THESIS

This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

"Harold Rosenberg: Application and Critique of His Concept of Action Painting"

presented by

Jong-Ai Kim

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M.A. degree in Art History

Linda O. Stanford

Linda O. Stanford

Major professor

Date August 20, 1984

HAROLD ROSENBERG: APPLICATION AND CRITIQUE OF HIS CONCEPT OF ACTION PAINTING

By

Jong-Ai Kim

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Art

1984

ABSTRACT

HAROLD ROSENBERG: APPLICATION AND CRITIQUE
OF HIS CONCEPT OF ACTION PAINTING

By

Jong-Ai Kim

American art criticism of the forties and fifties served as a means for understanding individual paintings and as an activity which provides insight into major artistic phenomena. Among critics of these decades, the critic Harold Rosenberg's role was remarkable, especially through his naming some of this current art—Action Painting.

Although the name Action Painting is frequently used by many critics, historians, and members of the public, it is often misunderstood and considered most appropriate for the painter, Jackson Pollock.

The purposes of this thesis are to review the concept of Action Painting and its critical application to two other painters, Hans Hofmann and Willem de Kooning, and to reevaluate the usefulness of Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting and his critical method.

Action Painting explains art by Hofmann and especially de Kooning more adequately than art by Pollock, thereby requiring a new understanding of its meaning and its use in criticism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my adviser, Dr. Linda Stanford, for her valuable suggestions and academic advising on this work. Her warm understanding and patience for a foreign student have provided strong support during the development of this thesis.

I also wish to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Sadayoshi Omoto and Dr. Eldon Van Liere, for their help and guidance in the preparation of this thesis.

And also I would like to thank Dr. Webster Smith for his encouragement and guidance during my education at Michigan State University.

Of course, the understanding, patience and encouragement of my husband, Byung-Kil, is most sincerely appreciated. My appreciation is also extended to my parents-in-law and my parents for their assistance and willingness to support my education in the United States.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Today the critic's role is as essential to the development of art as that of the artist. Since the artist has become more and more free to explore himself and his relationship to the world about him, "the history of modern art" is billed as "the history of the progressive loss of art's audience."[1]

The involvement with self, regardless of the supposed value to society or the apparent lack of relation to visual reality, represents one of the major challenges to the validity of modern painting. And the sense the growing personal freedom of the artist has made the art more and more complicated and difficult for the public to understand.

As a necessary buffer between the painter and the public, the professional critic has played an important part in explaining the complex meanings of art and justifying its validity. The public has attempted to discern through the critics the content or the meaning of particular works of art. Indeed, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the art of our time simply could not exist without the efforts of the critic.

One of the significant signs of the critic's power, in modern times, is "his naming of new art," as Donald B.

Kuspit remarked. As "Louis Vanxcelles' labels 'Fauvism' and 'Cubism', ..., have had an enormous influence on the understanding of these styles," the critic, by naming this new art, determines its identity and influences the future interpretation of that art.[2] The vivid example of such critical activity in the art field is revealed in the American art of the 1940s and 1950s, known as Abstract Expressionism.

Before the artistic experimentation of the post-world war era, many artists believed that American art lacked any continuous and profound visual traditions and suffered from either a provincial eccentricity or a shallow reflection of conventional European modes and styles. The need for an independent and mature art among American artists and critics was fulfilled by the new current development of art, Abstract Expressionism, which is "incredibly complex in itself, mingling Cubist, Surrealist and Expressionist elements in a reprise of twentieth century art."[3] The complexity of this movement demanded from its observers "a largeness of spirit, broadness of reference and subtlety of vocabulary." That is, a need for new strategies and categories for this art that stimulated American art critics and their enthusiasm.

Among these critics was Harold Rosenberg. His emergence, with the rise of Abstract Expressionism, is remarkable. The importance of Rosenberg's role as a critic lies in his discovery, advocacy and encouragement of unknown

artists of that time. And yet, his fame, above all, rests on his naming of this current art as Action Painting. This term has been used generally until the present day as frequently as the term Abstract Expressionism and often as a synonym for it. This use demands reexamination.

In his most celebrated essay of 1952, "The American Action Painters," Rosenberg sketched the lineaments of the new development as: "at a certain moment," the American painter approached the canvas with little idea of what he was going to paint. Then, creating out of a sense of mental release, the experience of painting became the subject matter of his canvas; painting was conceived as an event, a record of the artist's feelings and the physical movement to which they gave rise. The artist brought with him to the canvas his experience and his emotions which served as an impulse to set the essential process of action in motion.

Through this concept of Action Painting, Rosenberg offered his public a way to think about the new painting—a way totally different from the traditional conception of art as object. And yet, the concept of Action Painting by which Rosenberg justified his criticism still remains in the need of study. As early as 1960, Thomas B. Hess, among other critics, pointed out, Action Painting is used "'with as many different meanings as there are writers to misunderstand it.'"[4]

The purpose of this study is to reveal Rosenberg's notion of art, Action Painting, in terms of the importance

of his criticism in this particular period of art. However, the concept of Action Painting has no lasting meaning unless it is applied to actual art or artists. Thus, through the review of his application of this concept to selected artists such as Hans Hofmann and Willem de Kooning, the propriety of Rosenberg's critical method may be reevaluated.

For this task, this thesis is divided into three main chapters. Chapter 2 is offered to suggest the background of the concept of Action Painting, that is, what circumstances of Abstract Expressionism in general and what particular attributes of Rosenberg's critical activity permitted the emergence of the concept of Action Painting and its application to the art of this period. Chapter 3 discusses Rosenberg's sources for the concept of Action Painting and its meaning. To cope with his concept of Action Painting, Rosenberg's views on art in general and also on American art; his presuppositions for the concept of Action Painting; and his understanding of critics and publics are discussed. Chapter 4, the major part of this thesis, treats the actual application of the concept to two artists, Hans Hofmann and Willem de Kooning, who were suggested as the appropriate model for the concept by Rosenberg himself. In the Conclusion, the achievement and the limitation of the concept of Action Painting are assessed.

In spite of the importance of the critic who displays a unique range of methods for the investigation of art, in modern times, extensive study of the critic and his criticism is still limited. This study may be one of such

attempts to enlighten the significance of the critic's role and the presentation of his special concept to the art world. By providing ample recognition for Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting and examining the appropriateness of his concept for actual art, this study also aims to prevent that critical concept from being misunderstood and misused by future generations.

ENDNOTES I

[1]Henry Geldzahler, "The Art Audience and the Critic," The New Art, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P.Dutton, 1973), p. 49.

[2]Quoted from a Foreword by D.B.Kuspit in Jacqueline Victoria Falkenheim, Roger Fry and the Beginnings of Formalist Art Criticism (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980), unpaginated.

[3]Max Kozloff, "The Critical Reception of Abstract Expressionism," Arts Magazine, 40 (December, 1965), 27.

[4]Irving Sandler, "An Exchange on Art Criticism," Arts, 34 (May 1960), 28.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

A. Abstract Expressionism And Its Criticism in America

American Abstract Expressionism in the late forties and early fifties is commonly billed as America's first significant contribution to the international currents of art.

In fact, the Abstract Expressionist movement, mingling three currents of modern painting: abstraction with its concern for pure plastic values, expressionism with its emphasis on emotional intensification, and Surrealism with its reliance upon automatism, improvisation, and the universality of certain symbols, was enough to appeal to the international art field which suffered by the demise of Paris as the major art center.

Barbara Rose pointed out that Abstract Expressionism was born of two catastrophes— a depression and a war.

> The first, by means of the WPA, provided new opportunities for professionalism and cooperative values among artists; the second brought the leading figures of the European avant-garde to America, where their attitudes and their works served as an example to American artists.[1]

Actually during the war, the migration of European

intellectuals and artists stimulated American vanguard artists who were bored with the triteness of current provincialism and the streotypical mannerism of the Social Realists. By direct contact with the European masters and avant-garde groups, the vital group meetings in the gallery of the dealer Peggy Guggenheim, and the influential teaching of Hans Hofmann, American artists could be better prepared to join the mainstream of western painting than before. However, what made American Abstract Expressionism come of age was, above all, the artists' recognition of the need for their own independent art and the critics' active advocation and effective support of them.

American vanguard artists, disillusioned with the prevailing social-oriented art tempered by Marxism or chauvinistic prejudices, began to consult continental examples. During war time, "art had polarized into two camps: Cubist-derived abstraction", such as Neoplasticism and Constructivism; and Surrealism. To the American vanguard artist the former development was too impersonal and formal to expose the ambiguous irrationality of their own war period. And the latter, Surrealism, was too indifferent or hostile to modern art and its pictorial quality, because it placed major emphasis on humanist content. But American artists did aspire to infuse their own art with selected formal values of earlier abstraction by creating images carrying personal emotional or psychological importance as they do in Surrealism. To synthesize

Cubism and Surrealism in an entirely new way became the goal of American artists. They were eager to find a new way for their own art, thus they turned to their own particular experiences and visions. They experimented in their art to embody their own reality in contemporary forms.

These new experiments known as Abstract Expressionism among American vanguard artists coincided with American avant-garde critics' ambitions to make American art self-conscious enough to transcend its provinciality and sophisticated enough to outdistance modern European art. To enlighten and present America as a new international art center apart from the earlier European dominancy, these critics did not attempt to describe its historical development. But rather they developed a partisan, personal view, presenting a theoretical rationale for Abstract Expressionism and its artists with particular regard for their avant-garde status. Critical activity at this time did not serve merely as a means for understanding pictures. But it served as an activity which itself provides insights into certain major artistic phenomena of the time. Critics active in their critical interpretation of Abstract Expressionism formulated two major radical camps: Clement Greenberg on the side of formalism and Harold Rosenberg on the side of "expressionist criticism."[2]

Greenberg, as a representative of the formalist point of view, believed the essential characteristics of Abstract Expressionism involved a transformation of

pictorial space in terms of the patent surface elements on the canvas. On the other hand, Rosenberg saw the essence of Abstract Expressionism in its breaking with the very idea of style and in the rejection of formal completeness or even coherence as an aim; he favored the valuation of the action of the artists.

Whereas Greenberg's critical style of "didactic prose" entailed analysis of formal properties of exhibited art, Rosenberg's style was a metaphoric one concerned more with the character and context of the creative act of artists rather than its resulting pictorial form.

Even though their major concerns and approaches are different, the two critics' ultimate purpose was basically the same. In his article "Some Advantages of Provincialism,"[3] Greenberg viewed American provincialism, with its raw energy, its sense of vitality and directness, as providing an advantage for advanced art because of its "ignorance or mechanical (however felicitous) rendering of known styles." Praising the provincial mentality as the American's foremost advantage for advanced art, Greenberg tried to enlighten American abstract art as "advanced" art rather than as "exhausted" European art. Like Greenberg, Rosenberg tried to validate the American avant-garde experiments as "new" art in the international art field. Viewing "the mistake, the accident, the spontaneous, the incomplete, the absent"[4] as the aesthetic watchword of the new American painting, Rosenberg advocated

post-war American vanguard artists as revolutionary action painters and situated them in the international modern tradition. Actually these critics' attempts were effective and successful. The first generation of Abstract Expressionists began to receive international acclaim in the 1950s.

Even though, both Greenberg and Rosenberg played an active role in the field of American art criticism during the Abstract Expressionist period, Rosenberg's new term, Action Painting, was frequently used to describe Abstract Expressionists after his article "The American Action Painters" appeared in Art News in late 1952. Later in the 1950s, Greenberg, the most important spokesman on behalf of Abstract Expressionism during the early and middle-1940s, became dissatisfied with the Abstract Expressionists because of their strong surrealist-expressionistic concerns. He turned to post-Abstract Expressionist development and promptly named it "Post-painterly Abstraction" in the early 1960s.[5]

On the other hand, Rosenberg, in the 1950s, firmly established a reputation as a principal spokesman for the Abstract Expressionists through his essay of 1952 and his book The Tradition of the New of seven years later. It has even been said that the "fifties were 'occupied' by a regiment of Rosenbergians,"[6] whereas the sixties by Greenbergians.

B. Brief Biography of Harold Rosenberg

Born in Brooklyn in 1906, as a child of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, Rosenberg had become involved with the Abstract Expressionist painters in the late 1940s, as a poet through the Surrealist circle.

Before his direct involvement with art criticism, Rosenberg acted as a social poet and essayist on literature and philosophy. His early writings appeared in such magazines as Poetry; Transition, an important experimental magazine published in Paris; and The Symposium, which was dedicated to the theoretical discussion of culture. During the 1930s he, along with Greenberg, wrote for Partisan Review.[7]

During the Depression, a period of Communist activism in America, Rosenberg wrote political poems and defended Marxism through the Partisan Review and Poetry. But, unlike other left-wing Marxists, what he saw in Marxism was a kind of individualism.

> Like everyone else, I became involved in Marxism, but from the start my Marxism was out of date. I was interested in Marx for the sake of something else .... I found in his writings a new image of the drama of the individual ....[8]

His concern for man's individuality soon led him to his disillusionment with Marxists and Communists who reduced individuality simply to social identity. As Harry Roskolenko remembered, "as a member of a left-wing literary club, Harold spoke up against most of the left-wing Marxist and Stalinist

agitation-propaganda in the arts."[9] But Rosenberg "was closer to surrealism, which was closer to Trotskyism in France, with Andre Breton."[10] He was involved in the surrealist magazine View edited by Parker Tyler and VVV, in the 1940s. At that time, French Surrealists including the major spokesman, Andre Breton, fled to New York and began to develop an exchange of ideas and exhibitions through group activity. They brought to New York the surrealist idea which depended on the unconscious for revelation and an interest in symbols drawn from mythology as a way of understanding the truths imbedded in the unconscious. These surrealist ideas stimulated Rosenberg from that time on.

Rosenberg's association with avant-garde painters and sculptors began in his working on the Federal Art Project as an assistant to a muralist and in his joining its Artists Union. The Art Project of the W.P.A. (the Works Progress Administration) was established in 1935 under the direction of Holger Cahill in an effort to alleviate the devasting situation of the Depression and to save unemployed artists. Many of the W.P.A. artists were Social Realists who sought to convey a specifically political message through their art. However Rosenberg attacked Social Realists and joined the modernist camp.

He rejected simplistic communist demands on art and its social function but retained a concern for the meaning and intent of art through his activity at the Artists Union meetings and his commentary in the Union's magazine,

Art Front.[11]

Through his discourse with Tenth Street's avant-garde artists, Rosenberg began to establish his career as an influential art critic during the 1940s when he became involved with Abstract Expressionist painters.

He wrote introductions to early Abstract Expressionist group exhibitions in 1947[12] and in the same year he, with a painter Robert Motherwell, assembled the magazine Possibilities I, and published the works of then unknown artists, such as Pollock and Rothko. Two years later, he wrote an essay to the catalogue of the "Intra-subjectives" exhibition at the Samuel Kootz Gallery, which was an important early group exhibition with works by Baziotes, De Kooning, Gorky, Gottlieb, Hofmann, Motherwell, Pollock, Reinhardt, Rothko, Tomlin, Mark Tobey, and Morris Graves.

As an early member of the Club, the organization of Abstract Expressionists through the 1950s, he became the friend of Abstract Expressionists. And through contributions to such magazines as Possibilities I; Tiger's Eye edited by Barnett Newman; and It is, a journal of the Abstract Expressionists' Club, Rosenberg defended the thinking of these artists and spoke of their art. Then in 1952, his major essay, "The American Action Painters," appeared in Art News.

ENDNOTES II

[1]Barbara Rose, American Art Since 1900 (New York: Praeger, 1975), p. 155.

[2]The word "expressionist criticism" is borrowed from E. Feldman's term in his book, Varieties of Visual Experience (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1972), pp. 623-625.

[3]Clement Greenberg, "Some Advantages of Provincialism," Art Digest, 28 (January, 1954), 6-8.

[4]Harold Rosenberg, The Tradition of the New (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965; reprint ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 17.

[5]See Clement Greenberg, "Post-painterly Abstraction," Art International, 8 (Summer, 1964), 63-64 and "After Abstract Expressionism," Art International, 6 (October, 1962), 24-32.

[6]Carter Ratcliff, "Art Criticism: Other Minds, Other Eyes," Art International, 18 (September, 1974), 54.

[7]A.C.Smith, "Art as Politics: the Abstract Expressionist Avant-garde and Society," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1977), p. 103.

[8]Harold Rosenberg, The Tradition of the New, pp. 250-251.

[9]Harold Roskolenko, "Harold Rosenberg: 1906-1978." Art International, 23 (September, 1979), 62.

[10]Ibid., p. 62.

[11]A.C.Smith, "Art as Politics: the Abstract Expressionist Avant-garde and Society," p. 120.

[12]Rosenberg wrote an introduction to "Six American Artists" exhibited at Galerie Maeght, Paris, 1947; the exhibition included work by Baziotes, Gottlieb, and Motherwell.

CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPT OF ACTION PAINTING

A. Sources

The concept of Action Painting is not simply based on improvisational thinking. It is deeply rooted in Rosenberg's beliefs and thoughts on art developed throughout his career as a poet and critic. The major influences derive from individualism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Existentialism, and John Dewey's views on art.

From his early life, Rosenberg's central concern was man's individuality. As Dore Ashton said; "At no time,..., did Rosenberg relinquish his vision of the individual as the central, most important player in any drama."[1]

Throughout the 1930s, Rosenberg defended Marxism, but soon he dismissed it since it demanded only social commitment and rejected any independent role of individuals.[2] In art, through his experience with the Federal Art Project and the Artists Union, he saw the triteness of the Social Realist's method and their misleading of art by using it mainly for social purposes. Rosenberg turned to the modernist camp.

As a young critic, Rosenberg was affected by the avant-garde mentality and its radical, antagonistic, active dynamism against the established society. According to

vanguard theory, Rosenberg did not believe any linear development in art history but had faith in the spontaneous, mobile, changing moment, which was performed by revolution. Revolution buries the dead and inaugurates the realm of the New. And the New is the consequence of the artist's refusal to adhere to the given situation. Avant-gardism represented this revolutionary mentality through its artistic revolt against the established tradition. This appealed to Rosenberg. Furthermore avant-gardism was meant to be an individualistic revolt against society according to Rosenberg. Thus he defended modernism in art and avant-gardism. However, modernism, which was once the most radical avant-garde movement in Europe, suffered "a serious set back" during wartime, in Rosenberg's view. In a 1940 article called "The Fall of Paris," Rosenberg mourned the failure of modernism in Paris, the capital of modernism and avant-garde movements, since the struggle against fascism robbed the avant-garde of its intellectual freedom, the essence of its existence.[3] Rosenberg believed it was the collective ideologies that corrupted the Parisian avant-garde.

In view of the fall of Paris and his own experience with grovernment-sponsored art in the thirties, Rosenberg turned to the individual creator. To him, the "true" avant-garde should be free from the community ideologies of the Parisian avant-garde, from the dictums of the academy, and from the political demands of groups like the Communist

Party. And, according to Rosenberg, only individual artists can achieve this true avant-garde mentality, if they do not surrender to collective artistic goals and values, or form a shool or movement.

Indeed, after the World War, Marxism, the collective ethic which had once been so vital to artistic discourse, faded into the background of new discussions of existentialism. The crisis of values brought about by the Second World War had taken all ideas of social responsibility away from art. Responding to this change in the world, each artist became concerned with his own problems of existence and expression.

Watching this change in the needs of artists, especially, through such artists as Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, and Hans Hofmann, Rosenberg believed that something new was stirring in this country. These experiments seemed to be different from other modernism and also seemed to confirm the individualism of the artist's self. This appealed to Rosenberg. "Art for them is rather the standpoint for a private revolt against the materialist tradition that does surround them."[4] Rosenberg introduced these artists and began to evolve art criticism with enthusiasm. He confirmed his own belief that new art strove by necessity "... not to a conscious philosophical or social ideal, but to what is basically an individual, sensual, psychic and intellectual effort to live actively in the present."[5]

Ironically the past provided part of the basis

for his thought. Dadaism and its unconventionality reinforced Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting. Born in the cafes of Zurich during World War I, Dadaism was formed by a group of young radical artists, who, in their indignation and despair, were motivated to subvert every established convention of society and its culture. The crisis mentality of the Dadaists and their outrages against aesthetic values offered Rosenberg a model for Action Painting. As Robert Motherwell said in an interview of 1965 held by Max Kozloff:

> Actually the notion of 'action' is gratuitous. A critic's finger in the stew. It was taken by Harold Rosenberg from a piece by Huelsenbeck.... At that time I was editing 'Dada' proofs of Huelsenbeck's which ultimately appeared in the Dada anthology as 'En Avant Dada.' It was a brilliant piece.... Harold came across the passage in proofs in which Huelsenbeck violently attacks literary esthetes, and says that literature should be action, should be made with a gun in the hand, etc. Harold fell in love with this section, which we then printed in the single issue that appeared of 'Possibilities.' Harold's notion of 'action' derives directly from that piece.[6]

Following is a passage from Huelsenbeck to which Motherwell referred. It was included in Possibilities:

> The Dadaist should be a man who has fully understood that one is entitled to have ideas only if one can transform them into life- the completely active type, who lives only through action, because it holds the possibility of his achieving knowledge.[7]

Rosenberg admired the activism of the Dadaists who attempted to bind art and action together.

After the fading of the Dada movement with the end of the First World War, Dada's mentality, its emphasis on natural emotions, the intuitive, and the irrational was

continued by the Surrealists.

As a poet through a Surrealist circle in 1940's, Rosenberg shared the Surrealists' idea of art as a direct expression of one's inner, subconscious self, their reliance upon the intuitive promptings of creation, and their concept of automatism as "dictation of thought without control of mind." And further he shared their anti-aesthetic bias and their negative attitude toward the tradition of modern art. Like other orthodox Surrealists, Rosenberg was overly preoccupied with art content and distrusted formal aesthetic values. From this surrealist standpoint, Rosenberg assumed Action Painting contained images which transcended formal considerations and described it as an art which did not intend to produce an art object but to act to reveal the artist's self in the physical world.

However, Rosenberg did not tie himself to the Surrealists' ideological concepts but rather relied on the individual man epitomized by the artists. Thus he naturally joined in the prevailing existential philosophy which stressed the importance of individuality. Even though Rosenberg did not associate himself with Existentialism,[8] his certain assumptions and concepts of Action Painting show remarkable resemblance to existentialist thoughts, especially Sartre's.

Existentialism, originated by Soren Kierkegaard, prevailed in Europe during second quarter of the twentieth

century; it denied the idea that man has a definable nature, but emphasized his central role in determining his own experience. Sartre, a radical French existentialist, focused on the importance on human action and placed emphasis on 'choice' saying that the only reason for being in man rested in his continuous action of choice in given situations.[9] Through a man's action of choice, Sartre believed, the world comes to realize itself. Man brings a world into being by his decisions. Thus nothing is determined, fixed and limited. But everything is open, unpredictable, uncertain and possible. Man lives in a mood of expectancy, remains open to change. But also he is in a condition of anxiety "arising from the realization of his necessary freedom of choice, of his ignorance of the future, of his awareness of manifold possibilities, and of the finiteness of an existence that was preceded by and must terminate in nothingness."[10]

Rosenberg applied this existential concept of human being and his life to the realm of art, since he believed art is nothing but an artist who makes it.[11] The condition of man in Sartre concides with the condition of the artist in Rosenberg. The existential self in the act of decision in Sartre is the same as the artist in the act of painting in Rosenberg.

Art has no definite nature since it is the artist's will to paint and his act to paint. Actien Painting, the unending process of creative action, coincides with the

decision of the artist about himself and about the world. Through Action Painting, the artist creates self-realization and this self-realization makes the world reveal itself,[12] according to Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting.

Finally, Rosenberg's concept is associated with John Dewey's views on art. In Art As Experience, Dewey emphasized the active side of the process in art. In emphasizing the energies by which intense moments in the artist's life were organized into works of art, Dewey focused, rather than on the object, on the process which formed the object. And, like Rosenberg, he viewed the fundamental nature of the aesthetic event as an active process, as individual phenomenon. Rosenberg's emphasis on energy, tension, living on the canvas, and the artist's painting as a mixture of life and action reflects the same core of ideas of Dewey.[13]

With these various sources and bases, Rosenberg established the concept of Action Painting, saying that:

> At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or 'express' an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event.[14]

B. The Concept of Action Painting

1. "The Tradition of the New"

In his article, "American Action Painters," Rosenberg presents the new movement of American painters who did not intend to produce an art object but to abolish art in favor of meaningful gesture.

Through the concept of Action Painting, Rosenberg describes the changed nature of the work of art and the changed consciousness of the artists regarding their art. To Rosenberg these changes are unavoidable and necessary for the artists facing the crisis in the art world. During the world wars, the terror of war, totalitarianism, dictatorships, and nuclear distruction brought the artists to the point of a crisis mentality, according to Rosenberg. Artists felt "a desperate recognition of moral and intellectual exhaustion." And since the given collective, political purposes of art stimulated by the war corrupted Paris, the capital of modernism, artists were in "a sense of being surrounded by a visual void." Not only the political directions of the war period, but also the outmoded artistic tradition of the past itself caused the crisis of the art world, in Rosenberg's view. That is, the formal modernist tradition with its obsession of "form," "shape," and "composition," and its dependence on aesthetics and visual ideologies distorted the true nature of art and caused ironies: "the moral irony that changes a living event into a 'picture on the wall'" and "the tragic and comic irony that causes a masquerade to expose itself, to the surprise of those who have been taken in by appearances."[15]

Facing this crisis, artists recognized the need for a new, revolutionary art, according to Rosenberg. The new artist was "revolting against the materialist tradition which threatened to collapse the old order."[16] Thus,

"Action Painting is an attempt by artists to project themselves into the present, to shake off a past that has become a mental harness."[17]

Rejecting the sterile formal exercises of academic modernism, now artists abandon making "art" and "transform" or "reincarnate" it as "event." Since existing forms lack significance, artists, instead of pursuing objective ends, now "intensify their psychic concentrations in the course of painting." Artists now begin to attempt to find the true image of their identity through their art, according to Rosenberg. Now, art arises not out of the principle of the old ideology, aesthetics, styles and forms, but from the principle of "action."

Furthermore, for Rosenberg, significantly enough, this new movement is an entirely American-born movement and includes two traditions inherent in American art, "Redcoatism" and "Coonskinism." The former derives its values, taste and ideals from European modes, the latter draws on firsthand American experience itself for the creation of an art without models.[18]

The Redcoats ignore the American reality and continue to put out stylish academic painting but are knocked off by the revolutionary coonskiners. The coonskiners, on the other hand, recognize their reality, snipe at traditional European concepts of art and deal with art on their own terms. The Action Painting is the victory of the revolutionary coonskiners over the redcoats, during World War II.

"Coonskinism as a principle won ascendancy in American painting for the first time during World War II."[19]

These new coonskiners emphasize such elements of creation as "the mistake, the accident, the spontaneous, the incomplete, the absent." The "uneasy insistence and individual self-consciousness" that give the new American painting its vitality are entirely American peculiarities and are lacking in European art. After Action Painting, the American coonskiners not only defeated the Europeans but also began to rule European art, according to Rosenberg. "Coonskinism has become the Redcoatism of Europe."[20]

2. "The De-definition of Art": Action Painting

Then, what is the Action Painting? In the preface of his 1959 book, The Tradition of the New, Rosenberg stated his purpose of writing "to identify what is happening," and "to recognize the difference between a 'genuine uprising' and a 'simulated uprising'." Thus, he modestly placed his position as a reporter of the current development of American painting. And yet, his entire report on American Action Painting written with symbolic metaphors demands certain assumptions to cope with his entire arguments. Most of his assumptions reveal his development of ideas and beliefs which had been suggested in the concept of Action Painting and show his heavy dependence on existentialist assumptions. His concept of Action Painting can be analyzed by the three following presuppositions:

a) Action Painting itself is the "object."
b) Action Painting is the process through which the artist realizes himself.
c) Action Painting through the self-realization of an artist makes possible the revelation of Nature and the self-realization of the Audience.

a) Action Painting itself is the "object."

From the beginning, Rosenberg presupposes the definition of art is absurd in itself. For him, "the attempt to define is like a game in which you cannot possibly reach the goal from the starting point but only close in on it by picking up each time from where the last play landed."[21] And yet, the continuing crisis of art and society resulted from the misunderstanding that art can be set aside as a thing.

Art, for Rosenberg, cannot be defined as any other thing except itself. It precedes any external definitions or preconceptions. Painting is only "TO PAINT." And "TO PAINT" is something different from to write or criticize. Since "language has not accustomed itself to a situation in which act itself is the 'object'," the extrusion of the object in art is not for the sake of the aesthetic. Unlike other artistic developments, Action Painting has no common aim. This new painting does not constitute a School because "to form a School in modern times is the result of the linkage of practice with terminology of certain aesthetics." Art is constantly making itself, its definition is in this process of making. To establish the value of the new art is absurd because the novelty in art precedes any rigid,

final or defined judgement. The decision does not precede the act of painting but 'is' the act of painting. The decision in this art must constantly renew itself, the indeterminancy of this painting demands it. Thus Rosenberg's term "TO PAINT," Action Painting, can be directly injected into the existential terminology - "The existence precedes the essence" and "Essence can come into being only by the act of existence." Art exists as act not by any reason but by itself, and it is existence itself as absolute freedom.

b) Action Painting is the process through which the artist realizes himself.

Action Painting itself as an object can be identified with an artist's existence. Because art as an act belongs to the artist as the subject of action. "A painting that is an act is inseparable from the biography of the artist. The painting itself is a 'moment' in the adulterated mixture of life.... The new painting has broken down any distinction between art and life."[22] The artist discovers a new function of art as the action that belongs to himself. Since he is not concerned with producing a certain kind of object, he does not deal with value from certain aesthetics. He reacts to the canvas as an "arena" for his liberation from all values—political, aesthetic and moral. The artist only accepts as real the fact that he is in the process of creating. Art consists only of his will to paint. All values depend on his state of being. Thus, the content of

Action Painting is the artist's drama of creation, "his private myth." The artist creates the new by means of a heroic action in which he affirms and defines his artistic and personal identity. He is making himself what he is at the very time he is painting. Through the moment of action, the artist realizes his total personality.

However, "Action Painting is not self-expression," even though it has to do with self-creation or self-definition. Because self-expression "assumes the acceptance of the ego as it is," and the artist cannot achieve the self-discovery if he is obsessed by this self-expression. Thus, in the process of artistic realization, certain "distance" is necessary. To fulfill himself the artist should retain the "distance" by which some nullification or chastisement of his consciousness is achieved. "To maintain the force to refrain from settling anything he must exercise in himself a constant No."[23] In the procedure of self-discovery the artist should negate his ego constantly. Through this constant negation of ego, the artist transforms himself, transcends himself and remakes himself.

c) Action Painting through the self-realization of an artist makes possible the revelation of Nature and the self-realization of the audience.

Even though the ultimate subject of Action Painting is the artist, "Action Painting is not personal." "Action Painting is ambiguous; it asserts the primacy of the creative act but it looks to the object."[24] Action Painting is

not an artist's soliloquy, because the artist cannot separate himself from the material world. "He...[goes]up to ... [the canvas] with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him."[25] And also the concrete consciousness of the artist is inseparable from experience of time and place. An artist cannot escape from the material world, he must begin with art as he finds it. In creating he is free, but he creates within a given context. An artist cannot turn away his face from material reality and he is always conscious of this as well as of his self. Thus, Action Painting is the dialectical relationship between artist and material, and the image is the result made by this encounter. Antagonism of value is not an antagonism of reality as material world. The artist, only "through the action of brush," constantly heightens and transforms himself. "Transformation had to be total, that is, to take place simultaneously in the psyche of the artist and on the canvas."[26]

In the traditional sense of art as an object, the artist and the material world are separated and conflict with each other. The material world, the remaining thing, even though impermanent in its nature, is not autonomous, thus it is easily established in a rigid state by the influence of the historically created and socially conditioned world. On the other hand, the artist, in his nature, is metaphysically grounded and thus autonomous. He is always in revolt against being identified as belonging to any given

world, as being subject to any particular conditions.

However, in Action Painting, the act and the artist are one. Action carries the psychic state of the artist into the material world. In the artist's unending struggle with painting and its possibilities, the material world gains its nature, its possibilities to free itself from any limited definition. In Action Painting, the art is not a "thing" but a "thing" in process. In this way, through the mutual interaction between the self and the thing, Action Painting not only fulfills the self-realization of the artist but also reveals Nature, the material world, as itself.

Likewise, Action Painting, through the constant gesture of the artist toward Nature, makes sign language for the private myth of the artist and shows the possibilities of the self-realization of the audience. Painting as an object traditionally obstructs "the psychic transaction" between the artist and the spectator. However "in Action Painting the artist is the first spectator and the audience is invited to repeat with him the experience of seeing the work take shape."[27]

By the very act of disengaging himself from the traditional painting as object, and by involving himself in the process of creative action, the maker of Action Paintings preserves the direct encounter between himself and the spectator. The spectator cannot receive this message, or comprehend the meaning of this art by merely looking. There is nothing to look at but much to get involved with.

It is only when the participant supplies his own subjective sense of motion and time--the very motion and time with which the artist had invested his work-- that the participant is able to "re-enact" the work. The participant must match the energy of his own "will" with the painting which is the record of the artist's "will." That is, through the same performance as the artist, the spectator can achieve his self-realization and self-transcendence. "Art never speaks to the masses, but only to those individually awakened to it."[28]

3. "Critic within the Act"

"once you know what good art is, why care about critics, good or bad?"[29]

Since the conception of Action Painting appeared as an art which did not intend to produce an art object but to reveal the artist's self and physical world, some transformation must also take place in the art critic, according to Rosenberg. However, for Rosenberg, critics in their nature are absurd, because they cannot escape the polemical and cannot accept the transitional character of a situation. And once they decide their standards of judgement in the chosen value, they are bent on holding them as permanent and absolute. The critic who "goes on judging in terms of schools, styles, form, as if the painter were still concerned with producing a certain kind of object, instead of living on the canvas ...," is "bound to seem a stranger." Furthermore,

the language which is the critic's ultimate method is unsuited to talking of anything but things and therefore incapable of talking about an act.

For Rosenberg, to appreciate Action Painting involves considerations beyond the esthetic. First, the act in Action Painting is not proper behavior for an object of esthetic contemplation. Second, the work of art is not a "thing" or an image of a "thing," which is waiting for the critic's taste to respond to it. And it is not merely "a quantity of energy released into the whole configuration or arena of a contending world," but "a reflection of a consciousness of the changed nature of art in contemporary time." Thus to deal with Action Painting Rosenberg demands a new kind of criticism which precedes traditional esthetics, values, judgements. The new criticism should remain ahead of any conception of what art should be. But it should deal with the new function of art, the role of the artist and the behavioral context in which the thing was embedded.

> With traditional aesthetic references discarded as irrelevant, what gives the canvas its meaning is not psychological data, but 'role', the way the artist organizes his emotional and intellectual energy as if he were in a living situation.[30]

Rosenberg asserted the criticism within the act as a new system of appreciation.

> Criticism must begin by recognizing in the painting the assumptions inherent in its mode of creation. Since the painter has become an actor, the spectator has to think in a vocabulary of action: its inception, duration, direction—psychic state, concentration and relaxation of the will, passivity, alert waiting. He must become a connoisseur of the gradations among the automatic, the spontaneous, the evoked.[31]

Rosenberg develops this new system of criticism for the new notion of Action Painting in his actual criticism of artists.

ENDNOTES III

[1]Dore Ashton, "On Harold Rosenberg," Critical Inquiry, 6 (Summer, 1980), 615.

[2]See Harold Rosenberg, The Tradition of the New, pp. 178-198.

[3]Ibid., pp. 209-220.

[4]Rosenberg, "Introduction to Six American Artists," Possibilities I (Winter, 1947-1948), p. 75.

[5]Ibid., p. 75.

[6]Max Kozloff, "An Interview with Robert Motherwell." Artforum, 4 (September, 1965), 37.

[7]Richard Huelsenbeck, "En Avant Data," Possibilities I (Winter, 1947-1948), p. 42.

[8]See Rosenberg, Act and the Actor: Making the Self (New York: The New American Library Inc., 1970), pp. 205-206: " ... but my discussion of 'Hamlet' could scarcely be identified with Existentialism, since it followed up on a portion of an essay published more than a decade before the Existentialist movement began."

[9]J.P.Sartre, Essays in Existentialism (Edited with a foreword by Wade Baskin, New York: Citadel Press, 1967): 'Existence precedes essence. Essence can come into being only by the act of existence; movement must be there before rest; there must have been something moving before it could come to rest. The act of existence is production. There is no reality except in action. Man exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts.'

[10]Antony Flew, A Dictionary of Philosophy (New York: St. Martin's, 1979), p. 108.

[11]Rosenberg, The Tradition of the New, p. 343: "The act of painting is of the same metaphysical substance as the artist's existence."

[12]Ibid., pp. 26-27. "What matters always is the revelation contained in the act." Ibid., p. 30. "the lone artist did not want the world to be different, he wanted his canvas to be a world."

[13]On the relationship of J.Dewey's idea and American Abstract Expressionism and also Rosenberg's idea, see S.Buettner, "John Dewey and the Visual Arts in America," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 33 (Summer, 1975), pp. 383-392.

[14]Rosenberg, The Tradition of the New, p. 25.

[15]Rosenberg, "Critic within the Act," Art News, 59 (October, 1960), 27.

[16]Rosenberg, "Introduction to Six American Artists," Possibilities I, P. 75.

[17]Rosenberg, The Anxious Object, (New York: Horizon Press, 1964; reprint ed., New York: Collier Books, 1973), p. 40.

[18]Rosenberg, The Tradition of the New, pp. 13-22.

[19]Ibid., p. 21.

[20]Ibid., p. 22.

[21]Ibid., p. 23.

[22]Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[23]Ibid., p. 32.

[24]Rosenberg, Artworks and Packages (New York: Horizon Press, 1969; reprint ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 224.

[25]Rosenberg, The Tradition of the New, p. 25.

[26]Rosenberg, The Anxious Object, p. 126.

[27]Ibid., p. 93.

[28]L.Hall, "Harold Rosenberg says: Once you know what good art is, why care about critics, good or bad?" Art News, 72 (April, 1973), 66.

[29]Ibid., p. 64.

[30]Rosenberg, The Tradition of the New, P. 29.

[31]Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF ACTION PAINTING: ROSENBERG'S CRITICAL METHOD AND ITS LIMITATION

After the initial appearance of the "American Action Painters" in Art News of 1952 and following the republication of the essay in the volume The Tradition of the New, the concept of Action Painting evoked various responses among many writers and artists.

Many critics, on the one hand, rejected the notion of Action Painting. Mary McCarthy, in her review of The Tradition of the New in Partisan Review of 1959, admonished "you cannot hang an event on the wall, only a picture."[1] The most violent attack on Rosenberg was made by Greenberg who ridiculed the idea of Action Painting saying it "came from a half-drunken conversation between Rosenberg and Pollock" on a trip.[2] Most of these critics questioned whether this kind of painting Rosenberg had in mind could be considered as art.[3]

On the other hand, many artists and writers greeted Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting, which seemed to offer an effective explanation for new current abstract paintings, favorably. And the term, Action Painting, was widely used as a convenient handle for a new art. As Carter Ratcliff suggested, critics "who call themselves 'anti-formalists'

and 'post-Greenbergians' owe their rhetorical strategies to him [Rosenberg]."[4]

And yet, Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting has been generally misunderstood and reduced to a label for thrown paint. The concept of Action Painting has been simply used to describe the painting in which special importance was attached to speed of execution and spontaneous gestural marks. And also it was commonly assumed that Rosenberg's article applied mainly to the manner in which Jackson Pollock approached his work, more than any other painters.[5]

As early as 1947, Pollock pioneered a technique of dripping and flinging paint on the canvas. In the light of the Surrealist influence, Pollock did away with the use of the brush to allow bodily motion to determine the conception of his works. Thus, the need for a description of this art was met by Rosenberg's new term, Action Painting.

However, Rosenberg himself did not mention any artists as principal models in his 1958 article and also said later, "Action Painting is not a synonym for Abstract Expressionism through there is a connection."[6] Rosenberg in his review of Pollock pointed out the limitation of Jackson Pollock's method[7] and rejected the direct relationship between his idea of Action Painting and Pollock's idea. Wrathfully attacking Robertson's book, Jackson Pollock of 1961, Rosenberg spoke of himself and Pollock and asserted that:

> Apparently, Pollock, or someone presently speaking for him, wished to acquire this thought for himself exclusively, although Rosenberg had told Pollock, in the presence of a witness, that the article was not 'about' him, even if he had played a part in it.[8]

Actually, the Action Painting Rosenberg had in mind is not a painting executed in the exclusive manner of Pollock and of other gestural artists. But rather it is a kind of painting which would give the most direct expression to the artist's vision of himself in this world. Nevertheless, the general misunderstanding of his concept of Action Painting results from the reduction of "action" to a certain "method" or simply to "motion." In other words, many people consider the concept of action was referring to a speedy, spontaneous thrown manner of paint or to a "mindless" gesture by the uncontrolled motions of the hand. Indeed when Rosenberg said, "The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him," he is refering to a certain kind of method in art that is free from preconceptions.

However, the concept of Action Painting Rosenberg wants to suggest is not confinement to a certain method, but, rather, freedom from it in order to allow for a constantly renewable method. In this sense, the act in the Action Painting is not for "performing well in an existing order" but for creating an entirely new order. Thus, the real significance of Action Painting to Rosenberg, as Irving Sandler suggested, is "involved with a search for

new values, values rooted in the continual discovery 'of emotional consciousness of being,' a moral seeking for authenticity that has called into question all preconceived norms, including those of painting."[9]

It also should be noted that Rosenberg's conception of "act" does not mean a "mindless gesture." When Rosenberg said the painting is conceived as an event created out of a sense of mental release, he did not intend it to be a mindless physical movement. Rather he pointed out the dialectical role of both ideas and activity in painting. As he said, "you cannot think a particular idea without doing it. Nor can you do it in more than a mediocre manner without having an idea that transcends the mere activity."[10] That is, he suggested a kind of action which is not only "unpremediated" but is also "controlled" by the mind. To Rosenberg, the mind and act cannot be separated. Thus, in Action Painting, the metaphysical content and physical act should simultaneously happen. Indeed, through the concept of Action Painting, Rosenberg intended to create a totally new kind of art free from any other existing art.

However, to many critics who want to evaluate the painting as "object" rather than as "event," Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting is still unacceptable. Most of them attack this concept as inadequate because it can never fit actual artists and their art. As a response Rosenberg asserted any definition of what a lot of artists were doing, even of Action Painting, could never fit the best artists,

because the best artists escape that formula.

And yet, from the late 1950s, Rosenberg began to apply his concept of Action Painting to artists, especially to Hans Hofmann and Willem de Kooning. Rosenberg himself restated, in The Anxious Object, "de Kooning's improvisations provided the model for the concept of Action Painting."[11] And he called Hans Hofmann, "an Action Painter, not in all his modes, to whom an action implies responsibility to the mind and to something beyond it."[12]

A. The Application of the Concept of Action Painting to Hans Hofmann

1. Rosenberg's Criticism of Hans Hofmann

Rosenberg applied the concept of Action Painting to Hans Hofmann through such articles as "Nature into Action" in Art News of 1957 and "The Stability of the New," in The New Yorker of 1963. Here Rosenberg noted that Hofmann comprehended the limitation of relying solely on theory to make art. For Hofmann, according to Rosenberg, theory was not enough and so he was forced to turn to the possibility of action in painting.

Based on Hofmann's statement, "I want not to know what I am doing; a picture should be made with feeling, not with knowing," Rosenberg pointed out that Hofmann was a founder of automatism in American painting and an explorer of its accidental possibilities. According to Rosenberg, Hofmann's spontaneity is different from other "manneristic

representations of the spontaneity formula." That is, to Rosenberg, Hofmann's spontaneity is the "actual spontaneity" resulting from both the reflection of his theory and the accidental technique. "The best Hofmanns hold the action from rhythm to rhythm in a superb synthesis of impulse and esthetic consciousness."[13]

Rosenberg distinguished Hofmann's painting with three phases:

a) "Learning to see" period: a stage of investigation.
b) "Dialectic tensions and counter-tensions": a stage of development.
c) An extension to pantomime and dance: a stage of achievement and repetition.

a) "Learning to see" period: a stage of investigation.

According to Rosenberg, in this stage Hofmann analyzed Nature to learn to see the nature, that is "How-to-do-it" or "How-to-think-it." Thus Rosenberg explains this nature-study phase as an investigating stage with an analysis of the material world. "This period centers on a system for transforming visual experience into plastic creation on a flat surface without destroying this flat surface."[14] And then, Rosenberg asserts this is a negating stage against traditional aesthetics. Hofmann choses landscape rather than still lifes because he wants to be free from Matisse, according to Rosenberg. From this time on Hofmann's paintings are "demonstrations of concepts--and of getting away from them." Rosenberg includes Hofmann's still lifes and landscapes of the thirties and forties in this first stage such as Landscape of 1942 (Figure 1).

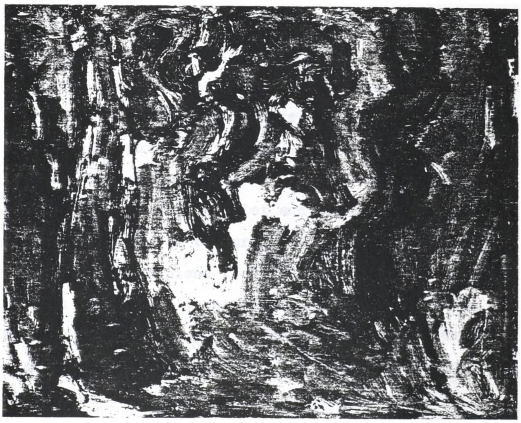

FIGURE 1. Hans Hofmann, Landscape, 1942. Oil on wood, 24 x 30 inches, Artcounsel, Inc., Boston. (Reproduced in Walter Darby Bannard, Hans Hofmann, A Retrospective Exhibition Catalogue, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, p.45).

And he distinguishes Truro River of 1937 and Provincetown Harbor of 1938 as examplars of this first stage.

b) "Dialectic of tensions and counter-tensions": a stage of development.

Explaining this second stage, Rosenberg relates Hofmann's "push and pull" to his concept of Action Painting. Hofmann's "push and pull" is the result of his conflict between the double reality in front of him, the three-dimensional real world and the flat and rectangular canvas. Since the picture plane is the primary element of painting, to preserve the picture plane leads the painting to flatness. Thus it cannot reveal the three-dimensional reality fully. "Using a two dimensional means, artists must bring into being a three dimensional effect." In this concern with the limitation of the picture plane, Hofmann set up the "push and pull" to achieve a simultaneous operation of flatness and depth in the painting. For Hofmann, at first, space and flatness may exist simultaneously in a tension which is created by the relationship of planes and colors. Each of the planes and colors has its own specific qualities and orders. Second, this phenomenon of "push and pull" continues the dialogue between painter and medium in the creative process. And this "push and pull" effect can be achieved by an accidental action of the painter according to Hofmann.

This theory, in a sense, coincides with Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting, especially its dialectical

relationship of the material elements and the artist. Rosenberg begins with his presupposition of Action Painting and develops it in Hofmann's "push and pull." Pointing to Hofmann's painting between 1947 and 1951 in the second stage, Rosenberg asserts that Hofmann's "plastic animation" excludes mediation:

> The painter still starts with the model, but once his notation has begun working on each other the canvas is allowed to take over, the painter 'thinks not' nor sets requirements but follows the intimations of the picture's brain with its dialectic of tensions and counter-tensions, Hofmann's push and pull.[15]

Rosenberg suggests The Prey of 1956 is one of the Hofmann's grandest paintings and explains "in it he [Hofmann] touched the mysterious intersection of hazard and inspiration" (Figure 2). He also suggests that Hofmann's Ecstasy (1947) had led him to be among the first in American painting to explore the possibilities of accident (Figure 3):

> In 'Ecstasy', 1947, with its powerful linear swirls interlocked with curved and boxed shapes like a section of a machine jutting into the sky, the artist, instead of calculating equivalences between the scene and the picture surface, allowed his brush to be moved after the first stroke by the notations on the canvas as if by guiding signs... he was the pioneer in defining the surface of plane by means of dribblings of paint through which forms are visible.[16]

After referring to Hofmann's automatism, Rosenberg also analyzes Hofmann's canvas as the direct representation of the painter's psychic state. The abstract signs of formal components on Hofmann's canvas reveal Hofmann's spiritual intention and his mode of creation according to Rosenberg. Identifying some of Hofmann's painting with that of Kandinsky, he asserts:

FIGURE 2. Hans Hofmann, The Prey, 1956. Oil on composition board, 60 x 48 1/8 inches, Owned by the artist. (Reproduced in William C. Seitz, Hans Hofmann, Exhibition Catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, p. 37).

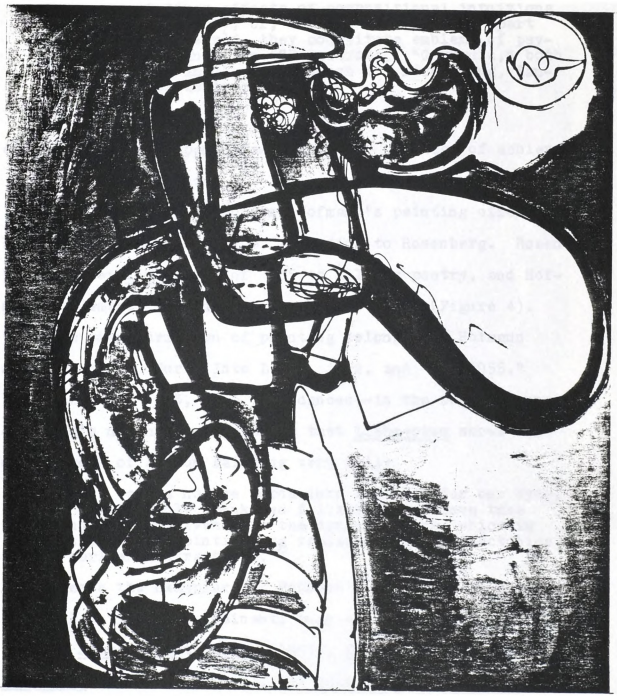

FIGURE 3. Hans Hofmann, Ecstesy, 1947. Oil on canvas, 68 x 60 inches, Owned by the artist. (Reproduced in William C. Seitz, Hans Hofmann, Exhibition Catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, p. 22).

> These are at times effects of compositional intuitions ("Magenta And Blue"); or, seeming to originate apart from the visual world, they constitute emblems of psychic states or entities ("Perpetuita," "Germania," both 1951), like in impulse to, though not resembling, Kandinsky's later abstractions.[17]

c) An extension to pantomime and dance: a stage of achievement and repetition

In turning to action, Hofmann's painting offers its hand to pantomime and dance, according to Rosenberg. Rosenberg relates Liebesbaum of 1955 to Rilke's poetry, and Hofmann's elements of painting to that of dance (Figure 4). "To this transformation of painting belong such Hofmann masterworks as 'Burst Into Life', 1952, and 'X', 1955." "'Liebesbaum', 1955, is a tree danced—in the scent of one of Rilke's nymphs." He asserts that Liebesbaum shows Hofmann's mode of Action Painting very well:

> In this canvas nature turns into action under our eyes, the unmistakable trunk and foliage of the love tree flinging themselves into the dance of forms which in this style of painting has replaced the architectonics of earlier abstract art.[18]

He suggests the examplars of Hofmann's paintings in which Action Paintings are dominant, such as, Moonlight Sonata (1961), Summer Nights Bliss (1961), In The Wake of the Hurricane (1960) (Figure 5), and Wild Vine (1961).

2. The Critique of Rosenberg's Criticism of Hans Hofmann

The application of Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting to Hans Hofmann is open to serious question from

FIGURE 4. Hans Hofmann, Liebesbaum, 1954. Oil on plywood, 60 7/8 x 30 inches, Owned by the artist. (Reproduced in William C. Seitz, Hans Hofmann, p. 40).

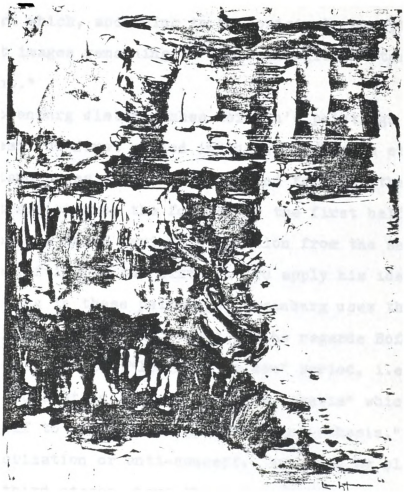

FIGURE 5. Hans Hofmann, In the Wake of the Hurricane, 1960. Oil on canvas, 72 1/4 x 60 inches, University Art Museum, Berkeley. (Reproduced in Walter Darby Bannard, Hans Hofmann, p.86).

many sides. In fact, unlike his theory, to deal with an individual artist, Rosenberg does return to the art object. To explain Hans Hofmann, he continuously refers to Hofmann's works of art which, according to his original concept, are nothing but images remaining as the meaningless aftermath of an "event."

Rosenberg distinguishes Hofmann's paintings as three phases; the first period including Hofmann's still lifes and landscapes of the thirties and forties; the second period abstraction from the forties to the first half of the fifties; and the third period abstraction from the second half of the fifties to the sixties. To apply his idea of Action Painting in these paintings, Rosenberg uses the dialectical method of Hegel. That is, he regards Hofmann's first period, so-called "learning to see" period, i.e., a period of theorization and analysis, as "thesis" which negates itself to become its opposite, "anti-thesis," that is anti-theorization or anti-concept. And then he places the second and third stages where these two contradictory impulses reconcile in the "synthesis." At the top of the dialectical development, Rosenberg places the concept of Action Painting. He sees Hofmann's paintings as a progressive or successive development toward the concept of Action Painting. Thus he praises Hofmann when he can successfully achieve the balance of dialectic between self and material world and thus realize his identity. And, based on this belief in dialectical movement, Rosenberg praises Hofmann

when he transcends himself and repeats his inner struggle without finishing it as an ending achievement:

> The dialectics of Hofmann's morality balances on his struggle against the given, the struggle for the 'creative'(his favorite word) as the sole reality—it involves putting into practice his fixed romantic assumption that painting must be constantly prevented from becoming the means by which the artist repeats himself. Beginning again is not only rule for each new canvas, it is the inner process which gives meaning to the picture.[19]

In this way Rosenberg points out Hofmann's weakness when he loses the balance of Action Painting's dialectics:

> Weakness in Hofmann's painting occurs when the artist has moved so fast that the action on the canvas is finished before he has been able to get into it: compositions of this type lack development and turn into more or less lucky swipes of color.[20]

To evaluate Hofmann, Rosenberg applies the criteria of the dialectical "balance" or "tension." And yet, he does not suggest any examples to prove this weak point in Hofmann's work and he avoids close analysis that could be called formal. Thus, we hardly find out what the precise meaning of the "balance" of Action Painting's dialectics may be, just when it may be reached, and how this balance may be recognized.

Since Rosenberg's appreciation of Hofmann is based on his admiration for the principle of process, and since he sees him as "incantatory" rather than formal, his language dealing with Hofmann's painting evolves in a different way. When he deals with the formal components of Hans Hofmann, he regards them as an agency of physical motion. That is, line as the direct manifestation of act establishing "the

actual movement of the artist's hand as an esthetic statement." And strokes of color, which are one of the dominant elements of Hofmann's painting, retain "their separate identities within the picture situation and function as forces in conflict, instead of being changed by their width or length into mere relations of planes." Rosenberg explains Hofmann's rectangles:

> Unique to Hofmann is the insertion of smoothly painted red, yellow or blue rectangles, into a multi-originated surface as if to demonstrate that action in painting need not be dependent upon violent brushwork but can be attained also through the back and forth movement produced by relations of hue and scale.[21]

Rosenberg compares Hofmann's composition of rectangles to a reflection of "the dilemma of motion in an immobile medium like painting" (Figure 6). Thus rectangles are "motion poised on stillness." By stating this, Rosenberg has failed to see the aspect of Hofmann which resists best the history makers — his form-making originality. Actually Hofmann is an European artist firmly inspired by the modernist tradition. His "push and pull" theory, his need to translate the volumes and voids of what was seen in the world into planes of color, in accordance with the two-dimensional character of the picture surface, is above all a "modernist" concern. As Irving Sandler suggested, Hofmann's ambition was "to arrive at a grand synthesis of Cubism and Fauvism while employing the method of gesture painting." Although Hofmann affirmed the artist's spiritual and intuitive feeling in art, he never disregarded systematic picture-

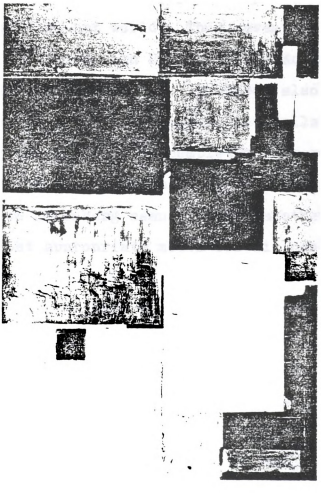

FIGURE 6. Hans Hofmann, Cathedral, 1959. Oil on canvas, 74 x 48 inches, Mr. and Mrs. Albrecht Saalfield. (Reproduced in Walter Darby Bannard, Hans Hofmann, p. 82).

making or such formal elements as Fauve brushwork and its color and Cubist design and masterly drawing. And yet, to Rosenberg, Hofmann's theory is never a basis for the form-making but rather a metaphysical symbol of the artist and his surrounding art world. Thus, eventually, Rosenberg is not fully satisfied with Hofmann as an Action Painter and criticizes him negatively. "Weakness also appears when Hofmann loses his grip on the action and falls back on concept to bring the painting to completion: here the artist's undefined feelings are suppressed."[22]

Indeed Rosenberg seems to have another artist in mind as the most appropriate model for his concept of Action Painting. In an interview of the painter Robert Motherwell by the critic Max Kozloff, Motherwell mentioned that, "Of course this notion of 'action' [Rosenberg's notion] as opposed to aestheticism is tailor-made to describe an aspect of de Kooning's pictures...."[23] And in Rosenberg's original article of 1952, if we read it carefully, we can find him describing de Kooning several times.[24] It was de Kooning's adventures on canvas which most resembled Rosenberg's vision of Action Painting.

B. The Application of the Concept of Action Painting to Willem de Kooning

1. Rosenberg's Criticism of Willem de Kooning

Rosenberg's criticism of de Kooning is entirely based on his belief in art and his concept of Action

Painting. Through such articles as "Painting Is a Way of Living," "On the Borders of the Act," and the major text on de Kooning in 1974, Rosenberg continuously advocates de Kooning as a foremost Action Painter and simultaneously confirms his concept of Action Painting.

Rosenberg directly applies his aesthetic rhetoric, which focuses on the threat of ideology, to the free, creative individual—de Kooning. With his belief in individualism, Rosenberg searched the canvases of de Kooning for signs of the artist's personal independence. "The logic of de Kooning's work lies not in its rational consistency but in the artist's unending struggle with painting and its possibilities."[25] De Kooning's use of disembodied forms and dramatic swaths of color symbolized this individualism, for Rosenberg.

De Kooning, like the Dadaists, never passively accepted ideas. Instead he took ideas and shaped them for his own purpose. For Rosenberg, de Kooning's mode of creation is illuminated as the negation of everything. In order to detach painting from the social, aesthetic, or philosophical value of a given time and place, de Kooning refused to adhere to any social norms, disciplines or the earlier notions of what art should be. According to Rosenberg, the art of the past only served as "creative stimuli" to de Kooning. Rosenberg pointed to de Kooning's art during the Depression when many American artists turned to either Social Realism or Regionalism and asserted that de Kooning

resisted those claims. Instead he painted "brooding men that are near self-portraits executed as recondite experiments in perspective."[26]

De Kooning refused to force a style and said, "there is no style of painting now." Rosenberg explained de Kooning's concept of "no style" as an expression of the social estrangement of the artist and an anti-form. And yet, Rosenberg added de Kooning's "no style" is "not to disregard style totally, but to transform them to new possibilities by the new use of the artist."[27]

De Kooning used many styles from many periods of art. He employed form or method from Cezanne, Cubism, Mondrian, Surrealism, Van Gogh, Soutine, and even Pompeian murals. He himself said, "I am an eclectic painter by chance: I open almost any book of reproductions and find a painting I could be influenced by."[28] Rosenberg explains de Kooning's use of traditional paintings as his specific mode of creation. Rosenberg asserts the meaning of metamorphosis lies in the artist's use of it. Thus, de Kooning, according to Rosenberg, by using or rearranging given styles as formal devices could achieve the ultimate transformation: transformation from old masterpieces to new innovative work.

Rosenberg's criticism of de Kooning is heavily based on the artist's personal talk, statements, and his interviews with the artist. He firmly believes that the content of every work of art is the artist's biography: the psyche of the artist, symbols and metaphors of the ..

artist's mode, and a revelation of the artist's experiences. To Rosenberg, content is made by a chain of inspiration. And inspiration occurs when the artist encounters the art (canvas) and "becomes one in the action."

For Rosenberg, art is an artist's experience and not simply an object to be viewed from a point of aesthetic detachment. Rejecting Maurice Denis' famous dictum, "Remember that a picture—before being a horse, a nude, or some sort of anecdote—is essentially a flat surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order," Rosenberg denies the art-for-art's sake attitude.

For him, all paintings are ultimately representational, even if they do not look it. Even the oddest abstract paintings can be considered as "inner" landscape or "inner" portrait. "In most of the abstract art, however, ... the scene has not been extinguished." Thus, he, most of all, hates formalist criticism which, he thinks, has consistently buried the emotional, moral, social and metaphysical content of modern art under "blueprints of achievements" in the handling of line, color, and form.

Rosenberg, from this standpoint, finds and tries to explain every sign of the artist's "desire, frustration, inner conflict, pleasure, disdain, humor, and irony" in de Kooning's painting. De Kooning's human forms and landscapes reflect the disorder of their time, for Rosenberg. The expressive canvases created out of spontaneous techniques are seen as symbols of the disorder of the epoch. And yet,

de Kooning also achieves unity through "an act of equilibrium." De Kooning's spontaneous compositions, for Rosenberg, rarely rely on automatism or doodling. Instead his free associations are made by years of painting practice and the example of other painters. De Kooning's scribble or a sign, his technique of "rapid flaunts of the brush" are animated by "conscious intuitions." This "unity" makes de Kooning different from others such as Surrealists, Gorky, and Pollock whom, Rosenberg thinks, made their paintings through an ideology or "therapy of the unconscious."

Based on the artist's statements, Rosenberg praises every attitude of de Kooning and his art. "In his canvases, painting in the twentieth century recovers the metaphysical concentration on self, being, and action of the most elevated moments in art."[29] He asserts:

> No art of our time is more immediately engaged than de Kooning's with the organic life of its creator. Each phase of his work contains the matter of his psychological condition, his intellectual activity, and his physical surroundings.[30]

For Rosenberg, de Kooning's major themes, women and the sea, are seen as symbols of metamorphosis and instability. That is, they are "concrete realities," "metaphors for the tremblings of nature," and "I" as the "leitmotif in Western art since the Renaissance." His early Women are the "massive icons of 'no environment'." And the women of the sixties are "today's cuties in their beach settings." Landscape for de Kooning refers to "scenery," "the physical world—called reality," "the social

context" and "the specific artistic situation." Gotham News (1955-56), Saturday Night (1955-56), Police Gazette (1954-56) are forms of the crowded cityscapes of the mid-fifties. And Parc Rosenberg (1957), Surburb in Havana (1958) and Door to the River (1960) are also new symbols of the highway. They are both outer and inner landscapes of the artist. They are images made by de Kooning's dialectical encounter with the material world. By his "willful mind" and "trained hand," de Kooning achieves the title as the foremost Action Painter, according to Rosenberg.

2. The Critique of Rosenberg's Criticism of Willem de Kooning

As compared with the application of the concept of Action Painting to Hans Hofmann, Rosenberg's application to de Kooning is more direct and extensive. Every mode of de Kooning and his works of art is directly related to Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting.

Indeed, de Kooning who was strongly anti-doctrinaire might appeal more to Rosenberg than Hofmann who was rather systematic, basing his aesthetics on a belief in universal laws. In contrast to Hofmann who was not apparently troubled by the existential abyss, de Kooning might have more existential character such as "angst," "pathos," and "isolation" in Rosenberg's eye.

However, the problem of Rosenberg's criticism based on the concept of Action Painting is still revealed in the

case of its application to de Kooning. Willem de Kooning is, above all, a traditional artist. His abiding interest is in a traditional figuration, in Cubist pictorial structure, and in an apparent painterliness. Unlike that of many of his contemporaries, such as Pollock, Newmann, or Still, each of whom produced a body of work which had a "non-art" look, de Kooning's work is full of the feel of "real art," of "art that looks like art."[31]

Throughout his career, de Kooning's art is mobile in a zone between abstraction and figurative iconography. However, in any of his abstractions, the references to nature are revealed. Even an abstract form, de Kooning said, has to have a likeness, and he worked for years to find the exact abstract forms that could be at once suggestive. In his famous paintings such as Attic of 1949 (Figure 7) and Excavation of 1950, the line is as graphic and abstract as the line in a Pollock painting (Figure 8), it also carries the memory of concrete objects, particularly human limbs.

With his love of "the vulgar and flesh part" of Western art, he chose the human figure as subject matter. Throughout the thirties, male figures dominated and in the forties women prevailed. Indeed, this choice of the human figure is an apparent indication of his attachment to past art. However, Rosenberg does not accept this figure-ground subject as the sign of traditional obsession. But, rather, with his firm belief in the avant-garde status of de Kooning,

FIGURE 7. Willem de Kooning, Attic, 1949. Oil on canvas, 61 3/8 x 80 1/4 inches, Collection Muriel Newman, Chicago. (Reproduced in Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning, Exhibition Catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, p. 65).

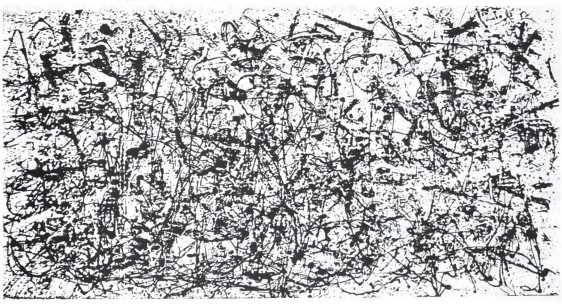

FIGURE 8. Jackson Pollock, Autumn Rhythm, 1950. Oil on canvas, 8' 7" x 17' 3", The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (Reproduced in Francis V. O'Connor, Jackson Pollock, Exhibition Catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, p. 108).

he explained this as "the rejection of radical cliches." Since woman is a "forbidden subject for the radical artist," using this given subject de Kooning is a "true" radical avant-garde artist, according to Rosenberg. By saying so, Rosenberg reduced other artists who have not deal with "forbidden subjects," to the level of "not true" radical artists or second-level avant-gardists.

With his open indifference to formal values in the work of art, Rosenberg's problem or parochialism is revealed. As in the case of Hofmann, Rosenberg is mainly concerned with the character and context of the creative act in de Kooning's art and ignores its resulting pictorial problems. His opposite, Greenberg, claimed that de Kooning was a "Late Cubist." "De Kooning's apparent aim is a synthesis of tradition and modernism that would grant him more flexibility within the confines of the Late Cubist canon of design."[32]

Actually de Kooning's relation to Cubism is apparent. As he himself said, "Of all movements I like Cubism most," he admired the firm design of Cubism and also its poetic qualities. In his dominant male figures, de Kooning flattened the forms, fragmented their bodies into planar anatomical shapes, and spread them across the surfaces. These are devices favored by the Cubists. De Kooning's sketch (Figure 9) and Untitled of 1937 (Figure 10) are apparently borrowed from Picasso's Studio of 1928 (Figure 11) and Painter and Model of same year (Figure 12). Likewise, Clown of 1941 shows the bold double profile view of the

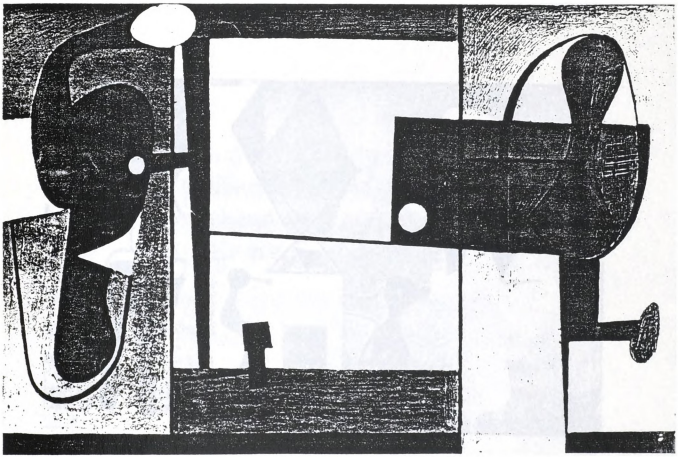

FIGURE 9. Willem de Kooning, Study for mural in the Williamsburg Project Social Room, Brooklyn, 1935, WPA Project. Present whereabouts unknown. (Reproduced in Harold Rosenberg, Willem de Kooning, New York: Abrams, 1974, Plate 5).

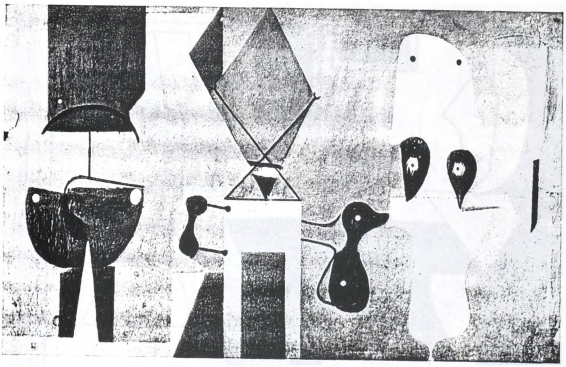

FIGURE 10. Willem de Kooning, Untitled, Ca. 1937. Oil on paper, 10 x 14 inches, Collection Elaine de Kooning. (Reproduced in Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning, New York: Braziller, Inc., Plate 46).

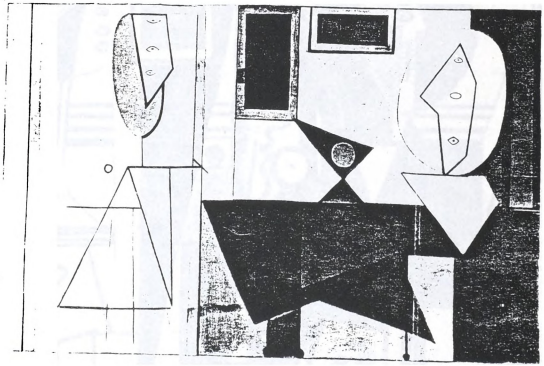

FIGURE 11. Pablo Picasso, The Studio, 1928. Oil on canvas, 59 x 91 inches, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. (Reproduced in Alfred H. Barr, Jr. ed., Picasso: Forty Years of his Art, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, p. 136).

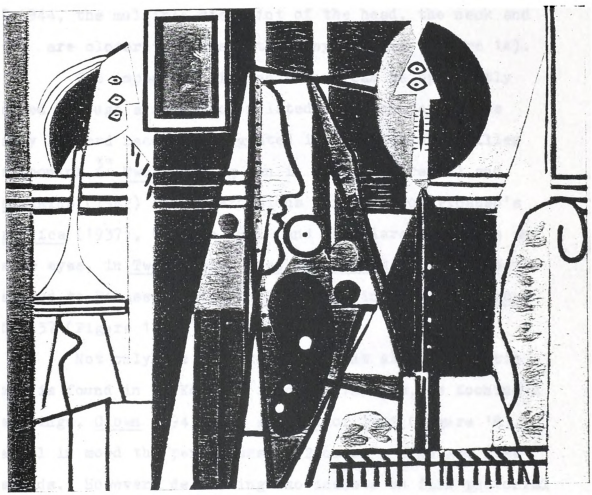

FIGURE 12. Pablo Picasso, Painter and Model, 1928. Oil on canvas, 51 5/8 x 63 7/8 inches, Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Janis, New York. **(Reproduced in Alfred H. Barr, Jr. ed., Picasso: Forty Years of his Art, p. 138).**

face, reflecting de Kooning's interest in the fractured repetitions of Cubism (Figure 13). And also in Pink Lady of 1944, the multiple viewpoint of the head, the neck and arms are closer to Picasso than anyone else (Figure 14).

The impact of Picasso's work can be apparently traced through a series of related works on paper. As Sally E. Yard recently suggested in her thesis on Willem de Kooning,[33] Two Standing Men in 1939 (Figure 15) and Mannikins (1942) show distortions derived from Picasso's Guernica (1937), (Figure 16). And the flared nostrils and large eyes, in Two Standing Men and Mannikins are directly related to Picasso's African Sculpture in front of Window of 1937 (Figure 17).[34]

Not only the Cubist method, but also its poetic mood is found in de Kooning's work. That is, de Kooning's paintings, Clown (1941) and Acrobat of 1942 (Figure 18), recall in mood the performers of Picasso's Blue and Rose periods. However, de Kooning who insists on firm pictorial structure like the Cubists, also tries to make a form that is more ambiguous and dynamic.

Picasso's expressionistic late Cubism enabled him to distort his own figures to gain a more intense form of expression. But, unlike the Cubists who eliminated color and employed tone to differentiate space, de Kooning evoked space by means of color and superposition of forms. In Study for a Backdrop of 1946 the packed forms are in no space, yet space is suggested by color and superposition of shapes (Figure 19). Furthermore, de Kooning's Cubism is

FIGURE 13. Willem de Kooning, Clown, Ca. 1941. Oil on masonite, 41 x 24 1/2 inches, Courtesy Allan Stone Gallery. (Reproduced in Salley E. Yard, Willem de Kooning, Ph.D. Dessertation, Princeton University, 1980, Figure 128).

FIGURE 14. Willem de Kooning, Pink Lady, Ca. 1944. Oil and charcoal on composition board, 48 3/8 x 35 5/8 inches, Collection Mr. and Mrs. Stanley K. Sheinbaum, Santa Barbara, California. (Reproduced in Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning, The Museum of Modern Art, p. 42).

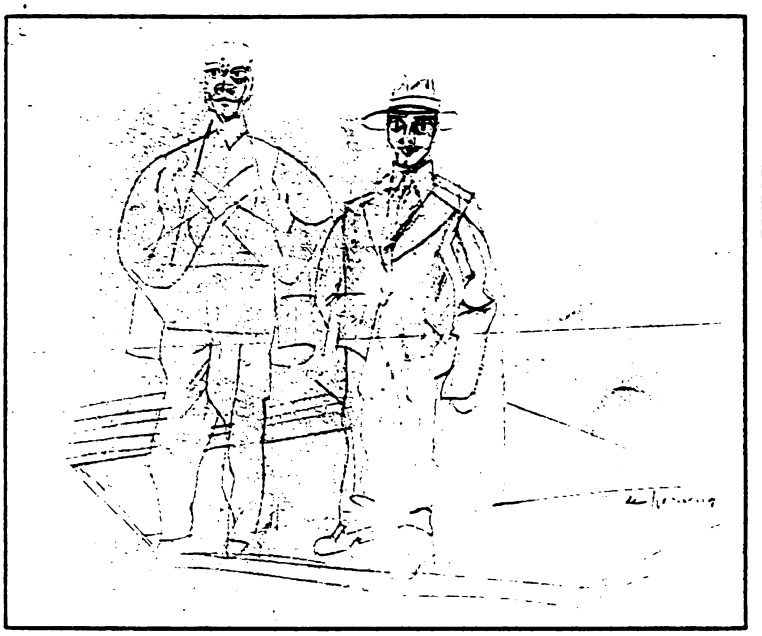

FIGURE 15. Willem de Kooning, Two Standing Men, Ca. 1939. Pencil on paper, 13 1/4 x 16 1/4 inches, Courtesy Courtesy Xavier Fourcade Gallery. (Reproduced in Sally E. Yard, Willem de Kooning, ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1980, Figure 132).

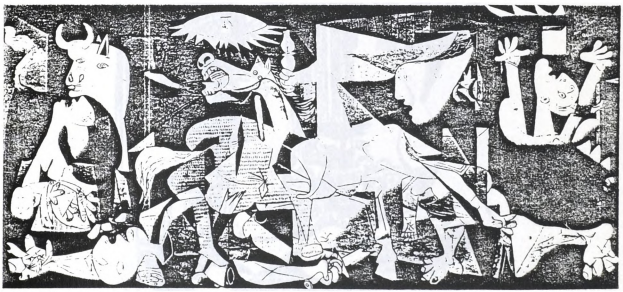

FIGURE 16. Pablo Picasso, Guernica, 1937. Oil on canvas, 11 feet 6 inches x 25 feet 8 inches, Estate of the artist. (Reproduced in Alfred H. Barr, Jr. ed., Picasso: Forty Years of his Art, p. 174).

FIGURE 17. Pablo Picasso, *African Sculpture in front of Window*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 28 1/2 x 23 1/2 inches, Mr. and Mrs. Leo Simon, New York.
(Reproduced in John Richardson, ed., *Picasso*, an American tribute, Exhibition Catalogue, Public Education Association in cooperation with Chanticleer Press, New York, Figure 13).

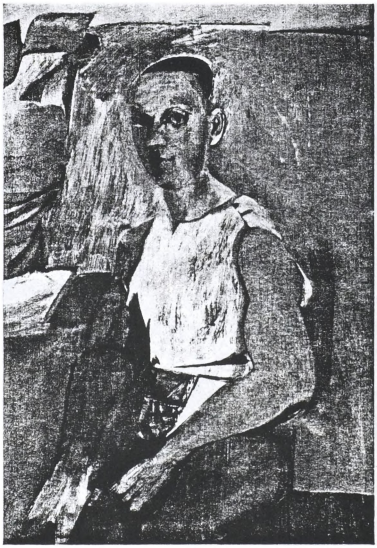

FIGURE 18. Willem de Kooning, Acrobat, Ca. 1942. Oil on canvas, 36 1/2 x 25 1/2 inches, Private collection, New York. (Reproduced in Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning, New York: Braziller, Inc., Plate 41).

FIGURE 19. Willem de Kooning, Study for Backdrop (Labyrinth), 1946. Oil and charcoal on paper, 22 1/8 x 28 1/2 inches, Private collection. (Reproduced in Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning, The Museum of Modern Art, p. 49).

tinted by the Surrealist mode, through Miro and Gorky. The Surrealists' multiplicity of association and ambiguous biomorphic shapes and Gorky's disembodied lines are presented in de Kooning's abstractions as early as the 1930s. And from the early forties he combined a biomorphic vocabulary with a loose painterly application of pigment, probably influenced by Surrealist automatism and later, Pollock's invention of drip painting.

Furthermore, de Kooning further "agonized" the biomorphic form, tearing it open to give it an angular Expressionist character. In Pink Lady (Ca. 1944) the gestural brushstrokes were combined with Cubist dislocation. And then he increased his gestural activity by loosing shapes and allowing paint to run in pictures like Light in August (Figure 20) and Untitled of 1950. Throughout the late forties works and famous Woman series, such characteristics as "big, slashing flayed stroke, tactile mashing and streaking of paint, drips and spatters, deformity and queer attitudes of figures," have been a hallmark of his art (Figure 21).

Greenberg did not accept this Surrealist-expressionist quality in de Kooning's art, because of his parochial favoring of disinterested abstract and pure art. Likewise, what Rosenberg did not see in de Kooning's painting was its logicality based on Cubism. He refused to believe that de Kooning, throughout his career, could not deny the insistence on flatness and the firm pictorial structure of Cubism.

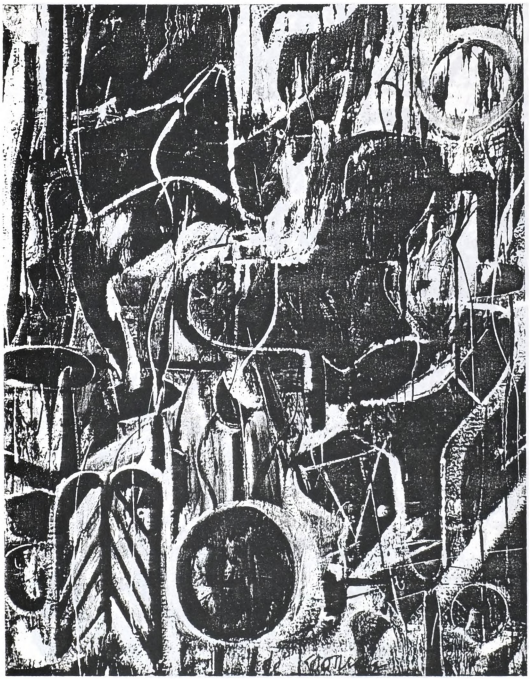

FIGURE 20. Willem de Kooning, Light in August, Ca. 1946. Oil and enamel on paper, mounted on canvas, 55 x 41 1/2 inches, Collection Elise C. Dixon, Scottsdale, Arizona. (Reproduced in Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning, The Museum of Modern Art, p. 54).

FIGURE 21. Willem de Kooning, Woman and Bicycle, 1951-1953. Oil, enamel and charcoal on canvas, 76 1/2 x 49 inches, Whitney Museum of American Art. (Reproduced in Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning, The Museum of Modern Art, p. 97).

Indeed, even in his Woman I of 1950 - 1952, de Kooning did not lose the surface qualities of painting while using traditional light and dark contrasts and recessive-projective color contrasts (Figure 22).

Rosenberg did not accept de Kooning's traditional formal concern, but rather neglected it as a secondary means for the artist's metaphysical intent. Based on Kandinsky's doctrine that art is the expression of an "inner necessity" and that emotion provides the true content of art, Rosenberg sought only the emotional content in art. And then, modified by Existentialism's concern with "action," he neglected the resulting picture and its pictorial problems.

Rosenberg firmly believed that Abstract Expressionism was dominated by a sense of "angst," "crisis" and an overwhelming concern for the expression of a certain kind of content. And he also believed de Kooning attained the status of Existentialist artist hero: one who risked everything willingly in the "act" of painting and bodily enacted his personal drama through the creative process. Thus, de Kooning's emotional, personal characteristics are emphasized in an exaggerated way. De Kooning's art, from the first to the last, is described as a symbol of all artists' personal dilemmas and the heroism of the post-war epoch with its chaos and confusions.

By emphasizing this "metaphysical" content as the artist's only and ultimate intent, Rosenberg asserted that

FIGURE 22. Willem de Kooning, Woman I, 1950-1952. Oil on canvas, 75 7/8 x 58 inches, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. (Reproduced in Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning, The Museum of Modern Art, p.90).

every form of art should convey this intent. And he also asserted that an artist could use every form and every style in every period of art for his special mode. Thus, the sign of eclecticism in de Kooning's art is justified as the means for the artist's ultimate ambition, that is, the ambition for "no style." Here we see Rosenberg's metaphysical irony. He explained "no style" as an expression of the artist's estrangement from society and an anti-form. And yet, we know, the Dadaists, especially Marcel Duchamp had already discarded all established stylistic methods for making art. By submitting a ready-made porcelain urinal entitled Fountain (1917), Duchamp ridiculed all artistic norms, aesthetics, artist's personalities and styles. Indeed it is an art with "no style" achieved by Duchamp's sarcastic nihilism. But, how about de Kooning?

Since de Kooning's paintings show many elements and many other "looks," we have lost sight of their uniqueness. As a result of the ambiguities achieved by a variety of pictorial approaches and devices, de Kooning is often said to have no style. However, it is not "no style," but rather an eclectic style achieved by de Kooning's sophisticated "trained hand."

It is still interesting to question whether the work of art, always coincides with the artist's intent. Matta once said that he talks about the violence of paint, but his own work is not violent in its handling.[35] Besides, could style be avoided, even if an artist intended to do so?

But, de Kooning did say "there is no style of painting now."

> Some painters, including myself, do not care what chair they are sitting on. It does not even have to be a comfortable one. They are too nervous to find out where they ought to sit. They do not want to 'sit in style.' Rather, they have found that painting — any kind of painting, any style of painting — to be painting at all, in fact — is a way of living today, a style of living so to speak.[56]

However, unlike de Kooning's intent, from the muted, lyrical Man to the exorbitant mesh of color and texture that is the 1964 figures (figure 23), a constant factor is revealed. He has shown persistent themes of Pompeian color, blue, pink, ocher and similar hooking forms and flickering contours. With a formal style, de Kooning also shows the characteristic emotional style of an intense unrest, a certain mood of irritation. Not only does de Kooning have a style, but that style has been so influential that it has practically come to stand for Abstract Expressionism in general.

Evidently it is de Kooning's irony which denies the style in his own mind, yet develops the "eclectic style" as if it were a kind of achievement free from the idea of style. And further, he "sits" on the chair of heroic, de Kooning style. Likewise, Rosenberg's irony is in his heavy dependence on the artist's statement. Thus he does not see the difference between what is happening and what the artist wants to happen. Of course, no work exists by itself, and all art exists in a context which includes other works and a climate of ideas, of which an artist's attitude and

FIGURE 23. Willem de Kooning, Clam Diggers, 1964. Oil on paper, mounted on composition board, 20 1/4 x 14 1/2 inches, Private collection. (Reproduced in Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning, The Museum of Modern Art, p. 126).

intention are "a part." But Rosenberg, looking at art only through its creators, does not believe the fact that art and the psychology of artists, although related, remain as two distinct areas. Thus, he denies the formal or visual effect of the work of art to the viewer or the critic, saying that "Once you know what good art is, why care about critics, good or bad?"[37] If art is nothing but an artist who makes it, and anything external is useless, why is Rosenberg himself doing the same useless job? What is he?

ENDNOTES IV

[1]Mary McCarthy, "An Academy of Risk," Partisan Review, 26 (Summer, 1959), 476-480.

[2]C. Greenberg, "How Art Writing Earns Its Bad Name," Encounter, 19 (December, 1962), 67-71.

[3]See Hilton Kramer's review of The Tradition of the New in Arts (September, 1959), pp. 56-59 and also "The New American Painting," Partisan Review, 20 (July-August, 1953), 421-427.

[4]Carter Ratcliff, "Art Criticism: Other Eyes, Other Minds," Part V, Art International, 18 (December, 1974), 54.

[5]B.H.Friedman, Jackson Pollock--energy made visible (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 197. Friedman asserts that Rosenberg's article, "The American Action Painters," has broad reminders of Pollock's life and outlook. He said, "In the remainder of the essay the reminders seem sometimes to refer even more specifically to Pollock (who himself referred to the essay as 'Rosenberg's piece on me')--that is, more than to de Kooning and Kline who must have been Rosenberg's other principal models."

[6]See Friedman, Jackson Pollock-- energy made visible, p. 197.

[7]Rosenberg, Artworks and Packages (New York: Horizon Press, 1969; reprint ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 58-74.

[8]Rosenberg, "The Search for Jackson Pollock," Art News, 59 (February, 1961), 60.

[9]Irving Sandler, "An Exchange on Art Criticism," Art, 34 (May, 1960), 28.

[10]L.Hall, "Harold Rosenberg says; Once you know what good art is, why care about critics, good or bad?" Art News, 72 (April, 1973), 64.

[11]Rosenberg, The Anxious Object, p. 117.

[12]Ibid., p. 155.

[13]Ibid., p. 159.

[14]Ibid., p. 156.

[15]Ibid., p. 157.

[16]Ibid., p. 247.

[17]Ibid., p. 157.

[18]Ibid., p. 248.

[19]Ibid., p. 159.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., p. 249.

[22]Ibid., p. 159.

[23]Max Kozloff, "An Interview with Robert Motherwell, How I admire my colleagues," Art Forum, 4 (September, 1965), 37.

[24]See Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," in The Tradition of the New, pp. 25-26. Here Rosenberg referred to de Kooning who used sketches uniquely at that time. And also when Rosenberg said that "The American vanguard painter took to the white expanse of the canvas as Melville's Ishmael took to the sea," (p. 31), he was describing de Kooning who considered Melville as his favorite author.

[25]Rosenberg, Willem de Kooning (New York: Abrams, 1974), p. 14.

[26]Rosenberg, The Anxious Object, p. 110.

[27]Ibid., p. 124.

[28]Rosenberg, "Interview with Willem de Kooning," Art News, 71 (September, 1972), p. 55.

[29]Rosenberg, Willem de Kooning, p. 32.

[30]Ibid., p. 34.

[31]W.D.Bannard, "Willem de Kooning's Retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art," Art Forum, 7 (April, 1969), 43.

[32]Greenberg, Art and Culture (New York: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 213.

[33]Sally E. Yard, "Willem de Kooning," (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1980), p. 122.

[34]Ibid., p. 123.

[35]Max Kozloff, "An Interview with Matta," Art Forum, 4 (September, 1965), 23-26.

[36]Rosenberg, Willem de Kooning, p. 146.

[37]L. Hall, "Harold Rosenberg Says: Once you know what good art is, why care about critics, good or bad?" p. 64.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: CRITIQUE OF THE CONCEPT OF ACTION PAINTING AND ITS METHOD

It is dangerous to criticize the critic's critique. Because other criteria are inescapably needed in order to point out the fallacy of the critic's critique. And this kind of criteria by its nature cannot escape from criticizing again, and yet it is impossible not to use the same tool.

In fact, the most significant problem of criticism is the critic's subjectivity. As Sartre said, it is impossible for man to transcend human subjectivity. The worst thing is once a critic sets up his position, he does not intend to accept other possibilities at all, as Rosenberg said himself. Rosenberg tried to solve that problem eagerly with his existential conception of Abstract Expressionism and he left his theory at the level of understanding not at the level of aesthetic perfection. With his firm belief in individualism Rosenberg defined art as an activity that engages the entire being of the individual.

Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting tried to break down every distinction between art and life. He did not dismiss reality as material world, instead he hoped to reach the balance between the artist's self and material

reality through dialectical action. To achieve or sustain the dialectics as a neutral state, he abandoned either mere intellectualization or mere formalism in painting. He assumed an artist could achieve self-identity or self-transcendence through his constant inner struggle between himself and his surroundings. And then, this dialectical encounter could achieve the other creation, i.e., the self-realization of the audience possessing an eye which can see the importance of that mode within the process of creation. Thus the justification of this concept was not in the traditional system of object-oriented judgment but in the will of understanding individuals eager for new possibilities. Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting seems to possess more flexible possibilities than any other prior critical bases for judgment.

Actually, the idea of Action Painting is an excellent extension and elaboration of ideas regarding the uniqueness of the individual artist and the importance of the act, in that it is an idea. It reflects the concept of "liberation": liberation from crisis and political and aesthetic ideologies. And it reflects an action for the entire emancipation of the individual from the universal, "a priori" order. This comes from Rosenberg's belief that the authentic existence of the artist is not based on the existing order and his worry over the increasing surrender to the masses and its negative effect on the solitary artist. Through the concept of Action Painting, Rosenberg tries to

protect the uniqueness of the individual artist and protest against the totalitarian, impersonal threat of mass culture and society. He expresses the "active force" of the artist who protests against accepted values and tries to find his own unique identity as "action."

Through the concept of Action Painting, Rosenberg, as Max Kozloff pointed out, shows "the ample recognition of such basic constituents of Abstract Expressionism as its automatism, and its empathetic appeal."[1] Indeed he supplies a good theoretical justification for extending art to pantomime and dance, i.e., Happenings and total art with his belief in the importance of action.

However, in spite of his great ambition for creating a totally new order by the concept of Action Painting, Rosenberg himself cannot escape from being caught in his own snare. Along with Greenberg, in the fifties, Rosenberg retained his leadership as a spokesman for the new movement. And yet, during the critical reception of Abstract Expressionism, Rosenberg, along with his rival Greenberg, represented the partisan position. After the open, direct attack by Greenberg of the concept of Action Painting, Rosenberg began to criticize Greenberg through such articles as "Action Painting: a Decade of Distortion" in Art News of 1961 and "After Next, What?", in Art in America of 1964. From then on the two men began to quarrel. And the dispute between the two encouraged both to refine their stands in mutual opposition and each became more fixed in his own approach. As S.C.Foster remembered:

> What became clear in the fifties is that these critical positions that of Greenberg and Rosenberg were conceived by their authors as mutually exclusive. The ensuing dialogue then assumed more of the character of a dispute; indeed, the temperature of the dispute often suggests another, more appropriate word such as war.[2]

In the mood of disputation Rosenberg is shown to be subject to the same inescapable limitations as all critics. To advocate his concept Rosenberg began to apply his concept to the Abstract Expressionist artists. And in the process of application, Rosenberg shows the methodological limitation of his concept.

Art historians, not being psychologists, have generally avoided, or found themselves inadequate to deal with, the deeply personal elements from which each artist's world has been constructed. As Barbara M. Reise states, in Studio International of 1968, American art history in general has been permeated by formalist analysis of art seen as style-epochs in a linear evolutionary progression. And content is seen "as relevant to intellectual history rather than to artistic value."[3]

During the post-world war period, Rosenberg's opponent, Greenberg was in such a formalist position and occupied the active field of art criticism. By concentrating exclusively on formal relationships in art, Greenberg ignored the question of content and mainly concerned himself with analysis of formal properties of exhibited art.

As a poet through the Surrealist circle, Rosenberg violently opposed Greenberg's formalist method of criticism.

With his interests in the life history of artistic creation, Rosenberg insisted the new criticism must begin "by recognizing in the painting the assumptions inherent in its mode of creation." "The apples," said Rosenberg, "weren't brushed off the table in order to make room for perfect relations of space and color. They had to go so that nothing would get in the way of the act of painting."[4]

With this belief, he had become more concerned with artistic collaboration behind the scenes than with public discussions of exhibited works. Rosenberg's position as a major critic is authorized by his fidelity to the intentions of the artists. Indeed, Rosenberg's formulation of an attitude toward painting, which was based on his admiration of great artists served the public who eagerly wanted to understand what the artists were about. And it was also appealing to many artists whose works were sometimes misunderstood by the formalist protagonist who ignored the artist's own intentions.

Especially, Rosenberg's devotion to de Kooning was remarkable. As Motherwell said in a 1965 interview, "I honor Rosenberg's devotion to de Kooning; still neither 'action' painting nor de Kooning himself are the 'center' of Abstract Expressionism, but instead, like the rest of us, one dimension of it."[5]

However, as Motherwell pointed out, the problem of Rosenberg's criticism is not his concern with the artist but with his partisan, polemical view. With his open indifference

to formal values of the work of art, Rosenberg mainly insisted on the importance of "metaphysical" content in art. And with his emphasis on energy, tension, and living on the canvas as a mixture of life and action, Rosenberg is obsessed by the idea of Action Painting.

Under the dictum of Action Painting, Rosenberg threw out all traditional aesthetic criteria. He disclaimed the material object as the major consideration of painting in favor of the act of painting. He distrusted not only traditional "a priori" values, but also artistic values in any form. However, as a critic, he had to write about artists with certain criteria and a certain method. Thus, he tried to transform the traditional artistic terminology into a metaphysical terminology.

In treating Hans Hofmann, he changed every physical component of Hofmann's paintings, i.e., lines, colors, oblongs, into literal metaphors. He did not examine individual pictures for any other purpose than to illustrate his rhetorical concept. He placed a premium on the emotional charge in Hofmann's art. He did not accept the intellectualism in Hofmann's mode of creation and the formal possibilities of abstraction which Hofmann attempted to create in a various manner of styles. Rosenberg did so partly to oppose the decorative emptiness of the "worst new abstract" painting and partly because he genuinely distrusted intellectualism in painting.

Likewise, Rosenberg's parochialism is more apparently revealed in treating Willem de Kooning. Taking his cue from

de Kooning's phrase, "style of living," Rosenberg applied his idea of Action Painting directly to the artist. He related de Kooning's way of life directly to the mode of creation of the artist. Believing any quality in de Kooning's art is comprehended by examining the life of the artist, Rosenberg transformed artistic value to Existentialist philosophical value. In this obsession with Action Painting, he tried to bestow centrality to de Kooning as the existential hero and as the foremost Action Painter.

However, de Kooning is neither an existential hero nor the only model of the authentic artist. Before being an existential hero, de Kooning is an artist with the high ambition to achieve a triumphant masterpiece. De Kooning's art, instead of "synthesis," shows an oscillation between abstraction and the figure, between all-over and focused space, and between excess and negation. Before being an anxious man's existential gesture against the void, de Kooning's habit of painting and re-painting or his continual practice of wiping out his painting is the simple pictorial problem of an artist using awesomely complicated methods. Rosenberg, with his obsession of Action Painting, could not see de Kooning as an artist and his art as an art. To apply his metaphysical idea of Action Painting to de Kooning, he rather isolated the artist as a kind of mysterious superhuman.

Indeed, there is no such thing as neutral, "ideology-free" criticism. Unlike those art historians who engage in the dissection of art after the work of art has settled in

history, critics have to respond to the work of art, grasp it when it is still new and strange, and give us a preliminary hold on its meaning.[6] Thus, to advocate the contemporary work of art which still remains a surprise, the critic is often a "passionate, partisan observer" of the work, rather than a detached judge of its value.

Rosenberg tried to cut off Abstract Expressionism from the history of art, since the history is only the record of past. Instead he tried to "envisage the artist as a hero who has the awesome task of re-making history." He tried to raise the Abstract Expressionists to this prominence, with his revolutionary and to him, "ideology-free" concept of Action Painting.

However, unlike his concept, in the actual criticism he does not possess enough detachment to let the work enter fully into his responses as the product of a sensibility different from his own. He does not accept the "otherness" of the artist. By doing so, Rosenberg isolates the work of art and the artist — shrouding them in his partisan view, situating them in a nebulous area, a kind of "twilight zone" which is incomprehensible. Rosenberg is also doomed to isolation himself by the limitation of his own subjectivity. With his partisan position his ambiguous concept leads the audience to another form of isolation.

ENDNOTES V

[1]Max Kozloff, "The Critical Reception of Abstract Expressionism," Arts Magazine, 40 (December, 1965), 30.

[2]S.C.Foster, "The Avant-garde and the Privacy of Mind," Art International, 19 (November, 1975), 75.

[3]B.M.Reise, "Greenberg and The Group: a Retrospective view," Part I, Studio International, 175 (May, 1968), 257.

[4]Rosenberg, The Tradition of the New, p. 26.

[5]Max Kozloff, "An Interview with Robert Motherwell," Art Forum, 4 (September, 1965), 37.

[6]Quoted from a Foreward by D.B.Kuspit in Jacqueline Victoria Falkenheim, Roger Fry and the Beginnigs of Formalist Art Criticism.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ashton, Dore. The Life and Times of the New York School. New York: Bath, Adams & Dart, 1972.

_____. The Unknown Shore: A View of Contemporary Art. Boston & Toronto: Brown, 1962.

Bannard, Walter Darby. Hans Hofmann. Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1976.

Battcock, Gregory., ed. The New Art: A Critical Anthology. New York: A Dutton Paperback, 1973.

Brown, Milton. American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955.

Feldman, Edmund Burke. Varieties of Visual Experience; art as image and idea. 2d ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963; New York: Abrams, 1972.

Flew, Antony. A Dictionary of Philosophy. New York: St. Martin's, 1979.

Friedman, B.H. Jackson Pollock - energy made visible. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974.

Greenberg, Clement. Art and Culture. Boston: Beacon Press, 1965.

Hess, Thomas B. De Kooning: Recent Paintings. New York: Walker and Company, 1967.

_____. Willem de Kooning. New York: Braziller, 1959.

_____. Willem de Kooning. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1968.

_____. Willem de Kooning Drawings. Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Soceity, 1972.

Hofmann, Hans. Search for the Real. Edited by Sara T. Weeks and Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1967.

Hunter, Sam. American Art of the 20th Century. New York: Abrams, 1972.

_____. Hans Hofmann. New York: Abrams, 1963.

Kuspit, Donald B. Clement Greenberg. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979.

Poggioli, Renato. The Theory of the Avant-Garde. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Ralph, B.W. Dictionary of Existentialism. New York: The Wisdom Library Edition, 1962.

Rose, Barbara. American Art Since 1900. New York: Praeger, 1975.

Rosenberg, Harold. Act and the Actor: Making the Self. New York: The New American Library Inc., 1970.

_____. Arshile Gorky: The Man, The Time, The Idea. New York: Horizon Press, 1962.

_____. The Anxious Object: Art Today and Its Audience. New York: Horizon Press, 1964; reprint ed. New York: Collier Books, 1973.

_____. The De-definition of Art. New York: Horizon Press, 1972; reprint ed. New York: Collier Books, 1979.

_____. Artworks and Packages. New York: Horizon Press, 1969; reprint ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

_____. The Tradition of the New. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965; reprint ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

_____. Willem de Kooning. New York: Abrams, 1973.

Sandler, Irving. The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism. New York: Praeger, 1970.

_____. The New York School: The Painters and Sculptors of the Fifties. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

Sartre, J.P. Essays in Existentialism. Edited by Wade Baskin. New York: Citadel Press, 1967.

Seitz, William C. Hans Hofmann. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1963.

Periodicals

Abel, Lionel. "Harold Rosenberg, 1906-1978," Art International 23 (September 1978): 76-77.

Alloway, Lawrence. "Activity of Criticism and Art History," Art Forum 13 (January 1975): 46-50.

_____. "The Biomorphic Forties," Art Forum 4 (September 1965): 18-22.

Ashton, Dore. "On Harold Rosenberg," Critical Inquiry 6 (Summer 1980): 615-624.

_____. "Willem de Kooning: homo faber," Arts Magazine 50 (January 1976): 58-61.

Bannard, Walter Darby. "Willem de Kooning's Retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art," Art Forum 7 (April 1969): 42-49.

Battcock, Gregory. "Re-evaluating Abstract Expressionism," Arts 44 (December 1969): 46-48.

_____. "Willem de Kooning," Arts 42 (November 1967): 34-37.

Buettner, Stewart. "John Dewey and the Visual Arts in America," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 33 (Summer 1975): 383-392.

Cowart, Jack. "De Kooning Today," Art International 23 (Summer 1979): 8-16.

Davie, Donald. "Immoderate Criticism," Encounter 13 (August 1959): 62-64.

De Kooning, Willem. "Is Today's Artist With or Against the Past?" Art News 57 (Summer 1958): 27, 59.

Ebert, Teresa L. "The Aesthetics of Indeterminacy: The Postmodern Drip Paintings of Jackson Pollock," Centennial Review 22 (Spring 1978): 139-163.

Finkelstein, Louis. "The Light of De Kooning," Art News 66 (October 1967): 28-31, 70.

_____. "Gotham News, 1945-60," Art News Annual 34 (1968): 115-123.

Forge, Andrew. "De Kooning's 'Women'," Studio International 76 (December 1968): 246-251.

Forgey, Benjamin. "The restless experiments of Hans Hofmann," Art News 76 (February 1977): 62-63.

Foster, Stephen C. "Avant-garde and the Primacy of Mind," Art International 19 (November 1975): 71-78.

_____. "Making a Movement Modern: The Role of the Avant-garde Critic," Art International 20 (October-November 1976): 59-63.

Fried, Michael. "Marxism and Criticism," Arts Magazine 36 (January 1962): 70-72.

_____. "Jackson Pollock," Art Forum 4 (September 1965): 14-17.

Goldin, Amy. "Harold Rosenberg's Magic Circle," Arts Magazine 40 (November 1965): 37-39.

Goldwater, Robert. "Varieties of Critical Experience," Art Forum 6 (January 1967): 40-41.

Golub, Leon. "A Critique of Abstract Expressionism," College Art Journal 14 (Winter 1955): 142-147.

Greenberg, Clement. "After Abstract Expressionism," Art International 6 (October 1962): 24-32.

_____. "How Art Writing Earns Its Bad Name," Encounter 19 (December 1962): 67-71.

_____. "New York Painting Only Yesterday," Art News 56 (Summer 1957): 58-59, 84-85.

_____. "Post-painterly Abstraction," Art International 8 (Summer 1964): 63-64.

_____. "Some Advantages of Provincialism," Art Digest 28 (January 1954): 6-8.

Hall, Lee. " Harold Rosenberg says: Once you know what good art is, why care about critics, good or bad?" Art News 72 (April 1973): 64-66.

Heller, Ben. "The Roots of Abstract Expressionism," Art in America 49 (Winter 1961): 40-49.

Hess, Thomas B. "Harold Rosenberg, 1906-1978," Art in America 66 (September-October 1978): 8-9.

Higgens, Andrew. "Clement Greenberg and the idea of the avant-garde," Studio International 182 (October 1971): 144-147.

Howard, Richard. "Sweetness and Light," Art News 64 (May 1965): 44, 61-62.

Huelsenbeck, Richard. "En Avant Dada," Possibilities I (Winter 1947-1948): 42.

Johnson, Ellen. "Jackson Pollock and nature," Studio International 185 (June 1973): 257-261.

Kozloff, Max. "An Interview with Friedel Dzubas," Art Forum 4 (September 1965): 49-52.

_____. "An Interview with Matta," Art Forum 4 (September 1965): 23-26.

_____. "An Interview with Robert Motherwell," Art Forum 4(September 1965): 33-37.

_____. "Critical Reception of Abstract Expressionism," Arts Magazine 40 (December 1965): 27-33.

_____. "The Dilemma of Expressionism," Art Forum 3 (November 1964): 35-36.

_____. "The Impact of de Kooning," Arts Yearbook 7 77-88.

Kramer, Hilton. "The Critics of American Painting," Arts 34 (October 1959): 26-31.

_____. "Harold Rosenberg's Book of Essays, The Tradition of the New," Arts 33 (September 1959): 56-59.

_____. "The New American Painting," Partisan Review 20 (July-August 1953): 421-427.

Kuspit, Donald B. "Two Critics: Thomas B. Hess and Harold Rosenberg," Art Forum 17 (September 1978): 22-33.

_____. "Book Review: Discovering the Present," Art Forum 13 (March 1975): 58-60.

Larporte, Paul M. "Painting, Dialectics, and Existentialism," Texas Quarterly 5 (Winter 1962): 200-224.

Leider, Philip. "The First Generation: The New York School in Los Angeles," Art Forum 4 (September 1965): 3-13.

Lippard, Lucy R. "Three Generation of Women: De Kooning's First Retrospective," Art International 6 (November 1965): 29-31.

McCarthy, Mary. "An Academy of Risk," Partisan Review 26 (Summer 1959): 476-480.

Mudrick, Marvin. "Studying the Time," Art News 69 (March 1970): 47-48.

O'Doherty, Brian. "Willem de Kooning: Fragmentary Notes Towards a Figure," Art International 12 (December 1968): 21-29.

Ratcliff, Carter. "Art Criticism: Other Minds, Other Eyes," Art International 18 (September 1974): 49-54.

Reise, Barbara M. "Greenberg and The Group: a retrospective view," Part I, Studio International 175 (May 1968): 254-257.

Rose, Barbara. "Problems of Criticism: The Politics of Art, Part I," Art Forum 6 (February 1968): 31-32.

_____. "The Second Generation: Academy and Breakthrough," Art Forum 4 (September 1965): 53-63.

Rosenberg, Harold. "Activity of Criticism," Studio International 189 (March-April 1975): 86-87.

_____. "After Next What?" Art in America 52 (April 1964): 64-73.

_____. "Interview with Willem de Kooning," Art News 71 (September 1972): 54-59.

_____. "Introduction to Six American Artists," Possibilities I (Winter 1947-1948): 75.

_____. "The Mona Lisa without a mustache: Art in the media age," Art News 75 (May 1976): 47-50.

_____. "The Search for Jackson Pollock," Art News 59 (February 1961): 35, 58-60.

_____. "Then and Now," Partisan Review 42 (1975): 563-566.

Roskolenko, Harry. "Harold Rosenberg: 1906-1978," Art International 23 (September 1979): 62-63.

Rubin, William. "Jackson Pollock and the Modern Tradition," Art Forum 4 (February 1967): 14-22, (March 1967): 28-37.

Rudikoff, Sonya. "Language and Actuality: A Letter to Irving Sandler," Arts 34 (March 1960): 23-25.

Sandler, Irving and Rudikoff, Sonya. "An Exchange on Art Criticism," Arts 34 (May 1960): 28-30.

Tumin, Melvin M. "What Is Art?: An Interview with Harold Rosenberg," Partisan Review 45 (1978): 523-560.

Wolfe, Judith. "Jungian Aspects of Jackson Pollock's Imagery," Art Forum 11 (November 1972): 65-73.

Wolfram, Eddie. "De Kooning's Un-American Activities," Art and Artists 3 (January 1969): 28-30.

Theses

Smith, A.C. "Art as Politics: the Abstract Expressionist Avant-garde and Society," Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1977.

Yard, Sally E. "Willem de Kooning," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1980.