence' he states, indicating that perhaps resonances from the Oriental concept of the Void have permeated his work. 9

Noguchi also relates a quality of rational structure in art to the Western perspective, seeing 'things which are fixed in a grid or perspective pattern ... [as] more artificial and Italianate' <sup>73</sup>. By contrast the Japanese garden, which he admires, 'goes beyond geometry into the metaphysics of nature and our relationship with it'. It is the latter, unstructured, mode of composition, and the world view behind it, which is expressed (along with an unbounded quality of space) in Noguchi's own gardens. This Oriental 'process' world view is again referred to by Noguchi when he asserts: 105

To me art is part of the environment - it is an element in asymmetrical flux.

Another connection to this way of seeing reality is brought out in his description of his 'Japanese' garden for Unesco in Paris (1956-8).

As the spectator moves through the garden 'the vista constantly changes and everything being relative, things suddenly loom up in scale as others diminish. The real purpose of the garden [Noguchi feels] may be this contemplation of the relative in space, time, and life' <sup>74</sup>.

Noguchi expresses this Oriental idea of a perpetually changing reality not only in his attitude to composition, but in his attitude to form. Asymmetry, 'imperfection' and a lack of 'finish' are qualities emphasized in his sculptures at the expense of the (mathematical) perfection of form often sought in European sculpture. Even in the sculptural forms contained in his Beinecke Court at Yale (which in some ways he feels is more Western than other gardens he had created) Noguchi introduces an element of asymmetry in order to create a less static image:

When I made the studies of the sun I distorted the shape and tried to find something that was harmonious and also disharmonious. If you have complete harmony, nothing happens, whereas if you have an element of disharmony, energy enters as a disequilibrizing factor <sup>75</sup>.

Rather than being ideal Platonic shapes, the circle, pyramid and cube in this court can be related to the free brush image of a circle, triangle and square by Sengai, where the slight 'imperfections' of forms are introduced (in accordance with the Zen aesthetic) through a rapid freehand execution <sup>76</sup>. 167

The transiency of form and the provisional nature of structure are also conveyed by Noguchi through the frequently fragile nature of his materials, for example, the twin marble slabs of Avatar (1947, Georgia Marble, 78" high, collection the artist). Marble, used in this way, as Noguchi points out, can be broken but not otherwise changed: 101

I took a peculiar satisfaction in its fragility arguing the essential impermanence of life, much as in a Japanese poem. Like cherry blossoms perfection could only be transient - a fragile beauty is more poignant <sup>77</sup>.

The non-joined construction of Humpty Dumpty (1946, ribbon slate, 100

58 3/4 x 20 3/4 x 18", collection Whitney Museum) underlines the fragility of the work and its non-monumental character, which the title also refers to. The decision not to join the pieces in a permanent way also indicates the lack of finality of the compositional arrangement and its non-architectural nature, reflecting once again the constantly changing nature of life in the Oriental perspective. The same logic can be seen as existing behind Carl Andre's (later) use of piled and otherwise unjoined parts in his works, for example, Lever (1966). Monumentality, (an aspiration of so many Western artists which is contrary to the Eastern spirit), is not pursued, works being constructed for a particular location and dismantled at the end of an exhibition.

So far, our discussion of the dynamic nature of the Eastern 'continuum' world view has concentrated on its influence on the treatment of form. In the following part of our examination we will consider the effect it has had on the use of line in American art. This distinction between the treatment of line and of form is by no means an absolute one since line is one of the means whereby solid, bounded, form is transcended in favour of a dynamic, 'all-over' image. As a result several points raised already will be expanded upon, although an attempt will be made to eliminate repetition.

Line will be seen to become, for many artists, a primary formal element in its own right. No longer tied to the 'secondary' role of outlining form it can be seen to carry a greater expressive weight. Its gestural, dynamic qualities in the work of many painters will relate it to the fluid world view we have seen being expressed in plastic terms. Much of the following discussion will be lent to an elucidation of the role played by one specific source of influence from the East on American artists' attitudes to the role of line in their works - that source being Far Eastern calligraphy<sup>78</sup>. Oriental calligraphy seems to have been an important precedent for the way artists came to use line and handle the brush. Amongst the many qualities it emphasized which became important in American painting we may briefly list the following: A stress on the importance of personal 'handwriting' in the gesture, regarding this as expressive of character;<sup>79</sup> a utilization of line as a 'primary' means of expression; an emphasis on spontaneity, lack of 'finish' and speed of execution; a dynamism; and an abstract quality<sup>80</sup>.

Although some painters borrowed purely formal qualities of Oriental calligraphy in their work, our main interest will be in noting the influence of the aesthetic and the way of seeing that this embodies. In accordance with the practice followed elsewhere in this thesis, influences from Oriental art will only be considered where they represent an interest in the philosophy underlying them (a borrowing of 'language' to express new concepts) or where they provide circumstantial or supporting evidence of such an interest.

In order to give some historical perspective to our discussion of calligraphy and modern American painting, it will be useful to make some points about Surrealist linear automatism, which was another major influence on the emerging New York School. In some ways the aesthetic of Surrealist automatism parallels that of Far Eastern calligraphy - both emphasizing a spontaneous execution - and this similarity has been noted by certain commentators. Chiang Yee, for example, writes that 'there is ... nothing essentially new in Surrealism; to the Chinese mind, accustomed through many centuries to an attitude of receptivity towards purely linear beauty, its principles cause no shock. A piece of our most ancient script, composed perhaps five thousand years ago, and a Surrealist drawing of the Twentieth Century produce very similar aesthetic emotions'<sup>81</sup>. Amongst American artists, Stamos was one who noted the parallels. In the 'Artists' sessions at Studio 35<sup>3</sup>, he questioned whether painters employing automatist techniques were aware of Oriental calligraphy and deliberately using it as a source:

Is automatic painting conscious or not? In the early 1900's Ernest Fenollosa wrote an essay with an introduction by Pound on the Chinese Character as a medium in poetry. Are the artists today familiar with it, or are such characters or writing unconscious? There is an amazing connection between the two<sup>82</sup>.

The similarity was not entirely incidental - our evaluation of the relative influences of Surrealist automatism and Far Eastern calligraphy on American painting must take into account the fact that Surrealist painters were themselves responsive to Oriental calligraphy during the

formative periods of their own styles. Masson, interviewed by Tadao Takemoto (August 1969), draws our attention to an early influence from Japanese brushwork, not only in his own case, but in that of Miro:

André Malraux, writing in Nouvelle Revue Française [c 1927] remarked that Miro and I had definitely been influenced by Japanese drawing and calligraphy. He did not say "Chinese" and he was right because our knowledge of Chinese painting is very, very bad - even now <sup>83</sup>.

Miro's Lasso series of 1927 has been likened by Dupin to Japanese calligraphy, and the influence appears to have stayed a fertile one for the artist over a considerable period. In the 1940's he was experimenting with the Japanese brush, and records in a sketchbook a reminder to himself to keep Japanese brushwork constantly in mind. In The Red Sun (1948, oil on canvas, 76 x 96 cm) Oriental calligraphy is recalled by the freely executed, black, linear elements which are arranged into 'ideogram' - like configurations. Far Eastern calligraphy's similarity to, and indeed influence upon, Surrealist painters should not blind us to the fundamental difference between the approach embodied in its underlying aesthetic and that contained in Breton's ultimately non-aesthetic definition of automatism. To those American artists who turned to Oriental calligraphy, there is evidence to suggest that the differences were more important than the similarities. Although we have noted Stamos's awareness of the parallel, he makes it clear that the degree to which the parallel can be seen to exist depends on the degree to which automatism is 'conscious'. The original Surrealist idea of automatism clearly saw it as a way to by-pass the conscious mind. Stamos also distinguishes automatism from the Oriental mode by noting the role that the acquisition of artistic skill plays in the latter. Speaking of Oriental art, Stamos writes:

What matters is the concentration of thought and the prompt and vigorous action of the hand to the direct will. Such a response seems like a kind of automatic writing, but the Oriental in possession of an infallible technique places himself at the mercy of inspiration <sup>84</sup>.

Macdonald-Wright also emphasizes the element of control in calligraphy. He states:

Far from being psychographic [it] is always under strictest control, the fortuitous playing no part in its construction <sup>85</sup>.

There is a difference then between the unconscious and untrained spontaneity of Surrealist automatism and the 'informed' spontaneity of the Oriental which is seen as calling on the whole of the psyche. For those Surrealist artists who felt their art had reached some kind of an impasse, and those American artists whose concerns were more purely painterly than they considered those of the Surrealists to be, Oriental calligraphy seems to have provided an important stimulus towards a new art. Before considering then, some artists of the New York School, we will look at painters who come to an interest in calligraphy from a Surrealist background.

Prominent amongst the artists who made use of Oriental calligraphy and its underlying aesthetic to transcend their Surrealist roots is André Masson. The early interest he displayed in calligraphy has already been noted, but the deeper involvement he was to undertake from the 1940's was to have more far reaching effects on his style. In Entanglement (1941, 41 x 32 cm, collection the artist) line is used not so much to describe the boundaries of static closed form as to create a dynamic field with 'all-over' properties. Oriental calligraphy is recalled by the 'carved' quality of the brushstrokes and by the way they are arranged together in groups resembling loosely executed ideograms. 80

A series of drawings executed during 1943 and 1944 show similarities in style to Islamic calligraphy rather than Far Eastern models, but again clearly line has the role of destroying the solidity of form and creating a dynamic imagery reflecting the process world view of the East. The Maple Tree in the Storm (1943-44, ink, 78 x 58.5 cm, collection the artist) is a good example of this type of work, and could illustrate perfectly Tobey's experience after his first lesson with Teng Kwei (quoted page 189). 81

Nocturnal City (1956, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm, Saidenberg Gallery, New York) which represents a later stage of Masson's involvement with the Orient, makes use of the same ideogram-like linear elements as Entanglement. These 'zig-zag' elements in various colours 84

help add to an 'all-over' sense of unfocused structure. One such ideographic element resembles the signature seal or other writing often found on Far Eastern paintings, and the vertical reading of characters in the Chinese and Japanese languages is also recalled.

Kabuki (1955, Gouache), titled with reference to the Japanese actors' theatre, uses calligraphic 'ideograms' to represent the figures of the participants, capturing a sense of vitality through the linear energy of the brushstrokes. The ideographic origins of Oriental calligraphy, (still visible in some Chinese and Japanese characters) are perhaps being recalled here. Masson values this imagistic aspect of calligraphy - 'ce qu'il y a d'admirable dans l'idéographie Chinoise c'est qu'elle est picturale' he states <sup>86</sup>.

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Onslow-Ford also responded to Oriental calligraphy and its aesthetic as offering a route beyond Surrealism. Although he does note a similarity between the Oriental principle of 'unwilled manifestation' in which creation is allowed to take place of itself without the intervention of the rational mind and the 'pure psychic automatism' of Surrealism <sup>87</sup>, it is clear that he ultimately distinguishes between them. He favours the non-duality of the Oriental philosophy as a way beyond the impasses of Surrealism, emphasizing the importance of conscious attention to the gesture being made rather than counselling an unconscious 'doodling' to by-pass conscious awareness.

Onslow-Ford admired Oriental calligraphy for its spontaneity, the rapid way it is executed without reworking of 'accidents', and its linear emphasis. He came to see line as the natural means of expression when working rapidly (as he prefers to do). A linear style is also felt to minimize associations to known objects - Onslow-Ford's intentions contrasting here with those of the Surrealists, who encouraged associations:

Spontaneous figurations to begin with seem at their best in drawings, in line, in calligraphic expressions, as colours [absent of course in Chinese or Japanese calligraphy] ... tend to be full of memories <sup>88</sup>.

Onslow-Ford discusses the influence of calligraphy on his work, noting



that he has not attempted to imitate specific details of style, but has used the insights he has gained from his study of it in a personal way:

The painter has been inspired by the practice of Chinese and Japanese calligraphy probably as much through misunderstandings as through understandings. The civilizing power of this calligraphy consists in being able to say anything, either in word or in image, with infinite variation on a few simple strokes.

The role of calligraphy in representing a world view characterized by a quality of flux, and indeed of opening the artist's mind to such a way of seeing, is pointed out. This Orientally-derived world view is characterized as 'asymmetrical' and thus allied to the non-archetectural type of composition which can be seen in Onslow-Ford's work. 'Calligraphy makes apparent a harmony and every changing asymmetrical balance, first in the brush strokes and then in life' <sup>89</sup>.

A formal study of Far Eastern calligraphy was undertaken by Onslow-Ford between about 1953 and 1958, mostly at the Zen centre in San Francisco with the Soto Zen master Hodo Tobase <sup>90</sup>. He studied traditional and 'grass style' calligraphy, treating it not purely as an artistic exercise but as a means to understand Zen. The resulting impact of this exposure to the Oriental aesthetic is visible in Untitled, (ink on paper, c 1957). The evidence of an influence from calligraphy is seen in the freely and rapidly executed linear strokes of the brush, the reduction to monochrome and the utilization of a 'broken ink' technique (the white of the paper surface being allowed to show through the unevenly applied ink of the stroke, adding to its sense of dynamic energy). In some works (for example Traveller, 1974, acrylic on canvas, 27½ x 10 3/4") the linear gestures are grouped into dynamic units which resemble ideograms - Onslow-Ford calls these forms 'live-line beings'. 114  
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Onslow-Ford speculates on the possibility of a future language which is imagistic and openended. The ideographic origins of Oriental calligraphy appear to have inspired this train of thought:

Perhaps one day ... there will be a new written language of image, sign and symbol in which the meaning could be read in the form of the characters, and which would remain open to invention <sup>91</sup>.

Amongst the native American artists who may have been helped beyond Surrealism by the aesthetic of Oriental calligraphy is Robert Motherwell. It is possible, given his awareness of Far Eastern aesthetics, that it was a factor in his espousal of 'plastic automatism' in favour of 'psychic automatism'. As we have seen, calligraphy combines the emphasis on spontaneity in surrealist automatism with a more conscious approach and one which makes accommodations to the idea of artistic beauty. We can point to particular works in which a spontaneous linear manner is present in order to support this assertion of an influence from calligraphy. Gesture Paper Painting No. 22 (1975, acrylic on paper, 18 x 24", collection the artist) shows linear gestural expression as the title implies. The lines retain their separate identities, being assembled into an open ideogram-like form which is also seen in Untitled (1979). 97 99

Describing Reconciliation Elegy (1978, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 364", collection National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) Motherwell states that he has attempted to retain in this large scale work 'the immediacy of ... Oriental calligraphy' <sup>92</sup> and in fact two of the sketches made for the painting in April 1977 were executed with a Japanese bamboo pen. Motherwell also approaches calligraphy in his use of letters as images in paintings, emphasizing their 'written' nature - A, No. 2 (1968) and Q (1968) are examples of this, and bear comparison in style to such pieces of Far Eastern calligraphy as Jiun's The Character 'Man' (18th century, 42.2 x 57.5 cm, private collection). 98 91 93 92

The restriction of much of Motherwell's work to black on white images is another feature which recalls Oriental calligraphy, the question of a specific influence becoming more pertinent when we note that Motherwell shares the Far Eastern idea of black as a colour <sup>93</sup>.

It is not just a 'look' of spontaneity which Motherwell tries to capture in his work. He has indicated that the gestural marks which constitute the image in the works of his 'Open' series are spontaneously

executed, and he considers it important that they are made in that way even if they look no different from how they would appear if they were done in a deliberate manner<sup>94</sup>. In taking this approach, Motherwell aligns himself very closely to the attitude of the Far Eastern artists.

Commentators who minimize the importance of Oriental calligraphy as an influence on the brushwork of American gestural abstractionists have on occasions emphasized a quality of 'aggression' in the latter which they find missing in Oriental art. It is interesting in this respect to note that Motherwell appears to have seen calligraphy as a means to counteract a decorative tendency in 'Abstract Expressionist' brushwork. Speaking of the Je t'aime series he says that it was 'a gesture of anger at the increasing tendency towards decorative surface in the development of American avant-garde painting in the mid-1950's, and a manifesto for a return to what the ancient Chinese call "The Spirit of the Brush". There is even an ancient Chinese treatise on painting called (to my eternal reassurance) "The Battle Formations of the Brush"<sup>95</sup>.

Although he made no statements throwing light on the matter, visual evidence does suggest that Bradley Walker Tomlin may have owed a debt to Oriental calligraphy in the development of his linear, gestural style. Interestingly Okada names him, along with Motherwell (and more surprisingly, Rothko) as an artist whose work is a fusion of East and West. Tension by Moonlight (1948, oil on canvas, 32 x 44", Betty Parsons Gallery, New York) can be compared to calligraphy in its dynamic use of line - perhaps the script of Hakuin (for example, Sanskrit Character, 107.8 x 56.7 cm, private collection) provides our closest parallel in style. The 'written' quality of line here is stressed in other works by Tomlin in which actual references to letters are made, (for example, In Praise of Gertrude Stein, 1950, oil, 49 x 102 1/4", collection MOMA). The parallel with Oriental calligraphy (and its possible role as a source for this practice) is made explicit in Number 12 (1949, oil on canvas, 32 x 31"), which contains what seems to be a Sanskrit character. The assertion that painting and writing are aspects of the same art is commonly made in Chinese aesthetics, and it may be that Tomlin's awareness of this idea encouraged him to adopt a 'written' line and include letters in his paintings. Motherwell is surely also aware of this idea and it may have contributed to his use of freely executed writing in Je t'aime<sup>96</sup>.

Many historians and critics have noticed a similarity between the mature works of Franz Kline and Oriental calligraphy. The use of a gestural line, composed into dynamic 'ideograms' in black on an open white background are the qualities which have encouraged this reading. Kline, however, has repeatedly denied that he has been responding in his work to an influence from Far Eastern calligraphy, or to Zen and other expressions of Oriental philosophy<sup>97</sup>. His friends do not remember Kline showing an interest in discussing matters of religion and philosophy, or even of art theory<sup>98</sup>. However, Elaine De Kooning notes his 'long held admiration for Japanese art'<sup>99</sup> and he is known to have had a collection of Japanese prints. In the light of this fact it is therefore not altogether implausible that an influence, albeit unconscious, was at work. Although later works show less strong parallels with calligraphy, the early works on paper in which his abstract style was crystallized are on occasion strikingly similar. In Calligraphic sketch (1949) the individual gestural brushstrokes retain their separate identities, being linked into ideogram-like shapes. The large areas of empty space and the asymmetrical placing of the forms also recall Far Eastern aesthetics, whilst the fluidity of ink is closer to Oriental practice than the use of oil. The smaller scale of these works and the absorbent surface on which they are executed make comparison to Chinese and Japanese brushwork easier than is the case with later works on canvas of a larger scale.

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Pollock gives line a prominence as a formal element in its own right, and it would be fruitful to briefly consider the question of an influence on his work from Oriental calligraphy. In both cases line is 'free' ... it does not have the task of delineating form. Both use a dynamic quality of line, speed of execution being a factor. Spontaneity is shared, and a willingness to accept the accidental fall of paint (as in the Chinese p'o mo ('splash ink') technique). The concern with abstract personal gesture - which we have noted above 'as a quality of calligraphy' - is shared by Pollock, although in the case of his mature work these gestures are of course 'poured' and not 'written'. Given these parallels of approach it is possible that Pollock was given 'permission' by Far Eastern calligraphy to proceed with the explorations which led to his mature style. He was certainly aware of the methods of Oriental painters, being on record as citing

them as a precedent for his method of painting with the canvas on the floor<sup>100</sup>. Formal similarities with calligraphy can be seen in some works, mostly these are later efforts such as Number 32 (1950), and it could be suggested that the 'imprint' of external influences is only visible in Pollock's mature work when the dynamic of his stylistic evolution begins to falter. Number 3 (1951, 56 x 24", enamel on canvas, collection Robert U Ossorio) can be compared to loose vertical strips of calligraphy. A horizontal series of three ideographic shapes occurs in O'Connor/Thaw catalogue no 797 (c 1950, enamel on paper, 11 1/8 x 59 1/4", collection Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart) which also bears comparison to Far Eastern models. In both these cases there is of course a reduction to black and white which underlines the similarities.

A brief mention can be made here of certain other New York painters whose work has, on occasion, reflected an interest in Oriental calligraphy. Several works by Reinhardt executed during the 1940's convey a calligraphic quality (for example, Untitled, 1948-9, oil on canvas, 51 x 21", collection Bernar Venet, New York), whilst Guston's drawings of the mid-1960's recall the linearity of calligraphy as well as the unbounded space of Far Eastern art - Off Center (1967, ink on paper, 17 3/4 x 23") is a good example of this. Frankenthaler's lithograph A Little Zen (1970) sees this artist drawing near to the quality of Oriental calligraphy, although she claims 'in general I have not sought Zen/Eastern/Oriental philosophies for my work. Like everything else, those "sneak in" - when fitting (e.g. titles), but not to dwell on'<sup>101</sup>. Lesser known New York artists who have responded to calligraphy include Cleve Grey (who studied Far Eastern art with George Rowley, writing a thesis on Chinese Yuan dynasty landscape painting), Ulfert Wilke (who held classes in calligraphy in his loft, taught by Nankoku Hidaï - who Reinhardt also invited to speak on Oriental art to his students at Brooklyn college) and Lewin Alcopley.

The importance of Far Eastern calligraphy as a means whereby painters could transcend Surrealist automatism has been stressed in the case of most of the artists we have considered so far. It should be noted however that calligraphy also seems to have provided an alternative to automatism as a means of acquiring a spontaneous quality of line. This will be seen to be the case with the painters whose work we will be examining at this point.

In our discussion of the role which the Oriental 'continuum' world view has played in prompting a change in Tobey's treatment of form, we have had occasion to note the part line has played in this transformation. We have seen that Tobey regards line as the major means in Eastern art whereas mass is the main concern of Western artists:

In a broad comparison between Eastern and Western art it could be said that in the East artists have been more concerned with line and in the West with mass <sup>102</sup>.

The Eastern source of Tobey's interest in line - which began with his lessons from Teny Kwei - has also been mentioned (page 189 ), and can be examined in more detail here. After his lessons in brushwork with Kwei, Tobey felt 'the tree is no longer a solid in the earth, breaking into lesser solids bathed in chiaroscuro. There is pressure and release [as in the calligraphic brushstroke]. Each movement, like tracks in the snow, is recorded and often loved for itself' <sup>103</sup>. He talks of 'the difference between volume and the living line'. The lessons Tobey took from Kwei in Seattle were followed up whilst in the Orient. In Shanghai he attended an art school where he studied calligraphic brushwork as a formal discipline - some examples of his early efforts are in the collection of Dartington Hall <sup>104</sup>. This formal study seems to have continued in Japan: 136

It was in Kyoto in 1934. I copied out of their books how to make trees, how to make rocks, how to make everything which they did. And then they used to compose some of these. They never painted from nature. Everything has been done for them in all these copybooks and so you would go to school and you would learn sixteen ways to make rocks <sup>105</sup>. 135

This study of calligraphic brushwork was undertaken by Tobey 'without thinking that I would ever use it' <sup>106</sup>, but its influence soon emerges in Broadway Norm (1935) which we have already mentioned. 142  
Tobey explicitly acknowledges the debt of his use of line here to Oriental calligraphy:

The calligraphic impulse I had received in China enabled me to convey, without being bound to forms, the motion of people and cars and the whole vitality of the scene <sup>107</sup>.

We see in the white line used in this work the origins of what would be called Tobey's 'white writing'. Normally, Far Eastern calligraphy is in black ink on a white surface (a pattern which Tobey follows in his 1957 'Sumi' works) but there is an Oriental precedent for this white on dark style. The works of major calligraphers have often been carved into rock to preserve them for posterity, and the rubbings made from these carvings - which have been widely reproduced - are of course in a reverse of the usual colouring. Tobey at one stage owned a screen which incorporated a white on dark image of calligraphy apparently taken from a carving in this way, but it is not known at what stage it entered his possession <sup>108</sup>. Another image of white on dark calligraphy in the archaic Chinese style is shown displayed above an exhibition of work by Tobey's students in a photo owned by the Dartington Hall archives, <sup>109</sup> and a later photo accompanying a Life article shows Tobey standing in front of an example of white on dark calligraphy. 153 154

The linear quality of Broadway Norm is retained in many works of Tobey's mature style, for example, Written over the Plains No 2 (1959) contributing to its 'continuum' imagery. The 'written' quality of this work, in which the distinctive 'carved' strokes of Oriental calligraphy are clearly visible, undermines the sense of constructed composition found in Western art and the sense of solid form which goes along with this. Tobey talks of 'writing a picture' as opposed to 'building it up in the Renaissance tradition' <sup>110</sup>. The relationship between this changed attitude to form and structure and the Oriental world view which inspired it has already been mentioned, but the role played by line as a primary formal element, energy-bearing rather than inert or passively outlining form, is being emphasized here. Tobey reveals that his attitude to the role of line closely approximates the Far Eastern one in his criticism of Graves' The Hero, which has a superficial similarity to the use of line in Chinese and Japanese painting. To Tobey, this work is very 'Renaissance' - 'there is only the outward appearance, the classical outline of the goat ... a truly Eastern artist 157

would never have painted it that way but would have brought out the energy-carrying elements, like the horns and the mouth and the hooves, to convey its inner essence' <sup>111</sup>.

Although some works, like Written over the Plains, No. 2, do have a close visual similarity to Oriental calligraphy in the type of brushstroke and the arrangement of individual strokes into ideogram-like forms, it is really the spirit of calligraphy that is most important to Tobey, and not the attempt to imitate specific forms <sup>112</sup>. He is as likely to use a meandering line - such as that in Serpentine (1955, gouache and pencil on paper, 29 3/4 x 39 1/2" collection Seattle Art Museum). The fact that Tobey was a mature artist when he encountered calligraphy and first started responding to it in his art goes some distance towards explaining the way in which he succeeds in digesting the influence. He does not attempt to meet calligraphy on its own terms, which he considers as unfeasible:

It is impossible for any Westerner to become a real calligraphist [sic] - because they would have to start at five under a master <sup>113</sup>.

Stamos, like Tobey, finds in Oriental calligraphy an alternative source to Surrealism for a spontaneity of line and refers to 'the expressive glory of Chinese calligraphic characters' <sup>114</sup>. The dynamic quality of line in the Far East is perhaps important for Stamos since it permits the artist to express the universal energy, the active spirit of life. Hsieh Ho mentions this dynamic concept (Ch'i-yün Shêng-tung) as the first of his six principles of painting, and Stamos follows him in emphasizing the importance of capturing this in art:

All that has been written in the monumental Oriental criticism amounts to little more than this, what counts above all in the quality of the artist or his work is the "resonance of spirit" or "spirit harmony", or "rhythmic vitality" - "life-movement" <sup>115</sup>.

Examples of Stamos's work in which an influence from calligraphy can be seen include Cassandra (1948-9) and Divining Rod (1949, Chinese ink on mulberry paper). The loose, energetic brush strokes of the latter are particularly telling. Fountain (1949, watercolour) has an atmospheric



feel that recalls Oriental landscape art whilst the vertical calligraphic element in the centre recalls Oriental writing.

In Jenkins's case there is a specific source for his interest in the Oriental use of line, and this is Hokusai. We have already (Chapter Three, page 123) discussed Jenkins's 'whiplash' line in relation to Herrigel and Zen, and here we can note its visual source in Hokusai <sup>116</sup>. Hokusai's line, for example in an image of a crane in the Mangwa, recalls Jenkins's Dakota Ridge (1958, oil and chrysochrome on canvas, 50 x 64", collection Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.) and Water Crane (1956, oil on canvas, 64 x 51", collection the artist). This latter work Jenkins relates to a woodcut of a waterfall in Hokusai's Mangwa. Jenkins admired in Hokusai the way in which line was an autonomous means of expression, not tied to the delineation of form - 'it had an independent meaning and created its own significant form' <sup>117</sup> 'Here was the line (he states of Water Crane, noting Hokusai's influence) which was form and image' <sup>118</sup>. The implications of the bold use of line he initiated here were developed in later works - for example, Phenomena Zen Bow String (1969, acrylic on canvas, 64½ x 38", collection Brayton Wilbur Jr., California).

The dynamic line he uses in his work relates to the quality of movement he found in Hokusai's line:

Movement was something that he lent a great dignity to, unlike Géricault who made it histrionic. And not only that, with Hokusai movement seemed to have a certain kind of velocity which I felt made it very exciting. But at the same time, it was controlled with the exactitude of a Samurai sword <sup>119</sup>.

Hokusai helped Jenkins beyond the negative associations movement in painting had held for him:

Hokusai helped me to turn toward movement.

I thought about how to gravitate towards movement without it being histrionic, neurotic, without giving the sensation of the abnormal - to penetrate the inchoate, to enter the mystery of

darkness and to be involved with exultation, celebration, aspiration, elements that converge into the positive nature of the visual

Like Tobey's Oriental mentor, Teng Kwei, he generally finds the static quality of still-lives without attraction. 'I find that static still-lives arrest my concentration for about three seconds'. Jenkins is aware that in adopting a dynamic line under Hokusai's influence, he is also adopting the dynamic Oriental world view of which it is an expression. He sees Hokusai as embodying this 'flux' world view (which he is aware occurs in Heraclitus). Hokusai's Views of Fujiyama (which he owns) 'showed the old idea of Heraclitus that you can never step into the same river twice. Maybe the same mountain will appear, it may seem to be the same river you are stepping into, but every time you experience it, it's different. That is the world of ever-changing reality'.

Interestingly, sculptors as well as painters responded to Oriental calligraphy in their work <sup>120</sup>. Seymour Lipton, for example, writes 'most important to me visually has been my absorption in Chinese calligraphy' <sup>121</sup>. He says of his work Sentinel (1959, nickel-silver on monel metal, ht. 89 3/4", collection Yale University Art Gallery) 75 that it 'stems directly from a Chinese written symbol of which I have no knowledge at all'. 'The form and meaning ... emerged from my own private experience but the original stimulus was the Chinese writing which mysteriously appeals to me'. Formal similarities can be noted between this work and certain ideograms - note especially the spear head/helmet shape which recalls a 'roof'-like form found in some ideograms. The broadening of the vertical form at its base recalls the 'carved' 165 calligraphic stroke, whilst the composition, which brings the linear elements together in a dynamic conjunction, recalls the non-static unity of the ideogram.

David Smith, in many of his later drawings, appears to approach Oriental calligraphy. There is no attempt to imitate specifics of brushwork and to learn the formal discipline of calligraphy, but a debt seems to be owed in the dynamic linearity, the use of black on an unbounded white background, and the incorporation of accident without reworking. In some works the linear forms are organized in vertical orientation, recalling the strings of ideograms in Chinese and Japanese

writing. Smith explains that it is aspects of the aesthetic of calligraphy which appeal to him, rather than specific formal qualities. His preference seems to be for Japanese brushwork, not surprisingly since the Japanese tradition produced much very freely executed calligraphy that is more comparable to Smith's work than traditional styles would be. 'It is not Japanese painting, but some of the principles involved have meaning for me' he writes. He emphasizes the energetic nature of the calligraphic stroke:

Certain Japanese formalities seem close to me, such as the beginning of a stroke outside the paper continuing through the drawing space, to project beyond, so that in the included part it possesses both the power of the origin and the projection. This produces the impression of strength <sup>122</sup>.

Force is again emphasized when Smith discusses a further influential aspect of the aesthetic behind Japanese brushwork:

Another Japanese concept demands that when representing an object suggesting strength - like rocks, talons, claws, tree branches - the moment the brush is applied the sentiment of strength must be invoked and felt through the artist's system and so transmitted to the object painted.

Smith makes the same emphasis on force in a discussion of Chinese calligraphy. He claims that 'In Chinese Rei Sho character writing, the graphic aim was to show force as if carved or engraved in steel' <sup>123</sup>.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'INVOLUTION' AND 'EVOLUTION'

The two preceding chapters have been concerned with the influence on the styles of American artists of the concepts of Oriental philosophy which we have labelled the 'Void' and the 'Continuum' - the former representing the 'unmanifest', transcendental aspect of life (as it is understood in the Oriental world view) and the latter the manifest, phenomenal aspect. We have noted that these concepts have in many cases significantly affected the formal language of the paintings and sculptures, causing it to reflect the Oriental world view. Despite the diversity of the various artists' expressions, we have been able to point out parallels between their works which can be traced to this shared paradigm.

The non-dualistic nature of the Oriental world view has already been attested to, and it must be underlined that the distinction that has been made by treating the 'Void' and the 'Continuum' in separate chapters is for convenience of presentation only. They are aspects of the same cosmological picture, being combined in a larger whole - the Hindu concept of 'Brahman', for example, can refer to this wider sense of wholeness. In the works we have examined in the previous two chapters both 'Void' and 'Continuum' have usually been represented in the same image, and on a formal level the changes in treatment of space through which one has been represented and the changes in form symbolizing the other can be seen to be interdependent. Cage, in his 'Lecture on Something', underlines the link between these two aspects of the Oriental world view: 'Something and Nothing are not opposed to each other, but need each other to keep on going' <sup>1</sup>. The Prajna-paramita-hridaya Sutra indeed identifies the two concepts, pointing to the difficulty of making intellectual distinctions in this area - 'Form is not different from emptiness; emptiness is not different from form. Form is precisely emptiness; emptiness is precisely form' <sup>2</sup>.

The Oriental world view is an essentially dynamic one, and we have examined this quality and its influence in our discussion of the 'Continuum' concept. In the present context of considering the ways in

which 'Void' and 'Continuum' can be seen as part of a larger whole - we must emphasize that the relationship between the two is considered to be a dynamic one. Form is seen as arising from formlessness to which it eventually returns and this process is regarded as taking place constantly. An image of the Oriental cosmology, then, is also an image of the processes of creation and reabsorption. We can label these two directions of the process 'evolution' and 'involution'. 'Evolution' refers on the objective level to the process of the phenomenal world's coming into being from the Void, and on the subjective level to the birth of thought and creative impulse from an inner mental silence (this latter aspect of Eastern philosophy having been discussed in some detail in Chapter Three, page 97 ). 'Involution' refers on the objective level to the reabsorption of form into formlessness (which occurs according to Hindu mythology at the end of each cosmic cycle) and on the subjective level to the individual's attempt to return (through the practice of yoga, etc) to the 'ground' of his being. It is clear that artists who reflected Oriental cosmology in their imagery were aware of this dynamic aspect of it <sup>3</sup>.

One way in which this relationship between Void and form is expressed by painters is by conveying an impression that the forms in the work have arisen from the empty spatial 'void' of the canvas surface. Guston describes this intention:

I like a form against a background - I mean, simply empty space - but the paradox is that the form must emerge from this background. Its not just executed there <sup>4</sup>.

Graves, in certain of his works, gives a similar impression that the form has emerged from the empty space behind it. Consciousness achieving the form of a Crane (1945, collection Seattle Art Museum) and Consciousness achieving form of a libation cup illustrate this type. Discussing this latter work, Graves describes it as an attempt to convey 'thought achieving form within mental space (the space of vision)' <sup>5</sup>. Jenkins, speaking of his work prior to The Shooting Gallery (now destroyed) points out that 'the form I sought was not yet emerging from space itself' <sup>6</sup>, a quality some of his later works do display. A similar quality is, incidentally, noted by Siren in Chinese painting, Siren writes that 'in Chinese painting the forms often seem to issue from some illimitable fluid or space represented by the bare silk' <sup>7</sup>.

The dynamic aspect of the Oriental cosmologies is more clearly seen as having had an impact on the imagery of some artists when the changes in their work over time are observed. In certain cases, this wider perspective reveals shifts in imagery indicating a pattern of 'evolution' or 'involution' which is not discernable from the examination of single works.

Onslow-Ford sees the Eastern practice of meditation as a technique to effect an 'involution' from identification with the surface level of phenomenal reality to an experience of its 'ground'. He writes that 'In the experience of meditation one follows the path of the creation of the world backwards, rising out of crass materialism through more and more subtle matter until one arrives at the point where existence becomes spiritualized'<sup>8</sup>. It is clear that for Onslow-Ford painting performs a similar role of providing a vehicle for involution, which he calls 'the adventure of the self discovering the Self ... Involution refers to the worlds within worlds that move from the surface of consciousness towards the depths of the unconscious'<sup>9</sup>. His work of the 1940's and 1950's, when viewed together, can be seen as 'mapping' this movement from form to void. He describes himself the formal traits that predominate when this inward dynamic is uppermost in his work. He notes that 'during involution painting is haunted by the known, there is memory of the landscape and the anthropomorphic'<sup>10</sup>. As the process of involution is continued, the imagery of the works changes and recognizable objects disappear. 'Complex forms tend to become more simple. Material that is agitated becomes more calm. Manifestations that appear chaotic settle down into an order'<sup>11</sup>. The introduction of an imagery of lines, circles and dots - regarded by Onslow-Ford (see Chapter Three, page 115 ) as the furthest extent of this process of formal simplification - represents the end point of the involution process, the move towards the 'ground of being'. Involution ('the search for the self') is replaced by evolution ('the growth of the self')<sup>12</sup>. From this point on in his oeuvre he sees his art as expressing the creative forces of nature, the birth of form from formlessness. 'All pioneer paintings today lead up to one primordial subject - the creation of the world'<sup>13</sup>, he writes. Line, circle and dot 'is the turning point, the rebirth, the known giving way to the new'<sup>14</sup>.

In the works which belong to this phase, he sees different formal qualities predominating. 'Once evolution begins, negative changes to positive, emptiness becomes full, space which seemed empty now takes on form and is full' <sup>15</sup>.

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A similar perspective of the artist's work over time reveals insights in the case of Reinhardt's imagery too. The gradual reduction of formal incident in his works over the years, leading to the near monochrome later 'black' paintings, represents an 'involution', a shifting of the balance from form to emptiness. Reinhardt was certainly aware of the dynamic relationship of form and Void as understood by the traditional Oriental cosmologies and he shows that he believes art can participate in both the direction of 'involution' and that of 'evolution', indicating why he favours the former role for his own art:

When space, matter was 'nothing' art was the making of something out of nothing. Now when space, matter are 'something', art is the making of nothing out of something <sup>16</sup>.

Involution, the 'making of nothing out of something' is seen as the appropriate task for art to undertake in the present age, moving in opposition to its predominantly materialistic tenor.

The dynamic nature of the relationship between form and void in the Oriental cosmologies - expressed in the concepts of 'involution' and 'evolution' - is evoked by artists in a further way to those we have already discussed. Not only is it expressed in static images, but it is also (for some artists) evoked in the process of the work's creation which takes on a ritual dimension. The evolution of a painting from the empty canvas to its final state appears to symbolize for some artists the process of cosmic 'manifestation'. The 'Void' is not represented merely by the quality of emptiness and unboundedness of space in the (static) final work but by the emptiness of the canvas before work begins. The viewer is able to share this private symbolism to the extent he or she is able to 'read' in the work the evidence of how it was made.

Again, Onslow-Ford provides an illustration of an artist who regards his work in this way. 'When painting [he writes] the paper is not a surface but the void'<sup>17</sup>. The way in which the process of working takes on an imagery of cosmic evolution is explained by the artist in his manuscript Instant Painting (page 47):

In the beginning there are no images. All is unified chaos. There are no objects in the unknown, but when the first mark is found, the heavens and the earth separate and the drama of creation begins over again.

The painter's act is to catch images as they appear on the paper, as they blossom from the seeds of the unknown. It is from no-image that images appear (page 75).

Describing how this evolution takes place in his own work, he writes:

The first mark begins as near to the simplest particle, to unity, to oneness, as possible. All there is is sparse, or is in abundance, according to how it is felt. Is it a particle on a ground, or is it a ground in a particle? Is it a subtle vibration of endless particles - ground? This is the place of potential from which the new world can grow.

We have suggested elsewhere that the process of working on a painting has a ritual dimension for Reinhardt too, but the symbolism that accrues to the process of working in Lassaw's case, is the opposite to that seen in Reinhardt's painting. The symbolism is one of growth rather than involution, affirmation rather than negation of the phenomenal world. In artistic terms, this is expressed in an interest in modelling, building up of form, addition - as opposed to carving, reduction of form, subtraction. Lassaw himself makes the link between this avoidance of negation and his interest in modelling, his position being based on the Zen idea that techniques of involution, attempting to 'grasp' the Void, are unnecessary and even counter-productive:

Neti, Neti (not this, not that) say the Brahmins, but I am inclined to say "And this too", "and this too".<sup>18</sup>



Paul Jenkins also hints that he views the process of a work's creation as symbolizing the creative and destructive forces of the cosmos as it is understood in the Orient. In describing the process of building up the surface of his paintings and then subsequently destroying aspects of the image in the interest of a larger goal, he invokes the image of the god Shiva who symbolizes in Hindu mythology the forces of nature which create form from formlessness and which are responsible for its eventual dissolution <sup>19</sup>.

In the paintings of Richard Pousette-Dart an emphasis is seen on the importance of the process of working rather than the final result. Forms which develop on the canvas are often eliminated in favour of new configurations. In some cases, the imagery is completely eliminated again in a return to a white surface <sup>20</sup>. In the light of his undoubted awareness of Oriental thought, the cyclical processes of manifestation and reabsorption of the material world which it describes may be presumed to have encouraged him to work in this way.

CONCLUSION

Oriental thought has had a broad ranging and significant influence on American painting and sculpture, and the result has been not a series of undigested borrowings but, in most cases, a creative synthesis with aspects of Western traditions. That such a synthesis has occurred reflects well on the intelligence and sensitivity of the artists involved, but it is also inevitable that concepts will suffer change in their 'translation' from culture to culture, dislocation from their original social context depriving them of part of their meaning and enabling creative misunderstandings to occur as the hiatus between cultures is crossed. This hiatus, which (as anthropologists are well aware) prevents a complete knowledge of another culture, has the consequence that we are left to a great extent with merely our images of what another culture is like, our projections upon it of our own preoccupations. Hence a study of this kind is valuable not just in telling us what artists may have learned from another culture, but gives us insight into the artistic issues that are important in our own society, rather like a sort of Rorschach 'ink blot' test. Most of the artists we have been considering make no claim, in any case, to be studying the Orient for its own sake, as an anthropologist might. Their interest (while often intense) is not generally systematic, but freely admitted as subjective and selective. They seek answers to specific problems they face, and are willing to selectively detach axioms that appear helpful. A systematic objective study would be irrelevant to their needs and amount to nothing more than a sort of scholasticism. 'I don't want now to start talking about how many angels are on the head of a Chinese knitting needle!' <sup>1</sup> was the response of Paul Jenkins to a too detailed questioning about his interest in Herrigel.

The degree of influence has, as we have seen, varied from artist to artist. In some cases, study of the Orient was crucial to the evolution of an artist's style. Tobey, for example, describes the Orient as 'the greatest influence of my life' <sup>2</sup>. With other artists, Oriental concepts provided little more than a post-facto justification for changes that were already occurring. Not all artists have been moved

as Tobey was to visit the Orient, or grapple, like Macdonald-Wright, with the complexities of Far Eastern languages. Further, many major innovative artists of the period - Newman, Rothko, Gorky and De Kooning amongst them - have remained altogether untouched by the East. It is perhaps not superfluous to emphasize that other influences from the realm of ideas were also important for the artists of this period. Existentialism for instance was of deep interest to many painters. The reader is not intended to believe that Oriental concepts can 'explain' all the transformations in American art of the postwar generation, merely that it was a significant factor in them.

There has been seen to be certain broad patterns in the ways in which artists responded to Oriental influences. This was visible, for example, in our discussion of artists' attitudes to the creative process. Certain common elements have also been isolated in the chapters considering the influence of the 'Void' and 'Continuum' concepts. Changes in the 'grammar' of formal language (for example, in the treatment of space) are similar from artist to artist, and can be seen in both painting and sculpture. Diversity of style remains, but this deeper homology betrays a common interest in the Oriental world view, which provides a new paradigm of vision. Cosmological themes, and the creative process itself, have often during this period become the explicit or implicit subject matter of works of art, and hence an interest in Eastern philosophy has been more fully expressed in them than it might otherwise have been. It has been a purpose of this thesis to show that abstract art, or the abstract element of art, carries meaning, and that changes on this formal level can be related to a desire to express a new iconography.

Whilst this underlying similarity between the way many artists 'use' Oriental concepts in relation to their art does exist, the simultaneous diversity (especially on a stylistic level) hardly needs to be mentioned, and is a natural concomitant of Western individualism, which never becomes submerged in the encounter with the East. However, it is also the nature of Oriental metaphysics which gives rise to this variety of response. At the centre of each of the Eastern traditions we have examined is an essentially mystical core, an experiential dimension regarded as ultimately beyond expression in word or form.

Artists therefore receive little guidance on how to express 'formlessness' in 'form', a paradoxical aim in any case. The leap from 'boundlessness' to the 'boundaries' of a particular artistic style becomes of necessity an arbitrary and personal process, since no one style 'correctly' expresses what is regarded as inexpressible - 'the Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao' <sup>3</sup> says the Tao Te Ching. In the 'empty mirror' of Zen, American painters and sculptors have seen a kaleidoscopic series of possibilities for their art.

APPENDIX ONE

## NOGUCHI AND THE JAPANESE GARDEN

The Japanese garden is felt by Noguchi to be one of the more accessible expressions of the spirit of Zen for those who have not been brought up in the Japanese culture (conversation with the author 18th June, 1980). He remembers his mother taking him as a child to visit gardens and has frequently returned to them as an adult. - he now keeps a studio in Japan where he spends part of each year.

Noguchi has engaged in landscape projects since 1933 (soon after his return from his first adult journey to Japan) and several of the gardens he has designed in his career have a distinctly Japanese flavour. The closest he has come to traditional models has been with his Unesco garden in Paris (1956-58), where, so he states 110 (Paul Cummings, Artists in their own words, New York 1979) he felt obliged to do something 'Japanese'. Noguchi claims that he has never made a detailed study of the conventions governing Japanese garden construction, and whilst he uses the elements found in that tradition, he adapts it to his own needs to produce an original result. He notes the contempt of the Japanese for those directors who make 'Japanese' films for the foreign market.

Noguchi's Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza, (1961-64) in New York has 105 several features in common with traditional Japanese gardens. It uses found rocks whose irregular shapes have not been altered by human hand, and thus recalls Zen gardens such as Ryoanji (Kyoto), which Noguchi 106 acknowledges as a major, but not pre-eminent influence. Ryoanji is also recalled by the absence of plants in this 'garden', by the *asymmetrical* placement of the stones, and by the arrangement of bricks which appears to mimic its patterns of raked sand. The sculpture court for the Beinecke Library, Yale (1960-64) also recalls Japanese traditions. Noguchi claims that his ideas for the court 'started from the sand 108 mounds often found in Japanese temples' (I Noguchi, A Sculptor's World New York, 1968, page 170), although memories of an observatory he had seen at Jaipur, India also influenced the design.

Besides exerting an influence on Noguchi's own gardens, the Zen landscape tradition also had an impact on his sculpture. The use of found rocks in gardens inspired his own use of natural forms with minimum intervention from the sculptor in such works as Myo (Kumara granite, 1957-66, collection the artist). Noguchi writes (A Sculptor's World, page 167):

Nothing is more sculptural than rocks in nature, and they represent the most profound Japanese expression of sculpture, only now being appreciated as a form of abstract sculpturing ... My effort was to find a way to link that ritual of rocks which comes down to us through the Japanese from the dawn of history to our modern times and needs. In Japan the worship of stone changes into an appreciation of nature. The search for the essence of sculpture seems to carry me to the same end.

A type of sculpture which Noguchi has frequently made consists of a 'table' on which are arranged (or from which protude) various forms. Whilst the influences of both Giacometti and Brancusi can be admitted, Zen gardens such as Ryoanji, in which the forms of rocks protude from a flat surface, are also an important source, as Noguchi acknowledges:

If my tables ... suggest landscape, you must be aware that every garden is a landscape, and every garden is a table, too, especially Zen gardens ... The garden of Ryoanji has [a] ... convention of raked sand with rocks to suggest the sea. In my tables I don't use gravel or sand, but I use a flat area of stone which is more or less their equivalent [quoted New York, Emmerich/Pace Galleries, Noguchi, 1980. Text by Sam Hunter].

Works such as The Uncertain Sea (late 1960's, granite) or Wave in Space (1972, granite) illustrate this type, recalling Ryoanji. 107  
Landscape Sculpture (late 1960's) recalls the garden of Gin kaku-ji temple, through its echo of that garden's sand cone. 108

Seen and Unseen (1962, bronze, L 27", h 21", collection A List family, New York) is a further work in which we can see a link to the use of stones in Japanese gardens. Here the ground itself is the 'table' 109

on which the work stands, and the forms of the stones can be imagined, as the title hints, to meet below the surface. Noguchi feels that the stones in Japanese gardens are to be viewed in this way. In A Sculptor's World (page 40) he writes:

In Japan the rocks in a garden are so planted as to suggest a protruberance from the primordial mass below. Every rock gains enormous weight, and that is why the whole garden may be said to be a sculpture, whose roots are joined way below.

The greater sensitivity to environment, the greater openness of form visible in Noguchi's more recent sculpture, can be seen as a further lesson that he has learnt from the Zen garden and its use of stone. The ground-hugging quality of this and other works by Noguchi (and also those of many works by Andre, for example, Lever, 1966, 4½ x 8 1/8 x 348½") seem to relate to a quality in the Japanese way of seeing. Tobey in his journal dating from his visit to Japan comments on his experience of sitting on the floor (rather than on a chair) after the Japanese manner, and notes that this causes him to become aware of a new attitude to nature. Later he was to write of this Japanese experience (Mark Tobey 'Biographical Note, in London, Whitechapel Art Gallery, Mark Tobey, 1962, page 10-11):

Once when I was sitting on the terrace of my room which gave onto a small intimate garden, with full-blown flowers on which alighted ballets of dragonflies, I felt that this small world almost beneath my feet had a value of its own which one should recognise and appreciate at its level in space. I suddenly felt that for too long I had only remained above my feet.

Interestingly, Tobey also responds to Japanese gardens and their sculptural use of natural stones. A postcard sent to the Elmhirsts (Dartington Hall Archives) shows a garden in Soochow (China) which he visited, and which seems to have inspired a pen sketch. In a letter sent to Dorothy Elmhirst from China, Tobey writes of 'how the Chinese can use stones in gardens and how they can make you feel you are in a garden and not just looking at it. They really can recreate nature and one's contact with it. All paths are not made easy as one goes up and down, and in and out. I can't imagine a more blessed spot than a good Chinese garden'

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APPENDIX TWO

## TOBEY'S 1934 VISIT TO THE FAR EAST

Tobey's 1934 visit to the Far East was made from Dartington Hall, and was sponsored by Leonard Elmhirst (who had earlier visited Japan himself, in the company of Tagore). Tobey travelled with the potter Bernard Leach, who had been to Japan before, and had been invited by his friend Yanagi to return. Leach would have been a useful travelling companion for Tobey, since he had an already developed interest in Oriental philosophy (derived in part from Yanagi's scholarship in that field), and would have been able to provide Tobey with introductions. It was through Leach, for instance, that Tobey met both Yanagi and the potter Hamada. Tobey and Leach did not travel together all of the time, however, and Tobey did have a contact of his own in Teng Kwei, whom he visited in Shanghai, and who introduced him to other painters. Furthermore, Tobey certainly prepared for his trip by reading about Oriental philosophy. A letter to the Elmhirsts of around Easter 1934 (Elmhirst Papers, Dartington Hall Archives), written after leaving Columbo but before arrival in the Far East, states that he has 'read a very good book on Buddhism' and also expresses the hope that 'I'll have some experiences related to those in the little book you sent ... which always delights me'. He was also to state later that whereas Bahai 'found' him, he 'sought' Zen, implying a degree of premeditation in the encounter.

Tobey left England in the Spring of 1934, travelling via Columbo to Hong Kong, China (Shanghai) and Japan. Bernard Leach's account of the journey is given in his autobiography Beyond East and West (London, 1978), and Tobey's own experience is documented in the many letters he wrote to the Elmhirsts (now in the Dartington Hall Archives) and in the 'diary' notes he kept at the time (Estate of Mark Tobey, photocopy in Wesley Wehr papers, University of Washington Archive, Seattle). Although his stay in the Far East was short, Tobey responded deeply and rapidly to what he saw, developing in later writings ideas which are already present in these contemporary records. Whilst the journey was to have a significant effect on the development of his art, most works made whilst Tobey was actually in the Orient are slight, and show no signs of a new departure.



Whilst in Shanghai, Tobey was invited to speak at an art school, was to visit at least one exhibition, and bought an example of contemporary Chinese painting (in Hong Kong he had also purchased several items, including a wooden Buddha-like figure and some model Noh masks). However, the experience of the dynamic life of the city itself (see Chapter Six, page 190) seems to have been the most important event of his stay in China.

Japan, rather than China, seems to have had the greatest impact on Tobey as an artist. In one undated letter to Dorothy Elmhirst he describes China as 'a forest' and Shanghai as 'an ugly place' expressing the hope that 'perhaps Japan will revitalize me'. Writing from Japan (9th July) he says:

China was and is a thrilling experience but I am glad  
to be in Japan with its cleanliness and sanity.

A letter to the Elmhirsts written a few years after his journey (possibly February 1938) states that in retrospect his stay in Japan stands out over other aspects of his trip.

The Japanese theatre deeply impressed Tobey, (as he had expected it would) and provided the subject for several sketches that he made. In one letter he mentions seeing a performance of a Noh drama called 'The Heron', and describes it as having 'practically no action, and yet plenty of it'. He seems to have immediately accepted certain lessons from the aesthetic of the theatre and applied it to his painting. A diary note of the time which seems to point towards his later works is worth considering here:

How can an artist ... trained to space and colour be satisfied with our Western idea after seeing the Japanese theatre - not a few performances of a travelling troupe such as we occasionally see in our country but to sit through the Noh dramas and Kabuki Za ... here one finds line and space cleared - here no ... draperies which swoon from a dull gilded proscenium hung with garlands struck with shabby sunrays - or nestling clusters of fruit dull green ... in their circle of feeble redness. Their

stage is no deep hole in which the reality of a three-dimensional world may be explained. The design is brought forward as in all great paintings [Tobey's emphasis] and life is used not in the realistic sense but forms the material for the world of art, not bounded by fact but powerful in suggestion, and operating from its own laws.

Here Tobey seems to look ahead to the abandonment of the illusionistic 'stage setting' of the Ren aissance tradition which he undertakes in his own work.

The Noh drama was to remain an inspiration for Tobey in later years. Seattle artist George Tzutakawa recalls (interview with the author, 10th September, 1980) that Tobey would not miss a performance when a company visited Seattle, and that he enjoyed meeting the artists themselves. Painter Paul Horiuchi, who credits Tobey with developing his interest in the Noh drama, recalls (interview with the author, 17th September, 1980) a performance seen with Tobey in New York (possibly in 1960). Tobey claimed that it was the best performance he'd experienced and stated that it was the finest piece of abstract art he'd seen.

Whilst in Kyoto, Tobey stayed for about a month in a guest house near a Zen monastery (Enryaku-Ji), to which he made frequent visits, meeting the Abbot. This first direct contact with Zen was to prove very important to him. Although he attempted Zen meditation he does not appear to have had a great deal of success with it, and he was more impressed by the way activities are used as a means of apprehending Zen. A letter of July 9th recounts a visit to 'the Butoku-den or Hall of Martial Virtues, a school for fencing, Jujitsu and archery':

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This afternoon I was shown classes in spear exercises especially for women. I was greatly impressed not only by the movement but the great hall open on all sides, the concentration of the pupils and the fiery spirit of the two women instructors ... I felt an underlying integrity in it all. I believe there is an underlying philosophy and science in this aspect here of Zen, for the archery and spear dancing is based on Zen.

Again he makes a connection to his own situation as an artist:

If I could get hold of this side of life, I might begin to realize that side of art teaching I have always wanted, and not have to depend entirely on intuition. I have been feeling the past year that I couldn't teach anymore but after seeing what I have today I believe teaching could be interesting if one had a definite ground upon which to build.

Tobey had also been exposed to Zen in Tokyo, where he had met Soetsu Yanagi. Tobey describes Yanagi as 'mothering and fathering me .. He is tireless as a teacher and in planning what I should see' Yanagi is 'an old hand at meditation and has given me many ideas about Zen'. Leach, in Beyond East and West (page 86), quotes a letter Yanagi sent him in 1915 arguing 'the possibility of the active, positive, affirmative method in mystical principles'. Presumably Tobey was made aware of Yanagi's ideas and they may have been responsible for the ease with which he related his study of Zen to his role as a painter. Certainly Tobey describes Yanagi as very knowledgeable about art and mentions Yanagi's interest in his brush drawings, (an admiration he states as being shared by the architect Bruno Taut who he apparently met in Tokyo). In Kyoto Tobey also made the acquaintance of a painter, Toshio Okada, who was a student of Zen, and this must have underlined for him the strong links which exist between Zen and art. In Tobey's College Art Journal article of Autumn 1958 ('Japanese Traditions and American Art') he mentions the influence of the Zen emphasis on 'simplicity, directness and profundity' on Japanese art, taking this list of qualities from Sabro Hasegawa's essay 'Abstract Art in Japan' (in The World of Abstract Art, edited by American Abstract Artists, 1957) but he also isolates the qualities of 'concentration and consecration' as characteristics of Japanese art, and these are terms which he uses first in a diary note made during his stay in the East.

APPENDIX THREE

## AGNES MARTIN AND THE ORIENT

In a letter to the author, dated December 31st 1983, Agnes Martin mentions several Far Eastern authors and texts that have been important to her:

My greatest spiritual inspiration came from the Chinese spiritual teachers, especially Lao Tzu ... My next strongest influence is the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng. My copy is translated by A.F. Price, 'The Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Hui Neng', Shambala Publications. I have also read and been inspired by the sutras of the other ... Buddhist masters, and Chuang Tzu ... who was very wise and very amusing.

FOOTNOTESINTRODUCTION

1. Many American artists display this feeling of belonging to a 'world' culture, of being free to draw on all available sources for their art. Sculptor Ibram Lassaw's remarks illustrate this well. He states that he 'began to feel that the tradition of African carving and Chinese sculpture and Indian Gods was my tradition too ... the Academicians looked back to the Greek and Roman and Renaissance tradition. As far as I could see they had no contact with other traditions of the world. I think with my generation ... we were now beginning to enter the mainstream of all those other cultures that we became acquainted with' (transcript of interview with Irving Sandler, 26th August, 1968, page 6, Tapel, Sidel, Archives of American Art). Motherwell expresses similar sentiments, stating that he feels one of the distinguishing factors of 'Abstract Expressionism' and not just of his own work, was its determination to use international standards in painting (telephone interview with the author, 29th December, 1979). Musician John Cage who belongs to the same generation, speaks of becoming 'convinced that the Orient was as much for us as it was for the Orient' (interview with the author, 30th August, 1979).
2. Several articles treat aspects of this theme, e.g. B Hawkins 'Contemporary Art and the Orient', College Art Journal vol. XVI, page 118. Sullivan's The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art is a thoughtful study of the influence of Oriental art, but its broad frame of reference prevents a detailed examination of the impact on modern American artists.
3. Lassaw discusses this sense of 'recognition' in the new: 'When I came in contact with Zen and other philosophies or religions, it was as if I was confronted with my own mind' (transcript of interview with D Seckler, November 1964, Tape 2, page 8, Archives of American Art). Lippold muses along similar lines in discussing the impact of Oriental thought on his art. 'It would be stupid to deny that one learns from other things, but ... I feel it was more a recognition of something already felt than an encounter with something I didn't know'. He elaborates: 'Maybe I don't know the difference between "influence" and "recognition", maybe we only learn from things we do recognize, maybe that's what learning is'. (interview with the author, 25th September, 1979).
4. Much attention, in particular, will be given to the painter Gordon Onslow-Ford, who is not usually regarded as an artist of major importance. I personally consider his work to be underrated, but have given him prominence because he clearly articulates in his statements attitudes which are only implicit in other artists and which are helpful to our

understanding of the way Oriental influences manifest themselves. Onslow-Ford is also a useful artist to consider because he was at one time involved with the Surrealists, and hence he helps us see the way Oriental influences aid artists to transcend Surrealist attitudes. The data presented concerning Masson is excused on similar grounds, and this latter artist is also included to enable us to compare the ways in which American and European artists respond to the Orient.

5. My definition of the 'Oriental world' excludes the Islamic cultures. I follow F.S.C. Northrop, A.K. Coomaraswamy and others in believing that the Hindu, Buddhist and Taoist systems of religion and philosophy share certain basic assumptions which enables one to consider them together, and I hope this will be illustrated in the references to these systems which I shall be making. It is the influence of these three systems which has been most lively in American art. Shintoism, Confucianism, etc., have not been particularly important.

#### CHAPTER ONE

1. Parallels between the Orient and the Transcendentalists, and influences from the former on the latter are examined in J P Rao Rayapati, Early American Interests in Vedanta, London, 1973, and V K Chari, Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism Lincoln, Nebraska, 1964.
2. Quoted Lawrence W Chisolm, Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture, New Haven, 1963, page 94. Art critic Caffin, who was familiar with the teachings of Arthur Dow, Fenollosa's collaborator, seems to be responding to this way of viewing Japanese art when he writes in 'Camera Work', No. 13, January 1906: 'If painting is to maintain a hold on the intelligence and imagination, as music does and possibly poetry, and to grow forward in touch with the growing needs of humanity, it must find some fundamental motive other than the appearance of the world ... it must take on something of quality, which is the essence of music - the abstract. It is here that it may learn of the Oriental ideal, as exemplified in Japanese art'.
3. See below, Chapter Six, page 200.
4. Pound himself has been responsible in at least one case for transmitting an interest in the Orient to an artist of a later generation. Carl Andre states (letter to the author, 12th August, 1979): 'Whatever exposure I have had to Confucius, as to so many other things, has been through Ezra Pound'.

5. Quoted Van Wyck Brooks, Fenollosa and his Circle, New York, 1962, page 68.
6. See F S Wight Morris Graves, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1956, page 20
7. A Werner (in Max Weber, New York, 1975, page 31) states that Weber regarded Fenollosa's writings, and especially Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art as a milestone in his education as an artist.
8. Quoted in Chisolm, op. cit, page 239
9. F.S.C. Northrop used O'Keefe's Abstraction No. 11 (1916) as a frontispiece to his book The Meeting of East and West, New York, 1946.
10. Quoted Marianne W Martin, 'Some American Contributions to Early Twentieth Century Abstraction', Arts, June 1980, page 164.
11. Handwritten note, John McLaughlin Papers, Archives of American Art .
12. In 'Une Peinture De L'Essentiel' Quadrum, May 1956, Masson notes the museum's strength in Sung dynasty paintings, and quotes a note he made on coming out of the museum which indicates the aspects which impressed him. 'La ligne la plus belle sera interrompue -s'evanouira - de préférence au leurre d'un remplissage destiné à se concilier un trop facile contemplateur. L'esprit du peintre: la forme même Eternité de l'éphémère. La brise qui tremble à la pointe d'une feuille, c'est notre vie'.
13. Tobey mentions having visited the Freer gallery in a letter to Dorothy Elmhirst, 5th June, 1935(?), Elmhirst Papers, Dartington Hall Archive, Devon.
14. A sketchbook drawing (Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art) shows a Chinese Chou bronze from the Freer.
15. The catalogue of Morris Graves's 1948 exhibition at the Willard Gallery, New York, contains a statement by Coomaswamy (chosen by Graves from Elements of Buddhist Iconography) which illustrates the anti-illusionistic nature of his view of art whilst also delineating a picture of art's function as being to aid in inducing a state of yogic absorption (see above, page 133): 'The vocabulary of art, sensible in itself, is necessarily built up from the elements of sensible experience, the source of all rational knowledge; but what is constructed is not intended

to resemble any natural species, and cannot be judged by verisimilitude or by the ear's and eye's sensation alone; it is intended to convey an intelligible meaning, and beyond that to point the way to the realization in consciousness of a condition of being transcending even the images of thought, and only self-identification with the content of the work, achieved by the spectator's own effort, can be regarded as perfect experience without distinction of "religions" and "esthetic", logic and feeling'.

16. 'We should err ... in supposing that Asiatic art represents an "ideal" world, a world "idealized" in the popular (sentimental, religious) sense of the words, that is, perfected or remoulded nearer to the heart's desire' ('The Transformation of Nature in Art, New York, 1956, page 10).
17. Eric Gill, Autobiography, London, 1940, page 174. See also W Shewring (ed) Letters of Eric Gill, London, 1947 for correspondence with Coomaraswamy. Gill wrote an introduction to Coomaraswamy's Visvakarma, London, 1914. Relations between these two figures are traced by Walter Shewring, 'Ananda Coomaraswamy and Eric Gill' in S Durai Raga Singam, Remembering and Remembering, Again and Again, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.
18. Coomaraswamy's letter to her is lost, but her reply to him (18th August, 1947) proposing an attitude towards abstract art he would not have found sympathetic is in the Princeton University Library. Rebay sees abstract art as concerned with 'abstract' mystical experience understood in an Oriental terminology. Given her key position in the New York art world as curator of the Museum of Non-Objective Art the fact that she should be thinking in these terms is in itself significant. She writes (quoted R Lipsey, Coomaraswamy, Volume 3, His Life and Work, New Jersey, 1977, page 225): 'To give up adoration to matter leads the feeling to the rhythm of the In-between, which is the Tao. Its cosmic vibrations are the secret of all soul-appeal and influence, inherent only to non-objective art'.
19. A letter of 30th April, 1932 to Meyer Schapiro is in the Princeton University Library.
20. See Dorothy Norman, 'The Hero: Myth/Image/Symbol', New York, 1969.
21. In earlier writing Coomaraswamy was less traditionalistic in his outlook, and more willing to accept the individualism of modern art. In 1919 he was able to write (quoted R. Lipsey, op. cit. page 150): 'The modern artist has to be his own priest and has both to recognise the vital problems and to find his own solutions'.



22. Quoted R Lipsey, op. cit. page 225. Compare to Hilla Rebay's statement, quoted in note 18.
  
23. In 'A Gift from Alfred Stieglitz', Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, xxii, 1924, Coomaraswamy attempts to bridge the gap between Stieglitz's use of photography as an art form and his own traditionalist aesthetic: 'In as much as the lens does not in the same way as the pencil lend itself to the elimination of elements the problem is so to render every element that it becomes essential; and in as much as in the last analysis there are no distinctions in nature of significant and insignificant the pursuit of this ideal is theoretically justified. A search for and approach to this end distinguishes the work of Alfred Stieglitz'.
  
24. Letter to Stieglitz, 4th March, 1923, Beinecke Library, Yale.
  
25. This is mentioned in a letter from Coomaraswamy to Stieglitz, 25th April, 1923, Beinecke Library, Yale
  
26. Mentioned in a letter from Coomaraswamy to Stieglitz, 7th March, 1924, Beinecke Library, Yale.
  
27. See Coomaraswamy's letter to Stieglitz, 17th November, 1923 Beinecke Library, Yale.
  
28. In interview with the author, 25th September, 1979, Lippold confirmed that he had read Coomaraswamy's works many years earlier.
  
29. Noguchi (A Sculptor's World, New York, 1968, page 18) describes how (during his 1927 Guggenheim fellowship) he spent a month in the British Library preparing for a trip to the Orient which he planned to undertake: 'I read everything pertaining to sculpture and the Orient, from Coomaraswamy to Max Muller'. In conversation with the author (18th June 1980) Noguchi mentioned having developed an interest in Indian philosophy and mythology. He felt a sympathy with it because it seemed to embody human issues. Noguchi had several Indian friends and took an interest in the movement for independence in India. Works such as Bindu (exhibited Cordier and Ekstrom, New York, April 1967) and Gunas (1948, Marble) betray in their titles Noguchi's awareness of Hindu philosophy derived in part from Coomaraswamy. The 'Gunas' (rajas, tamas and sattva) are the three aspects or strands of material nature, being combined in varying relationships in all phenomena according to traditional Hindu philosophy. Noguchi chose the title since the sculpture is made up of three interlocking pieces, each of which supports the others. Just as man's nature would be incomplete without the presence of all three of the Gunas, the sculpture would not be viable without each of its elements.

Noguchi's first visit to India was made in 1949, the year after this sculpture was made. He was impressed by the close links between art and life which he perceived both there and in Bali. The large Buddhist and Hindu temples impressed him as sculptural entities: 'There is no vaster concept of sculpture than the temples of Ellora hewn out of the mother rock' he wrote in A Sculptor's World, page 31.

30. In 'Some Aspects of Sung Painting', Magazine of Art, October 1949, page 223 Macdonald-Wright shows he has read *And admired* Coomaraswamy's ideas on Indian art and its relationship to yogic techniques of concentration. In 'Observations' (included in Los Angeles, University of California Art Galleries, Stanton Macdonald-Wright, 1970) he includes Coomaraswamy in a list of art writers he appreciates but doesn't necessarily agree with. In 'Blueprint for a textbook on art', College Art Journal, March 1945, he describes a possible textbook on Oriental art and Coomaraswamy is mentioned as one of the people he would like to see contributing a section. Evidence of an influence from Coomaraswamy on Macdonald-Wright's thinking about art can be found in a statement of 1956 (in Los Angeles County Museum, 'A Retrospective Showing of the Work of Stanton Macdonald-Wright' 1956) in which he quotes Dante ('chi pingge figura, si non puo esser lei, non la puo porre') to illustrate the idea of the artist's identification with his work in the act of painting, an attitude he also notes (see page 103) in Oriental art. This isolated phrase is also used in Coomaraswamy's 'The Transformation of Nature in Art' (page 7, and again page 202, note 61) - also in a discussion of Oriental aesthetics - and this must surely be Macdonald-Wright's source.
31. Ossorio met Coomaraswamy when he was a student: 'I met him when I was at Harvard, [and] he was at the Boston Museum. He was a fascinating man if only because he opened one's eyes to the richness of a tradition that lay behind these enigmatic Oriental objects. [Coomaraswamy enabled Ossorio to see the religious dimension of art] ... there was a whole social, theological, aesthetic structure behind them. And one that was quite different from what was behind some of the more immediately contemporary work'. (A Ossorio, in interview with the author, 17th September 1979). A religious subject matter was to appear in Ossorio's mature works such as Mother Church (wax and watercolour, 22 x 16", collection the artist) - indeed in 1950 he decorated a church in the Phillipines - but evidence of an influence from Coomaraswamy's ideas on art and religion is already present in his senior year thesis at Harvard, which links closely these two fields of experience. It is entitled 'Spiritual Influences on the Visual Image of Christ'.
32. Reinhardt's lecture notes record that he referred students to Coomaraswamy's History of Indian and Indonesian Art. The Dance of Siva is also included on a reading list. (Reinhardt Papers, Archives of American Art). In a letter to Thomas Merton (1962) he mentions Coomaraswamy as one of his former 'favourite religious

- writers'. (J Masheck, 'Five Unpublished letters from Ad Reinhardt to Thomas Merton and two in return', Artforum, December 1978, page 25). Quotations from the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas in Reinhardt's notes show his close acquaintance with Hindu philosophy.
33. English potter Bernard Leach, a friend of Tobey's from his days at Dartington Hall, regarded Coomaraswamy (along with Soetsu Yanagi, who had been an early friend) as a highly significant commentator on the relationship of art and religion. In a letter of 24th November, 1964 (quoted page 299 of his autobiography 'Beyond East and West' London, 1978) he writes: 'I can think of only one creative critic of religion and art, of the East and of the West, with whom I can perhaps compare Yanagi, and that is Ananda Coomaraswamy, the well-known Indian critic, who died some years ago. Such men are rare, and very important to the whole world, for they lead the way forward to the next stage of evolving human life'.
  34. Fred Hoffman, (The Art and Life of Mark Tobey: A Contribution to an understanding of a psychology of consciousness, PhD thesis, University of California, L.A. 1977, page 62) includes this work in a list of books known to have been in Tobey's studio or to have been read by him.
  35. Confirmed in interview with the author, September 17, 1979.
  36. Mentioned in interview with the author, (14th August, 1979). Lassaw feels Coomaraswamy may have been the source through which he acquired his initial awareness of the Orient. The link which Coomaraswamy emphasizes between art and religion is one that Lassaw seems to respond to - 'My work inevitably, partakes of my philosophy, or rather more than my philosophy, my religion'. 'I am attracted to the ancient idea, in Coomaraswamy, that a good work of art is a theophany. I feel it is far more wonderful to praise God than to attempt to communicate some idea or other'. (Both these quotations are from undated handwritten notes, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art).
  37. According to Lipsey, op. cit, page 222, Coomaraswamy and Gliezes were in contact from 1935 and resumed correspondence after the war. In a letter of 5th November, 1945 (quoted by Lipsey) Gliezes discusses 'The Transformation of Nature in Art'. 'The Transformation of Nature in Art'.
  38. John Cage, in interview with the author, 30th August, 1979. He regards 'The Dance of Siva' as Coomaraswamy's other important book. Coomaraswamy provided Cage with his first significant introduction to Oriental thought, preceding his involvement with Suzuki. Cage met Coomaraswamy's widow, and his daughter came to one of Cage's classes at the New School, but he never made Coomaraswamy's personal acquaintance: 'I only went to a lecture once, I never knew him. I went to one lecture and I was amazed because he presented it all in Sanskrit and he made no attempt to translate, but it was very elegant' (interview with the author, 30th August, 1979).

39. Quoted R Kostelanetz, John Cage, London 1971, page 129.
40. Interview with the author, 30th August, 1979.
41. Ibid
42. Interview with Paul Cummings, transcript, page 93-4, Archives of American Art.
43. Ibid, page 102. 'Five Variations within a Sphere' was later owned by Cage, and was dedicated to him when exhibited at the Willard Gallery, April 12 - May 8, 1948.
44. John Cage, A year From Monday, New Lectures and Writings, Middletown, 1967, page 31.
45. Interview with the author, 30th August, 1979.
46. R Lippold, 'To Make Love to Life', College Art Journal, Summer 1960, page 304.
47. Interview with author, 14th August, 1979, East Hampton, New York.
48. Commenting on his Beside the Sea series, Motherwell states: 'one might say that the true way to "imitate" nature is to employ its own processes' (quoted H H Arnason, Robert Motherwell, New York 1977).
49. G. Onslow-Ford, 'Towards a New Subject in Painting' San Francisco, 1948, page 22. An acquaintance with Hindu thought was amongst Onslow-Ford's first contacts with Oriental philosophy. In San Francisco he studied Vedanta with Haridas Chaudhuri a pupil of Sri Aurobindo, prior to becoming involved with Zen. Notes and quotations in his sketchbooks indicate his familiarity with the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads and Patanjali.
50. 'Morris Graves - Excerpts from Guggenheim application', typescript in R Lippold papers, Archives of American art.
51. Interview with the author, 25th September, 1979. See also page 96 for related comments. Compare the second of the quotations given here with Coomaraswamy's discussion on page 65 of 'The Transformation of Nature in Art'.
52. In conversation with the author, 30th August, 1979.

53. Interview with the author, 17th September, 1979.
54. Ibid
55. Ibid. Ossorio liked the way in which (he felt) Pollock had 'merged the East and the West, his work expressed [for Ossorio] both action and contemplation'. (F du Plessix 'Ossorio the Magnificent' Art in America. March/April, 1967, page 60). He bought Pollock's 'Number 5' from the 1948 Betty Parsons exhibition and became friends with the artist soon after. In view of their close contact over the period which followed, and Ossorio's acknowledgement that he saw Pollock's work as aiding him in relating Oriental aesthetics to modern art, it would not be surprising if Ossorio had shared Coomaraswamy's ideas with Pollock.
56. Quoted in Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 'Mark Tobey', 1961. One of the earliest documentations we have of Tobey's interest in the Orient is a comment of 1925, made during his first visit to Europe. In this statement he is already mentioning the Orient and the Mediaeval in the same breath: 'America has been too long haunted by the art of the Italian Renaissance, with its great Gods Michelangelo and Leonardo. It is clearly time for us to find other sources of inspiration in the Gothic or Oriental', New York Herald Tribune, International Edition (Paris) 15th November, 1925. Newsclip in Tobey's studio, quoted Hoffman, op. cit., page 65).
57. Reinhardt made this statement in a lecture of 1943, quoted B Rose, Art as Art, The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt, New York, 1975, pagell4.
58. G Onslow-Ford, Painting in the Instant, London 1964, page 26
59. Quoted K Kuh 'The Artists' Voice' New York, 1962, page 117. Elsewhere - in a printed, duplicated sheet titled '"Three Kinds of Space" by Morris Graves,' copy in Artist's file, Seattle Public Library (apparently based on a letter from Graves to Mel Kohler, 1950, in files of Henry Gallery, Seattle) - Graves makes a similar point in different words: 'Ignored by modern civilization is the knowledge that brick-laying, plumbing, clerking, taxi-driving, gardening, housekeeping, photography bookkeeping, tennis, ad infinitum, each can be an ART, can bring into use the skill of an artist, can be freeing agents'.
60. Quoted J Butterfield, 'The Other Side of Wonder' in Boston I.C.A., 'Sam Francis', 1979. Francis seems to be seeing his painting as a kind of yoga, as being in the service of a larger goal. Elsewhere (quoted J Butterfield, 'Time has an infinite number of faces' in Los Angeles, County Museum, 'Sam Francis' 1980) he states 'my work is not just my paintings - it is something else ... painting holds me in check, so to speak, or keeps me from flying off in other directions'.

61. 'Morris Graves - Excerpts from Guggenheim application', typescript in R Lippold papers, Archives of American Art.

62. There is a reference to these different spaces in the title of a work of 1943 - 'Fish Reflected upon outer and Mental Space' tempera 26½ x 53", collection Mr and Mrs Charles Laughton, Hollywood. Similarities exist between Graves's conception of 'Three spaces' and a threefold classification of types of devotional yoga which Coomaraswamy makes (The Transformation of Nature in Art, page 164-5). He talks of devotion to 'gross' (Sthula) phenomenal images - that is, icons, to 'subtle' (sukhma) mental images; and that made directly to the deity (para-rupa, beyond form). Graves certainly seems to have begun elaborating his idea of the 'three spaces' prior to meeting Coomaraswamy, and we can assume that his writings were the source.

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63. Seattle painter Guy Anderson notes that he, Graves and other artists of their circle were very interested in reading about Oriental art and aesthetics, mentioning Coomaraswamy as of particular interest. According to Anderson, Graves made the visit to Boston to see some scrolls - he had been prohibited by circumstances from visiting Japan, his original intention. Anderson tells an anecdote about the meeting of the two men: 'He met Dr Coomaraswamy and he showed him a number of scrolls, and so they got to talking about the role of the Westerner and Eastern art and this sort of thing - so all of this was very, very interesting and Coomaraswamy was very nice to him and then as they were leaving Morris asked Dr Coomaraswamy for some advice about something and his great interest in the Far East, and Coomaraswamy said "My advice to you, young man, is go and pay tribute to Walt Whitman's grave"'. Anderson sees this statement as ironic, but of course Coomaraswamy was aware that Whitman was an example of an American creative talent who had successfully learnt from the Orient without sacrificing his own heritage. Thus he is not telling Graves to forget his interest in the East. Coomaraswamy describes Whitman (and Blake) as examples of 'idealistic individualism' (see R Lipsey, op. cit. note 18 above, page 108) holding out hope for a revival of the West. Despite his general antipathy to modern art, he does see possibilities that it might usefully respond to the Orient: "It is just possible (he writes, The Transformation of Nature in Art, page 3) that ... certain ... tendencies in modern European art on the one hand and the penetration of Asiatic thought and art into the Western environment on the other, may represent the possibility of a renewed rapprochement". A more general interest in Hindu thought can also be noted in Graves's case. Viola Patterson remembers Graves giving a copy of the Bhagavad Gita to her husband Ambrose Patterson. (interview with the author, 19th September, 1980, Seattle), and Guy Anderson notes that one Christmas Graves gave copies of that book to all his friends. This direct contact with a Hindu text may have been a response to reading Coomaraswamy, but an interest in the writings of the Theosophists, who draw deeply on the East, seems to be of an early date. An interest in the Orient amongst Seattle area artists was in any case general, geographical proximity perhaps playing a part.

- Anderson was introduced to Japanese prints by his childhood piano teacher, the wife of a missionary to Asia (conversation with the author, 20th September 1980, Seattle). Sculptor George Tzutakawa was educated in Japan (1917-1927) where he was exposed early to Zen, Noh drama, etc. Both Tzutakawa and fellow Japanese-American artist Paul Horiuchi credit Tobey with reawakening an interest in their cultural heritage. "Tobey began to unwind me ... [Tzutakawa says, interview with author, Seattle, 10th September, 1980] and rekindled my interest in Japanese art".
64. Quoted S Rodman 'Conversations with Artists' New York, 1957, page 12
65. This version is taken from a printed sheet titled "Three Kinds of Space" by Morris Graves 'in the Artist's file, Seattle Public Library. There are minor differences of wording.
66. Quoted in F S Wight. 'Morris Graves' Los Angeles, 1956, page 32
67. The Transformation of Nature in Art, page 29.
68. Letter to Kenneth Callahan, 25th September, 1948, K Callahan Papers, Archives of American Art. We see here another example of an artist being influenced by Coomaraswamy's discussion of the similarities between Oriental and Mediaeval European art. The fact that he made the visit soon after meeting Coomaraswamy leads one to conjecture whether he might have actually suggested the journey to Graves.
69. Letter to Kenneth Callahan, (dated to 1935 by Callahan, but perhaps of later date), K Callahan papers, Archives of American Art.
70. Pousette-Dart's wife remembers him giving her a copy of Lao Tzu soon after they met. (Author's interview with Mr & Mrs Pousette-Dart, 13th July, 1980).
71. 'The Way according to Lao Tzu' (New York, 1944) and 'Lao Tzu, The Way of Life' (New York, 1955) are recorded as being in Pollock's library by F O'Connor in F O'Connor and E Thaw 'Jackson Pollock, Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings, Drawings and other works' New Haven and London, 1978.
72. Ferren's awareness of Taoism stemmed from his early years in San Francisco. A journal entry of 3rd June, 1927 states: 'I believe in nothing but that there is a single fecundating principle. Tao' (quoted in New York, Graduate Centre, City University of New York, 'Ferren', text by Craig Bailey).

73. MacDonald-Wright has painted a work entitled 'Lao Tse'
74. Onslow-Ford mentions his study of the Tao in a letter to the author (16th March, 1980) writing 'I now perhaps feel closer to the Tao than to anything else'. In 'Instant Painting (the Way of the Painter)' (Archives of American Art, Washington DC) he writes (page 7): 'Discovering the Tao te Ching as a painter awoke the depths in ways not seen in traditional Chinese paintings'.
75. See John Cage, M:Writings, '67-72, London, 1973, page 213.
76. 'Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching' trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, London, 1973, Chapter 9.
77. Ibid. Chapter 19.
78. Handwritten Diary Note, 19th August, 1954 (?). Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art.
79. Carl Andre, letter to the author, 12th August, 1979.
80. For example: 'A great tailor cuts little' (Chapter 28). 'The Universe is sacred./You cannot improve it./If you try to change it, you will ruin it'. (Chapter 29). Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching op. cit.
81. Alan Watts 'The Way of Zen' London, 1957, page 35
82. Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching, trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, London, 1973, Chapter 62.
83. Ibid. Chapter 1
84. For discussion of Reinhardt's awareness of Taoistic attitudes, see Chapter Three, page 87.
85. Mark Tobey, 'Japanese Traditions and American Art', College Art Journal Fall 1958.
86. Paul Jenkins, quoted in Mario Amaya, 'Paul Jenkins, by Mario Amaya' Interview, ix. 9th September, 1979, page 56.
87. Note in sketch books, August 1967 (?), Onslow-Ford Papers, Archives of American Art



88. Frank Lloyd Wright, 'Western Round Table on Modern Art' (in Modern Artists in America first series, Ed R Motherwell and A Reinhardt, New York, 1951, page 29). Tobey was also present at this round table.
89. Frank Lloyd Wright, in 'Frank Lloyd Wright - writings and Buildings' selected by E Kaufmann and B Raeburn, New York 1974, page 298.
90. Waldemar Januszczak, 'Andre adds a human touch' Guardian 7th February, 1981.
91. See J Ittens 'Design and Form' , London 1964, page 18
92. Handwritten notes, Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art. Elsewhere he quotes 'illusion is colour, colour is illusion', attributing it to a source in Ch'an Buddhism. Tobey also looks upon colour as a distraction and cites an Oriental authority for his position. In interview with William Seitz he states (Tape III, side 1, page 4): 'I never did feel that colour was as important as people made it, to need colour was something young' and adds (page 5) 'colour in the Orient was for children' (Seitz Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington DC). Tobey's Zen master friend Takizaki provides a possible source for his statement here. In an interview he states 'colour is a distraction in nature ... it was an afterthought, placed in the trees, the flowers, the grass and the hills as a decorative feature to charm men but not to teach them' (Louis R Guzzo 'Words and Music, Seattle Times, 6th November, 1957). Tobey acknowledges an interest in the Japanese ideal of 'shibui' which he interprets as meaning hidden beauty, 'that which doesn't look like anything, but in time discloses its jewels' (W Seitz, Mark Tobey, New York, 1962, page 50). The often subdued and limited colour range of Tobey's work accords with his theoretical statements.
93. See Chapter Three, pages 96, 98 and 102. Further references can be found in the footnotes below which refer to specific artists.
94. Zen in the Art of Archery is included in a list of books in Pollock's library to be found in F O'Connor and E Thaw, Op. cit. The book was a gift of Paul Jenkins in 1955, a period in which Pollock was showing an interest in archery.
95. Mentioned by Motherwell in telephone conversation with the author (29th December, 1979) as one of the books about Zen he had read.
96. Mullican describes a seminar held by Alan Watts which he attended in Los Angeles during the 1950's: 'One evening there was a reading from 'Zen in the Art of Archery' - I immediately knew that this was also 'The Art of Painting' or the way I had always painted - since 1947' (L Mullican, letter to the author June 1980).

97. Masson mentions having read this work in 'Une Peinture De L'Essentiel', Quadrum, May 1956, page 38. He points out that Herrigel's idea of an 'artless' art ('L'art sans art') is applicable to painting. Herrigel is also mentioned by Masson in Deborah Rosenthal, 'Interview with André Masson', Arts Vol. 55, No. 3, November 1980, page 88.
98. See Georges Braque 'Le Tir à L'Arc', 1960. This volume juxtaposes aphorisms by Braque on painting with texts from Herrigel's 'Zen in the Art of Archery', including excerpts from the introduction by Suzuki. Illustrations by Braque are scattered through the text.
99. See below, Chapter Four, page 136. Davie's Target For No Shooting (oil on canvas, 90 x 82", 1958, collection Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh) appears to be a reference to Herrigel.
100. See Chapter Three, page 117 and note 166 for further references to Noguchi's awareness of Herrigel.
101. Letter to Leonard Elmhirst, Spring 1958, Elmhirst Papers, Dartington Hall Archive, Devon.
102. Wesley Wehr, in conversation with the author, 22nd September 1980.
103. Letter to Dorothy Elmhirst, 1934, Elmhirst Papers, Dartington Hall Archive, Devon. An illustration in the letter shows an archer. 140
104. A Elsen, Paul Jenkins, New York, 1974, page 60. Jenkins read Herrigel's book soon after settling in Paris in 1953. See below Chapter Three, pages 96, 123 and note 165 for information of Jenkins's response to Herrigel.
105. See F Hoffman, Op. Cit. Note 34, page 52. On page 405, (note 59) Hoffman states that Tobey owned I Mears, Creative Energy, a study of the I Ching, and gave a copy to a friend in 1938.
106. The I Ching is referred to by Francis in a letter of 1966 which is excerpted in Betty Freeman, Sam Francis: Ideas and Paintings, 1969, unpublished manuscript, copy in Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
107. See below, Chapter Three, page 128 and note 206. The richly imagistic nature of the commentary to the I Ching may have inspired in part Jenkins's Water Crane, 1956, oil on canvas 64 x 51", collection the artist. (See also below, Chapter Six, page 212 for a discussion of sources of this work). A part of the commentary to the sixty-first hexagram ('Inner truth') reads 57

(The I Ching or Book of Changes, translated by Richard Wilhelm, London, 1951): 'A crane calling in the shade. Its young answers it. I have a good goblet. I will share it with you!' While the crane is a commonly recurring symbol in Far Eastern art, it should be noted that cranes and goblets both figure in the iconography of Morris Graves. A great many of Jenkins's other titles reveal his interest in Oriental thought. Amongst the many which could be mentioned are: 'Lotus' (1957) 'Phenomena Kwan Yin' (1969) and 'Phenomena Zen Shield' (1972).

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108. References to the I Ching occur in his sketchbooks (Onslow-Ford Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.)
109. See below, Chapter Three, page 130.
110. In 1970, Richard Serra created a work entitled 'To Encircle Base Plate Hexagram Right Angle Inverted' Serra visited Japan in 1970, and has been interested in Zen meditation.
111. Kaprow points out that he is unable to follow Cage in the latter's use of the I Ching in his work: 'I find the I Ching a beautiful book, but it is not a fast enough method for me, whereas Cage is inordinately bound up with careful procedures'. R Kostelanetz, 'The Theatre of Mixed Means' London, 1970, page 113.
112. An influence on his work from the I Ching, and Jung's introduction to it, are mentioned by John Mc Cracken in a letter to the author (11th August, 1980).
113. Her study of the I Ching is noted in Springfield Museum of Fine Arts 'Three American purists' 1975. An oil by von Wiegand in the Walker Art Gallery, Minneapolis, is entitled 'The Great Field of Action or the Sixty-Four Hexagrams'
114. See New York, City University Graduate Centre, John Ferren text by Craig Bailey, page 7.
115. B Cavaliere ('Theodoros Stamos in Perspective', Arts, December 1977 page 110) notes Stamos's reading on Oriental art and thought, pointing out that he became 'especially enthusiastic about the translations of Chinese poetry by Arthur Waley'. Cavaliere also suggest Waley as a possible source for Stamos's awareness of the Chinese custom of the Emperor having to plough a furrow on ascending the throne, which is displayed in the title of his 1950 painting 'The Emperor flows the field'. 'The Emperor sees the Mountains', also of 1950, appears to be a related work.

116. Jenkins remembers being brought a Waley book by a friend who had visited London whilst living in Paris, circa 1953. (Paul Jenkins, in interview with the author, 8th October, 1979).
117. Waley's 'Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China' is mentioned in a booklist Reinhardt prepared for his students in 1963 (Reinhardt Papers, Archives of American Art).
118. A quotation from Waley may be found in his sketchbooks (Onslow-Ford Papers, Archives of American Art).
119. See S MacDonald-Wright, 'Blueprint for a textbook on art', College Art Journal, March 1945
120. See interview with Masson by Takemoto, August 1969 in C F Yamada (ed.) 'Dialogue in Art' London 1976, page 297.
121. Motherwell recalls reading 'The Flight of the Dragon' during the 1940's. The book was brought to his notice by Baziotes, who shared an interest in the Orient during that period. (R Motherwell in telephone conversation with the author, 29th December, 1979).
122. See 'Observations', by Macdonald-Wright in Los Angeles, University of California Art Galleries, 'Stanton Macdonald-Wright', 1970.
123. See Cavaliere, Op. Cit., page 110.
124. Writing to Dorothy Elmhirst from Washington D.C., June 5, 1935 (?) Tobey notes 'I am very enthusiastic about Lawrence Binyon's The Spirit of Man in Asian Art. It's just out and very inspiring!' (letter in Elmhirst papers, Dartington Hall Archive, Devon).
125. I Noguchi in conversation with the author, 18th June, 1980.
126. E Pound 'Chronicles' Blast No. 2, July 1915, London, page 86. 'Rhythmic vitality', (rather than illusionistic skill) is the quality in Oriental aesthetics which is brought to the defence of Vorticism: 'Every statue, every picture, is a series of ordered relations, controlled as the body is controlled in the dance, by the will to express a single idea ... It is not essential that the subject-matter should represent or be like anything in nature; only it must be alive with rhythmic vitality of its own'. Waley also knew Pound around this time. From 1913 until 1929 Waley was employed in the Oriental Print Department of the British Museum, working under Lawrence Binyon.

127. Reinhardt's friendship with Merton is attested to by Rita Reinhardt (telephone interview with the author, 5th August, 1980). Correspondence between them has been published by J Masheck ('Five Unpublished letters from Ad Reinhardt to Thomas Merton and two in return', Artforum, December 1978), and may also be found in the Reinhardt papers (letter Merton to Reinhardt, 9th May, 1959, letter Merton to Reinhardt, 8th August, 1960), Archives of American Art. Merton had been art editor of the Columbia College magazine Jester, to which Reinhardt had contributed. His comments on Reinhardt's contributions are given in 'The Seven Story Mountain', page 154. Reinhardt was to make Merton a gift of one of his later works to hang in his cell at the Abbey of Gethsemanie. In one letter Merton asks Reinhardt to send him illustrations of non-Christian sacred art for a book he is writing. Not only was Merton able to share Reinhardt's interest in the Orient, but he was also responsive to art. His father had been an artist. He himself practiced calligraphy and chose the subject 'Nature and Art in William Blake' for his M.A. thesis.

For a discussion of the parallels in Merton's and Reinhardt's thinking and the implication that an influence is present, see below, Chapter Two, page 75.

128. Cage quotes Blyth ('Silence', Middletown, 1961, page 131) that 'the highest responsibility of the artist is to hide beauty'.
129. Onslow-Ford includes a quotation from Blyth in his sketchbook of the early 1950's: 'Not to distinguish between man and nature - this is the secret of living. And not to distinguish between man, nature and God, this is to be a Buddha'. (Onslow-Ford Papers, Archives of American Art).
130. Andre writes 'Through an early interest in poetry I became familiar with Haiku in translation. This was my first, and main, exposure to Japanese texts'. (C Andre, letter to the author, 12th August, 1979).
131. See 'Silence' Middletown, 1961, page 269.
132. Pollock and Guston's High School teacher took his students to hear Krishnamurti lecture in Ojai, California. At this time, Krishnamurti had not broken from the Theosophists, whose ideas Pollock is known to have been affected by - he mentions this interest, for instance, in a letter to his brother of 1930. Lee Krassner confirms (in F du Plessix and Cleve Grey, 'Who was Jackson Pollock', Art in America, May/June 1967) that Pollock attended these lectures, but sees any influence that may have resulted as belonging to a period in his life before she had met him (Lee Krassner, telephone conversation with the author 6th August, 1980). Francis O'Connor (conversation with the author, 27th September, 1979) was told by Benton that Pollock

never discussed Theosophy with him.

133. Tobey's awareness of Krishnamurti was confirmed in conversation with Wesley Wehr, a friend of the artist, 15th September, 1980.
134. Louise Nevelson had been interested in Krishnamurti prior to 1931. See her 'Dawns and Dusks', New York, 1976, page 43.
135. Graves's New York dealer, Marion Willard Johnson, suggests that he may have had an interest in Krishnamurti prior to becoming absorbed in Zen (interview with the author, 4th October, 1979).
136. Cage lists the Gospel of Ramakrishna as one of his favorite books (see R Kostelanetz, John Cage, London, 1971, page 138). He had been given a copy by an Indian friend Gita Sarabhai, which he read prior to attending Suzuki's classes (see below, page 82 ). Ramakrishna's view that music is a way 'into' life, (quoted by Cage in 'Silence', page 45) would have helped the composer towards the view of art's function he developed, (see Chapter Four, page 132).
137. Cage, who has been a friend of Graves over a long period, claims that the painter is very interested in Ramakrishna. 'His life is very close to the 'Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' and he begins every day with the reading of this book ... It's as though *he* were doing a physical exercise, or a yoga.' (J Cage, interview with the author, 30th August, 1979).
138. A quotation from Ramakrishna may be found in his sketchbooks (Onslow-Ford Papers, Archives of American Art).

## CHAPTER TWO

1. In J Elderfield, 'Geometric Abstract Painting' Artforum, May 1970, page 54, he is quoted as stating 'to me, the circle and the square were the sky and the earth as symbolized by the ancient Oriental religions; they formed a kind of rudimentary alphabet by means of which everything could be expressed with the most limited means. They evoked prehistoric runes and the early Chinese I Ching, or book of changes'.
2. See Richard Sheppard 'Dada and Mysticism: Influences and Affinities' in Stephen Foster and Rudolph Kuenzli, 'Dada Spectrum: The Dialectics of Revolt', 1979. This essay is the source of all other unacknowledged quotations concerning Dada and the Orient.

3. Quoted R Motherwell (ed.), The Dada Painters and Poets, New York 1951, page 247.
4. A Breton, Surrealism and Painting, London, 1972, page 224
5. G Duthuit, Chinese Mysticism and Modern Painting, London, 1936, page 12. This passage and another from the same page are included, virtually unaltered, in Stamos's 1954 essay 'Why Nature in Art', excerpts from which are included in B Cavaliere, 'Theodoros Stamos in Perspective', Arts, December 1977.
6. A Masson, interviewed by T Takemoto, August 1969, in C F Yamada (ed), Dialogue in Art, London, 1976
7. Quoted Umbro Apollonio 'Miro', London, page 21.
8. M Leiris 'Joan Miro' in Documents No 5, October 1929, page 264.
9. See especially Chapter Six, pages 200 - 203.
10. See Patrick Waldberg, Surrealism, London, 1965, page 41.
11. Ibid. Page 76.
12. Artaud's 'Letter to the Buddhist Schools' sees rationality as a European 'problem' which the East does not face. 'We suffer from a corruption, the corruption of Reason', he writes. (Waldberg, Op. Cit., page 60)
13. Quoted D T Suzuki, The Zen Doctrine of No Mind, London 1949, page 146.
14. Ibid, pages 81-2
15. A Breton, Surrealism and Painting, London, 1972, page 224 Reinhardt also notes (in a somewhat disparaging way) the parallels between the bizarre methods of Zen masters such as Rinzai and Tokusan and the antics of the Surrealists. He refers to the 'wonderful and witty stories of the early Dada and Surrealist artists, barking like dogs, getting drunk, shouting and getting arrested, with a rich admirer always waiting bail' (untitled, undated, handwritten notes, Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art).

16. Statement in New York, Curt Valentin Gallery, André Masson - Recent Work and Earlier Paintings, 1953
17. John Cage, Silence, Middletown, 1961, page 'xi. Nancy Wilson Ross was an acquaintance of Morris Graves during his Seattle period.
18. A reference to Freud seems to be intended when Onslow-Ford writes: 'Some would-be healers look at the effects of the unconscious on the conscious from the point of view of sickness, obsessions, complexes and madness. These approaches treat the mind as if it were divided against itself, and this tends to arrest inner growth. The unconscious inner-worlds are best approached from the point of view of health, wholeness and an open mind' (G Onslow-Ford, Creation, Basle, 1978, page 29).
19. Onslow-Ford notes (in interview with the author, 1st December, 1979) that Jung was considered by the Surrealists as a 'mystic', a 'throwback'. Jerome Kamrowski, a painter closely involved in New York Surrealism, gives the evaluation of Jung current in his circle: 'when things were exciting and important was the late thirties [sic] then Jung was a fascist' (letter to the author, May 8, 1980).
20. An early letter from Graves to Kenneth Callahan (K Callahan papers, Archives of American Art, dated 1935 by Callahan but probably later) contains a quotation from Jung on the 'archetypes'. Graves had obviously found in Jung reinforcement of his own views on the role of visualization in creative inspiration, which were derived from Coomaraswamy. He sees introspection as a means to obtain vital and universal imagery: 'The sum of the archetype signifies this for Jung [Graves comments], the sum of all the latent potentialities of the psyche - an enormous inexhaustible store of ancient knowledge concerning the most profound relationship between God, man and the cosmos'. He quotes Jung that 'where faith and dogma have hardened into empty forms as in our highly civilized, technical and rational-minded Western world' the archetypes have 'lost their magical force and left man helpless from within and from without'. Graves feels that 'to remove this confusion and to assist man to a wholeness is the meaning and aim of Jung's guidance', an aim he takes up in his art, attempting to revitalize symbols by using yogic methods of visualization. Graves' interest in Jung is confirmed by his friend, Jan Thompson (in interview with the author, 20th September 1950), who claims he has close friends who are Jungians. Marion Willard, New York dealer of Graves and Tobey, had heard Jung lecture in Europe in 1937 (interview with the author, 4th October, 1979) and it is almost certain that she would have discussed his ideas with these artists.
21. According to D J Watson ('Stanton Macdonald-Wright' M.A. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1957), Macdonald-Wright's unpublished manuscript 'Beyond Aesthetics' refers to Jung's 'Psychological Types' and uses Jungian terminology.



22. Motherwell was offered a free Jungian analysis during the 1940's but turned it down. His preference is for the more empirical theories of Freud. (Robert Motherwell, telephone interview with the author, 29th December, 1979).
23. Tobey gave a copy of Jung's 'Two Essays in Analytical Psychology' to a friend, Mrs Bishop, between 1934-48 (F Hoffman. 'The Art and Life of Mark Tobey: A contribution to an understanding of a psychology of consciousness' PhD Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1977, page 367, note 28.
24. Baziotes quotes Jung in dialogue related in an unpublished literary portrait by Donald Paneth (written 1961, but based on interviews February-July, 1952), Baziotes Papers, Archives of American Art.
25. In a letter to the author (June 1980) Lee Mullican states that Jung has been of considerable influence on him.
26. Pollock's statement 'I have been a Jungian for a long time' is well known. He received therapy from Joseph Henderson (early 1939 to Summer 1940) and Violet Staub de Lazlo (by Spring 1941 till at least the end of 1942). For references, and a critical discussion of Pollock and Jung, see W Rubin 'Pollock as Jungian Illustrator: The Limits of Psychological Criticism', Art in America, November 1979.
27. Sam Francis began working with Dr James Kirsch, a Jungian psychiatrist with knowledge of alchemy, in Autumn 1971.
28. In interview with the author (October 8th 1979) Paul Jenkins noted that he had worked with a Jungian psychiatrist for about four years, and had learnt much about the language of Jungian psychology.
29. 'Psychology and Alchemy' was published in 1953 but some material was included in 'The Integration of the Personality' (New York, 1939). This book includes Jung's influential ideas on alchemy. Lassaw has both the versions on his studio bookshelf. Lee Krassner had read and been excited by 'The Integration of the Personality' prior to meeting Pollock (telephone conversation with the author, 6th August, 1980). 'Psychology and Alchemy' was the first of Jung's books which Paul Jenkins read - he obtained it in December 1953.
30. I Lassaw, interview with the author, 3rd August, 1979.
31. R Pousette- Dart, interview with the author, 13th July, 1980.
32. Opinion expressed by Paul Jenkins in interview with the author 8th October, 1979.

33. 'Psychology and Religion, West and East', London 1958, page 536
34. 'Modern Man in Search of a Soul', London 1933, page 242
35. Ibid, page 249
36. 'Psychology and Alchemy', London, 1953, page 7
37. 'Psychology and Religion, West and East', London, 1958, page 485
38. Theodore Roszak, interview with James Eliot, 1956, transcript page 30, Archives of American Art.
39. A Ossorio, in interview with the author, 17th September, 1979.
40. S Lipton, letter to the author, 26th April, 1980. Joseph Campbell's study of archetypal patterns in world symbolism, 'The Hero with a Thousand Faces' may have been one of the inspirations of Lipton's 'Hero' series. The S Lipton papers (Archives of American Art) contain a letter to Lipton from Campbell, written in response to a letter from Lipton asking to meet him. Lipton is, however, unwilling to accept all the implications of Jung's and Joseph Campbell's writings on the collective unconscious: whilst he sees the symbolism of his works as being of a more than personal nature, Lipton writes 'As to Jung and his collective unconscious, I have serious reservations. I doubt whether general basic symbols and myths prevail as a collective universal fact in the human unconscious' (letter to author, May 1980).
41. I Lassaw, 'Perspectives and Reflections of a Sculptor', Leonardo Vol. 1, 1968, page 351.
42. 'Psychology and Alchemy', page 94, (Chapter Three is entitled 'The Symbolism of the Mandala')
43. Interview with the author, 8th October, 1979.
44. Ibid.
45. Dale Mc Conathy 'Ad Reinhardt', in Paris, Grand Palais, Ad Reinhardt 1973, page 42.
46. Jung discusses these psychological functions in 'Psychological Types' (first published 1923), page 436-7.

47. See 'The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious' London, 1959, page 436-7.
48. 'Psychology and Religion: West and East,' London, 1958, page 59 (Originally published as 'The Terry Lectures of 1937', New Haven, 1938).
49. I Lassaw, interview with Dorothy Seckler, Tape 1, transcript page 19, Archives of American Art.
50. J Mc Cracken, letter to the author, 11th August, 1980.
51. J Cage, interview with the author, 30th August, 1979.
52. I Lassaw, in conversation with the author, 13th August, 1979.
53. P Jenkins, in conversation with the author, 24th September, 1979.
54. Onslow-Ford is also aware of this book, which he mentions in a letter to the author, 16th March, 1980.
55. Nancy Wilson Ross, 'Something about Morris Graves' in Minneapolis, Saint Paul Art Center, Morris Graves, 1963.
56. Page 18: 'In one of the Puranic accounts of the deeds of Vishnu in his Boar incarnation ... occurs a casual reference to the cyclic recurrence of the great moments of myth. The Boar, carrying on his arm the goddess Earth whom he is in the act of rescuing from the depths of the sea, passingly remarks to her:  
"every time I carry you this way..." For the Western mind, which believes in single epoch-making historical events ... this casual comment of the ageless god has a gently minimizing, anihilating effect'.
57. Guy Anderson, interview with William Hope and Wesley Wehr, 1974 transcript page 48, W Wehr papers, Archives, University of Washington.
58. C G Jung, foreward to D T Suzuki 'An Introduction to Zen Buddhism' London, 1949, page 15.
59. 'Since the unconscious really means the not-conscious, nobody can gain that state while he is alive, and be able to remember it afterwards, as the Hindus claim. In order to remember, one must have a conscious spectator, who is the Self or the

- conscious being' (Jung, quoted in Miguel Serrano 'G G Jung and Hermann Hesse', New York, 1968, page 49.
60. Typed, undated notes, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art. (The following quotations are from the same source)
  61. See A Watts, The Way of Zen, London, 1957, (in particular pages 97, 108 and 147 ff. for a discussion of this characteristic of Zen).
  62. An illustration of this non-conceptual method of conveying truths is given in a Zen anecdote recounted by Lassaw: 'A young disciple asked a Zen master what was the ultimate nature of reality ... the master pointed to some bamboo leaves. He said see these leaves are short and these are long' (undated, handwritten notes, I Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art).
  63. G Onslow-Ford, note in sketchbook (c 1963), Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C. Onslow-Ford distinguishes Zen from the Hindu tradition by its non-symbolic means: 'The Hindu images are mostly expressed in symbols - it should be possible to get at the inner worlds directly through spontaneity' he writes (letter to the author, 16th March, 1980).
  64. John Cage, interview with the author, 30th August, 1979.
  65. John Cage, M: Writings '67-'72, London 1973, page 17.
  66. C Andre, statement in letter to the author, 12th August, 1979
  67. T Merton, Zen and the Birds of Appetite, New York, 1968, page 50.
  68. T Merton, letter to A Reinhardt, 9th May, 1959, Reinhardt Papers, Archives of American Art.
  69. A Reinhardt, quoted J Masheck, 'Five Unpublished Letters from Ad Reinhardt to Thomas Merton and two in Return', Artforum December 1978, page 26. The distinction between Reinhardt's attitude and that found in Zen can be brought out if we compare this statement with Suzuki's quoted below (Chapter Four, page 142). Reinhardt attacks imagery, Suzuki reacts with indifference.
  70. John Ferren, interview with Paul Cummings, 7th June 1968, transcript page 42, Archives of American Art. Ferren dates his own first contact with Zen to the 1920's. He was friendly at that time with several Chinese painters. Speaking of his encounter with it, which was to continue in New York, he says:

'I read it continually and often reflect about it, and in many ways I absorbed a great number of factors of it' (interview with Paul Cummings).

71. James Brooks, interview with Dorothy Seckler, 10th June, 1965, transcript page 30, Archives of American Art.
72. Hasegawa, who exhibited paintings influenced by the Japanese sumi tradition, was an important figure because of the interest he stimulated in Far Eastern art and philosophy amongst New York artists. Lassaw remembers Hasegawa performing the tea ceremony for him (conversation with the author, 13th August, 1979) and he accompanied Noguchi on a visit to Japan in 1950. Hasegawa took with him to Japan some photos of Kline's work, which were published there to great excitement in the Japanese art world. His essay 'Abstract Art in Japan' (in The World of Abstract Art, a volume produced by the American Abstract Artists in 1957) discusses Oriental precedents for abstraction, and is made use of by Tobey, (see page 230).
73. Philip Guston, conversation with the author, 4th October, 1979.
74. Reinhardt also lectured to the club on Oriental art (10th October, 1958). In 1952 he had lectured to 'Studio 35' on the subjects 'Religion and Modern Art' and 'Detachment and Involvement in Eastern and Western Art'.
75. H Holtzman. 'The Sickness of the Cult of the Hero', It Is, Issue 4, Autumn 1959, page 33.
76. D T Suzuki. Mysticism; Christian and Buddhist, New York, 1957 page 48.
77. Handwritten, undated note, I Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art.
78. I Lassaw, interview with Irving Sandler, 26th August, 1968, transcript page 84, Archives of American Art.
79. Ibid, page 59. In interview with the author (13th August, 1979) Lassaw confirmed his appreciation of this 'wordly' aspect of Zen, illustrating it by quoting a saying of Pang-yun, which eschews the supernatural for the every day: 'Miraculous power and marvellous activity - drawing water and hewing wood'.
80. I Lassaw, interview with Irving Sandler, 26th August, 1968, transcript page 60, Archives of American Art.

81. D T Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture, New York, 1959, page 17 (first English publication, Kyoto, 1938).
82. Ibid, page 17.
83. D T Suzuki, quoted O Siren 'The Chinese on the Art of Painting' New York, 1963, page 106. (first English publication, Peking, 1936). Reinhardt quotes this passage by Suzuki in a humorous 'review of Suzuki's "Zen Buddhism" and Rudi Blesh's "Modern Art, U.S.A." (both books being published in 1956): 'One book tells of the jokes, stories, dialogues and methods of the old sophisticated Zen masters, and the other tells of the old jokes, bar gossip and exclamatory utterances of the new primitive expressionist masters'. Reinhardt's deflationary style, which obscures the real importance Zen had for him, is in clear evidence: 'A good part of Modern Art, now a big and booming business, alert to all commercial possibilities and new marketing ideas, has its eye on Zen. Zen might be an additional selling point and help modern artists to sell out... Both books seem to feel things are o.k. and that everything happens for the best and the best thing is to leap before you look, live it up, get down into and go along with the swing of things' (handwritten untitled notes, Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art).
84. For Example, Essays in Zen Buddhism was first published in London (in three volumes), 1927, 1933 and 1934. Many works were published or republished in the late 1940's and early 1950's e.g. Introduction to Zen Buddhism (New York, 1949, first published in English Kyoto, 1934).
85. In a letter to Ulfert Wilke (1960), Tobey includes a quotation from Suzuki's 'Zen and Japanese Culture'. (Ulfert Wilke papers, Archives of American Art).
86. B Cavaliere ('Theodoros Stamos in Perspective', Arts, December, 1977) mentions that Stamos owned Suzuki's 'An Introduction to Zen Buddhism'.
87. Reinhardt mentions Suzuki in a 1962 letter to Thomas Merton as one of his former 'favorite religious writers'. (see J Masheck (ed), 'Five Unpublished letters from Ad Reinhardt to Thomas Merton and Two in return' Artforum, December 1978, page 25).
88. Macdonald-Wright mentions Suzuki in a list of scholars whom he would like to see contributing to a projected publication, outlined in 'Blueprint for a textbook on art' College Art Journal, March 1945, page 44.
89. A sketchbook note probably of the mid 1950's reveals that Onslow-Ford has read Suzuki's 'Studies in Zen', (London, 1955. Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.

90. Tom Hess (writing in 'It Is' No. 5) recalls sculptor Pavia lending him a book by Suzuki in 1951.
91. Although a very minor artist, Ray is mentioned here since he painted a series of eight portraits of Suzuki. These were exhibited in 1955 at the Corcoran Gallery, Washington D.C. and the Willard Gallery, New York. Works by Ray were apparently owned by Suzuki. A photo portrait of Suzuki was made by Alvin Langdon Coburn in 1936.
92. Mullican states in a letter to the author (June 1980) that he has read Suzuki.
93. Masson mentions having read Suzuki's books in an interview with Takemoto (August, 1969) in C.F. Yamada (ed) 'Dialogue in Art' London, 1976, page 297.
94. See Chapter One, note 98.
95. Breton mentions Suzuki's 'The Zen Doctrine of No-mind' (London, 1949) in a letter of 1952 to Picabia. 'I would like you to read it [he writes] because if anyone has set himself the task proposed in this book of transcending discrimination in all its forms, it is certainly you'. (Surrealism and Painting. 1965, page 224). In the post-war period, Breton was interested in the relationship of Zen to the aesthetic of the 'Tachistes', a connection that is also made by Tapié and Mathieu.
96. In 'Beyond East and West' (London, 1978, page 289), Leach writes: 'I met Dr Suzuki ... but I have not talked with him more than half a dozen times, yet he and his friends Soetsu Yanagi and R H Blyth changed my outlook'.
97. I Noguchi, in conversation with the author, 18th June, 1980. In 'A Sculptor's World' (New York, 1968, page 40) Noguchi mentions a conversation about Japanese gardens which he had with Suzuki on a train between Kyoto and Tokyo.
98. Betty Parsons states (conversation with the author, 10th October, 1979), that she had attended the Columbia lectures, and remembers Sari Dienes being there as well. She claims that Suzuki also lectured at venues other than Columbia and that both Reinhardt and Rothko attended his talks. Whilst Reinhardt's attendance at the Columbia lectures is also attested to by Lucy Lippard (Ad Reinhardt, Abrams, 1981) there is no corroborative evidence which suggests Rothko took a serious interest in the Orient.
99. Lassaw remembers his presence (conversation with the author, 13th August, 1979).

100. John Cage, conversation with the author, 30th August, 1979.
101. Lassaw's daybooks contain notes taken during Suzuki's classes, and these appear to date from c. 1953 to 1957. A note dated May 17, probably of that latter year, records Suzuki's last class at Columbia, Lassaw Papers, Archives of American Art.
102. J Cage: 'I had the good luck to study with Suzuki ... for two years ... I'm not a very good historian, but that was '47-'48, or '48-'49, '46-'47'.' (interview with author, 30th August, 1979). Ellsworth J Snyder ('Chronological Table of John Cage's Life', in Kostelanetz 'John Cage', page 38) dates Cage's study of Oriental philosophy with Sarabhai and Suzuki to 1945-1947.
103. P Guston, interview with author, 4th October, 1979.
104. P Guston, letter to the author, 20th September, 1979
105. J. Cage, interview with the author, 30th August, 1979
106. J Cage, Ibid.
- Cage was to meet Suzuki again on a trip he made to Japan in the early 1960's.
107. Cavaliere (op. cit. note 86) notes that Stamos owned Watts' 'The Spirit of Zen' (first published, London, 1936).
108. Guston mentioned that he had read books by Watts in conversation with the author, (4th October, 1979).
109. In conversation with the author (24th September, 1979) Jenkins mentioned that he considered Watts to have played an important role in the introduction of Eastern ideas to the West.
110. Some brief, cryptic notes by Reinhardt (B Rose (ed) Art as Art: The Selected Writing of Ad Reinhardt, New York, 1975, page 133) can be shown to refer to Watts's writings. The phrase 'bag of skin' is a reference to Watts's idea that Western man is deluded by the 'hallucination' that one is 'a separate ego enclosed in a bag of skin', a hallucination the holistic Oriental world view can dispel. The phrases 'in the know', 'now you see it, now you don't' and 'Mobius strip- no inside and outside' can also be shown to be references to Watts's 'The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are', London, 1969, pages 9, 11, 20 and 21.



111. In one of his broadcast lectures Watts apparently repeats an anecdote told to him by Lassaw.
112. Carl Andre, letter to the author, 12th August, 1979.
113. Amongst works by Watts seen on the sculptor's studio bookshelves (August 1979) were 'Psychotherapy East and West' and 'The Way of Zen'
114. I Lassaw, 'Perspectives and Reflections of a Sculptor' Leonardo Vol. 1, 1968, page 355.
115. G Onslow-Ford & letter to the author, 16th March, 1980.
116. J Cage, in interview with the author, 30th August, 1979.
117. Alan Watts, 'In my own way', London, 1973, page 248.
118. Marion Willard, New York dealer of Tobey and Graves was a friend of Alan Watts. (Marion Willard, interview with the author, 4th October, 1979).
119. Mullican writes (letter to author, June 1980), that 'it was through Gordon Onslow-Ford and Dr Friederick Spiegelberg that I met Alan Watts. This was in San Francisco in 1949-50. (I immediately realized that Zen had great interest for me). This was an association that continued for many years'.
120. Varda had been associated with Paalen whilst in Europe.

### CHAPTER THREE

1. Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching, translated by Gia Fu Feng and Jane English, London 1972, Chapter 43.
2. Ibid. Chapter 48
3. The Bhagavad Gita, translated by S Radhakrishnan, London, 1948, page 177.
4. A K Coomaraswamy, The Transformation of Nature in Art, New York, 1956, page 22 and Kuo Hsi, An Essay on Landscape Painting, translated by Shio Sakanishi, London, 1935 are the most likely sources for artists' awareness of this story.

5. See Kenneth Sawyer, Stamos, Paris, 1960, page 43
6. See Lawrence Campbell, 'Lassaw makes a sculpture', Art News, March 1954.
7. G Onslow-Ford, Painting in the Instant, London, 1964 page 53.
8. See B Rose, Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt, New York, 1975, page 159.
9. Notes, Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art.
10. A Reinhardt, 'Timeless in Asia', Art News, January 1960.  
 When considering the influence of concepts derived from Oriental philosophy on Reinhardt's painting, we are faced with his statements which emphasize the purity of art, and deny any non-aesthetic interests. These assertions have led some commentators, wrongly, I feel, to play down the importance of Oriental influences on Reinhardt. I consider Reinhardt's motivation in denying non-aesthetic goals as being an attempt to prevent his art becoming impoverished by being seen as an illustration of a theoretical position. His profuse denials of any positive content to his art in itself parallels the 'negative theology' of Zen, designed to prevent the intellectual assimilation of a truth considered essentially experiential. In interview with Ruth Bowman (10th May, 1964, Archives of American Art) Reinhardt explains that 'the value of the work of art can't be stated, it has to be achieved by the student himself. You know that's a Zen Buddhist situation in one way. In other words, you can't tell anybody else the value of the work'. When Reinhardt denies a religious content to his art I feel he is saying that it contains no specific religious symbolism, but I believe he would consider art to be religious in its essence. In one unguarded statement, he does bring art and religion together, and gives an insight into the motivation behind his theoretical statements: 'I suppose there's a reason for making a religious analogy. Maybe that's the best analogy today. Anyway, there's a long tradition of negative theology in which the essence of religion and in my case the essence of art, is protected, or the attempt is made to protect it from being pinned down or vulgarized or exploited'. ('Art as Art Dogma' talk at ICA, London. May 28, 1964, in Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art).
11. Handwritten notes, Reinhardt Papers, Archives of American Art. Elsewhere Reinhardt also transcribes the following passage from Lao Tzu: 'To yield is to be preserved whole. To be bent is to become straight. To be hollow is to be filled ... to be in want is to possess. To have plenty is to be confused'.

12. A Reinhardt, 'Timeless in Asia', Art News, January 1960. Masson echoes Reinhardt in emphasizing the lack of novelty in Oriental art: 'Do not forget the slight importance which Asiatic painters ascribe to the individual, their contempt for what we call originality' (A. Masson, 'The Instant, Notes for a new style', Art News, October 1951, page 21).

Much evidence can be marshalled to show Reinhardt's interest in Oriental art. He was to teach the history of Oriental art at Brooklyn College, and published articles about it ('Cycles through the Chinese Landscape', 'Timeless in Asia'). On one occasion he claimed 'I felt closer to tenth century Chinese painters than I did to fellow artists around' (lecture, January 1966, transcript, page 31, Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art). Reinhardt was a member of both the Chinese Art Society of America and the Asia Society and was to visit Japan and India himself in 1958. Artist Ulfert Wilke, with whom Reinhardt stayed in Japan, recalls him buying a small Buddhist scroll when they visited Nara together. Reinhardt told him that this was the only work of art he had ever bought (letter to the author, 17th June, 1980).

13. M Tobey, 'Japanese Traditions and American Art', College Art Journal Fall, 1958. A friendship between Tobey and Takizaki developed around the year 1957, and they apparently had many discussions on artistic and religious subjects - Takizaki has stated that Tobey shared his interest in Zen. George Tzutakawa and Paul Horiuchi, two other Seattle artists, also benefited from a contact with Takizaki, and Horiuchi recalls (conversation with the author, 17th September, 1980) many occasions spent with Tobey and Takizaki in learned discussions which would take place in the back room of Takizaki's antique shop. The closeness of Tobey and Takizaki at the time when he was painting the 'sumi' works is intimated by his reference to them in a letter to Takizaki in which he describes them as 'our paintings' (Louis R Guzzo, 'Words and Music', Seattle Times, 6th November, 1957).
14. M Tobey, interviewed by William Seitz, Seitz papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
15. M Tobey, letter to Marion Willard, January 1953, excerpt quoted in Paris, Musée de Arts Decoratifs, Mark Tobey, 1961.
16. Ibram Lassaw, interview with Irving Sandler, 26th August, 1968, transcript, page 92, Archives of American Art. 'Thatness' and 'suchness' are attempts by Lassaw to translate the Japanese concept 'Tathata'. This key Zen idea (and one which Lassaw frequently refers to) describes the world 'as it is', when seen by the open mind, freed of the ego's conceptual blinkers.
17. Typed notes entitled, 'The World of the Artist', (1975), I Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art.

18. I Lassaw 'Perspectives and Reflections of a Sculptor', Leonardo Vol 1, 1968, page 361.
19. I Lassaw, interview with Irving Sandler, 26th August, 1968, transcript page 58, Archives of American Art.
20. Ibid, page 85 .
21. Ibid, page 89.
22. Ibid, page 86. Elsewhere Lassaw again links artistic creativity and the cosmic process of creation: 'Experience the Art which you are making all the time. The art of being and becoming. Everywhere about you is art, including yourself' (notebook entry, December 1954, Lassaw Papers, Archives of American Art).
23. Ibid, page 85.
24. Hakuin, 'Zazen Wasan', quoted by Lassaw in undated handwritten notes, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art.
25. Quoted Alan Watts, The Way of Zen, London, 1957, page 153. This statement was quoted by Lassaw in conversation with the author (13th August, 1979) to make the same point.
26. Ibram Lassaw, interview with Irving Sandler, 26th August, 1968, transcript page 89, Archives of American Art.
27. G Onslow-Ford, Op. Cit. note 7, page 44.
28. G Onslow-Ford, undated handwritten note. Sketchbook, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
29. G Onslow-Ford, Op. Cit. Note 7, page 35.
30. G Onslow-Ford, Op. Cit. note 7, page 63. Compare this quotation to a poem from the Zenrin Kushu: 'Sitting quietly, doing nothing, Spring comes, and the grass grows by itself' (quoted A Watts, Op. Cit., page 154).
31. G Onslow-Ford, handwritten note, possibly 1957, sketchbook, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
32. G Onslow-Ford, statement for first 'Instant Painting' exhibition (May 1957) noted in sketchbook.

33. G Onslow-Ford, in conversation with the author, 1st December, 1979
34. J Cage, quoted R Kostelanetz, John Cage, London, 1971 page 116.
35. J Cage, in conversation with the author, 30th August, 1979.
36. J Cage, Silence, Middletown, 1961, page 37. The phrase 'deep sleep' is frequently used by commentators as a translation of the Indian term 'samadhi'.
37. D Ashton, Yes, But ..., New York, 1976, page 92.
38. Philip Guston, in 'The Philadelphia Panel', It Is, No. 5, Spring 1960, page 37.
39. This idea was expressed by Guston in conversation with the author (4th October, 1979) in the context of discussing his interest in Oriental thought.
40. Philip Guston, statement in New York, Museum of Modern Art, 12 Americans, 1956.
41. Philip Guston, 'Philip Guston's Object, a Dialogue with Harold Rosenberg', in New York, The Jewish Museum, Philip Guston, Recent Paintings and Drawings, 1965.
42. Philip Guston, Statement (1957-8) in New York: Museum of Modern Art, The New American Painting, 1959.
43. Philip Guston, statement in Op. Cit., note 40.
44. Philip Guston, Op. Cit. note 41.
45. Philip Guston, 'Faith, Hope and Impossibility', Art News Annual, 1966.
46. The term is Paalen's. See Chapter Four, page 135.
47. Noguchi has attested to his interest in Zen (conversation with the author, 18th June, 1980), pointing out that it is the philosophical dimension of it which has attracted him. During his visit to Japan in 1931 Noguchi concentrated on exploring Zen, which he feels contains the essence of Buddhism. A couple of Noguchi's works bear

titles which show his awareness of Japanese artists who have been inspired by Zen. Hakuin, (1965-6, Mannari granite, 72 3/4" h, collection the artist) and Sesshu (1960, Aluminium). The latter work, which has been cut from a single sheet of metal, shows an awareness of the Japanese art of paper folding (Origami) which Noguchi remembers practicing as a child.

48. I Noguchi, quoted K Kuh The Artist's Voice, New York and Evanston, 1962, page 175.
49. I Noguchi, in conversation with the author, 18th June, 1980.
50. Ibid.
51. I Noguchi, quoted K Kuh, Op. Cit., page 175.
52. Carl Andre, statement in letter to the author, 12th August, 1979.
53. Ibid. Apart from a direct contact with Oriental thought and art, Andre may also have assimilated aspects of its aesthetics from Noguchi's work. He writes (letter to the author, 12th August 1979): 'I have admired the work of Noguchi especially for his precarious balancing of Eastern and Western influences. The balance does not always succeed, but neither are all my works worthy of comparison with his'.

Like Noguchi, Andre has been impressed by 'the raking and planting of stones in Japanese gardens' - he feels his 'first intuitions of place' derived from photographs of such gardens seen in the 1950's and early 1960's (letter to the author, 12th August, 1979). Stone Field Sculpture (1977, Hartford, Conn.) seems to be a personal reworking of Ryoanji temple garden. Andre feels close not just to Japanese carpentry and gardens, but to all aspects of Japanese art. 'I was in Japan ... and Japanese art had quite a considerable influence on me ... somehow I felt much closer to that than to Western art, any kind of Western art' (Andre, in Paul Cummings Artists in their own words, New York, 1979, page 188)

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54. Morris Graves in 'Morris Graves - Excerpts from Guggenheim Application', typescript, Richard Lippold papers, Archives of American Art. Oriental ideas can be seen as contributing to Sam Francis's similar statement - 'I wanted to eliminate all personality in my paintings' (S Francis, quoted in Betty Freeman Sam Francis: Ideas and Paintings, unpublished manuscript, xerox copy in Archives of American Art, Washington DC, page 119.
55. Morris Graves, quoted in K Kuh, Op. Cit., page 110.

56. Morris Graves, quoted Ibid, page 108. James Brooks talks in almost identical terms: 'A very strange situation, I believe, but a painting does paint itself' (quoted in introduction to New York, Martha Jackson Gallery, James Brooks, 1975. Essay by Elayne H Varian). He amplifies the statement by noting that the ego does not play an active role, but is merely a witness to events: 'My interest is in this encouragement of the forms that are intent on surfacing, and my function is to act not as a maker but a discoverer' (statement written for 'Art Now: New York 1971'). Brooks's interest in Zen has already been noted.
57. R Lippold, in interview with the author, 25th September, 1979.
58. R Lippold, in interview with Paul Cummings, transcript page 51, Archives of American Art.
59. R Lippold, in interview with the author, 25th September, 1979.
60. R Lippold, Ibid.
61. R Lippold, Ibid. Lippold's discussion of architectural sculpture here should be seen in the light of his own longstanding involvement with public commissions.
62. E Herrigel, Zen in the Art of Archery, New York, 1953.
63. P Jenkins, in interview with the author, 8th October, 1979.
64. P Jenkins, Ibid.
65. R Pousette-Dart, talk given in Boston, 1951, typescript in artist's file, library, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
66. Mrs Pousette-Dart remembers that when she first met her husband, he was reading the Bhagavad-Gita and the Upanishads (author's conversation with Mr & Mrs Pousette-Dart, 13th July, 1980). Pousette-Dart is reticent about discussing an interest in Hindu philosophy, but some concrete evidence of such an interest is present in certain works, such as Presence, Being, Om (1971) where Sanskrit symbols are included.
67. E Herrigel, Op. Cit, page 6.
68. Ibid, page 42.

69. Li Sih-hua, quoted G Rowley. Principles of Chinese Painting, Princeton, 1959, page 77.
70. Yu Ch'uang Man Pi 'Scattered Notes at a Rainy Window', (edited by Mei Shu Ts'ung shu), quoted O Siren, The Chinese on the Art of Painting, New York, 1963, page 203.
71. Quoted O Siren, Op. Cit., page 66. Reinhardt's 'Twelve Rules for a new Academy' (see B Rose, Art as Art: The Selected writings of Ad Reinhardt, New York, 1975), which parodies the precepts of the Chinese aestheticians, ends by noting that 'the fine artist need not sit cross-legged'.
72. M Tobey, 'Japanese Traditions and American Art' College Art Journal Fall 1958.
73. Quoted, K Kuh, Op. Cit n 48, page 236
74. Mark Tobey, letter to Leonard Elmhirst, 11th April, 1958, Elmhirst papers, Dartington Hall Archive, Devon.
75. Mark Tobey, letter to Ulfert Wilke, 1960, Ulfert Wilke papers. Archives of American Art. The statement quoted is followed immediately by a poem transcribed from Suzuki's Zen and Japanese Culture.
76. Several of Tobey's friends have told the author that Zen was a frequent topic of conversation with him in later life.
77. Mark Tobey, handwritten 'diary' notes, Kyoto, 1934, photocopy in Wesley Wehr papers, University of Washington Library, Seattle.
78. G Onslow-Ford, statement c 1971-2, sketchbooks, Onslow-Ford Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
79. G Onslow-Ford, Painting in the Instant, London, 1964, page 36
80. G Onslow-Ford, statement in sketchbooks, c 1971-2.
81. G Onslow-Ford, Instant Painting, unpublished manuscript (first draft for Painting in the Instant) Onslow-Ford Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
82. G Onslow-Ford, Painting in the Instant, page 34.



83. Ibid, page 33 'The closed mind is personal. The open mind is impersonal' (page 34).
84. Ibid, page 18.
85. I Noguchi, in discussion with the author, 18th June, 1980.
86. I Lassaw, interviewed by Ruth Bowman, transcript, page 48, Archives of American Art. Zen's devaluation of thought is also noted by Lassaw in a diary entry of 15th December, 195(??) (I Lassaw Papers, Archives of American Art): 'Zen ... does not confuse spirituality with thinking about God'.
87. G Onslow-Ford, sketchbooks. 'Seeing [the innocent vision of things as they are in their essential nature, their 'suchness'] is pre-figurative [before the appearance of thoughts]' Onslow-Ford writes in Painting in the Instant, page 25.
88. J Cage, Op. Cit. note 36, page 170.
89. Lippold, typewritten notes, undated, Lippold Papers, Archives of American Art.
90. Quoted Los Angeles, Art Galleries of the University of California, Morris Graves, (texts by John Baur, Duncan Phillips and Frederick S Wight), 1956, page 19.
91. Rollin Crampton, 'Symposium: The Creative Process' Art Digest 15th January, 1954. Lassaw also keeps books in his studio which he may read from prior to beginning work.
92. Ibid.
93. A Masson, 'Une Peinture de l'Essentiel', Quadrum, May 1956.
94. A Masson, 'The Instant, Notes for a new style', Art News, October 1951, page 66.
95. A Masson, 'Divagations sur l'espace', quoted in Rubin and Lanchner André Masson, New York, 1976.
96. E Herrigel, Zen in the Art of Archery, New York, 1953, page 85. Bamboo painting was a distinct genre of Chinese art. Siren, The Chinese on the Art of Painting, page 55-6, gives Su Shih's account of the method of bamboo painting as taught to him by his

master Yu-k'o, this being the source of Herrigel's idea of the painter becoming the bamboo. Su Shih also notes (page 56) that 'when Han Kan painted horses, he truly was a horse'.

Hindu art does not share the outward orientation to visible nature of the Far East, but a parallel principle of identification with the object to be painted (held in the form of a mental visualization) is described by Coomaraswamy in The Transformation of Nature in Art (page 5). He notes (page 6) that 'the principle involved is that true knowledge of an object is not obtained by merely empirical observation or reflex registration, but only when the knower and known, seer and seen, meet in an act transcending distinction. The root of this attitude in Hindu metaphysics is exposed when (page 7) Coomaraswamy quotes the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad (I, 4, 10): 'Whoever worships a divinity as other than the self, thinking "He is one, and I another" knows not'.

97. E Herrigel, *Op. Cit.*, page 70.
98. A K Coomaraswamy, The Transformation of Nature in Art, New York, 1956, page 8.
99. Kuo Hsi, An Essay on Landscape Painting, (translated by Shio Sakanishi), London 1935, page 49.
100. Except that Stamos talks of drawing bamboos where Herrigel talks of observing bamboos. Stamos openly acknowledges the importance Far Eastern art has had for him: 'I can say I have found some degree of solace and enlightenment in trying to understand the art of China and Japan' he says in his unpublished 1954 essay 'Why Nature in Art', pointing out that his acquaintance with the paintings led him on to a consideration of the underlying philosophy. 'After the looking I have been allowed, I think it is important to determine the elements of thought of the Far Eastern artists. What were the desires they sought to accomplish and what conceptions of man and nature did they seek to express' (quoted, B Cavaliere 'Theodoros Stamos in Perspective', Arts, December 1977, page 109).
101. T Stamos, quoted Kenneth B Sawyer, Stamos, Paris, 1960, page 15.
102. S Macdonald-Wright, 'Some Aspects of Sung Painting', Magazine of Art, October, 1949.
103. S Macdonald-Wright Beyond Aesthetics (c 1952). Quotation from this unpublished manuscript in Dori J Watson, 'Stanton Macdonald-Wright', M A Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1957, page 31.

104. The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright- Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, Kenzo Okada, Paintings 1931-65, 1965
105. Philip Pearlstein, quoted Paul Cummings, Op. Cit. note 53, page 167.
106. Certain of Pollock's friends feel that he responded in a significant way to Oriental thought. Tony Smith relates that Pollock 'mused aloud about esoteric religious ideas, Oriental philosophy, things I knew nothing about ... I once made a casual reference to Western man. He straightened right up and said "what's the matter with Eastern man?"' (F du Plessix and C Grey, 'Who Was Jackson Pollock?', Art in America, May/June 1967). Betty Parsons (in interview with the author, 10th October, 1979) confirms this interest, noting that he had Indian dancer friends who came to stay and with whom he discussed Hindu philosophy - Nataraj and Pia-Veena Vashi taught Indian dance and lectured on Hindu philosophy at Black Mountain College in 1949. Several books on Eastern philosophy (and art) found a place in Pollock's library, including: Bhagavad-Gita (Boston, 1951), F Yeats-Brown Yoga Explained (New York, 1949) and Sri Niranjananda Swamy, Maha Yoga or the Upanishadic Lore in the light of the Teaching of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, Tiruvannamalai, 1947. We can presume that Pollock's interest in Hindu philosophy grew out of his early involvement with Theosophy.
107. Jackson Pollock, in Possibilities, I, Winter 1947-8. Morris Graves (quoted, S Rodman, Conversations with Artists, New York, 1957) sees Pollock's working method as 'pure yoga'.
108. Ibid.
109. G Onslow-Ford, Creation, first (unpublished) draft, c 1971, page 27, Onslow-Ford Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
110. Ibid.
111. Philip Guston, Op. Cit. note 41. Zen or the concept of 'satori' are not explicitly mentioned in his published statements, but Guston has indicated in conversation with the author (4th October, 1979) that they lay behind his statements in the Rosenberg interview.

Because of the abstract nature of Guston's work during the period with which we are most concerned, a direct illustrative reference to his interest in the Orient is not something we can expect to find. In a representational work 'East Coker' (c 1979) such a piece of evidence does however exist. This work, the first

Guston painted on coming out of hospital after a heart attack, depicts a head- his own - which has an elongated ear of the type found in traditional representations of the head of the Buddha. Guston specifically pointed to this source for the motif in conversation with the author (4th October, 1979), and also told an anecdote related to this painting, concerning his hospital stay. When it was feared that his life was in danger, he was asked what religion he belonged to, and gave the reply 'Buddhist'.

112. P Guston, in 'The Philadelphia Panel', It Is, No. 5, Spring 1960, page 36.
113. P Guston, in conversation with the author, 4th October, 1979.
114. Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (edited by Swami Abhedananda), New York, 1907, page 123.
115. Chandogya Upanishad, 7.6 in The Upanishads, translated by J Mascaro, Harmondsworth, 1965.
116. Hsi Yun, recorded by P'ei Hsiu. This passage is quoted by John Cage in M:Writings, '67-'72, London, 1973, page 164.
117. Quoted O Siren, op. cit. note 70, page 24.
118. Ibid, page 215.
119. E Herrigel, op. cit. note 96, page 34.
120. The Huang Po Doctrine of Universal Mind, translated by John Blofeld (Chu Ch'an), London, 1947, page 33.
121. Seng - ts'an, quoted A Watts, The Way of Zen, London, 1957, page 135.
122. Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, 25, quoted A Watts, op. cit., page 37.
123. A Watts Op Cit. page 152
124. Zen Buddhism (selected writings of D.T. Suzuki), edited by William Barret, New York, 1956, page 234.
125. E Herrigel, op. cit. note 96, page 31.

126. Quoted O Siren, op. cit. note 70, page 36. Reinhardt was aware of this fourfold distinction made by the Chinese, and Baziotés gave a typescript describing the four categories to his students at New York University (where he taught from 1949-1952) in which he quotes from George Rowley's Principles of Chinese Painting, Princeton, 1947.
127. Quoted Siren, op. cit. note 70, page 183.
128. Ibid., page 152.
129. J Cage, op. cit. note 36, page 15.
130. J Cage, in conversation with the author, 30th August, 1979.
131. Ibid.
132. J Cage, quoted R Kostelanetz., John Cage, London, 1971. Cage talks of 'that magnificent statement' and 'the text of Zen that has been so meaningful for me, the Huang-Po Doctrine of Universal Mind'.
133. J Cage, op. cit. note 116. 'The Wisest thing to do is to open one's ears immediately and hear a sound suddenly before one's thinking has a chance to turn it into something logical, abstract or symbolical'. (A Year From Monday, New Lectures and Writings, Middletown, 1967).
134. Lippold first met Cage 1943-4, and they were to become neighbours. Certainly by October 1948 we have evidence of Lippold's interest in the Orient. Writing in his application for a Guggenheim Fellowship of that date, Lippold states that he has been led in his work 'into statements of philosophical contemplation very nearly related to certain forms of Oriental art' and claims that one of the things he would do if given a fellowship would be 'more extensive reading in the areas of Eastern and Western philosophy, regions which I have found important as an American artist, suspended between East and West and subject to the influence of each' ('Plans for work', typescript, Lippold Papers, Archives of American Art).

Elsewhere Lippold expresses a similar sentiment: 'I feel that an awareness of any similarities and differences that may exist between East and West is a vital necessity of our time' (Sylvia Plapinger, typewritten profile of Richard Lippold, page 2, Lippold Papers, Archives of American Art).

This interest in reconciling East and West led directly to Lippold's piece 'The Sun' (Variations within a Sphere, No. 10), 1953-56, collection Metropolitan Museum, New York. In a letter to

Francis Henry Taylor, director of the Metropolitan Museum (28th December, 1950, Lippold Papers, Archives of American Art) in which Lippold proposes constructing the work he states: 'The present intersection of East and West which marks the exact instant of all our lives does not leave me unmoved in relation to my work, which obviously contains many references of craftsmanship, symmetry and spirit to the Orient. He goes on to propose the creation of the work for the specific setting of the Islamic gallery, where he hopes it 'would shine like an eternal, universal sun in an Oriental garden'. 'It would be an extremely modern, up to the minute object in ... amongst ancient objects of the same spirit, and would in a sense be a way to show the correlation of the East and the West, that there are similar principles at work' (interview with the author, 25th September 1979). In his letter to Taylor he states: 'To prepare a sculptural statement adequate to describe our Occidental debt to the Orient and its debt to us has always been a concern of mine. The international events of the present urge on me this awareness even more, all other national concerns seem quite petty'.

Oriental thought can also be shown to have influenced the conception of another, unexecuted work, which was proposed in a letter to Sweeney (6th January, 1954). The work was to have occupied the central space of the Guggenheim Museum. Lippold describes the work thus: 'Formally, the piece would consist of a number of centers, most likely seven, one rising above the other, each interpenetrating and each with delicate connections to the spiral ramp ... Obviously, this concept is related to the Oriental concept of the 'Serpent power' or Kundalini, with its seven lotus centers in the body, from the basal arch of the body, through the genitals, navel, heart, throat, and the forehead, to the thousand-petalled lotus of the crown of the head'.

135. R Lippold, 'To Make Love to Life', College Art Journal, 1960 page 304.
136. Richard Lippold 'How to make a piece of sculpture', typewritten notes, undated, Lippold Papers, Archives of American Art.
137. Philip Guston, 'Faith, Hope and Impossibility', Art News Annual, 1966, October 1965.
138. Philip Guston in 'The Philadelphia Panel', It Is, No. 5, Spring 1960, page 37. Compare Guston's statement here with a similar one made by Reinhardt which also has a context in Oriental ideas: 'I travelled around the world in order to get rid of it. There was something about seeing things in my own imaginary museum that I wanted to see, and in that way, I guess "get rid of it" is a good expression, I guess its a Zen Buddhist expression too' (lecture by Ad Reinhardt, January 1966, transcript, page 3, Archives of American Art). Like Guston, Reinhardt tries to eliminate influences from other artists as a means of avoiding preconceptions during the process of working.

139. Philip Guston, Op. Cit. note 137. Guston points out in interview with Rosenberg (Op. Cit. note 41) that it is not important to him whether the paintings should look different from one another rather it is 'how you feel when you do them'.
140. Philip Guston, op. cit., note 41. There is a useful parallel to be drawn between Guston's erasures and adoption of an abstract style and Reinhardt's use of brushstrokes to erase brushstrokes in his 'monochrome' works. In both cases a transcending of the personal element in art is the goal, and an interest in Oriental thought provides the context. In Guston's case, however, the resulting work does not need to have the 'look' of anonymity which Reinhardt prefers.
141. Philip Guston, Op. Cit., note 137.
142. Philip Guston, statement in New York, Museum of Modern Art, 12 Americans, 1956.
143. Philip Guston, Op. Cit. note 137.
144. Ibid.
145. Philip Guston, op. cit. note 41. This statement would be most fully applicable to works such as New Place (1964, oil on canvas, 76 x 80", collection San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), or The Three (1964, oil on canvas, 80 x 91", collection the artist) in which there are distinct forms to be placed against a distinct background. 50
146. Philip Guston, Op. Cit. note 137.
147. Philip Guston, Op. Cit., note 41.
148. G Onslow-Ford, statement for first 'Instant Painting' exhibition May 1957, in sketchbook, Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
149. G Onslow-Ford, Creation (first, unpublished, draft), 1971, page 12, Onslow-Ford Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
150. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit., note 81, page 37. 'To paint with what has been learned, or what is already known, only takes the painter to the place where creation begins' (G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 79, page 33).

151. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 81, page 37.
152. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 149, page 13.
153. W Paalen, 'Metaplastic' in San Francisco Museum of Art, Dynaton 1951, page 10.
154. G Onslow-Ford, Creation, Basel, 1978, page 49.
155. G Onslow-Ford, handwritten note, sketchbooks, Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
156. Ideas expressed by Onslow-Ford in conversation with the author, 1st December 1979.
157. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit., note 81, page 37. In conversation with the author Onslow-Ford explained that he equated 'enlightenment' with a fast speed of awareness.
158. G Onslow-Ford, letter to the author, 16th March, 1980.
159. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 149, page 14.
160. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 154, page 35.
161. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 79, page 29.
162. Ideas and brief quotations of phrases or terms attributed to Noguchi here and below are derived from conversations between the artist and the author, 18th June, 1980.
163. A mondo is a short anecdote in the form of a question and answer used in Zen with the purpose of precipitating enlightenment in the student. For example, when T'ung-shan was asked 'What is the Buddha?' he replied 'Three pounds of flax!' (quoted A Watts, op.cit. note 121, page 147).
164. Compare to Bankei's words: 'You are primarily Buddhas; you are not going to be Buddhas for the first time. There is not an iota of a thing to be called error in your inborn mind ... If you have the least desire to be better than you actually are, if you hurry up to the slightest degree in search of something, you are already going against the unborn' (quoted A Watts, op. cit



note 121, page 179, see also Watts, page 147). Onslow-Ford shares Noguchi's position here that study is not a necessary precondition for painting. 'There is nothing that has to be learned before starting to paint. The painter starts from where he is, and with what he knows instinctively' (Painting in the Instant, page 53)

165. Zen's view that technical skill and innocence are not in conflict is noted by Gropius: 'A Zen maxim runs: "Develop an infallible technique, and then place yourself at the mercy of inspiration". This underlines Zen's abhorrence of intellectual reasoning, the "logical impasse" as they call it, and the emphasis on instinctive response to direct experience'. (quoted S Rodman, op. cit, note 107, page 6). Tobey shows an interest in the same idea: 'There's a very wise thing said in Zen. You must be prepared before the fire can take over. This is what I mean when I say that an artist should concentrate on his technique, so that he has a mastery of his craft. Then, when inspiration arrives, its expression will not be hampered by some lack of mastery of technique. Unless you know how to move your fingers on the piano, how to play the notes first, how can you make music?' (quoted in W Wehr, 'Conversations with Mark Tobey, Part VII'. Northwest Arts, V, 8, 13th April, 1979). Paul Jenkins, commenting on Herrigel's statement (see page 107) that the shot must take the archer by surprise, emphasizes that this innocence of attitude is not untutored: 'I think the artist has to train himself to become suprised, because very often something of great benefit, of enormous value, of imperative necessity will occur and if he or she is not trained to the extent he should be, he won't notice it'. (interview with the author, 8th October, 1979)
166. 'Sudden awareness' can be taken as a translation of 'satori'. Noguchi's use of the metaphor of being 'hit' seems to derive from Herrigel's description (op. cit. note 96, page 69-70) of the state of mind of the archer after having experienced the correct method of shooting: 'Is it "I" who draw the bow, or is it the bow that draws me into the state of highest tension? Do "I" hit the goal, or does the goal hit me?' The same passage lies behind Masson's description of the passivity of the ego during the creative process: 'All now takes place as if he [the archer] were the bow which makes use of the archer instead of vice versa. It is the same with the painter of this same teaching. It is the élan vital which takes possession of him to reveal itself to him' (quoted Manfred Schneckenburger, 'Zen Buddhism, Ink Painting and Modern Art', in Munich, Haus der Kunst, World Cultures and Modern Art, 1972, page 220).
167. Yun Men, Tao Shin. Undated, handwritten note, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art. A Zen anecdote related by Lassaw ('Perspectives and Reflections of a Sculptor', Leonardo, Vol. 1 1968; page 355) conveys the same message: 'Hofeku, pointing at the mountains, trees and streams outside his window said "Is not this reality?". Chokei answers, "It is, but it is a pity to say so"'.

168. I Lassaw, untitled, handwritten notes, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art. Elsewhere Lassaw writes: 'Suzuki once said when Adam and Eve began to distinguish Good and Evil they were expelled from Paradise'.
169. I Lassaw, statement in North Carolina, Duke University, Ibram Lassaw 1963. In his sketchbooks, Onslow-Ford quotes a passage from the Taittiriya Upanishad which brings out the same quality of playfulness that Lassaw distinguishes here: 'From delight all things are born, by delight they exist and grow, to delight they return'.
170. M Tobey, letter to Marion Willard, November 1947, quoted Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 'Mark Tobey, 1961.
171. Kenzo Okada, quoted in 'The Irrepressible Mr Okada', AFIA World Autumn 1962, page 11 (copy in artists file, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York).
172. Kenzo Okada, quoted in S Rodman, op. cit., note 107, page 95.
173. Ibid, page 94.
174. John Ferren, interviewed by Dorothy Seckler, 12th June 1965, transcript page 23, Archives of American Art.
175. Stanton Macdonald-Wright, 'Some Aspects of Sung Painting', Magazine of Art., Vol. 42, October 1949.
176. A Masson, 'The Instant, Notes for a new style', Art News. October 1951, page 21.
177. A Masson 'Une Peinture De L'Essentiel', Quadrum, May 1956, page 40. Interestingly, Dubuffet likens Ossorio's way of working to the method of these same Chinese painters (J Dubuffet, Alfonso Ossorio Paris, 1951, page 22-3).
178. A Masson, op. cit. note 176, page 21.
179. A Masson, 'Divagations sur l'espace' (June 1949), quoted in Rubin and Lanchner, 'André Masson', New York, 1976, page 183.
180. A Masson, quoted in Rubin and Lanchner, Op. Cit., page 184.
181. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit., note 154, page 92.

182. 'There are a great range of speeds within the spontaneous that extend from the just faster than thought all the way to the Instant' (G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 154, page 69).
183. G Onslow-Ford, letter to the author, 16th March, 1980. The distinctness of the imagery of the different 'worlds' is guaranteed by the existence of 'quantum leaps' between them.
184. Onslow-Ford believes the 'world' of line, circle, dot 'finds its clearest expression in figurations of pure black and white'. Sharp distinctions rather than tonal gradation is another stylistic consequence in his work which he feels follows from his concern with the instant. Perceptions of gradations requires a time element, whereas for Onslow-Ford 'the jump from black to white and from white to black [in a work such as Who Lives, 1962, 77½" x 53", Parles' paint, collection Whitney Museum] happens in the Instant' (op. cit. note 154, page 85). 115
185. Richard Lippold in New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, The New Decade, 1955, See also page 110 above, where Lippold uses the term 'now-moment', referring to it as an Oriental concept.
186. E Herrigel, op. cit. note 96, page 60.
187. Paul Jenkins, interview with the author, 8th October, 1979.
188. I Lassaw, undated, untitled, handwritten notes, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art.
189. I Lassaw, in 'Sculpture Panel', It Is No. 1, Spring 1958, page 26.
190. I Lassaw, undated, untitled, handwritten notes, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art.
191. Mark Tobey, 'diary notes' 1934, photocopy in W Wehr papers, University of Washington Archives.
192. Many examples of a concern with transience can be found in Japanese haiku. The following example is quoted by Watts, op. cit. note 121, page 205: 'In the dark forest/a berry drops:/the sound of the water.'
193. C G Jung, foreword to 'The I Ching or Book of Changes' translated by Richard Wilhelm, London, 1951, page ii.
194. Duchamp's denial was made to John Cage (reported in conversation with the author, 30th August, 1979).

195. John Cage, in interview with the author, 30th August, 1979.
196. Ibid.
197. John Cage, quoted R Kostelanetz, op. cit. note 132, page 19:  
 'This is what you have to do if you are going to write by means of chance operations. You have to envisage exactly what are the questions you ask when you write music and then toss coins to help you answer each question'. A detailed description of his method of composing with the aid of the I Ching is given by Cage in Silence, page 57. Amongst the works in which it was used can be cited Williams Mix, Variations V, and Music of Changes. It was also used in the production of his prints.
198. Rauschenberg is one painter who was unable to come to terms with the programmatic aspects of Cage's use of chance. In interview with Dorothy Seckler (Transcript, Archives of American Art) he states: 'I was interested in many of John Cage's chance operations and I liked the sense of experimentation he is involved in, but painting is just a different ground for activities. I could never figure out an interesting way to use any kind of programmed activity - and even though chance deals with the unexpected and unplanned, it still has to be organized. [Paradoxically, Rauschenberg felt that] working with chance I would end up with something that was quite geometric; I felt as though I were carrying out an idea rather than witnessing an unknown idea taking shape'.
- Cage feels no need for his work to have the 'look' of spontaneity that is associated with gesture. He is well aware that 'there's the assumption that there's a kind of honesty associated with gesture rather than with some systematic procedure'. He notes that Rauschenberg considered his working method to be 'too systematic, and not spontaneous enough, not direct enough' (in interview with the author, 30th August, 1979).
199. Mark Tobey, quoted in Colette Roberts, Mark Tobey, New York, 1959.
200. The 'sumi' works belong mostly to the period around 1957, but some paintings of this type were certainly executed earlier in the 1950's - letters from Tobey to Marion Willard in 1953 mention sumi experiments. Tobey saw the sumis as the culmination of the Eastern influence on his work, and felt they were the works he would be remembered for. Writing in 'Japanese Traditions and American Art' (College Art Journal, Fall 1958) Tobey suggests that 'as the arts of the East and the West draw closer together' one should look not for 'fine draughtsmanship nor fine colour - perhaps no colour - but directness of spirit'. He seems to have his 'sumi' works in mind at this point.

201. Arthur Barnett, in conversation with the author, 16th September, 1980.
202. Points made in this discussion are based on a conversation with the artist, 18th June, 1980.
203. John Cage also suggests that the arrangement of stones in the garden at Ryoanji was determined by chance (A year from Monday New Lectures and Writings, Middletown, 1967, page 137).
204. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 81.
205. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 79, page 89.
206. Paul Jenkins, in interview with the author, 8th October 1979: 'We're not really talking about chance, chance is every place. Ever-changing reality is always in evidence. We seem to have gotten from the Age of Reason, or God knows where the mistaken idea that because we're pragmatic or practical, we're controlling nature, or that we're totally controlling our own minds. However, it is meaningful to realize your vulnerable position. The I Ching is applicable today but in an entirely different way'. Sam Francis makes a similar statement which should be interpreted in the light of his interest in the Orient: 'I am aware of the limits of my own intellect. I always want the chance to take its part' (quoted Jan Butterfield 'The Other Side of Wonder' in Boston, I.C.A., 'Sam Francis', 1979). Francis's use of dripped and randomly mixed pigments display this attitude to creativity in action.
207. Paul Jenkins, in interview with the author, 8th October, 1979.
208. David Smith 'Second thoughts on Sculpture', College Art Journal, Spring 1954.
209. A Reinhardt, 'Timeless in Asia', Art News, January 1960.
210. Reinhardt's attitude to the chance intrusions of the environment in his works contrasts sharply with Cage's. Whereas Cage accepts the intervention of external sounds during the performance of his work, Reinhardt studiously eliminates them: 'The painting leaves the studio as a purist, abstract, non-objective object of art, returns as a record of everyday (Surrealist, expressionist) experience ("chance" spots, defacements, hand-markings, accident-"happenings", scratches) and is repainted in the same old way (negating the negation of art), again and again, over and over again, until it is just "right" again' (typed note, 1961, Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art). The contrast of approach between Reinhardt and Cage recalls the different positions held by Shen-hsiu and Hui-Neng in a well known Zen story, recounted for instance by Alan Watts (op. cit. note 121, page 111), and referred to by Suzuki. Shen-hsiu's attitude is closer to the traditional Buddhist idea that enlightenment is attained through

the practice of meditation which purifies the mind of thoughts and attachments: 'The body is the Bodhi Tree/The mind like a bright mirror standing/Take care to wipe it all the time/ and allow no dust to cling'. Cage seems closer to the pure Zen approach of Hui-Neng, whose position is stated thus: 'There never was a Bodhi Tree/Nor bright mirror standing/Fundamentally, not one thing exists/so where is the dust to cling?'. Hui-Neng considered that the idea of purifying the mind was misconceived since 'our own nature is fundamentally clear and pure'. This distinction, incidentally, was known to Breton, who writes to Picabia (Surrealism and Painting, London, 1972, page 224): 'You are one of the two here who first went beyond the idea that the mind is a shining mirror which must be carefully sheltered from dust (the other, of course, was our friend Marcel Duchamp who went so far as to undertake the breeding of this dust)'.

211. A Reinhardt, op. cit. note 209. Gropius should be noted as another Western visual artist who sees order as a quality of Far Eastern Art. In S Rodman (op. cit. note 107, page 6) he is quoted as saying: 'Zen is a cult of utter simplicity and austerity in which nothing is left to chance'.
212. Carl Andre, in Andrea Gould, 'Dialogues with Carl Andre, Arts, May 1974, page 27.
213. Carl Andre, statement in letter to the author, 12th August, 1979.
214. Ibid.
215. Ibid.
216. 'Who is that unique, if you come right down to it? ... I mean in a large sense' (Richard Lippold, in conversation with the author, 25th September, 1979).
217. Ibid.
218. Richard Lippold, in interview with Paul Cummings, transcript, page 94. Archives of American Art.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

1. Sarabhai gave Cage a copy of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, a book which was to be an important influence on his thinking.
2. J Cage, in interview with the author, 30th August, 1979.

3. J Cage, quoted R Kostelanetz, John Cage, London, 1971, page 77
4. This and the following quotations are from R Lippold 'Designing in Space', typewritten notes, Lippold papers, Archives of American Art. Lippold also recalled this statement in conversation with the author (25th September, 1979), again placing emphasis on the effects of the work on the artist as being more important than the effect on the spectator.
5. Morris Graves, in K Kuh, The Artist's Voice, New York and Evanston, 1962, page 117.
6. Ibid, page 116. In an undated sketchbook note (Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.) Onslow-Ford closely echoes the point Graves makes here, stating that 'the act of painting itself is [the painter's] meditation.
7. Morris Graves, printed statement, copy in artist's file, Seattle Public Library. A shortened (and slightly differently worded) statement, which does not include this passage has been previously published. The original source of the statement is a letter from Graves to Mel Kohler (1950), now in the files of the Henry Gallery (not seen by the author). Elsewhere Graves talks about 'that place where the painting qualifies for that miraculous union ... where the seer and seen become one' ('Excerpts from Guggenheim Application' typescript, November 1945, R Lippold papers, Archives of American Art).
8. Morris Graves, in letter to the author, 5th September 1979. Although Graves utilizes symbols in his art derived from the Oriental religious systems, he makes it clear that he feels the subject matter of painting has little to do with religiosity, whereas the creative act is close to the sacred.
9. See The Transformation of Nature in Art, New York, 1956, page 81, where Coomaraswamy conjectures that the truly perfect artist would no longer need to create.
10. Morris Graves, in K Kuh, op. cit. page 108. Elsewhere (Tom Robbins, 'The Metaphysical Morris Graves', Seattle Magazine February 1966, page 8) Graves describes form as 'a straight jacket for being'.
11. John Ferren, interview with Paul Cummings, 1968, transcript page 43 and 44, Archives of American Art.
12. Louise Nevelson, Dawns and Dusks, New York, 1976, page 177

13. W Paalen, 'Metaplastic' in San Francisco Museum of Art, Dynaton, 1951, page 11. Ve danta and Buddhism seem to lie behind much of what Paalen says in this essay, although he explicitly rejects the philosophy of the Upanishads as being too passive. He does not appear to be aware of Zen Buddhism, in which meditation is indeed often active (as Paalen counsels it should be) and in which art is often used as a tool.
  
14. 'Copy of paper read by Mark Tobey at the first drawing class of the term; typescript (with corrections by Mark Tobey) page 3, Dartington Hall Archive, Devon.
  
15. I Lassaw, in interview with Irving Sandler, 26th August 1968, transcript page 92, Archives of American Art.
  
16. I Lassaw, in conversation with the author, 15th August, 1979.
  
17. I Lassaw, notebook entry, I Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art. This passage is, in fact, a quotation from two Buddhist sources, Saraha and Tilopa. Both excerpts can be found in A Watts, The Way of Zen, London 1957, page 99.
  
18. Charmion Von Wiegand, 'The Adamantine Way', Art News, April 1969, page 39. Von Wiegand began her study of Oriental art and thought in 1949, although she did not visit India till 1970. Several titles of her works give evidence of her interest, for example: The Kundalini Chakra, (1968-9), The Five Buddhas (1964-5), The Tantric Gate (1964), and The Adamantine Way (1962).
  
19. A didactic function for art is of course found in the Orient. Stamos describes this in his (unpublished) 1954 essay 'Why Nature in Art' (quoted in B Cavaliere 'Theodoros Stamos in Perspective', Arts, December 1977), emphasizing that the purely aesthetic function of art is (in his estimation) secondary in the Orient to its role in opening the spectator to spiritual experience. The Buddhist artist 'as he carved or painted [did not] consciously create a work of art. His aim was to teach, by the symbolic value of his art, the way to the spiritual experience of which his art was the outward and visible sign. Aesthetics had no part in his thought and our Western valuation of a Buddhist work of art as being or not being "beautiful" is irrelevant to its original purpose'.
  
20. I Lassaw, in conversation with the author, 13th August, 1979.
  
21. S Macdonald-Wright, 'Observations' in Los Angeles, University of California Art Galleries, Stanton Macdonald-Wright, 1970.



22. Hui-Neng, quoted D T Suzuki, The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind, London, 1969, page 126.
23. 'To be detached from all forms, not to take hold of anything, not to be determined by any conditions, not to have any affections or hankerings' (Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art).
24. A Reinhardt, 'Timeless in Asia', Art News, January 1960. The original source here is the Chinese Zen master Lin-Chi, who states: 'Make no mistake: There is nothing on the outside and, likewise, nothing on the inside that you can grasp' (quoted A Watts Psychotherapy East and West, New York, 1961, page 101). Watts quotes Lin-Chi to point out the holistic nature of the Oriental world-view. He sees a 'grasping' attitude toward the world as based on a false ontological premise since man is a part of nature, inwardly identical with it, rather than standing outside it. Thomas Merton, lifelong friend of Reinhardt and frequent correspondent with him, describes the attitude inculcated by Zen. He seems to describe the frame of mind Reinhardt wishes the spectator of his works to enter, and it is quite likely that such issues occurred in their discussions. Merton writes: 'Buddhist meditation, but above all that of Zen, seeks not to explain but to pay attention, to become aware, to be mindful, in other words to develop a certain kind of consciousness that is above and beyond deception by verbal formulas - or by emotional excitement' (Zen and the Birds of Appetite, New York 1968, page 38).
25. J McLaughlin, in letter to Gerald Norland, 25th September, 1960, J McLaughlin papers, Archives of American Art.
26. I Lassaw, undated, untitled, handwritten notes, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art. Elsewhere, Lassaw explains in greater detail what he is referring to by the term 'thusness'. He derives the term from his knowledge of Zen: 'In Buddhist philosophy there's a term that is translated as "thusness" or in Sanskrit "tathata", "thatness" you might call it - the thing in itself ... It's experienced so little in our culture that we don't even have a word for it really ...[but] the "thusness" of things, the things as they are without associations, without strings attached, you might say, just the way it happens, not for any purpose or use. Without labeling it as either good or bad' (interview with Ruth Bowman, transcript page 48, Archives of American Art). A Lassaw sculpture of 1960 is entitled Tathata (various alloys, 15 x 16½ x 15¾). 71
27. I Lassaw, interview with Irving Sandler, transcript, page 90, Archives of American Art. Various other sculptures by Lassaw have been given titles which remind us of his interest in Oriental philosophy. Maitreya is the incarnation of the Buddha yet to appear, and the Buddha is also referred to in the title The Awakened One (1956-7, bronzes and steel, 7' 1" high). A diary entry of 5th December 1956 relates to this work: 'A Buddha! The piece of sculpture I am working on must be a Buddha. The Awakened One'. (Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art). 69

The title of Sui Shih (1962) is explained in a Zen anecdote which Lassaw quotes (undated, handwritten notes, Lassaw papers): 'Feng-Kan of the T'ang dynasty, when he was asked what was the teaching of the Buddha, simply answered "Sui-Shih" meaning "follow the time".'

28. John Mc Cracken, statement in Colin Naylor and Genesis P Orridge (editors), Contemporary Artists, London, 1972, page 582.
29. John Mc Cracken, statement in letter to the author, 11th August, 1980.
30. John Mc Laughlin, in Fort Worth, Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, The Artist's Environment: West Coast, 1962, page 76-7.
31. Ibid. Mc Laughlin started painting in 1938, after becoming acquainted with the art and the language of Japan. In a letter to Gerald Norland (25th September, 1960, Mc Laughlin papers, Archives of American Art) he states: 'With respect to direct influences I must stress my interest in 15th and 16th Century Japanese painters'.
32. See above, Chapter 2, page 74.
33. Carl Andre, statement in letter to the author, 12th August, 1979.
34. Carl Andre, quoted in V Whiles, 'Tantric Imagery - Affinities with 20th Century Abstract Art', Studio International, March 1971.
35. D T Suzuki, An Introduction to Zen Buddhism, London, 1949, page 39. Andre claims (letter to the author, 12th August, 1979) never to have studied Suzuki's work specifically, but has an awareness of Oriental philosophy derived from other sources.
36. Morris Graves, excerpt from a letter to Mel Kohler, 1950 (see note 7 above.)
37. Morris Graves, excerpt from Guggenheim application, November 1945, typescript, Richard Lippold Papers, Archives of American Art.
38. Morris Graves, statement in New York, Willard Gallery, Morris Graves 1948.
39. A Reinhardt, from notes entitled 'End', Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art. Elsewhere Reinhardt's notes show his awareness of the use of yantras (visual meditation devices) in the Orient as a means to alter the viewer's mode of perception, and his mention

of the image as 'hindrance' relates to his own late work: 'Wrong seeing (suffering, dukha) into correct seeing (bliss Sukha). Yantra, mental machine, first through eyes, other senses, point where figure a hindrance, then vanishes'. Elsewhere in his notes he shows awareness of the use of internal visual images in meditation: '"Dhyana" - meditation - mental picture (God) prescription. Concentration - attention - inner effort - control - steady - mind "samadhi". Mind one with object, personality into vision, intuition of object ...' Reinhardt's ritual separation of the act of painting from everyday life forms a further parallel with yogic techniques. He writes that 'painting is special, separate, a matter of meditation and contemplation ... as much consciousness as possible ... clarity, completeness, quintessence, quiet ... detachment, disinterestedness, thoughtfulness, transcendence' (statement in New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, The New Decade, 1955).

40. A Reinhardt, quoted V Whiles, op. cit.
41. J Cage, Silence, Middletown, 1961, page 93. Some aspects of Cage's own work are illuminated by this statement, but we must also consider it as a possible influence on some 'Minimalist' and 'Pop' artists. Rosenquist, for example, deliberately chose unexciting imagery with the aim of stimulating a disengaged attitude ('direct emptiness') such as Zen aims for: 'The imagery of the sixties [he feels] may have had to do with the Beat generation and the rejection of material things. Remember the abundance of material things in the 1950's? The look of the front end of new automobiles was a vacant vision, like direct emptiness. Painting the front of an automobile wasn't concerned with nostalgia. I had an abstract attitude toward my painting. I thought by using images that were a little out of date and style, you would have a little harder time getting excited about them' (J Rosenquist, interviewed by Phyllis Tuchman, Art News, May 1974, page 28). Rosenquist studied Eastern culture at the Aspen institute for Humanistic Studies in 1965, and visited Japan in 1966. The source of Cage's statement quoted here appears to be a letter from Oswald Sickert to Arthur Waley, included in the latter's The Noh Plays of Japan
42. R Rauschenberg, in R Kostelanetz, The Theatre of Mixed Means, London, 1970, page 83.
43. Huang-Po, quoted J Blofeld (translator) Huang Po, New York, 1959, page 127.
44. Suzuki, in An Introduction to Zen Buddhism, tells a story where attention to an unstructured auditory source is counselled as a means of unfocusing attention. A monk Hyakajo asks Gensha the way to enlightenment, and is asked in return whether he hears the murmuring of the brook. On replying yes he is told 'that is the entrance'.
45. Cage acknowledged his awareness of the parallels in interview with the author, 30th August, 1979.

46. A Watts, In My Own Way, London, 1973, page 231. Watts is referring to a discussion which took place around 1950.

#### CHAPTER FIVE

1. The experience of the Void has already been described in Chapter Three, albeit in different terms - it can be seen as identical to the state of 'emptiness' some artists attempt to cultivate prior to the creative act, the state in which the ego is in abeyance.
2. See Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, Vol. III 1959, page 221. Similarly the Kuan-tzu (quoted F Capra, The Tao of Physics, London, 1976, page 222) ascribes a quality of 'emptiness' to the Tao: 'The Tao of Heaven is empty and formless'.
3. Quoted, A Watts, The Way of Zen, London, 1957, page 83.
4. Handwritten note on the theme of Chinese art and culture, Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art.
5. Notes entitled 'Dark', Reinhardt papers.
6. Note, Reinhardt Papers.
7. Note, Reinhardt Papers. Brief mention may be made here concerning two further artists' awareness of the concept of the Void. Noguchi gives one of his works the title Mu, a Zen term meaning 'nothingness'. Nothingness is also the title of a painting by Okada, exhibited (along with another called Silence) at the Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, 1959. Several of Okada's other titles refer to his Oriental interests, for example Hexagram (1961), Noh, and Hagoromo (1964). 111
8. For example, Cage thinks that he probably discovered Eckhardt via Coomaraswamy. The importance of Eckhardt to him lies in his similarity to Oriental modes of thought: 'I every now and then have recourse to Occidental thought, but it is thought in an Oriental form, as in Meister Eckhardt' (J Cage, interview with the author, 30th August, 1979). Lassaw (conversation with the author, 14th August, 1979) also points out the similarity of Eckhardt to Oriental thinking, feeling that he himself must have been aware of the East.
9. Masson quotes Mallarmé: 'Imiter le Chinois au coeur limpide et fin' (Une Peinture De L'Essentiel', Quadrum, May 1956).

10. An Existentialist approach to the Void can be seen in the following statement by De Kooning, although the Genesis story is also being referred to. Interestingly, he makes a link between the discussion of cosmological issues and artistic ones in a similar way to Reinhardt, Onslow-Ford, and others: 'In Genesis it is said that in the beginning was the Void, and God acted upon it. For an artist that is clear enough. It is so mysterious that it takes away all doubt. One is utterly lost in space forever. You can float in it, fly in it, suspend in it, and today it seems, to tremble in it is maybe the best or anyhow very fashionable. The idea of being integrated with it is a desperate idea' (from a paper read to a group of artists, 18th February 1949, published in T Hess. De Kooning, 1968).

A notion of the Void informs Newman's work (for example, Pagan Void, 1946) and although there is not space here in which to make a detailed consideration of his understanding of this concept, it can be noted that Existentialist undertones are present. Creative activity (as for Motherwell, see page 170 ) is seen as a means to counteract a sense of the Void: 'Original man, shouting his consonants, did so in yells of awe and anger at his tragic state, and his own self-awareness, and at his own helplessness before the Void' ('The First Man Was an Artist', Tiger's Eye, October 1947).

11. In the present socially and philosophically fragmented age, we can perhaps not talk of a dominant world-view or 'public' code - in art, particularly, we see a proliferation of 'codes', some relatively 'private'. Hence American art can be usefully related to the traditional Oriental world view rather than attempting to explain it only by referring to a 'modern American world-view'.
12. A K Coomaraswamy, The Transformation of Nature in Art, New York 1956, page 217. See Chapter 1, page 41 for a discussion of Graves' use of this concept, which he derives from Coomaraswamy.
13. It is the term used to denote 'ether', one of the five elements.
14. T Merton, Zen and the Birds of Appetite, New York, 1968.
15. A K Coomaraswamy, op. cit., page 6. The identity of the two concepts can be confirmed by two further quotations from the Chandogya Upanishad, in which space is envisioned as the source of manifest reality, and directly identified with Brahman (the Absolute): 'Where from do all the worlds come? They come from space. All beings arise from space, and into space they return. Space is indeed their beginning and space their final end (1.9.1.) 'We should consider that in the inner world Brahman is consciousness; and we should consider that in the outer world Brahman is space. These are the two meditations' (3.18.1). The Upanishads, (J Mascaro translation), Harmondsworth, 1965.

16. Quoted, O Siren, The Chinese on the Art of Painting, New York, 1963, page 27.
  
17. This interpretation is supported by Rowley and Siren. Siren (op. cit. page 97) provides a useful delineation of the Chinese artists' use of space, and considers the question of a symbolic dimension: 'Space was not to [the Chinese painters] a cubic volume that could be geometrically constructed, it was something illimitable and incalculable which might be, to some extent, suggested by the relation of forms and tonal values but which always extended beyond every material indication and carried a suggestion of the infinite ... When fully developed as in the composition of the Ch'an painters, where the forms are often reduced to a minimum in proportion to the surrounding emptiness, the enveloping space becomes like an echo or a reflection of the Great Void, which is the very essence of the painter's intuitive mind. The correspondence may not be demonstrable, it may be a matter of feeling or intuition rather than a conscious calculation, yet it seems quite obvious when we know something about the psychological attitude which was developed by the Ch'an training'.
  
18. Quoted O Siren, op. cit., page 28. Reinhardt was aware of this statement, which he notes down in his papers.
  
19. Quoted G Rowley, Principles of Chinese Painting, Princeton, 1959, page 71.
  
20. Ibid, page 71.
  
21. Ibid, page 72.
  
22. W Paalen, in San Francisco Museum of Art, Dynaton, 1961, page 25.
  
23. A Reinhardt, quoted in B Rose, Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt, New York, 1975, page 214. In a handwritten note (Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art) Reinhardt shows that he sees the Indian world view as embodying an unbounded concept of space: 'Soul of India/Lacks time sense/seek's infinity in space rather/than eternity in time.
  
24. A Reinhardt, 'Cycles Through the Chinese Landscape', Art News, December 1954. In a brief note in the record of his travels in Japan, Reinhardt questions 'how to make manifest meaning of empty space in picture' (Reinhardt Papers).
  
25. Mark Tobey, interview with William Seitz, transcript, Tape II, Side 1, page 22, W Seitz papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.

26. Mark Tobey, 'diary' notes made during 1934 visit to the Far East, copy in W Wehr papers, manuscript collection, University of Washington. The actual subject of the painting Tobey is discussing is not clear.
27. This opinion of Tobey's is quoted in Travel Bulletin, which appears to be a cruise line's journal. A page from this journal containing an article entitled 'Mr Mark Tobey, American Artist, is charmed by Japan' is in the Elmhirst Papers, Dartington Hall Archive, Devon. Tobey's handwritten note on the page states: 'I said some of this!'.
28. A Masson (1956), quoted Rubin and Lanchner, André Masson, New York, 1976, page 183. Masson regards his own treatment of space as emphasizing the same active, living quality. Kahnweiler quotes him as describing his space as 'a space which has become active, growing, ripening, vanishing' (Curt Valentin Gallery, New York, André Masson - Recent Work and Earlier Paintings, 1953).
29. A Masson, in International Association of Plastic Arts, Information Bulletin, no. 39, February 1961. Masson also discusses Indian sculpture in 'Puissance de L'Inde', in Arles, Art Extrême-Orient, 1955.
30. The title Japan Line may be a punning reference to the source of the new calligraphic quality he was discovering at the time. Some works of this period have close visual similarities to examples of Japanese and Chinese painting - compare Towards Disappearance III with Jih-Kuan (died 1296) Grapes, 154 x 42 cm, private collection.

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Francis mentions a growing Oriental influence on his art around 1955. He is aware of the concept of 'Tai Chi' which he says (quoted P Selz, Sam Francis, New York, 1975, page 34) 'became very important to me'. He is also informed by the ideas of Zen, to which he keeps, he says 'a respectful distance, a not unaware distance' (quoted Jan Butterfield, 'The Other Side of Wonder' in I.C.A. Boston, Sam Francis, 1979). The painter Walasse Ting, who has been close to Francis, feels (letter to the author, 22nd July 1980) that he has been drawn to Zen. In 1964, Francis and Ting planned a book of translations of Chinese poetry, never completed as a joint venture.

31. In 1957, prior to Francis's trip, Arnold Rudlinger (who knew him well) wrote in an introduction to a catalogue for an exhibition of his work at Klipstein and Kornfeld in Bern: 'He is familiar with Eastern thought. The last gouaches show he knows how to employ the silence and the void of Oriental painting as artistic means of expression' (quoted in P Selz, op. cit. page 65)

Since his first visit to Japan, Francis has returned on numerous occasions. He states: 'Each trip to the Far East convinces me of my own identity by my sameness and differentness to people here'

- (letter to Betty Freeman, 1964, quoted in her unpublished manuscript Sam Francis: Ideas and Paintings, 1969, copy in Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.). 'The first impression I had of the Orient was of déjà-vu - of having been there before ... It was like ... returning to some place ... specifically warm, exhilarating, dark and shot through with light'. (Sam Francis, July 1979, quoted Jan Butterfield, op. cit.)
32. Sam Francis, in Centre G Pompidou, Paris, Sam Francis, peintures récentes, 1976-8.
  33. Sam Francis, quoted P Selz, op. cit, page 64.
  34. Sam Francis, quoted Betty Freeman, op. cit. page 144.
  35. Francis (quoted R T Buck 'The Paintings of Sam Francis' in Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, Sam Francis, Paintings 1947-77, page 137) develops this point, emphasizing the role of space as being more than just a negative background: 'They (the images) appeared to me as things embedded in space. The space also was a thing'.
  36. Paul Jenkins, in interview with the author, 8th October, 1979.
  37. Ibid. This work of c 1979 (title unknown) was seen by the author in the artist's studio.
  38. Ibid. See Chapter One, page 46 , where this paradox of emptiness and fullness is further discussed. The work mentioned, whose title and date are unknown, was seen by the author in the artist's studio.
  39. A further indication that Jenkins had to look to the Orient for spatial concepts that would be of use to him is his belief that the Greeks did not have a word for space - an opinion that he states in Paul and Esther Jenkins, Observations of Michel Tapié, New York, 1956. Art Critic Tapié, who also had an interest in Zen, was an acquaintance of Jenkins's in Paris.
  40. T Stamos, handwritten answer to a Whitney questionnaire, artist's file, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
  41. T Stamos, quoted B Cavaliere, 'Theodoros Stamos in Perspective', Arts, December 1977, page 114.
  42. Stamos's Teahouse series was apparently inspired by effects of light observed through Japanese screens.



43. I Lassaw, in conversation with the author, 13th August, 1979.
44. I Lassaw, daybook entry, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art.
45. W Paalen, San Francisco Museum of Art, Dynaton, 1951, page 22. This concept of an unmanifest state, a nothingness is non-Western. Paalen himself notes that the Hindus (and the Maya) - but not the Greeks - understood the concept of 'zero'.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. There is little direct evidence of Paalen's awareness of Hindu philosophy, but Onslow-Ford does recall (sketchbook note, Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art) coming across Paalen in a yoga posture on one occasion, and being told by Paalen that he had been taught by an Indian in Paris.
49. Onslow-Ford once owned the work.
50. G Onslow-Ford, 'Paalen the Messenger' in Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico, Homage to Wolfgang Paalen, 1967, page 25.
51. G Onslow-Ford, note in sketchbooks, Onslow-Ford papers.
52. G Onslow-Ford, Painting in the Instant, London, 1964, page 67.
53. G Onslow-Ford, sketchbook notes, probably early 1950's, Onslow-Ford papers.
54. G Onslow-Ford, Creation, Basel, 1978, page 63.
55. Mark Tobey, 'Notes by Tobey', in Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, Mark Tobey, 1962, page 15.
56. Graves discussed his ideas in published statements and would have had many opportunities to share them with Tobey in conversation. In a tempera of 1960, For the Inner Eye, Tobey echoes the many similar titles given by Graves at an earlier date (for example, Little known Bird of the Inner Eye, 1941, tempera, 20 3/4 x 36 5/8", collection MOMA, New York).
57. Mark Tobey, quoted in a review, Arts, December 1957.

58. Mark Tobey, in interview with William Seitz, transcript, Tape II, Side I, page 17-18, Seitz papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
59. Mark Tobey, 'Notes by Tobey', op. cit., page 15.
60. Mark Tobey, quoted W Schmied, Mark Tobey, London, 1966.
61. Cage was acquainted with a great many artists, and personal contact must have been an important means whereby his Zen-based aesthetic received an airing. Cage has a reputation for intellectual generosity. Amongst artists that Cage knew personally are Tobey, Graves, Kline, Motherwell, Reinhardt, Newman, Lippold, Guston, Rauschenberg, Johns and Twombly. Classes Cage held at the New School for Social Research were attended by several younger artists, including George Brecht, Dick Higgins and Allan Kaprow. Jim Dine, George Segal and Larry Poons were occasionally present.
62. J Cage, Silence, Middletown, 1961, page 70.
63. Ibid, page 124.
64. See A Watts, The Way of Zen, London 1957, page 101.
65. J Cage, op. cit. page 8.
66. Cage states (interview with the author, 30th August, 1979) that 'we had an immediate feeling of recognition, the two of us ... It was very strange. Sometimes we would talk but it wasn't necessary. We were so enthusiastic about what each one of us was doing!' Whilst at Black Mountain College Cage actively proselytized Zen. For example, at a mixed media event to which Rauschenberg contributed, Cage read from a Zen text.
67. 'The project of doing that piece was in my mind for several years before I actually did it. And I gave a talk about it at Vassar in the symposium on the arts there, ... I described the piece, but had not written it. I didn't write it even then till two years later' (John Cage, in interview with the author, 30th August, 1979).
68. Ibid.
69. Rauschenberg certainly regarded these works as having a metaphysical rather than a formalist motivation, as he revealed in a letter to his dealer Betty Parsons (post mark 18th October, 1951) sent from Black Mountain College. 'They are large white (one white as one

God) canvases organized and selected with the experience of time and presented with the innocence of a virgin, Dealing with the suspense, excitement and body of an organic silence, the restrictions and freedom of absence, the plastic fullness of nothing, the point a circle begins and ends' (quoted L Alloway, Rauschenberg, Washington D.C., 1977, page 3).

70. Rauschenberg is quoted in Cage, op. cit., page 99 as saying: 'A canvas is never empty'.
71. J Cage, in interview with the author, 30th August, 1979. 'It was through Bob Rauschenberg that I became free to look at representational things again. Perhaps Zen had something to do with that, but certainly Bob was the tangible introducer'.

Cage's aesthetic may also have been important in Twombly's case. His Olympia (1957), for example, shows the same separation of formal elements against a background of unbounded space that Cage achieves with the sound and silences of his music. Cage has indicated (in interview with the author) that Twombly, Rauschenberg, Johns and Duchamp were the visual artists he was closest to during the 1950's, and so the question of an influence is relevant here.

72. 'Its ... something that I've felt all my life, and I think I've always had that sense of a craving for space ... as a child I remember feeling that way too' (Richard Lippold, interview with the author, 25th September, 1979).
73. Richard Lippold, interview with Paul Cummings, transcript, page 94 Archives of American Art.
74. 'The little bit of music that I wrote was very much like what Cage and the others developed and refined and made. It might have gone the same way if I'd stayed with music - spatial - sounds in space, not clusters or harmony or melody, or things that are continuous and run along from beginning to end ... ' (R Lippold, interview with the author, 25th September, 1979).
75. Of his sculpture Variation Within a Sphere No. 10, The Sun (1953-56, collection Metropolitan Museum, New York) Lippold states (interview with the author, 25th September, 1979): 'That work grew out of my experience with the space for which I conceived it at the Metropolitan Museum'. Whilst a student at the Chicago Art Institute, Lippold says he was 'very taken by Oriental art ... Indian temples, Indian painting, Cave paintings, Chinese architecture, things of this sort, in which there is a strong relationship of the painting or the sculpture to its environment, whether immediately, or in terms of the landscape. For instance, Angkor Vat seen from a distance is magnificent as well as from close by, because the scale of everything is adjusted to the whole environmental situation - and this I responded to'.

76. R Lippold, 'Structure is Illusion', typescript, Richard Lippold papers, Archives of American Art.
77. Lippold (in interview with the author, 25th September, 1979) gives another instance of his interest in the paradox of emptiness and fullness: 'Some time back I was interested in learning about "white sound", which is all sounds from the lowest audible note to the highest audible note, all at once, not even separated by the steps of the piano keyboard for instance, but everything at equal volume. Just a kind of hiss - which is everything at once and it is nothing, it is nothing and everything, both total presence and total absence, and there is no difference'.
78. See L Lippard, Reinhardt, New York, 1981.
79. This phrase appears to come from the Tao Te Ching. Elsewhere Reinhardt quotes Lao Tzu's description of the Tao as 'the form of the formless, the image of the imageless', and the assertion that the Tao 'fills the whole frame, yet you cannot keep track of it' (notes, Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art).
80. Rollin Crampton, quoted in a press release of the Kramer Gallery, New York, issued on the occasion of a posthumous one-man show, October 1971.
81. Flavin's earlier interest in Oriental art is revealed in his experiments with Chinese-style brushwork (for example Untitled (Tenements in the Rain), 1959) to which he had been introduced by Walasse Ting, a Chinese painter living in New York.

The work of Yves Klein shows that the idea of the Void was also an influence on the production of monochrome art in Europe. His first experiments with monochrome canvases began in 1946, although they were not exhibited till 1955. In 1947 (predating Cage) he projected the 'monotone - silence - symphony' - consisting of one note held continuously, then followed by silence - which was used to accompany his Anthropometrics. The theme of 'L'Immatériel' was to occur in other aspects of his artistic endeavour as well, for example his exhibition consisting of an empty gallery. Klein's knowledge of the Orient was extensive - He had studied Oriental languages and was the author of a book on judo.

82. John Mc Laughlin, printed notes, dated 10th June, 1964, Mc Laughlin papers, Archives of American Art.
83. I Noguchi, undated printed note, artist's file, Whitney Museum.

84. See Magic Circle (1955, oil and Chrysochrome, 37 x 33", collection Pierre Lamaroux, Paris), and A Elsen, Paul Jenkins, New York, 1974, plate 171. In Chapter Two, page 65, the circle motif in Jenkins's work is also related to his interest in mandalas. 54
85. See Circle Void (1970, watercolour, 18½" x 17½"). A link between the circle image and the Void idea is also made in Crane with Void (1945, the Haseltine collection of Pacific Northwest Art), and in a related drawing Eagle, Snake, Animals with sphere, (collection Henry Gallery, University of Washington). 44  
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86. 'Was it selflessness? [he asks] was it the universe - where I could lose my identity' (Mark Tobey, 'Japanese Traditions and American Art', College Art Journal, Fall 1958). Possibly the metaphor of the 'circle of emptiness' which Tobey uses (see above, page 46) is derived from this experience.
87. The Cleveland Portal (1976-77), which Noguchi relates to the 'Void' series, draws on yet another source - the Shinto Torii.
88. Pousette-Dart has created small metal sculptures, some of which adopt this form of the pierced circle. The motif also appears in some of his paintings, carrying an association of 'wholeness' for him. In conversation with the author (13th July, 1980) Pousette-Dart acknowledged that he feels close to the spirit of early Chinese art.
89. Robert Motherwell, in telephone conversation with the author, 29th December, 1979.
90. The Samurai series were so named because at the time of their creation Motherwell attended a festival of Japanese films (R. Motherwell, in telephone conversation with the author, 29th December 1979). 96
91. R Motherwell, quoted in W Seitz, Abstract Expressionist Painting in America, unpublished Ph D Thesis, 1955, Princeton, page 29.
92. Motherwell acknowledged this interest in a telephone conversation with the author (29th December 1979). He has read several books on Zen, and apparently owns and treasures an example of Zen painting.
93. R Motherwell, in telephone conversation with the author.
94. W Kandinsky, 'Empty canvas, etc', in Myfanwy Evans, The Painter's Object, London, 1937.
95. Motherwell acknowledged his interest in the French symbolists in a telephone conversation with the author.

96. R Motherwell, statement for the Symposium 'What Abstract Art Means to Me', in Museum of Modern Art, Bulletin, Vol. 15, No. 3 Spring 1951.
97. For a full discussion see Laxmi P Sihare, Oriental Influences on Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian, PhD thesis, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1967, and Sixten Ringbom 'Art in "the Epoch of the Great Spiritual"', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, Vol. 29, 1966, page 386.
98. S Macdonald-Wright, in Duveen-Graham Gallery, New York, exhibition catalogue, 1956.
99. In Art Actuel International, 1, 1958, Macdonald-Wright is quoted as saying that his work is governed by a conception of art derived from Sung dynasty Chinese painting: 'C'est en découvrant la sagesse Zen et en étudiant les principes de la peinture Sung que j'ai découvert enfin mon propre mode d'expression picturale'.
100. Carl Andre, in André Gould, 'Dialogues with Carl Andre', Arts May 1974.
101. Empty space is also given positive emphasis in 8 Cuts, (1967) which is a negative version of The Equivalent Series (1966). Several works of 1972 are given the title Void.
102. In particular, we should consider Pollock, in whose mature work we find an unbounded spatial background ('a sort of unframed space' in Lee Krassner's words) - for example, Number 32 123 (1950, collection Kunstsammlung Nordrhein - Westfalen, Dusseldorf) and Autumn Rhythm (1950, oil, 105 x 207", collection Metropolitan Museum, New York). 124
103. G Limbour, 'Tableaux Récents d'André Masson, XX Siècle, January 1956.
104. 'Note that the notion of the abyss has become the very locus of my transmutations' (A Masson, in 'L'Effusioniste', La Nouvelle Revue Française, July 1955, page 47).
105. A Masson, in interview with Takemoto, August 1969, in C F Yamada (ed), Dialogue in Art, London, 1976, page 299.
106. A Masson, *ibid*, page 299.
107. A Masson 'Une Peinture de L'Essentiel', Quadrum No. 1, May 1956, page 38.
108. A Masson, in Deborah Rosenthal, 'Interview with André Masson', Arts, Vol. 45, No. 3, November 1980, page 88.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Quoted F Capra, The Tao of Physics, London, 1976, page 200.
2. A Watts, The Way of Zen, London, 1957, Page 90.
3. John Cage, in interview with the author, 30th August, 1979.
4. John Cage, *ibid.* 'I love symbols if everything symbolizes everything else', he adds.
5. I Lassaw, in 'The Artist Speaks', Art in America, August/September 1965.
6. I Lassaw, handwritten, undated notes, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art.
7. G Onslow-Ford, Instant Painting (The Way of the Painter), unpublished manuscript, page 91, Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
8. G Onslow-Ford, Painting in the Instant, London, 1964, page 48.
9. G Onslow-Ford, Creation, 1971, first, unpublished draft, page 11, Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
10. G Onslow-Ford, note in sketchbooks, 1965. Onslow-Ford papers.
11. G Onslow-Ford, note made in sketchbook, possibly mid 1960's.
12. Quotations are from undated handwritten notes in the Lassaw papers, the ideas ascribed to the artist being also developed by him in conversation with the author (13th August, 1979). A source for Lassaw's distinctions of different attitudes to nature may be found in a taped lecture by Alan Watts, a copy of which Lassaw owns.
13. I Lassaw, statement, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, The New Decade, 1955, page 52.
14. J Needham, Science and Civilization in China, Volume II, London, 1956, page 478. Fenollosa picks up the same point, and his formulation may have been particularly important given his role as interpreter of the Oriental aesthetic to an American audience -

- he states that 'relations are more real and more important than the things which they relate' (quoted L W Chisolm, Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture, New Haven and London, 1963 page 226).
15. I Lassaw, in conversation with the author, 13th August, 1979.
  16. R Lippold, in interview with the author, 25th September 1979. This interview is also the source of subsequent quotations.
  17. David Smith, in 'Symposium: Art and Religion', Art Digest, 15th December 1953, page 32.
  18. T Stamos, from his 1954 lecture 'Why Nature in Art', quoted B Cavaliere, 'Theodoros Stamos in Perspective', Arts, December 1977, page 112.
  19. John Mc Laughlin, handwritten note, Mc Laughlin papers. Archives of American Art.
  20. W De Kooning, 'The Renaissance and Order', written 1951 for a lecture at Studio 35, in T Hess, William De Kooning, New York, 1968, page 143.
  21. Sam Francis, quoted in Betty Freeman, Sam Francis: Ideas and Paintings unpublished manuscript, page 60, copy in Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
  22. Sam Francis, *ibid*, page 59.
  23. Noguchi has stated (in interview with the author, 18th June, 1980) that one of the qualities he admires in the Zen gardens of Japan is that the relationships between the forms are 'immanent'.
  24. Ma-tsu (quoted A Watts, *op. cit.*, page 143) explains that according to Zen the view which sees the body as enduring through time is false, since the body only consists of the coming together of a group of elements. His explanation implies a kind of 'atomism' which parallels the apparent atomism of structure in Francis's or Cage's works. Just as sound follows sound in Cage's music without being linked together, so according to Ma-tsu 'the thoughts follow one another without being linked together. Each one is absolutely tranquil'. 'We take things apart in order that they may become the Buddha' Cage writes (A Year from Monday, New Lectures and Writings, Middletown, 1967, page 136).



25. John Mc Cracken, statement, in Washington Gallery of Modern Art, A New Aesthetic, 1967.
26. Mark Tobey, postcard to Leonard Elmhirst, postmarked 9th June, 1934, Elmhirst papers, Dartington Hall Archives, Devon.
27. Figurative works such as Broadway Boogie (1942, tempera, 30 1/4 x 23 1/2", collection Mr and Mrs Max Weinstein) and E Pluribus Unum (1942, tempera, 20 1/8 x 24 1/2", collection Seattle Art Museum) display a similar concern with conveying a sense of underlying unity. 147  
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28. The intimate connection of man and nature postulated by the Oriental philosophies is brought out in a statement Graves makes in a letter to the painter Kenneth Callahan (Callahan papers, Archives of American Art) dated 25th September 1948, written whilst he was at Chartres: 'Know thyself and nature to be mental. Know that thou containest the Universe and not it thee'. Graves repeats this thought in a letter to Richard Lippold of a similar date. Interestingly, Carl Andre considers the same idea, reversing however its formulation. Speaking of the strong sense of 'place' he finds in Japanese gardens and attempts to create in his own work, he conjectures: 'If one cannot really contain the universe, perhaps, in one's mind, then one of these gardens has the very secure feeling that one is contained in the universe' (Andre, in Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, Carl Andre: Sculpture 1959-78, 1978).
29. Evidence concerning some specific aspects of Graves's interest in the Orient has already been presented, for example, in our discussion of Coomaraswamy. It is proposed at this point to bring together a miscellaneous collection of data for the purpose of demonstrating the degree of Graves's involvement with the East, the context of the particular borrowings he makes in his art.

Graves has made many visits to the Far East, the first visit to Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong being as early as 1928. Later visits, made after his artistic personality had achieved definition, and stemming from his interest in Oriental art and philosophy, were to follow in 1971 and 1973.

Through his life Graves has collected Oriental works of art. Marion Willard (in conversation with the author, 4th October, 1979) remembers a collection he had of Oriental scrolls. Whilst living at 'The Rock' Graves created for himself a garden on the Japanese model, using large found boulders. Friends of the artist have informed the author that he favours the sparse style of interior decoration encountered in the Japanese aesthetic. In his 1945 Application for a Guggenheim fellowship (typewritten excerpts in R Lippold papers, Archives of American Art) Graves states: 'We in America are rapidly turning toward the Japanese house and garden model'.

Graves' initial exposure to Oriental art came through his visits to American museums. The Metropolitan museum's collection was explored during visits to New York. A drawing dated 1935 shows a copy of a hand of the Buddha from the Metropolitan's collection. The Seattle Art Museum was also particularly important to Graves, who was employed there for a period.

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Evidence of a purely formal influence from Chinese and Japanese paintings can be seen in Graves' work - at times he adopts the format of the hanging scrolls, and he has also made use of gold backgrounds. A quality of asymmetrical composition, and an elimination of perspectival depth are both attributable to Far Eastern precedents - 'I think it was the two dimensional quality ... that appealed to me particularly in Japanese painting' Graves states in Ida E Rubin (ed) The Drawings of Morris Graves (Boston 1974, page 54). Graves also makes use of Japanese brushes, and favours working on a horizontal surface.

Although he had dropped out of high school before graduating, friends of Graves have attested to the author that he reads widely, in particular turning to Oriental subjects. He has been interested in Chinese and Japanese poetry, and has certainly read on the subject of Zen Buddhism, which he had claimed 'comes nearest to apprehending the relationship of man to the universe'. (quoted, F S Wight et al, Morris Graves, 1956, page 43).

30. Morris Graves, quoted in Ida E Rubin (ed) The Drawings of Morris Graves, Boston, 1974, page 66.
31. Callahan acknowledges the importance for his development as an artist of his exposure to Oriental and particularly Chinese painting. One of his canvases is entitled Yin and Yang.
32. Kenneth Callahan, Callahan papers, Archives of American Art.
33. Kenneth Callahan, *ibid*.
34. Ashvaghosha, quoted F Capra, *op. cit*, note 1, page 308. Although this illustration is from Mahayana Buddhism, atom theories of matter are also dismissed by Chinese and orthodox Indian philosophies.
35. D T Suzuki, The Essence of Buddhism, Kyoto, 1968, page 53.
36. Viola Patterson, in interview with the author, 19th September, 1980. Tobey taught at the Cornish School, Seattle, intermittently from 1923 to 1931.
37. M Tobey, in interview with William Seitz, Tape III, side 1, transcript page 40, Seitz papers, Archives of American Art, Washington DC. Tobey met Teng Kwei (who was also known as Kwei Dun)

in Seattle (at the University of Washington) in either 1922 or 1923. They were to travel to New York together in 1929, and later in 1934 Tobey was to visit Kwei in Shanghai. Kwei had studied sculpture at the University of Washington, where he took his Master's degree - he later taught at the University (1927 - 28). Kwei's brush and fingernail paintings were exhibited at the Henry Gallery, Seattle and the East West Gallery, San Francisco, in 1928, and show him to have been working in a traditional manner. As well as his art work he also lectured on the history and philosophy of Chinese art on the West Coast.

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38. Mark Tobey, letter to Dorothy Elmhirst (written from Shanghai, 1934). Elmhirst papers, Dartington Hall Archive, Devon.
39. Mark Tobey in 'diary' notes made during 1934 Orient visit, Xerox copy in Wesley Wehr papers, University of Washington Manuscripts collection.
40. The calligraphic sign writing particularly caught Tobey's eye - significantly in the light of his own future use of this linear language. Onslow-Ford in his travels to the Far East was similarly impressed with this popular use of calligraphy, as he recounts in a sketchbook note (Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art): 'The Japanese advertisements that one sees in gold characters in the countryside are quite pleasing. If I understood what they meant, then they might hide the landscape in which they are placed, but just as forms they are lively'. Calligraphic sign writing also seems to be recalled in Masson's Nocturnal City (1956), and it seems possible that Tobey's city scenes may have been an influence here. 84
41. Mark Tobey, 'Reminiscences and Reveries', Magazine of Art, October 1951, page 230.
42. Mark Tobey, letter to Dorothy Elmhirst, 25th April, 1934, Elmhirst papers, Dartington Hall Archive.
43. Mark Tobey, in Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mark Tobey, (text by W Seitz), 1962, page 27.
44. Mark Tobey, letter to Feininger, quoted F Hoffman, The Art and Life of Mark Tobey: A Contribution to an Understanding of a Psychology of Consciousness, PhD thesis, University of California, Los Angeles 1977.

Graves similarly relates his choice of media to an appreciation of the transiency and non-substantiality stressed in Eastern philosophy: 'I've painted on Japanese and Chinese paper for so long and found a delight in the fragility, the transiency of the material. If you see morning grass with a fabric of cobwebs holding dew, part of the delight is because its fleeting. I've delighted in the use of Chinese and Japanese paper with some of that same feeling. Such materials are not as physically present as canvas and oil' (Morris Graves, in K Kuh, The Artist's Voice, New York, 1962, page 105)

45. Mark Tobey, in interview with W Seitz, quoted in F Hoffman, 'Mark Tobey's Paintings of New York', Art forum, April 1979, page 25.
46. Mark Tobey, quoted F Hoffman, op. cit. note 44, page 283.
47. Mark Tobey, quoted op. cit. note 43, page 23.
48. Mark Tobey, in interview with William Seitz, quoted F Hoffman, op. cit. note 45.
49. A Masson, 'The Instant, Notes for a New Style', Art News, October 1951.
50. A Masson, 'Une Peinture de l'Essentiel', Quadrum, No. 1, May 1956, page 38. Masson talks of wanting the object to become free and no longer oppressive.
51. I Lassaw, printed note, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art - source also of the following quotations. Lassaw talks (in conversation with the author, 13th August, 1979) not of matter, but of 'mattering', emphasizing the dynamic quality found in the Oriental world view.
52. R Lippold, in interview with the author, 25th September 1979.
53. See footnote 24.
54. R Lippold, in introduction to Homage to the Square: Ten works by Josef Albers, New Haven, 1962.
55. R Lippold, 'Structure is Illusion', typewritten notes, Lippold papers, Archives of American Art. Lippold admits that this idea (until recent discoveries of science) could only have come from an Eastern mystic. In this statement Lippold reflects the Hindu and Buddhist doctrine of 'maya' which is described by Watts, op. cit. note 2, page 61 in the following manner: 'The maya doctrine asserts that ... forms (rupa) have no "own-being" or "self-nature" (svabhara): They do not exist in their own right, but only in relation to one another'.
56. R Lippold, 'How to make a piece of sculpture', typewritten notes, Lippold papers, Archives of American Art.
57. R Lippold, in interview with Paul Cummings, Archives of American Art.

58. R Lippold, 'To Make Love to Life', College Art Journal, Summer 1960, page 303. This dynamic image of interacting polarities is used by Lippold in an attempt to partially explain his attraction to symmetry in his work: 'I've ... wondered a long time about why I favour symmetry so much in my work and I think it's because I understand that for everything that exists there's some opposite force and almost anything you can name ... you can always find its opposite and this tension between things moving away and coming together ... makes a symmetry of shape. Things go away and they come back together and they're around this centre where they can touch and go away from and it's that contact and separation, contact and separation which is really how we learn and how we move through life' (R Lippold, in interview with the author, 25th September, 1979).
59. R Lippold, in interview with the author, 25th September 1979.
60. R Lippold, *ibid.*
61. R Lippold, *op. cit.* note 58, page 303.
62. I Lassaw, in conversation with the author, 13th August, 1979. Lassaw has read, for example, F Capra's Tao of Physics which examines the parallels between modern scientific and traditional Eastern cosmologies. In an undated handwritten note in his papers Lassaw sees the abandonment of a belief in the solidity of form, and an acceptance of a Void concept as 'the most startling revelation of modern physics, more than Einstein's space and time ... The dissolution of all that we regard as most solid into tiny specks floating in the Void ... that gives an abrupt jar to those who think things are more or less what they seem'.
63. J Cage, in interview with the author, 30th August, 1979. Cage is referring to the introduction to the first edition.
64. Morris Graves, quoted in Tom Robbins, 'The Metaphysical Morris Graves', Seattle Magazine, February 1966. Graves had been invited to visit NASA to watch a launching, and there met several scientists. Certainly more recently he has read on the parallels between Eastern thought and modern science - a popularizing book on this topic was sent by Graves to a friend Jan Thompson (author's conversation with Jan Thompson, 20th September, 1980). Tobey, along with other artists touched by the heritage of Romanticism, generally rejected science as an influence. It is interesting to note that many physicists (including Niels Bohr and Erwin Schrodinger) have themselves been aware of the parallels between their discoveries and Oriental thought.
65. 'Through the devices and fictions around the concept of polarity, of interlocking oppositions, I have tried to discover a sculptural world that brings such incongruent forms as man, technology and nature together as a single new entity'. (Seymour Lipton,

handwritten notes titled 'What my Sculpture since 1950 is about', prepared in relation to a talk at the International Sculpture Conference, Washington D.C., 30th May, 1980. Xerox copy in author's possession).

66. Seymour Lipton, letter to the author, 26th April, 1980.
67. See A Elsen, Seymour Lipton, New York, 1971, page 55.
68. Seymour Lipton, conversation with the author, 23rd June, 1980.
69. Seymour Lipton, op. cit., note 65.
70. Seymour Lipton, quoted A Elsen, op. cit., page 33. Lipton discussed this idea again in conversation with the author. Reinhardt, in the context of discussing Chinese painting, mentions the same principle: 'The art of painting consists of four characters. Vertical and horizontal, combining and scattering' (quoted in B Rose, Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt, New York, 1975, page 215).
71. Seymour Lipton, letter to the author, 26th April, 1980. Lipton also writes: 'The Chinese have always impressed me in their poetry and painting'.
72. William Baziotes, quoted in Donald Paneth's unpublished literary portrait of Baziotes, written 1961 but based on conversations which took place in 1952. Copy in Baziotes papers, Archives of American Art. Paneth's article is also the source of the following Baziotes quotations.
 

Circumstantial evidence of Baziotes's interest in Eastern thought and art is available from several quarters. Oriental interests are occasionally reflected, for example, in his choice of titles: Oriental and Japanese Garden were shown at the Kootz Gallery, New York, February - March 1953, Eastern being painted around 1956. A statement of 1954 mentions Utamaro amongst Baziotes's favourite artists, and he is known to have been interested in Judo (a newspaper cutting concerning Judo classes at the American Buddhist Academy is amongst his papers at the Archives of American Art).
73. I Noguchi, 1977, quoted Sam Hunter, Isamu Noguchi, New York, 1978 page 154. Similarly, Hedda Sterne, contributing to a discussion in 'Artists Sessions at Studio 35' (in Motherwell and Reinhardt (eds) Modern Artists in America, New York, 1951) asserts that the use of geometry 'has to do with Western thinking. A Chinese thinks very well, but does not use logic. The use of geometrical form comes from logical thinking'.
74. Isamu Noguchi, in K Kuh, op. cit. note 44, page 178.

75. Isamu Noguchi, in Sam Hunter, op. cit., page 155.
76. Noguchi also points out that the cube's precarious balance also destroys a Western reading of static harmony in this work. Suzuki (Zen and Japanese Culture, New York, 1957, page 24) points out the value placed on imperfection in the Japanese aesthetic: 'Evidently, beauty does not necessarily spell perfection of form. This has been one of the favourite tricks of Japanese artists - to embody beauty in a form of imperfection or even ugliness'.
77. Isamu Noguchi, in S Hunter, op. cit. page 84.
78. By 'calligraphy' I mean to refer to the linear brushwork in Chinese and Japanese painting as well as that in writing per se, since there are many similar qualities.
79. The idea that the artist's personal 'handwriting' is important, that the quality of the gesture reveals the personality of the painter, is expressed by Kuo Jo-hsu: 'The actual strokes of his [the artist's] brush in writing or painting betray him and announce either the freedom and nobility of his soul or its meanness and limitation' (quoted L Binyon, The Flight of the Dragon, London, 1911) Although great emphasis is placed in China and Japan on the role of tradition, individual expression is encouraged. Study of the masters led not to an attempt to copy their styles, but to the imbuing of traditional forms with personal characteristics.
80. Chiang Yee, writing in 1938 (Chinese Calligraphy, London) noted that 'the deliberate neglect of realistic representation is in no way strange to the Chinese'. It is the abstract quality of calligraphy that Macdonald-Wright emphasizes ('Some Aspects of Sung Painting, Magazine of Art, October, 1949, page 222): 'Writing was so much an art in itself that, in most instances, the literal writing of the written character was of negligible interest; its value lay in the same "spirit" that gave life to the plasticity of the brush - in short, its inclusive expressiveness'. The abstract qualities of calligraphy would have been especially visible to American artists since most were unable to read Oriental languages, but it should be noted that some artists were aware that pure abstraction never occurred in Far Eastern calligraphy. Paul Jenkins states (interview with the author, 8th September, 1979): 'In Kyoto I was told that no matter how abstracted an emblem may be, one is always able to identify it in calligraphy - whether abstracted or Archaic-traditional. You can read it'. Tobey similarly notes that 'without knowing the language or at least having a reading knowledge, our understanding of Chinese calligraphy, to say the least, is limited' (quoted in Ulfert Wilke, 'Chinese calligraphy at the Metropolitan', Art in America, September/October, 1972).
81. Chiang Yee, op. cit. page 108.

82. T Stamos, 1950 in Motherwell and Reinhardt (eds) op. cit.
83. A Masson, in C F Yamada (ed), Dialogue in Art, London, 1976, page 296.
84. T Stamos, 'Why Nature in Art' 1954 lecture, quoted B Cavaliere, op. cit., note 18. Compare this mention of 'infallible technique' with that by Gropius (note 165, page 276). Their joint source is a passage by Duthuit quoted in Suzuki's Zen and Japanese Culture, p 26.
85. S Macdonald-Wright, quoted National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C. Stanton Macdonald-Wright, 1967, page 16, Macdonald-Wright made a study of Chinese calligraphy over a decade, learning Oriental languages as well. This study of calligraphy has certainly begun by 1923, and his introduction to Oriental art (by Focillon) occurred in 1912. Speaking in 1948, Macdonald-Wright said that he felt there was 'in my painting ... an "obligato" line for whose inspiration I am indebted to the Tang and Sung Chinese' (quoted in op. cit. above).
86. A Masson, op. cit, note 50, page 41.
87. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 7, page 9.
88. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit., note 9, page 15.
89. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 7, page 9.
90. Tobase, who spoke very little English, also taught wrestling. His work was featured in an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1957.
91. Hartung has expressed a similar idea. See Anthony Everitt, Abstract Expressionism, London, 1975, page 49.
92. Robert Motherwell, Reconciliation Elegy. Geneva/New York, 1980 page 68.
93. Motherwell is aware that black is so regarded in the Far East: 'My experience is that even more rare among painters than a sense of colour as hue is a sense of black as hue'. He feels that an awareness of black as a colour is 'most rare, except in Japan'. Amongst the Western artists he feels have this sense he includes Matisse, but in his case Motherwell also feels an Oriental source is at play: 'I suspect that Matisse learned it either from the black shadows in Morocco, or from Oriental calligraphy, or from both' (R Motherwell, 1979, in William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Robert Motherwell and Black, 1980, page 81)



94. R Motherwell, in telephone conversation with the author, 29th December, 1979.
95. R Motherwell, in H H Arnason, Robert Motherwell, New York, 1977 page 115. The Spirit of the Brush (by Shio Sakanishi, London, 1939) is a volume in the 'Wisdom of the East' series which Motherwell and Baziotès were reading in the 1940's.
96. Many American artists certainly were aware of this Oriental dictum. Macdonald-Wright (op. cit. note 80, page 221) quotes Kuo Hsi as stating that painting and calligraphy are identical. Onslow-Ford feels (op. cit. note 8, page 15) that 'handwriting is a form of drawing', and Noguchi (interview with the author, 18th June, 1980) also regards the two as related. Reinhardt notes that in China no separation is made between the 'forms of language' and the 'forms of art' (handwritten note, undated, on theme of calligraphy, Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art). Masson writes (op. cit. note 50, page 41): 'c'est inconcevable - qu'un peintre éminent ne soit aussi un grand calligraphe', whilst Mathieu (Au-delà du Tachisme, Paris, 1963, page 183) refers to the same principle.
97. See K Kuh, op. cit. note 44, page 144.
98. John Cage, who knew Kline well, was however surprised to hear he had disclaimed an interest in the Orient (interview with the author 30th August, 1979).
99. Elaine De Kooning, 'Franz Kline: Painter of his own Life', Art News November 1962.
100. 'I paint on the floor and that isn't unusual - the Orientals did that ...' (Jackson Pollock, 1951, quoted in B H Friedman, Jackson Pollock - Energy Made Visible, London 1972).
101. Helen Frankenthaler, letter to the author, 2nd July, 1980.
102. Mark Tobey, 'Japanese Traditions and American Art', College Art Journal, Fall 1958.
103. Mark Tobey, quoted Museum of Modern Art, New York, op. cit. note 43, page 47.
104. In a letter to Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst (3rd May 1934, Shang hai, Elmhirst papers, Dartington Hall Archive) Tobey writes: 'enclosed is a sample of my own Chinese writing which my friend [Teng Kwei] says belongs in three years practice grade. Am sending first and tenth attempt'.

105. Mark Tobey, interview with William Seitz, Tape III, side 1, transcript, page 47, Seitz papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.
106. Mark Tobey, in International Association of Plastic Arts. Information Bulletin, No. 37, February 1961, page 16.
107. Mark Tobey, in Museum of Modern Art, New York, op. cit. note 43, page 51.
108. Information is from Eliza Rathbone, The Theme of the City in the Work of Mark Tobey, M A report, 1974, Courtauld Institute. Rathbone illustrates the screen, which later entered the collection of Morris Graves. Tobey had an extensive and often changing collection of Oriental antiques.
109. A note penciled on to the photo album claims this and other photos to be of Tobey's 1932 and 1933 classes, intriguingly suggesting a date prior to his trip to the East. The photo cannot, in any case, be of a date much later than Broadway Norm.
110. Mark Tobey, in K Kuh, op. cit. note 44, page 236.
111. Mark Tobey, in S Rodman, Conversations with Artists, New York, 1957.
112. Other works can be mentioned which bear a specific relationship to Far Eastern calligraphy: Untitled Calligraphic, (1953, tempera on panel, 37 1/8 x 11", collection Seattle Art Museum) has the vertical orientation found in Far Eastern writing, whilst Eastern Calligraphy (1959, sumi, 14 1/2 x 19") acknowledges in its title its closeness to Oriental modes. Space Line (1953, tempera, 26 3/8 x 5 7/8", collection Willard Gallery, New York) can be related to images of a single vertical stroke made by several Oriental brushwork masters - for example Jiun's Staff (128.8 x 28.5 cm, private collection). Ulfert Wilke (letter to the author, 17th June, 1980) notes that when he knew Tobey he 'still held the brush as he had been told by his calligraphy master'.
113. Mark Tobey, in interview with William Seitz, Tape III, Side 1, transcript page 14, Seitz papers, Archives of American Art.
114. T Stamos, quoted K Sawyer, Stamos, Paris, 1960, page 23.
115. T Stamos, 'Why Nature in Art', unpublished lecture. 1954, quoted B Cavaliere, op. cit. note 18. 'Chi-yün shêng-tung' is translated by O Siren (The Chinese on the Art of Painting, New York, 1963, page 19) as 'Spirit Resonance (or Vibration of Vitality) and Life Movement'.

116. A statement by Jenkins in which he describes his discovery of Hokusai may be found in A Elsen, Paul Jenkins, New York, 1974, page 49. Elsen also describes some works on 'rice' paper which Jenkins executed during the summer of 1953 working on the floor (page 50). These works, which adopted the format of Far Eastern scroll paintings, have since been destroyed, but may have been an early response to his developing interest in Japanese painting, and in particular Hokusai. However, as early as 1949, Jenkins had experimented with Chinese ink sticks, and his exposure to Oriental art began with childhood visits to a local art museum. Jenkins's interest in Oriental art is revealed in the collection he has formed, which contains Tibetan Tankas amongst other items.
117. Paul Jenkins, quoted A Elsen, op. cit., page 62.
118. Paul Jenkins quoted A Elsen, op. cit. page 62.
119. Paul Jenkins, in interview with the author, 8th October, 1979,
120. An influence of calligraphy on Noguchi's sculpture has already been noted (see page 169 and page 198 ). Noguchi studied Oriental brushwork in Peking (1930) with the painter Chi Pai Shi. An exhibition of his Peking brush drawings was held at Cordier and Eckstrom, New York, April-May 1968.
- Herbert Ferber's Calligraph with Wall (1957) betrays similarities to Oriental brushwork in its linearity and composition of dynamic forms. The artist, however, in a letter to the author (6th July, 1980), denies any causal link: 'There is no connection of a philosophical nature with Oriental art. I called these works calligraphs because they resemble calligraphy, but the similarity was recognized after I made them from my drawings, which I also realized resemble calligraphy'.
121. Seymour Lipton, letter to the author, 26th April, 1980 - the following quotations are from the same source.
122. David Smith, from a lecture at Museum of Modern Art, New York, quoted Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, David Smith: The Drawings, 1979, page 26.
123. David Smith, 'Second Thoughts on Sculpture', College Art Journal, Spring 1954. Dorothy Dehner, first wife of Smith, does not remember any particular interest in Oriental calligraphy during the time they were together, but points out his interest in art of all cultures. The carved stone wheels on Indian temples, for example, were the inspiration for Smith's wheeled sculptures, such as Voltri XIII (1962, steel, 64 1/8 x 103 3/4", collection University Art Museum, Berkeley, California). Dehner does recall that there was experimentation with Oriental bamboo pens at Bolton Landing (telephone conversation with the author, 8th July, 1980), and Smith may have been affected by her interest in Eastern philosophy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. John Cage, Silence, Middletown, 1961, page 129.
2. Prajna-paramita-hridaya Sutra, Chinese version, quoted A Watts, The Way of Zen, London, 1957, page 84. Reinhardt records this concept that 'form is void' in his notes (Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art).
3. Tobey's The Void Devouring the Gadget Era (1942, tempera, 21½ x 29 3/8") seems to depict this process of reabsorbition. Reinhardt gives Lao Tzu's formulation of the dynamic relationship of Void and forms (see page 147), and the Tao Te Ching's illustration (Chapter 16) of the process of involution is also noted by Onslow-Ford in a quotation included in his sketchbooks: 'Having attained perfect emptiness, holding fast to stillness, I can watch the return of the ten thousand creatures, which all rise together. These creatures all return to their separate roots - in stillness each has returned to its original state'. Paalen feels art should make the spectator aware of the dynamic relationship of form and formlessness. He writes: 'A painting is beautiful when it makes the spectator partake emotionally in the great structural rhythms, the tidal waves of form and chaos, of being and becoming ...' (San Francisco Museum of Art, Dynaton, 1951, page 26). 145
4. Philip Guston, interview with Harold Rosenberg, in Jewish Museum New York, Philip Guston: Recent Paintings and Drawings, 1965.
5. Morris Graves, in Willard Gallery, New York, Morris Graves, 1948.
6. Paul Jenkins, quoted A Elsen, Paul Jenkins, New York, 1974, page 43.
7. O Siren, The Chinese on the Art of Painting, New York, 1963, page 27.
8. G Onslow-Ford, undated note in sketchbooks, Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C. This cosmological picture, which distinguishes between 'gross' and 'subtle' levels of matter, corresponds to the Hindu understanding.
9. G Onslow-Ford, Creation, first (unpublished) draft, 1971, page 22. Copy in Onslow-Ford papers, Archives of American Art.
10. G Onslow-Ford, undated sketchbook note.
11. G Onslow-Ford, Creation, Basel, 1978, page 23.

12. G Onslow-Ford, sketchbook note, undated.
13. G Onslow-Ford, op. cit. note 9.
14. G Onslow-Ford, sketchbook note, undated.
15. G Onslow-Ford, sketchbook note, undated.
16. A Reinhardt, undated note, Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art.
17. G Onslow-Ford, sketchbook note, 21st December 1966.
18. I Lassaw, diary entry, 4th December 1954, in notebooks, Lassaw papers, Archives of American Art.
19. See statement c 1955, in A Elsen, op. cit. page 48.
20. In a 1951 lecture (transcript in artist's file, Museum of Modern Art Library) Pousette-Dart comments: 'Some of my canvases are just this, a final experience of white on white having travelled through and through, like an area of ground wherein much dancing has occurred'. Pousette-Dart acknowledges (in conversation with the author 13th July, 1980) that during the process of working many paintings may emerge and disappear, the final work being perhaps of less interest than what has gone before.

#### CONCLUSION

1. Paul Jenkins, statement in interview with the author, 8th September 1979.
2. Mark Tobey, quoted in Louis Guzzo, 'Words and Music', Seattle Times, Friday 3rd May, 1957.
3. Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching (translated by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, London, 1973, Chapter I).

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