

Sam Francis, Blue-Black, 1952, oil on canvas, 117 x 76 1/4 in.
Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1956

COLOR FIELD REVISITED

Paintings from the Albright-Knox Art Gallery

The Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University

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Paintings from the Albright-Knox Art Gallery
July 8 - September 12, 2004

Co-organized by the Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.

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Walter Darby Bannard, Harbor View #1, 1970 © Walter Darby Bannard/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Jack Bush, Coloured Funnel, 1965 © 2004 Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York/SODRAC, Montreal

Sam Francis, Blue-Black, 1952 and The Whiteness of the Whale, 1957 © 2004 The Estate of Sam Francis/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New Y

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Sam Francis, *The Whiteness of the Whale*, 1957, oil on canvas, 104 1/2 x 85 1/2 in.
Gift of Seymour Knox, Jr. 1959

The Haggerty Museum of Art is pleased to present **Color Field Revisited: Paintings**
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Morris Louis, Alpha, 1960, acrylic resin paint on canvas, 105 x 145 in.
Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1964

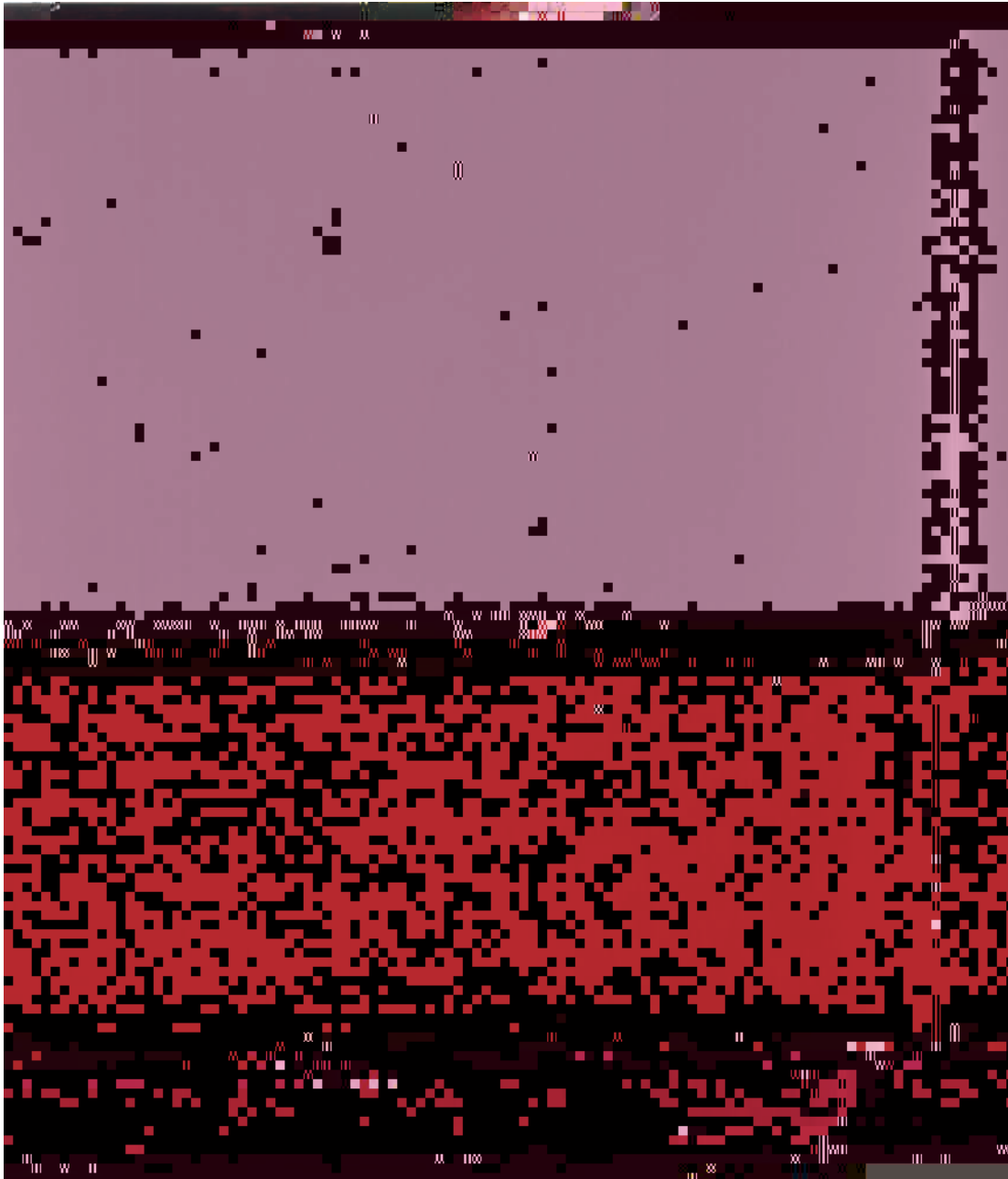
A part from fashion and interior decoration, selecting a new automobile, or admiring a sunset, people in ordinary life situations do not typically view color as a matter for special consideration. Even in the history of art before the twentieth century, color in paintings was considered secondary to shape and design. The philosopher Immanuel Kant argued in his *Critique of Judgment*, 1790, that color might enliven a composition, but could not make it beautiful. (J.M.W. Turner, who foretold twentieth-century painters' interest in abstraction and color, is an exception.) Wassily Kandinsky in his *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1910, built a language for painting based on matching certain hues with corresponding affective states of consciousness. Still, color was not recognized as central to painting until Fauvism emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Fauves, including Matisse, applied unmediated paints directly to the canvas and were known for the intensity of the "pure" colors they used for expressive and decorative purposes, as well as for building pictorial structures. Twentieth-century artists from the Fauves on recognized color as a central element in artistic form.

Following upon these earlier artistic interests in color, painters later on in the century found reason to consider carefully both the psychological and the physical aspects of color. Whether by becoming intuitively sensitive to the effects of colors in the compositional process or through scientific experiments with color, artists increasingly paid attention to color in developing their art.

The Color Field painters represented in this exhibition offer a variety of stylistic approaches to painting from Sam Francis' *The Whiteness of the Whale*, 1957, concerned with tension between the whiteness and surrounding color and space to the erratic geometric forms of Frank Stella in *Fez*, 1964. Helen Frankenthaler's playful, amorphous cloud-like pools of color that literally float on the picture plane are in sharp contrast to Kenneth Noland's geometric bands of color bounded by ruler sharp linear edges in *Day*, 1964. Hence it is more or less arbitrary to link these artists together under a single designation such as Color Field. Yet this is how late twentieth-century critics and art historians have chosen to classify the artists shown here. Their work flows out of a radical rethinking of painting during the Post World War II era from 1950s to 1970s. Jackson Pollock's ground-breaking explorations in the generation before initiated a revolution in the relation of paint to the canvas and caused artists on both coasts of the United States and elsewhere to probe more deeply into painterly abstraction. For painters in the United States such as Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Mark Rothko and the others featured here color became the primary element of painterly form. Like the Abstract Expressionist painters of the previous generation, they used color for expressive purposes, but increasingly they focused mainly on what was happening on the canvas, virtually abandoning all traces of representation. For the most part, these painters abandon the seeming spontaneity of Pollock's Abstract Expressionist canvases for painting surfaces that appear to be conceptually planned and executed.

What is most curious about the painters in the Color Field group is the near total absence of human feeling. There is no nostalgia, no rage. There is neither loneliness nor joy. What is expressive about these works reflects mainly an interest in the material

properties of paintings rather than expression connected to emotive states of consciousness. Their works represent a virtual withdrawal from the world outside painting. Like the philosopher Plato, their aim was to create a world of pure forms. Even Helen Frankenthaler's whimsical Tutti-Fruitti, 1966, which at first appears as a field of playful, amorphous floating clouds of color, on closer examination turns into a study of how various colors confront each other in a harmonious scheme and how thinly applied extended innovations



Mark Rothko, Untitled, 1961, oil, acrylic, and mixed media on canvas, 79 1/2 x 69 1/2 in.
Gift of The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc., 1985



Larry Poons, Orange Crush, 1963, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 80 in.
Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1964

The Albright-Knox Art Gallery has a particular collecting philosophy that has been in place since the museum was founded in 1862 (as the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy). While the institution had the opportunity to acquire old master works when it started, it decided instead to focus on contemporary art. This has proven to be a winning approach. Many of these contemporary works have become modern masters.

The first work acquired was Albert Bierstadt's painting, *The Marina Piccola, Capri, 1859*, a gift of the artist. In 1926, the museum purchased Pablo Picasso's Rose period masterpiece *La Toilette, 1906*, a very forward-looking acquisition for its day. It was followed the next year by another vanguard purchase, Constantin Brancusi's *Mlle. Pogany II, 1920*. Keep in mind that these acquisitions were made before the Museum of Modern Art in New York even existed. It opened in 1929.

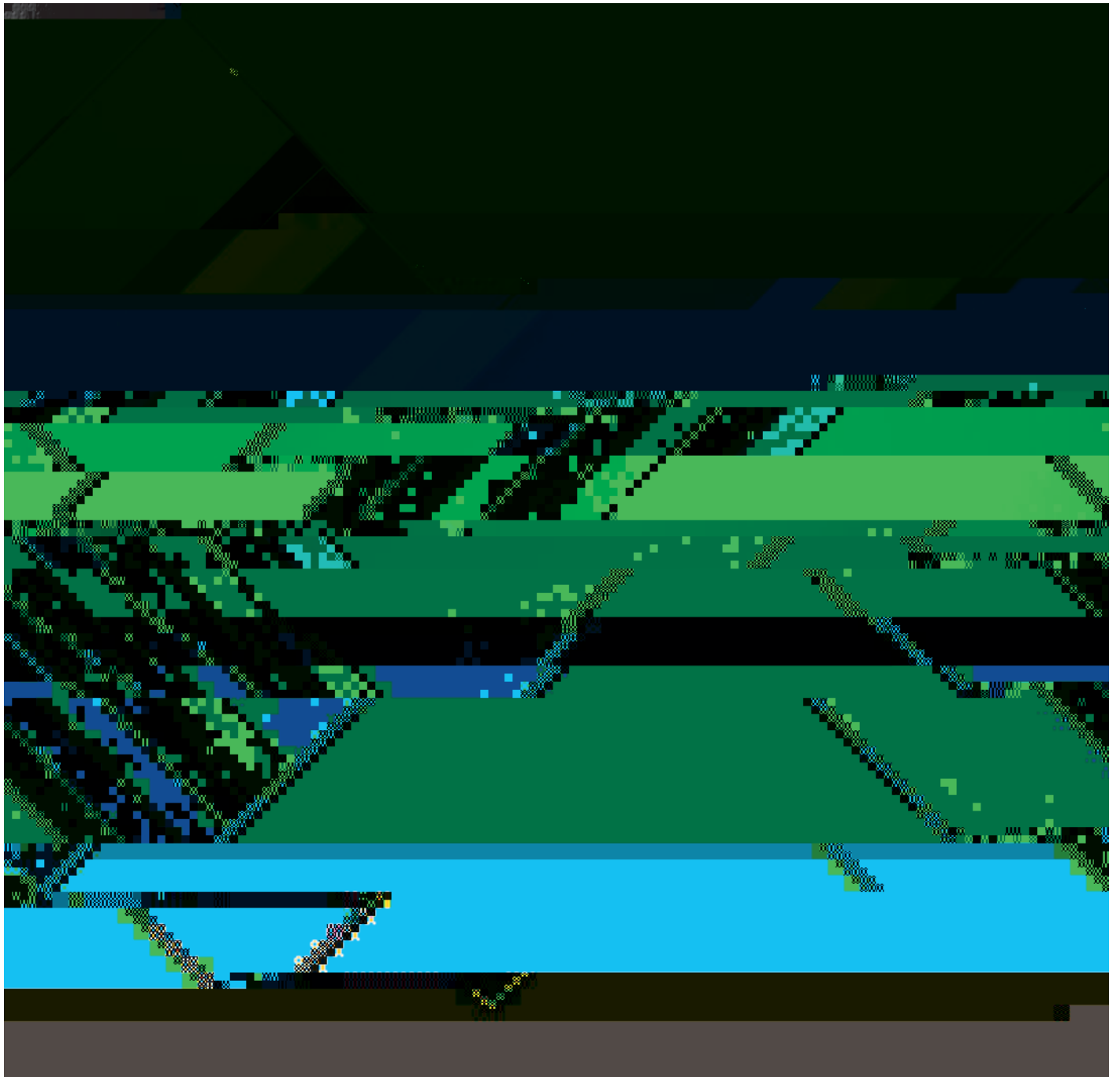
By acquiring the art of its day, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery has had access to

Almost a century ago, in "Principles of Art History," the German art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, distinguished between what he termed "linear" painting – best exemplified by the crisply delineated, lucidly organized pictures of Renaissance Florence – and "painterly" painting – embodied most clearly by the turbulent, broadly brushed, theatrically lit images of the Baroque. Wölfflin posited, too, a continuing alternation between these extremes throughout the history of art. Just as the painterly extravagances of the Baroque succeeded the linear order of the Renaissance, disciplined, linear Neo-Classicism supplanted the sensual, painterly Baroque, while Neo-Classicism was in turn challenged by the painterly, dramatic instabilities of Romantic painting. And so on.

Wölfflin's theory can even seem prescient. It is, for example, not only possible but also in many ways useful to adopt Wölfflin-ian terms to describe American vanguard painting of the 1940s and '50s. Clement Greenberg, arguably the most perceptive and articulate critic of the period, did just that when he wrote: "If the label 'Abstract Expressionism' means anything, it means painterliness: loose, rapid handling, or the look of it; masses that blotted and fused instead of shapes that stayed distinct; large and conspicuous rhythms; broken color; uneven saturations or densities of paint, exhibited brush, knife, or finger marks – in short, a constellation of qualities like those defined by Wölfflin when he extracted his notion of *Malersiche* from Baroque art."¹

Greenberg's invocation of painterliness was also evidence that he subscribed to Wölfflin's notion of the alternation of styles. In the essay, "After Abstract Expressionism," from which the passage is drawn, he listed the characteristics of 1950s gestural abstraction not only to describe it, but also to underline how it differed from both the crisp geometric paintings of the American abstract artists who preceded the Abstract Expressionists and the lean, color-based compositions of the generation of abstract painters who succeeded them. Greenberg's equation of Abstract Expressionism with painterliness was also intended as a warning against debasement. In 1962, when "After Abstract Expressionism" was published, the painterly qualities that he suggested defined the movement had degenerated into mere manner in the work of many artists of the time. Younger painters so zealously imitated the energetic, wet-into-wet, frayed-off paint application of such first generation Abstract Expressionists as Willem de Kooning that gestures that originally functioned as declarations of individuality and as traces of the history of a particular image became, at best, arbitrary signs of a style, and at worst, full-blown clichés. Painterliness could seem less a formal imperative than a signal of slavish adherence to a dogmatic set of assumptions; Greenberg dismissively called this version of gestural abstraction "the Tenth Street touch."

But as he also pointed out, painterly painting was not universal even among the first generation of Abstract Expressionists, particularly not among those most fascinated by the expressive possibilities of color. In gestural abstraction, tonality usually subsumed hue. Dragging sweeps of pigment over underlying layers or



Kenneth Noland, *Day*, 1964, acrylic resin paint on canvas, 69 3/4 x 69 3/4 in.
Anonymous donation in memory of Gordon M. Smith, 1997

overlapping them onto nearby zones created an appearance of spontaneity and endless mutability, but it often muddied or modulated chroma. Such dragging and muddying was conspicuously absent in the thinly painted, economical paintings of Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko, or (in slightly different ways) Adolph Gottlieb and Robert Motherwell. Instead, evocative color took precedence over the overt semblance of emotional turmoil. It could be argued that the work of these artists, far from demonstrating that painterliness was the defining characteristic of abstract painting in the 1950s and early 1960s, suggested wholly new ideas about what abstract pictures could be.

Rothko's best known canvases, with their confrontational, hovering rectangles, appear to be dispassionate and introspective, in contrast to the emotionally unbuttoned work of so many Abstract Expressionists. Rothko's paintings depend not on bravura gestures and roiling accumulations, but on minimally inflected, scrubbed-in sheets of paint. They seem to possess color but not substance, to assert a literal surface and simultaneously establish a kind of ambiguous space. We experience Rothko's floating rectangles, some intense and glowing, others like spent coals, as coherent but disembodied blocks, but we also feel that we can see into them, as if mentally entering zones of redness, blueness, or blackness whose limits are defined only by the intensity of hue. Rothko's color is neither symbolic, as it was for Wassily Kandinsky, nor structural, as it was for Hans Hofmann – to name only two modernists who attached special importance to the role of color in abstraction. Instead, it functions as an equivalent for space or atmosphere, an evocation of place, emotional temperature, or state of mind, detached from description or identification but freighted with myriad, evocative associations.²

Rothko's paintings and those of his fellows among the "anti-gestural" abstract painters dramatically enlarge the meaning of the label Abstract Expressionism. When they are viewed through the clarifying lens of hindsight, they can also seem to prefigure ideas explored by some of the most inventive American artists of the next generation: the loosely associated, aesthetically and chronologically diverse group who came to be known as the Color Field painters. The work of these painters – who include, among others, Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and Jules Olitski – can be read as taking as its point of departure the possibilities suggested by Rothko's poised rectangles: the primacy of color, frontality, spatial and emotional ambiguity, and a paradoxical "signature" anonymity, with the deployment of surprising hues made to carry the main burden of associative meaning. Yet, in many ways, these paintings, which have also been labeled, perhaps in a back-handed homage to Wölfflin, "post-painterly abstraction," are more distinguished by their "cool" – in the Marshall McLuhan sense of the word – than by any obvious relation to Abstract Expressionism. Louis's, Noland's, Olitski's and (to a degree) Frankenthaler's otherwise diverse paintings, with their insubstantial surfaces and deliberately suppressed "handwriting," all appear strikingly reticent, not only physically but also psychologically. As their younger colleague Frank Stella famously remarked, "What you see is what you see."³

Stella's frequently quoted assertion did not mean, however, that his work or that of his older peers was empty or devoid of feeling. While it strenuously avoided anything resembling psychological symbolism, the "post-painterly" conception of "cool" included the belief that a painting, no matter how apparently deadpan or restrained, could address the viewer's whole being – emotions, intellect, and all – through the eye, just as music did through the ear. (Obviously, any work of art worthy of the designation is loaded with the artist's baggage and viewers will view any work

of art through the filter of their own prejudices and associations.) What sets the best Color Field works apart is the extraordinary economy of means with which they manage not only to engage but also to ravish the eye. At times, it can seem as if the goal was to see how pared-down a painting could be before it ceased to be interesting to look at. Discrete shapes, dynamic imbalances, cursive drawing, and even the most elliptical, implicit suggestions of narrative all were jettisoned, in various combinations and sometimes all at once. The single indispensable element proved to be color – in generous amounts, which, paradoxically, both emphasized the painting's presence as an object and suggested vast, evocative space that one saw into but could not, even metaphorically, enter. "Size," Greenberg wrote, "guarantees the purity as well as the intensity needed to suggest indeterminate space: more blue simply being bluer than less blue."⁴

It's worth noting that for the Color Field painters, as for so many of their ancestors throughout the history of Western art, technical developments were inextricably linked with aesthetic ones. Just as the widespread use of oil paint paralleled the quest for subtle illusionistic modeling, and the availability of commercially prepared, brilliant oil paint in easily portable tubes corresponded to the advent of plein-air painting and, eventually, Impressionism, there is a synergy between the invention of acrylic paint and the Color Field painters' exploration of the possibilities of large expanses of intense, relatively unmodulated color, applied with a neutral touch. While the earliest Color Field paintings, like those of the "anti-gestural" Abstract Expressionists, were made with oil paint, thinned with turpentine, their authors soon began to experiment with the new water soluble pigments, originally intended for commercial use, that appeared on the market in the 1960s. Unlike oils, acrylics remained bright even when diluted and could be spread easily and smoothly over



Jack Bush, Coloured Funnel, 1965, oil on canvas, 68 3/4 x 68 3/4 in.
Charlotte A. Watson Fund, 1973



Helen Frankenthaler, Tutti-Fruitti, 1966, acrylic on canvas, 116 3/4 x 69 in.
Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr. 1976

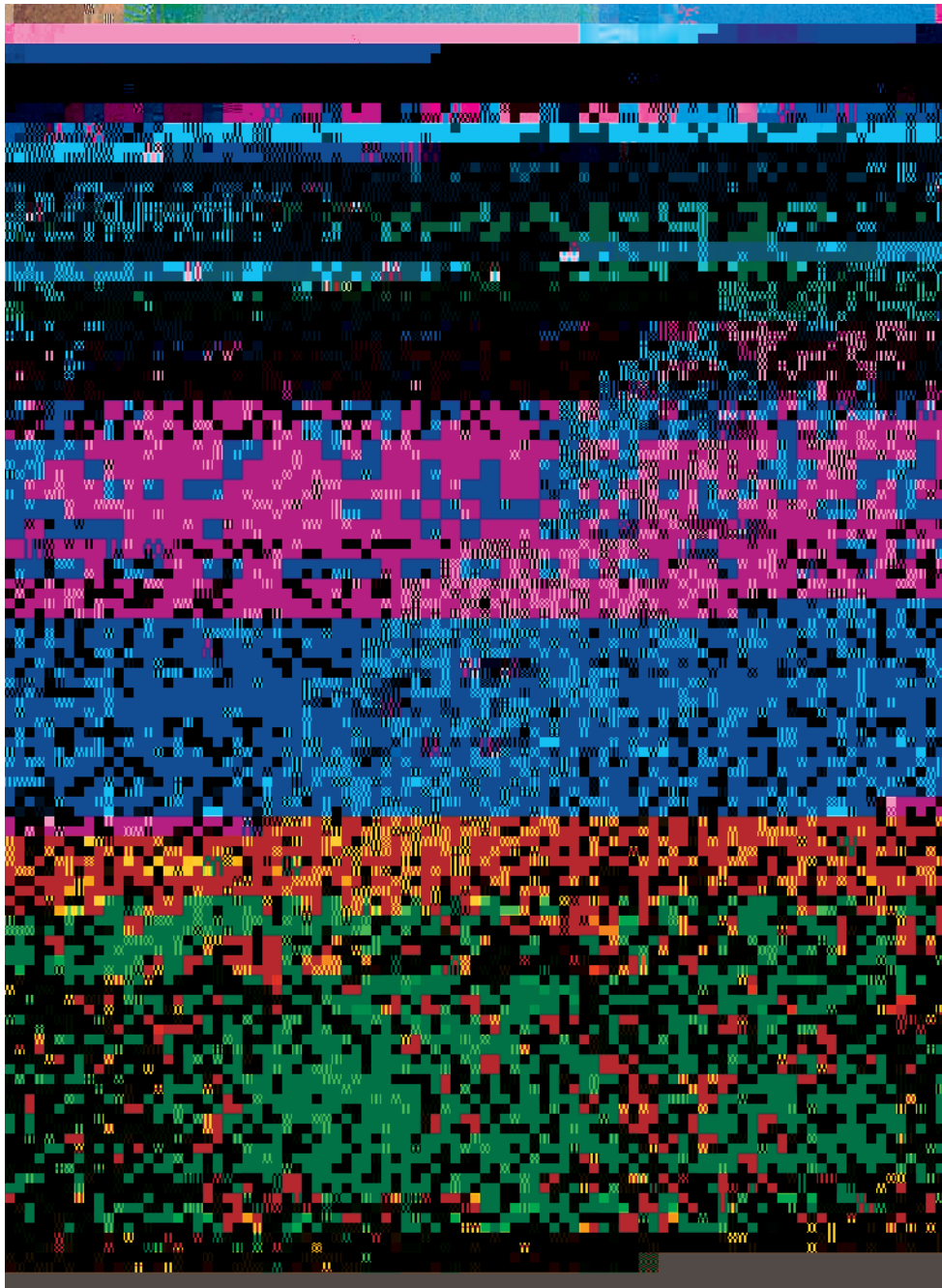
Frankenthaler adopted Pollock's practice of pouring thinned-out pigment onto unprimed canvas, but departed from him by creating, instead of skeins and tangles, broad, fluid lines and spreading pools of pale color. Soaked into the canvas, like stains, they fused painting and drawing without resorting to conventional painting or drawing marks. Frankenthaler's generously scaled canvases, with their vigorous, but curiously disembodied drawing, their almost intangible surfaces, and their expanses of white canvas, were as direct, spontaneous, and transparent as watercolors, but they had the presence, authority, and visual weight of their large size. The elusive images and luminous hues of Frankenthaler's exuberant pictures of her early years, such as the iconic *Mountains and Sea*, painted in 1952, when she was twenty three, rapidly established her as a painter to be reckoned with. That her stain method also suggested a fruitful direction for some of her older colleagues has become the stuff of art historical legend: witness the celebrated story of how Louis and Noland's seeing *Mountains and Sea* in Frankenthaler's studio, in her absence, affected their subsequent development.

The episode has been endlessly r

loosely predetermined formats. Family resemblances exist among groups of her pictures, evidence of recurring preoccupations or of what she calls “worrying an idea until I have exhausted it,”⁹ but unpremeditated drawing, informed by her concerns of the moment and inextricably bound up with her instincts about color, is always the generating force of her pictures. During the 1960s, the delicate dramas of *Mountains and Sea* and related paintings gave way to more muscular orchestrations of larger pools of radiant color, but Frankenthaler’s images, however abstract or elusive, remained improvised or discovered, never deduced from a set of givens. Often, there is a sense that the zones of surprising, radiant color in her paintings have found their own shapes, because of the way paint flows, at the same time that they seem to have been willed into place by a powerful personality.

II

It’s not an overstatement to describe Clement Greenberg as the primary link among the artists now grouped – however casually – under the rubric Color Field. As a critic, he was both a spokesman who championed their efforts and a valued studio visitor whose tough-minded, uncompromising responses to their work they found stimulating and helpful. When he was asked to act as a curator or consultant, he included their work in exhibitions and steered collectors who asked for his advice in their direction. Friendships among the artists themselves – who sometimes had met through Greenberg in the first place – provided further connections, although the so-called Color Field painters never formed a coherent



Jules Olitski, *Second Tremor*, 1969, acrylic on canvas, 105 1/4 x 75 3/4 in.
Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1970



Walter Darby Bannard, Harbor View #1, 1970, alkyd resin on canvas, 78 x 93 1/2 in.
Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1970

the first generation Abstract Expressionists – and Dzubas’ exact contemporary – has been grouped with that of the Color Field painters is logical, given the evolution of his pictorial concerns over his lifetime. There is also the fact that he and Frankenthaler were married from 1958 to 1971, but as early as the 1940s, Motherwell’s pictures declared his refusal to embrace the painterliness so typical of his generation of Abstract Expressionists, and by the 1960s, series such as the austere “Opens,” with their thinly brushed, all-over “walls” of subdued color and subtly placed geometric drawing, announced his intellectual kinship with younger artists’ investigations of the limits of economy and associative color (and his shared enthusiasm for Matisse). In the 1970s, Motherwell began to explore the implications of luminous nature-related hues in both the “Opens” and related pictures, suggesting ambiguous meanings with minimal means.

Olitski’s friendship with Greenberg began in 1958, when the critic saw the young painter’s first solo exhibition in New York and invited him to take part in a group show, along with Noland, Dzubas, and Louis, among others, at French & Co., for whom Greenberg was acting as an advisor. The following year, when Olitski had a one-man exhibition at the gallery, he met Noland. That connection became closer in the early 1960s, when Olitski taught at Bennington College and Noland lived in a neighboring town. The mix was enriched by the presence of the British sculptor Anthony Caro, who was artist in residence at the college. The three eager young men frequented one another’s studios; Greenberg visited regularly. The result was an extraordinary period of innovation, cross-fertilization, mutual criticism, and stimulation. Each artist’s work developed in rich, fascinating ways, spurred by the efforts of his colleagues and their heated debates about what Caro calls “the onward of art.”¹⁰ It was during one of these intense studio conversations that Olitski declared that his ideal would be to spray color in the air and somehow have it remain there¹¹ – which led to his first painting made with a commercial spray gun and compressor. The resulting spray paintings are among Olitski’s best known: seamless, seductive, tonally inflected expanses with superimposed edge-drawing that asserts

In some ways, the California-born and based Sam Francis is odd man out, in terms of close personal ties to Greenberg and his circle, although the critic was clearly well aware of his work and singled him out for praise in several articles.¹² That Francis was represented in the seminal 1964 exhibition, *Post-Painterly Abstraction*, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, for which Greenberg wrote the catalogue essay and selected the artists, would suggest a more direct connection if it were not that the California painters, including Francis, were chosen by James Elliott, the museum's curator. Yet it is easy to see why Francis's paintings of the 1950s and early 1960s, with their inflected fields of rhythmic, overlapping touches, and their "buried" color, like banked coals, would have attracted Greenberg's attention. Like Frankenthaler's paintings of the same period, Francis's pictures declared their descent from Pollock, not because of their method, but because of their all-overness, recast in terms of the Color Field generation's desire for detachment and anonymous surfaces.

The McLuhan-esque "cool," high key color, and declarative, almost program-



Jules Olitski, First Love-29, 1972, acrylic on canvas, 75 x 60 in.
Gift of Lawrence Rubin, 1980



Robert Motherwell, *The August Sea #6*, 1972, acrylic on canvas, 71 3/4 x 53 7/8 in.
Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1972

images whose surfaces are truly mechanical and anonymous.

Pouring and staining, of course, imply that gravity is also part of the painter's arsenal. Louis' pictures depend, in their execution, on paint's response to this elemental force, but defy its power with inverted configurations that can place the spreading bottom of a pour at the top of a rivulet of color. Olitski defied gravity when he sprayed color on his canvases – the next best thing to spraying it in the air and having it remain there. Poons' "thrown" pictures of the 1970s, by contrast, not only acknowledge the effect of gravity on paint, but also make it the primary agent of drawing, as well as one of the determining factors in the relationship of superimposed colors.

III

Over the past decade and a half, and until recently, when astute eyes have begun to reevaluate what remains a living tradition, the reputation of the Color Field painters has sometimes seemed

carried so far into regions so purely literary that they seem to have forgotten that the eye is part of the brain. Perhaps today's renewed interest in painting posited on the conviction that the eye, the intellect, and the emotions are inextricably connected is an indication art is retreating from "regions more verbal" back to the realm of the visual. "Aesthetic delectation" is not always a bad thing.

Karen Wilkin
New York, April 2004

1. Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," *Art International*, 25 October 1962, in Clement Greenberg: *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, *Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 123.

2. Obviously, these associations will vary with each viewer and may or may not correspond, even tangentially, to those



Friedel Dzubas, *Alleman (Everyman)*, 1973, magna on canvas, 72 1/4 x 72 1/4 in.
Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1974

Walter Darby Bannard (b. 1934)

The artist and writer Walter Darby Bannard started painting seriously while attending Princeton University, where he graduated in 1956. Early influences include William

Helen Frankenthaler (b. 1928)

Helen Frankenthaler studied under Rufino Tamayo at the Dalton School in New York, and with Paul Feeley at Bennington College where she received a Bachelor of Arts in 1949. During the summer of 1950, Helen Frankenthaler studied in Provincetown, Massachusetts with Hans Hoffman. Inspired by the work of Jackson Pollock, Frankenthaler began experimenting with stain painting. She thinned her paints with turpentine and applied washes of color onto unprimed canvas. The following year she had her first solo exhibition in New York, and in 1952, she painted *Mountains and Sea*. The painting influenced a number of her contemporaries including Kenneth Noland, Morris Louis and Friedel Dzubas with whom she was sharing a studio at the time. From 1958 to 1971, Helen Frankenthaler was married to the Abstract Expressionist Robert Motherwell. In addition to painting, printmaking, designing ballet sets and book covers, and working in sculpture, Frankenthaler has lectured extensively at various universities. She has had countless museum exhibitions internationally. Important exhibitions in the United States include her 1960 show at the Jewish Museum, New York and the Museum of Modern Art's retrospective of the artist's work in 1989. Frankenthaler currently lives and works in Darien, Connecticut and New York City.

Morris Louis (1912-1962)

Morris Louis trained at the Maryland Institute of Fine and Applied Art in Baltimore from 1927 until 1932. After living in New York from 1936-40, Louis moved back to Baltimore. At the Washington Workshop Center of the Arts, Washington, D.C., he befriended fellow teacher Kenneth Noland who taught there from 1952-56. The two artists, together with Clement Greenberg, visited Helen Frankenthaler's New York studio in

Kenneth Noland (b. 1924)

After serving in the United States Air Force from 1942-46, Kenneth Noland took advantage of the GI Bill to attend Black Mountain College, and then studied art in Paris. In 1949, Noland returned to the United States and began teaching at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Washington, D.C. Noland, like Morris Louis, taught at the Washington Workshop Center for the Arts. In 1953, he and Morris Louis visited Frankenthaler's studio along with Clement Greenberg whom Noland had met at Black Mountain in 1950. Following this experience, Noland began experimenting with different stain painting techniques on large canvases. Later, he began developing the center of each canvas and concentrating on the interplay of different colors. From the late 1950s on, Noland worked in series, exploring such motifs as "Circles," "Chevrons," and "Stripes," while varying the color and intervals of each form. Diamond-shaped and irregularly shaped canvases known as "Surfboards" followed. Noland's paintings were shown at the Jewish Museum, New York, in 1965 and a retrospective of his work was held at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1977.

Jules Olitski (b. 1922)

Jules Olitski, (née Demikovsky), was born in Russia, but immigrated to New York with his mother and grandmother in 1923. When his mother remarried in 1926, his name was changed to Olitsky. Between 1940 and 1942, he studied at the National Academy of Design and the Beaux-Arts Institute in New York. After serving in the United States Army, he used the GI Bill to study in Paris like Sam Francis. His first solo exhibition was in Paris in 1951. Shortly after this, Olitski returned to New York. From 1952 until 1955, he studied philosophy at New York University and later taught at CW Post College, Long Island University and Bennington College, Vermont. Following the misspelling of his name in an exhibition announcement, the artist officially changed his name to Olitski in 1958. During the 1960s, Olitski began experimenting with stain painting techniques. He poured paint, used brushes, sponges and rollers, and was the first among his contemporaries to spray paint on canvas. In 1966, he won second place at the Venice Biennale. A year later, his work was featured at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and in 1969, Olitski was the first living artist to be given a solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. This was followed by a retrospective at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1973. He lives and works in Meredith, New Hampshire and Islamorada, Florida.

Larry Poons (b. 1937)

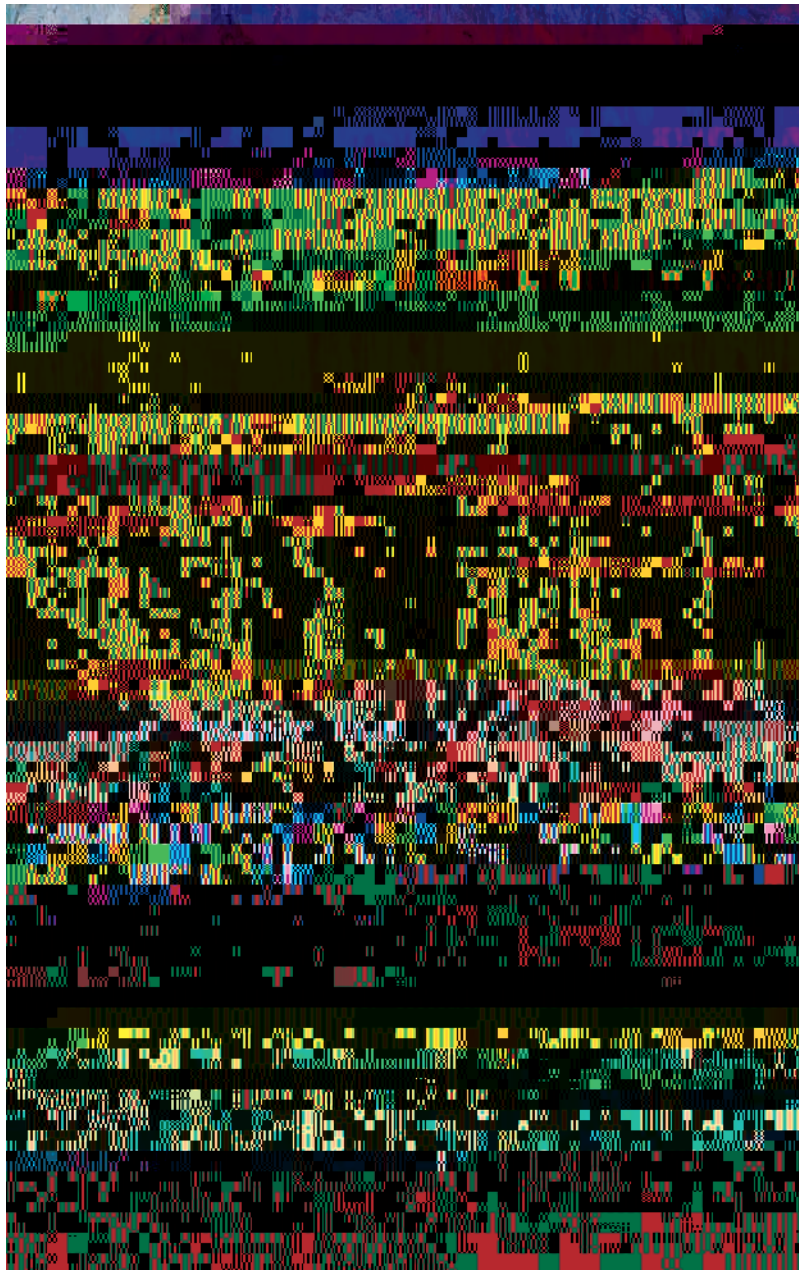
Though born in Japan, Larry Poons grew up outside of New York City. In 1955, he attended the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. Two years later, he transferred to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts to study painting. He moved to Manhattan in 1958, where he met the art critic Henry Geldzahler and saw the proto-Minimalist work of Frank Stella. In 1963, he painted *Orange Crush*, and had his first solo exhibition. By 1965, his work had been included in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. In the early 1970s, Poons began experimenting with various techniques including the pouring and throwing of paint. In 1981, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston mounted a major exhibition of his paintings from the 1970s. Poons currently lives and works in New York.

Mark Rothko (1903-1970)

Mark Rothko, a central figure in the Abstract Expressionist movement, was born Marcus Rothkowitz in Dvinsk, Russia in 1903. In 1913, Rothko and his family joined his father who had immigrated to the United States three years earlier. After receiving a scholarship, Rothko attended Yale University for two years, but left to study art. He moved to New York City in 1923, and began studying at the Arts Student League under Max Weber. In 1935, Rothko was one of the founders of the Ten (or the Ten Who Were Nine), a group of avant-garde painters. In the late 1930s, Rothko worked for the WPA. In 1940, he first began using the name Mark Rothko, legally changing it in 1959. In the mid 1940s, he developed a method of painting with thinned watercolor on paper. He then adopted this technique in his oil paintings which became larger and more abstract. In 1954, an exhibition of Rothko's recent paintings was shown at the Art Institute of Chicago, and in 1958, he began receiving major mural commissions. Rothko committed suicide in 1970. His signature canvases of floating rectangles were featured in a retrospective exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1978.

Frank Stella (b. 1936)

American painter and printmaker, Frank Stella graduated from Phillips Academy, Andover in 1954 and Princeton University in 1958. While at Princeton, he studied painting under William Seitz and Stephen Greene. In 1958, he moved to New York and produced a series of paintings influenced by Jasper Johns' Flags and Targets paintings. Three of his Black Paintings were included in the 1959, exhibition Sixteen Americans at the Museum of Modern Art. In the 1960s, Stella began painting concentric squares, stripes and large geometric motifs in bright color, often on irregularly shaped canvases. He later developed complex three-dimensional relief paintings that blur the boundaries between painting and sculpture. Stella's long and distasteful completion



Larry Poons, *Getting Straight*, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 108 x 69 in.
Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1976

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Walter Darby Bannard

American, born 1934

Harbor View #1, 1970

Alkyd resin on canvas

78 x 93 1/2 in.

(198.12 x 237.49 cm)

Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1970

The Whiteness of the Whale, 1957

Oil on canvas

104 1/2 x 85 1/2 in.

(265.43 x 217.17 cm)

Gift of Seymour Knox, Jr. 1959

Helen Frankenthaler**Jack Bush**

Canadian, 1909-1977

Coloured Funnel, 1965

Oil on canvas

68 3/4 x 68 3/4 in.

(174.625 x 174.625 cm)

Charlotte A. Watson Fund, 1973

Friedel Dzubas

American, born Germany, 1915-1994

Alleman (Everyman), 1973

Magna on canvas

72 1/4 x 72 1/4 in.

(183.51 x 183.51 cm)

Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1974

Sam Francis

American, 1923-1994

Blue-Black, 1952

Oil on canvas

117 x 76 1/4 in.

(297.18 x 193.67 cm)

Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1956

Kenneth Noland

American, born 1924

Day, 1964

Acrylic resin paint on canvas

69 3/4 x 69 3/4 in.

(177.165 x 177.165 cm)

Anonymous donation in memory of
Gordon M. Smith, 1997

Jules Olitski

American, born Russia, 1922

First Love-29, 1972

Acrylic on canvas

75 x 60 in.

(190.5 x 152.4 cm)

Gift of Lawrence Rubin, 1980

Second Tremor, 1969

Acrylic on canvas

105 1/4 x 75 3/4 in.

(267.335 x 192.405 cm)

Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1970

Larry Poons

American, born 1937

Getting StraidercnLrst Love-29, 19696 1gf5R Tf(, 197767)