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Dear Jeanne,

Around 1992 I spent a few days reading Myron's journals at Oil and Steel Gallery. I xeroxed some hundred pages or more for further study. I still have the original xeroxes, but they're in storage in either Boston or Seattle at the moment.

That same year I typed selections from the xeroxes into computer for possible use in my manuscript on Hofmann. I was very accurate with my typing and proofreading, right down to each dash and comma. I'd had a lot of practice typing quotations by artists. Not only did I transcribe entire interviews with former Hofmann students, but in the years prior to working on the project I'd gathered about 600 pages of quotations from artists of various centuries into a manuscript that became the basis for an MA thesis.

Enclosed are the selections I typed from the original journals. This letter may be passed around along with them, by way of introduction.

Warm regards,



MYRON STOUT
SELECTIONS FROM HIS JOURNALS

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/23/53) "Open and Closed" composition. The openness is a lack of bounding the painting... That is, the movement within and on the canvas finds its completed orientation not just on the canvas. It is unfettered and uncontained. Thus the subject-object (object in the sense of a thing) floating on the canvas (figures against background) tends to be closed where the emphasis is on delineation, and/or definition of the object. In order to "open" such a canvas, the object has to be dematerialized. ... the form can be opened through light, where the color-light of the object emanates in the proper vibration with the color-light of the background. From this standpoint, the color is more abstract in essence, more universal than the form element: The form element acting as the particularizing pole in counterflight from and to the color. The form gives the orientation, for it is inevitably and inescapably direction and movement, and we tend to think of the dynamics of a painting as depending on the form. Whereas, of course, the color has its dynamic also, but it is a more universalized emanation or radiation of movement instead of a specific directional movement. The question arises then, can a painting define an object and at the same time have an openness adequate to the needs of high expression: that is, can it have the necessary expansive quality when the objects that make it up are particularized and defined? And it would seem that it can be, when the color is so related to the forms, eliminating them, yet depending on them in its variations that the forms are transcended (you could say they take on a transparency through color, which opens them) and the whole thing takes on an expanding vitality. This answers the problem (unstated above) of having forms present and defined, yet not stultifying the picture through definition. It seems to me this is a basic problem (if not the basic) in a

deep psychological sense. The effort to grasp, both in a physical and conceptional sense, the wholeness inherent in a form or an object, this particularizing to get a whole seems to be part of the earliest effort toward self-orientation. This seems to be the basic problem the painter has always, and will always have to struggle with. ... It has been stated before, of course, but usually in terms of "how to get depth without making a hole in the canvas."

This is also the painter's problem, but no real artist recognized as such throughout the ages ever had a hole in his canvas or on his wall. There's almost no evidence that I've ever seen of that. A painter instinctively avoids it and they always have. But there is, all through the history of painting, the evidence of his struggle with the problem of definition and closure of forms and maintenance of openness and expansion.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/23/53) The movement of forms on the canvas can give itself to a universalizing; also, in fact, it is an essential element. This comes through the balancing of the totality of movements. This is "tension held in balance" so often referred to, wherein there is a summarization of the directional forces in a more or less centrifugal and centripetal way, and as well as swinging in and out of these forces, in and out, that is, of the implied space of the canvas.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/24/53) A painting should fill the air between it and the viewer with its vibrations so that one has the sense of being both close to it and at a distance, as one stands at one's best point for seeing, of course, and is satisfied whether feeling close to or far away from it. It must bridge the gap of from near to far. The feeling of proper -- of "just right" -- spatial orientation that can make a masterpiece depends on the proper attunement of all

senses of direction from out to in, from above down, from side to side, and reverse, from down up, plus all possible intermediate directions. And this does not omit upside downness and top or bottom one-side-ness.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/25/53) The intuition is more in harmony with nature than any theory the mind can figure out.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/25/53) Problem solving and painting is problem solving must include analysis -- and then the analysis must be left behind.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/29/53) Mr. Hofmann was very expressive last night and talking willingly about painting, as is usual, but in the intimacy of his own kitchen, much more penetratingly and at great length. I kept the pace rolling when Miz and Toasty, the dog, interrupted, and for almost the whole of two hours, he talked of nothing else. It is impossible to remember all that was said, and no exact wording, as you are so concentrating on getting his meaning from his strange use of English. He spoke, though, of the impossibility of knowing what you do in painting, and yet how every square millimeter "must be" right (meaning perfect, so it is there) in its place "on the canvas" -- "integrated" -- with every other square millimeter. The gist of all this and most other talk (and here I have to use my own words), was that painting is not a process of logical construction, of conscious planning in the high outer levels of knowing, that it comes from so deep that we have no awareness or knowing of its own logic. We must simply see what's there and not be

blinded to the possibilities of that logic. He did not use the word logic with this organic meaning, as I remember. I supplied the term "organic" ("Organic intention" would have been better) in comparing the process to the growth of a tree, when there is absolutely no predicting just what the form of the tree will be; one can only watch it and see what relation the branches will have to the trunk, etc. This he agreed with. Of the multiplicity of possibilities in a painting, (and of our inability to see more than a few) he spoke humorously (enjoying largely his wit) to this effect: It's not a case of seeing two hundred out of a thousand. I can't rephrase this so as to carry his meaning. Anyway, his joke ran in the fantastically high figures and also with an exactness down to the last digit, and the meaning that there was such an infinity of possibilities.

Then he spoke of creative destruction, as he so often does, of how absolutely important it is and of the way the process of destruction gives rise to multiplicities of possibilities; his term was "invention": That in destroying, you are unconsciously inventing. He said that he works in two ways: one, highly disciplined and controlled; the other, absolutely free, playful, leaving every possibility for free invention, and that in color, his palette is constantly a source of inspiration, that he never cleans his palette, as the natural combining of colors there is always better than one can be on the canvas. That as he looks from the palette to the canvas, he knows what is wrong with the canvas and must "destroy" accordingly. He said the more "perfect" the canvas looks to you (beguiled by the charm you see there), the more sure you can be that it is wrong, because your knowing or thinking you know indicates wrongness.

The other day, when he showed me some drawings from an earlier period at San Tropez (they were enlarged photostats of small ink drawings, actually, but quite beautiful though unfortunately framed), he spoke of the way the object was present in them, something the young painters are beginning to try to achieve, but that they go at it from a

too abstract method, without the knowledge of the object. At the same time, he complimented me on the way my paintings had looked at the Hansa, saying they looked just beautiful (he used some light word -- like charming) and that the other paintings there were too much playful method, or some such expression. He spoke more highly, as he always has, of my drawings there; saying in a sort of offhand way: "...and the drawings were absolutely beautiful."

I asked him about Jan [Müller's] show and he said it was very beautiful. We spoke particularly of the big one. He said Jan had been coming regularly to class, doing very beautiful drawings of the model, rather like Maillol, "sophisticated", "round", "beautiful play of light", and that Jan had "come up against" him, something he says he likes. Also that Jan was at a period there very difficult for the teacher, for he doesn't know whether to tell him or not to tell him ("To tell him", the implication seemed to be, may be to either confuse or turn him backward), but he said he would leave him alone, simply pass him by and say, "It is beautiful" or say nothing (Jan didn't know how beautiful they were, for he would destroy them), and finally he told him just what was wrong; first what he had to do (just being a word of force rather than definition, as he used it) and Jan took it very well. I also asked him about John Grillo's show, and he liked it, as he always has; speaking of the beautiful light created by the paintings, to go into the gallery was "like going into the sunlight". He laughed about the way John always says his work has changed and the way it never has changed. He thought the Hansa had showed such talented people; spoke of Jacques Bechwith and Kaprow, and again of (Rupriore's?) paintings at the Stable.

In regard to teaching, when he was talking about Jan, he said he so often resorts to "indirect" ways. He might not say what he means to the individual (implying that they couldn't "take it") but would say things at the next time that applied. I wanted to say how

aware I was of the indirection he has employed with me, but thought better. His whole talk about his way of painting was an indirect lesson to me, as I was only too aware. He was far too gentle with me for long; he for long gave me praise that seemed extravagant and was (though I didn't realize it at the time) somewhat overwhelming. His way, at the same time, of withholding it (particularly at the Friday criticisms) simply, for long, baffled me and upset me. The thing that kept coming back to me from others was the way he would praise my work to them. Then to me, particularly in group criticisms, he would measure the praise and often, through tone and what he didn't say, give the effect of passing over the work rather briefly. For the last year and a half now he has had comparatively little to say of my work that has any conviction that he really likes it. Of course, I have accomplished comparatively little, and I have not been around him in the same way, but also I think that he was personally caught up, two or two and a half years ago, with the sort of thing I was doing, the clear, more objective approach, with such a strong suggestion of objectivity, and so he was then more in rapport with me. His own production of the large non-objective black and white paintings (1951 Kootz Gallery show) [was] the first (and the only one ever publicly shown) painting of his of that kind. It seemed to me that he had to prove to himself that he could do this seemingly far out of his usual order of things, and having done it, then followed a whole series of paintings, large, clear, as it was, but more painted. Several people at and after that 1951 show said, "He is doing your sort of thing," "You have influenced him." This was true, of course, only in very small measure. I had been studying with him since 1946, and was myself caught up in a strongly, running Mondrian current in the school, drawing, as was inevitable, on the whole milieu of his studio. I believe I did something with that impulse that no one else did, and that I succeeded in a certain way that no one else did, but that is not to deny the sources in Hofmann and many of his students (Alfred Israel and Toni

LaSelle probably chiefly) though there were others, unremembered, whose specific paintings I more clearly remember being struck by, of my inspiration. I think it was as natural for Hofmann to participate in this communal swing towards Mondrian, so to speak, at the same time that he was in such large measure directing it, as it was for me to, and it certainly doesn't mean that he was "copying" me any more than I was "copying" Mondrian or Toni or Israel ... The thing that was always in my consciousness, and a constant and powerful inspiration to me was the fact that, in spite of his own rather expressionistic style, he could know and respond fully to the thing that is so beautiful in Mondrian. Through this, I began to come to see that painting was not this or that; that it was not just Picasso or Matisse, or Mondrian, each of whom had always seemed to fall into such separate categories to me, but that it was something so much bigger that not even the difference between Picasso and Mondrian began to exhaust its possibilities. I think that Toni was my inspiration in this way: she helped me to see personal and particular possibilities, and Hofmann inspired me through the breadth of vision and understanding, and the vast range of possibilities he opened up. ...

I spoke to Mr. Hofmann about my writing, how necessary it was and the part it seemed to fill in the process of clarification for me. He put it very clearly when he said: there are all these things coming at you from every direction, and there comes a time when you simply have to stop and find a direction, and he gestured forward with his straightened hand on the table so forcefully.

Much that Mr. Hofmann had to say about the organic and unknowable quality of painting, and that he was saying, I felt, not only as a statement of his own beliefs but also as something of a lesson to me, I have already begun to realize as is evident, I feel, particularly in what I have done this spring. I hope when he sees the paintings that he will bear me out on this.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/29/53) One has simply to be able to see the world as in flux; you cannot conceive it as formed. And this conception, as in flux, is at such an opposite pole with a whole life built up on what were only apparently certainties and finalities of form. I told Mr. Hofmann the despair I feel at not being able to see the whole canvas, all of it, the desperate feeling that comes with realizing that one is only seeing it, really, in little pieces, or that one is seeing only a bit here or a bit there in relation to the whole -- of not seeing what is present there. He was in complete understanding -- he knew exactly what I meant.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/29/53) In painting, you have to follow your feeling, not your knowing; yet the only thing more fickle than one's knowing is one's feeling!

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/31/53) A characteristic Hofmann phrase: (such and such) "won't be denied," indicating his response to the strength of living, with force or energy.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (6/1/53) I see, both from my own impulse which I was not quite willing to believe, or not quite courageous enough to follow, and from all Hofmann had to say yesterday, that I must form my paintings to compete with their environment. They cannot be considered as "isolatable", such as in a gallery or museum; they must more powerfully command the atmosphere about them. Their quality cannot reside in fine nuance, it must

come more through a broadly stated authority.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (8/26/53) My feeling has always been strong that an organic whole has a center which is the essence and center, so to speak, of its vitality. A person has it, a cat has it, a tree has it, anything whatsoever has it when one feels its actuality, its being-ness. The world itself, one feels, has it; there is a centripetal pull, so to speak, in all things. This center is mythical -- it is there simply because we feel it and name it; we cannot locate it except as it is revealed by the quality of all the organisms being held together. When we paint a picture, we hold it together only by revealing that centeredness.

The outward pull -- the pull toward things outside itself that all things have is just, I suppose, as important. In order to be itself, though, an organism must have the strength to be itself in opposition to the whole force of the universe. It is not, of course, that it can do it only by opposition. It does it by participation in that force too.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (8/26/53) I am coming to see, more clearly, that the "content" of what is painted is only come to on the basis of being face to face with nature at all times. The source of and the reality -- the meaning of the painting, symbolic of that meaning -- is the world of our experience. It is us face to face with the world. If the painting is to be the visual symbol, it must be come to through visual experience.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (9/9/53) Answer to the man at Gallery "256" who asked me what my "red" painting meant: what does a beautiful landscape mean? The facts of the geological construction

of the land, the bio-chemistry of the growth of vegetation, the meteorological situation at that moment have nothing to do with the feeling you have when you look at the landscape. Your feeling is a response to the visual construction and organization of the totality of the scene. You feel a delight in your eyes and in your very soul at the way the light reveals the form, in the space there in front of you.

Answer to his next question, what does it represent? If it represents anything, it is more nearly a representation of the universe than of anything in particular. But the fact is that no painting, no matter what its ostensible subject, represents anything. It presents something. It puts before you the artist's vision, a way he has found, symbolically, of organizing his world. He has found visual means which indicate how he feels the world is held together.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (9/13/53) The art experience is an expanding experience. It is not "elevating", for I can't see what it would elevate us above. It is enriching, it is intensifying; it is enlarging.

A work of art is a release from the moment into all time. It is a release from the immediate place into all space. It would be possible to call this ideal time and space, but that indicates too much of an abstraction, for it is a time in which we are participating and a space which we are inhabiting.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/11/53) No matter what other tendencies painters find appearing in their work, they are forced again and again to re-evaluate their efforts in the light of the clarity, the "pregnant" simplicity which Mondrian constantly reminds them is possible in painting. Though the strength of his message is carried to most, unfortunately few painters see

beyond his great accomplishment of a full integrity of surface and strive for and achieve a "flatness". In this they are aided by what they see in the Impressionists and in Matisse. It (the flatness) is indeed a quality where the tendency is variably produced, but the depth, the profundity of the painting which is also an invariable product is the thing that is missed. The Neo-Plasticists, the avant garde abstract expressionists both maintain a surface which has an integrity. Few, however, pierce that pictorial surface to attain a plastic depth or any psychological and philosophical engagement with the substance of painting.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/11/53) The artist, like every man, has to come to terms with the world, and he has to come to terms with himself, and he can carry this out only on his own terms and through his own medium. He is, like everyone else, a lone being in the universe. His painting takes on meaning only as he finds meaning within himself and in his world. ... Where the avant garde painter fails to connect with the world through his painting, he is not failing because his painting does not connect through its resemblance to the known visible world. He is failing because he himself has failed to connect spiritually with the world. He is always claiming, incidentally, that the world fails to connect with him spiritually, that nobody understands, that they are either not concerned with understanding or more frequently are incapable of understanding him. While there is some truth in this, of course, the failure is not necessarily only on the world's part. Part of the failure is certainly his. If his meaning is clear enough, the world will come to understand that meaning.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/11/53) Meaning in a painting is that reflection in it of the inner and only substantial reality that all artists feel in themselves. It is the veritable -- the balanced pattern of life -- never balanced to a static and measurable formula, but a balance of vital, ever-moving forces that apparently consent to an equipoise just long enough to give us an illusive glimpse of what order can be.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/15/53) It is Mr. Hofmann's qualities as a man and as an artist that make him an outstanding figure among those who have come in contact with him. As a man, he is to me always an amazing and an inspiring figure. With people, he has that rare, rare quality of true humanity while, at the same time, he is never without a deep and abiding affection for people. He seems also to have an amazing objectivity: an objectivity that is more cold, without feeling, but one that rises above petty personal feelings which most of us are so subject to. Nor is it that he is without the basis for such feelings; he would be truly super-human if that were so. But it is that he has so concerned himself with things of broader moment that the smaller things fall into a more proper perspective. I have often wondered about the fact that since I have known him, there has never been any evidence of a really close and intimate friendship. He speaks of people of his past experience as being intimate, but they are all of the past. I take this to mean that, since he has been in this country, he has really been alone, and, however much he has the wish for intimates, has never found anyone who could in true, friendly rapport communicate with him. I have supposed this to be due to the consistent opposition he has encountered as an artist and teacher. However much various individuals, actually quite a multitude, have been drawn to him and have believed in him, probably for him more dominant has

been the fact that he has also met with so much hostility and mistrust, his ideas misunderstood, his art unappreciated and not because he or it was unworthy, but from reasons of ambition. As I have known him, certainly there has never been on his part any criticism of others for their life or their work that has not been of a most sympathetic and broad-minded kind. Where, for instance, his students, easily recognizing the fault and weaknesses of a painter, ridicule and treat him lightly, it is typical of Hofmann not to pass a derogatory judgment. It is always obvious from what he says that he starts out from an attitude of full respect for the painter as a human being, with all the potentialities of success and failure that anyone can have. His judgments may not, from his own point of view, be very favorable, but they are never deprecating, derogatory or arrived at by placing himself in a superior position. Only once in an association as a student and to some extent as a friend over the past seven years have I heard him openly and specifically condemn anyone; and that one had so callously, and with such obvious intent to hurt Hofmann personally and injure him in the public's eye, attacked him, that anyone would obviously consider him as a mortal enemy. Hofmann spoke about the affair to the class, making quite a point of it, in rather general but easily identifiable terms, ending with the statement that such a person "could just go to the very devil," and with all the force of his great vitality. Nonetheless, the person, who had been his student, [who had] left him in a pique to study with Davidson and then made public fun of Hofmann at a forum at the art association, ... was later taken back into the class where he asked to be, having, it was understood, apologized and "come to an understanding" with Hofmann.

When a man reaches his seventies, he is expected to have come to something of an understanding of human nature and to acquire a broad viewpoint, of course, but the evidence seems to me to show that Hofmann has been long in possession of just those faculties in full measure.

He is not, I must add, wholly without the very human qualities of anger, suspicion of others, and sometimes an immodest pride. But his larger actions and his manner of dealing with people show the small part such qualities actually play in his nature.

In a way, he uses Miz as a foil for these more emotional or less considered qualities within himself. It is obvious that his angers and rancors are fully expressed to her, but a too explicit exposition of them from her will draw a moderation or denial of them from him. Certainly, he never talks about them with any personal quality. Their discussion in any way will usually bring from him a turning from the smaller, personal issue to larger issues which are reflected in them.

I once myself did something very foolish which he could only take as an act of presumption which could (fortunately, it didn't) injure him and the school. I felt his censure (how much of that was out of my own guilty feeling I don't know) but I heard not a word of censure from him: a mild, but clear remoteness was the most I got.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (9/7/52) The tension of time: the long drawing out of the thread of the life -- or the music-string -- of an idea of a form -- of a mode of feeling and seeing. Its course running through time, its substance vibrating in response to the various influences of the various positions along its course -- an influence at a late position setting up renewed vibrations along its course backward in time, which shows us how the past actually lives in the present. The necessity of conceiving time as something other than chronological -- a system for its conception other than perspectival. Is it continuous through ways other than through adjacency?

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (9/7/52) Nature is more than the form of men and women, more than land and sea and cityscapes, more than fruit and flowers. Nature is all that we experience ... It is the connection between stars and the sparkle of water.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/17/53) Decorative painting in its expansive flatness implies a reach far beyond the bounds of the canvas. It is sketched more tautly in space. Non-decorative painting, on the other hand, has its expansion within the bounds of the canvas, and so thrusts deeper into the implied space within the canvas. It is more completely an object within itself. It seems, in its expansion, to enlarge the canvas. The decorative paintings go beyond the canvas. They are more dependent on the world. Non-decorative painting is more nearly a world -- or a universe -- of its own.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/17/53) Expansiveness being a kind of emanation of life -- of energy. The dynamic quality which is at once centrifugal and centripetal, contained yet boundless.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/17/53) Question of represented space, implied space: the dynamic force that can be formed in perspective is what the artist works with, but it is not the charted space of copy-book perspective. It is the feeling -- the impulse -- that travels along the lines of sight. The Renaissance artists used it because they recognized its dynamic quality and that is what they worked with. Academic perspective is stale and static because it has become a thing in itself -- an end. So the dynamicism that is possible to achieve through

it is missed. It has been, of course, just one aspect of the plastic force. The less decorative of my "neo-plastic" paintings always have something of perspective on a dynamic basis, but it is a kind of spiral perspective. It's as though the forces which ordinarily work this way switched to a shifted orientation, constantly shifting eye-level point, oriented on a suspension of forces.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/18/53) Evident structure and hidden structure: of course, in a work of art the structure is, as Hofmann says, "overcome", but there are two ways of working: 1) to let its skeleton be not only its inner support but also its outer expression, 2) to let the outer garment or surface reflect the skeleton, but clothe and mostly conceal it. It's perhaps like the difference between a nude statue and a draped one. But in painting, it is a much more ephemeral thing, because the structure of a painting is more intangible. ... It's also like the bare tree in the winter and the foliated tree in the summer. The tree is most entrancing in the spring and fall when its "garment" is fugitive, and the structure is also fugitive. Both structures and garment are visible, the process of clothing or unclothing is visible. The "unclothed" work has the effect of being more fundamental. In it, of course, lies the danger of scientific sterility. In the "clothed" work lies the danger of emptiness and superficiality, yet it can be most entrancing, for the hidden structure is always teasing the observer. I do not mean that a work of art has to be either skeletal or clothed: all works have both qualities; in the greatest, it's just impossible to separate the two elements...

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (3/30/54) The form that meaning takes in painting is a three- into two-dimensional expression of the world. Forms are of the particular. Form is of the generality that truth

is. It is form that the painter is concerned with. Painting is the form that meaning takes for the painter.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (3/30/54) The sense of "looking through a window" is important in that it helps to define the format and the boundaries of the "creation". The trouble is that you are not looking through anything. You are, more nearly, either inside within it, or it is "outside" with you! The painting is basically an object, and it at once takes you inside with it and comes out of itself to you.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/26/54) What, then, is it that makes a painting a work of art? First of all, I would say that it is not the painting itself that makes it art -- it is the painter -- it is his concern with himself, his own experience as a living, breathing human being in an outside objective world filled with other such living, breathing individuals as himself. He, like they, seek a meaning which goes beyond the meaning of the daily practical and exigent meanings. He seeks a meaning which has an over-all, a comprehensive meaning, one which does not only reside in this event or that object, which at the same time that it is present in this or that event or object is also present with some continuity and some constancy in all the events and objects of his experience -- an experience which, it must never be forgotten, he shares with his fellow human beings: people who have similar capacities for feeling, responding, conceiving and expressing. ... all artists are artists not just because they have a talent for drawing or writing or sculpting... they cannot be artists until and unless they are concerned about meaning. People do not -- or certainly they should not -- become artists because they have a talent for painting and paintings are

marketable and that way they can make a living. People do not become artists because that is the niche in the current scheme of things that they fit into best. There is no reason in the world for anyone to be an artist unless he cares about such things as art can express.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/26/54) A painting is a work of art also because the painter has found the means -- the aesthetic means -- which carry his meaning. They are expressive of that meaning.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/26/54) A human figure, say, has the quality of evoking an aesthetic response. It is, however, his response that the artist works with -- not that specific human figure which evoked the response. So the literal subject becomes a transmitter, a funnel; it is the wire which carries the electric charge where the purpose is to get the charge from here to there. The abstract painter likewise has a subject which, while it "carries" the meaning, is not the meaning. Thus, the "lines" and the "color planes" of Mondrian painting do not mean "black lines" and "color planes" any more than a Renoir nude means any specific nude person. Mondrian's forms, like Renoir's, are means by which his whole and deeper aesthetic meaning is presented.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/3/54) Painting, it will be argued, is a means of expression, and the artist should be expected to know what he wants to express. But the fact is, as is true of the scientist, that what he does is a creative process, not a kind of giving birth to something previously formed. (Nor is it an expression in the sense that you feel hungry and then give

expression to the words, "I am hungry.") Painting only seems to be an expression. A truer way to put it is that it is a forming process which objectifies subjective experience, and, with almost every brush stroke, the painting is a new experience subjectively. ... Frequently, you see used a kind of formula to express the idea of what happens with the artist, which goes like this:

the objective world the artist's subjective world the painting

But it is just not that simple. You would have to draw a similar diagram in reverse and think of it as operating at the same time, or that it could be this:

as that would at least help to indicate that though experience is continuous, it is as much like an alternating current as it is like a flowing stream. This flowing stream is internal as well as external. The painter is not only forming the painting, he is constantly forming and reforming within himself that idea of what the painting is to be.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/24/54) Painting seems to consist of several processes for me. First, I suppose, there is something I want to express in general: there is, I believe, a powerful but only generalized urge toward painting, that is, toward the whole painting-expressive process, but there has to be something somewhere along the line that has touched this off. Often I don't know specifically what it is. I may have an urgent and delighted response toward

some visually felt impression of nature. Trees are often the particular sources for this, with me, and nature movements: waves, cloud movings, the feeling of the color's changing in sunsets, and certainly not least of all, the human figure, and most powerfully in it, certain expressive-gestural qualities of position that seem to "set up" space through an imposing but apparently static control. Also, not by any means, the least is color -- yet this is much more difficult to describe. Mostly it is an eye-filling and soul-saturating quality that comes from a bed of vivid flowers, from sunsets, particularly that pervasive afterglow of the sun's setting where every object, in every direction you turn towards or away from the sun, emerges in an entirely different and transcendent aspect. Color then can so possess objects that the world is recreated in the aspect of a gigantic painting which you participate in most intimately despite the immensity of the space around you.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/5/54) Such discussions as they have "at the club", and at forums, etc., tend not so much in the direction of a common understanding as in that of the participants simply titillating themselves by exploiting their differences of opinion. This keeps the action alive, but as such action has no real purpose in seeking a common understanding, it has no value. At least no immediate or present value. Some people, of course, are curious enough so that afterwards and privately, they may begin to take into account the fact that there are larger meanings which may possibly contain all the various meanings which were brought out in the discussion. But that seems not often to be very true. For each succeeding discussion usually goes over the same ground that was covered before.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/17/55) As one can see a star only by focussing a little to one side of where our sense tells us it is, we find it impossible to come to know an "essence" by focussing only on where we presume it to be. Its peripheral evidences are, so to speak, accessible to us. Its core, unknowable, in any exact sense.

Words and speech are a side effect of thought and conception. So we must deal through indirection by indirection in order to come to know -- to the extent that it is possible to know.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/26/55) "Plasticity" is a term that you cannot do without when you are talking in any depth about painting. This is because it refers to a basic element in visual art, one without which a work of art cannot exist.

The first thing to say is that it is a quality which occurs when, with aesthetic intention, paint is used on canvas. As applied to painting, it means something different from what is meant when applied to wet clay, as in sculptural use, for the sculptor through his use of a three-dimensional medium is producing plasticity more in the original sense of forming or molding. It cannot be used in this sense with reference to painting, which has, physically speaking, only two dimensions. The thickness of the paint, as in impasto painting, is of course three-dimensional, but whatever great extent a painter makes of impasto, he must still obey the law of two-dimensionality.

I suspect, however, that people confuse the two uses of the term, never distinguishing between plasticity in three dimensions and plasticity in two dimensions, and these form a third use, which might be called the general aesthetic or spiritual plasticity which has to do with all art forms ...

So its use with reference to painting is a metaphorical one, not a precise, scientific or exact one. But it is an effective metaphor, and when accepted as one, it refers in an easily comprehensible way to the sense of space which is inherent in and expressed through every painting as the product of the artist's aesthetic intention. This sense of space includes, incidentally, all the various implications of space which result from all the different ways of sensing and coming to know space. For we do not know space through only our eyes. (We know it primarily through movement, and through contact and touch, through emptiness and fullness, through openness and closedness as well as nearness and farness, and we know it through sound, etc.)

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (10/7/55) Pictorial space: This is the space which a painter creates (on his canvas and within its confines). The fact that the canvas is flat and two-dimensional is, comparatively speaking, of little importance. What is important is that it is, spiritually speaking, space which he deals with and if he does not think of it in these terms, he fails as a painter.

Technically speaking, the two dimensions of the canvas become of tremendous importance, for they must be transcended. But when the completed painting comes to be evaluated, it must stand or fall, not on the degree of respect he has had for the flatness of the canvas, nor his ability both to respect the flatness at the same time that he breaks it and returns the penetration to establish a balance of forces in depth; it depends on whether or not he has utilized these basic technical means to establish expressively a sense of space and the way we exist in and relate ourselves to space.

Nor is space of all-powerful importance, for it, again, is the medium of the field, the framework, the that-within-which of our existence and it is of importance to us only

because we exist in it. ... we must never forget, when we use the phrases "pictorial space" and "the painter's created space" that we are using words in a creative or imaginative way just as the painter is using his canvas and paint in a creative way. ... the phrase "pictorial space" refers to our sense of space and not to any single, isolatable thing. This is simply to say that when we use such phrases, the phrases themselves have no absolute and clear meaning: they, like the paintings, are symbolic expressions which mediate between our awareness of knowing and our awareness of what we can come to know and through which, as means, we reach a meaning. They are indications of meaning and not the meanings themselves.

The painting, then, is a kind of metaphor of space...

The reality of space, i.e. what we feel with regard to space as being convinced of it through our experience, is always so much more than any formulation of it... It is too much to be encompassed in any single painted or semantical statement of it; its reality, in that it can have any precision and absolute tangibility, is something that is forever beyond our grasp, either physical or conceptual, either in words, stone or paint, and while we must seek it because we can't not seek it, it is the transforming and shifting and emerging capacity of metaphor.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (10/7/55) The painter can create an expression of his feeling about, or his response to, space, but he cannot create the space itself -- which makes his picture an expression, i.e., communicable [in] that we all have a similarity in our responses to the world.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (10/7/55) Perspective, which, as developed in the 15th century, was a mathematically conceived metaphor of our sense of space and came to be believed in not as a metaphorical means but an efficient formulation of what was assumed to represent the concrete reality of space. The truly aesthetic quality of all paintings which employ perspective has come to be believed to lie in the means which the artists used instead of in what they reached through those means.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (10/7/55) ... the word space is ambiguous, because most people ... have always connected it, without any penetrating inquiry into why they do so, with a concept of space that is inadequate: a shallow or superficial one and one that also leads them in a backward instead of a forward direction. They seem to think that the word space, since it names something that obviously always has been and is now and always will be, can be a constant, a universal, the concept of which, as indicated by the word space, can be depended on not to change. ... the semantical inflexibility is simply a reflection of a similar conceptional inflexibility, and no matter what else they may be told, ... the rigidity of their manner of thinking keeps them from any substantial incorporation of the new ideas of space within a conceptual framework that can include, as well as a quality of permanence of space, the quality of impermanence that must be brought to it. It must include the quality of change.

When a painter or a writer talks about a new concept of space, that's what he is talking about, that he thinks of space in new terms and more inclusive terms than were formerly used ...

Space is an abstraction which needs a reformulation for every purpose that it serves. ... Thus the painter must have a general painting-formulation of space... As his

conception of space is liable to modification at every minute of his life, he must again re-formulate it for each painting and, for that matter, again and again while he is at work on a single painting. This can only convince him that his painting must express the differences and changes and lead him to the conclusion that space is a part of the process, participates in the process; that it is a dynamic thing instead of static; that his is the business of painting a picture, a process, a becoming, but the painted picture must present a becomingness, the thing expressed is his view of the way the world becomes -- instead of is.

So we can come to the term pictorial space, and to the contemporary painter this means not only that he doesn't paint a representation of something that has already clearly been formulated by tradition, so that all he has to do is to learn how to paint so that that formulation is clearly and adequately and precisely presented, but that he has to deal with something that probably never will be formulated in such absolute terms. He must, instead, achieve a formulation of conceptual and general terms and technically expressive means that will be adequate to his aesthetic purposes, which lie behind the conceptual terms. Thus we can say that Impressionism, Post Impressionism, and Realism, etc., are all efforts to generate the technically expressive means for the new conceptual terms of what is not a fact, but really only a mythically held belief in a constant and higher and timeless aesthetic.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/23/57) [Harold Rosenberg's]¹ term "action painting" is, however, a particularly

¹ In reference to Harold Rosenberg's article, "Hans Hofmann: Nature into Action" in Art News, v. 56 (May, 1957): 34-36, a review of Hofmann's retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

inspired one, though one that is much misunderstood for its real meaning -- perhaps even by Rosenberg himself. The spontaneous soul-and-physical gesture of putting paint on canvas certainly is, as Rosenberg has brilliantly perceived, at the very root of painting, but taken out of its total painting context and, as it were, refined as denotative, it becomes like so much of the painting it characterizes, more of a caricature than anything else. ... It is a very perceptive observation, and a very well put metaphor, to say that painting has abandoned its alliance with architecture and makes one with dance and pantomime. But this overlooks a fact, which the Renaissance artist, for instance, was well aware of, that painting, as does architecture, has a basic dependence on its existence as a stable object in time. It stays still in time and must achieve its dynamicism through physically static visual means. "The dance" is on the other hand the essence of from-moment-to-momentness. This is something that Hofmann knows well, none knows it better than he, so with him there is never, as in so much abstract "action" painting, simply the marks on canvas of having taken action. His action has as its whole sole purpose the enrichment and fulfillment of meaning, through vision as it can be discovered and revealed on a canvas.

Contrary to what Rosenberg says (in characterizing "action painting"), the primary agency of physical motion in painting is not line any more than it is splotches, flat areas or any other name you can give to the physical elements of painting. All the elements are "primary agencies of the physical motion." You could much better say that it's the way these elements are achieved in spite of the physical motion which is necessary to get them on the canvas.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/28/57) The hand does what the inner eye is seeing; the thing is to become responsive in your consciousness to the sense of the inner eye.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/28/57) We are led to believe, through our education, that we can acquire, through being taught, certain principles. The effect is that, if we learn them, we tend to believe that they have become ours to possess immutably and hold to, and that we can depend on them, for they will thus remain constant like some unchangeable, impermeable object to possess.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/29/57) Re: the creativity that produces a Finnegan's Wake, A Remembrance of Things Past, an Inferno.

Jan [Müller's opinion]: that we must have an idea first.

Nat [Halper's opinion]: that we must have an idea, whether it comes first or last or whatever.

Me: that the idea is the thing that is developed in the process of creativity. It is the sought, the What-is-sought and brought-into-expression.

Jan represents the "literary" attitude, the finding of one's self in the tradition, the identification with the historical milieu. His work will always have a close resemblance to what exists, for he finds himself through what already has been expressed in the culture.

Nat represents the detached, rather "scientific" attitude which lends itself in its weakness to academicism, in its strength to a large objectivity.

Hofmann represents, to me, what I believe to be the most vital attitude. He is willing for the idea, so to speak, not to exist, until he has brought the impulses out of which it can be built, to perhaps no more than a tentative or primitive expression, but the expression will always thus have a greater pregnancy.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/31/57) ... spatially, we can on the one hand think of ourselves as being in only one spot and position at any single moment, (and we cannot help conceiving of ourselves as existing in individual moments). Yet we know other moments and other positions, so that on the other hand, we cannot keep out of any single conception the implications of a multiplicity of positions.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/31/57) It is the nature of expression, I believe, in fact, you could call it a necessity, for it to be more and more embracing. It strives toward an embracing totality of all that is a part of consciousness, yet it must also be comprehensible in the moment of impact and perception or apprehension. It must all be accessible in the single moment when one first lays eyes on it, if it is a painting.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (9/15/57) New York University, Hunter, Columbia, for instance, have all sought out and employed painters who have been, or are, hotly or warmly of the milieu of the New York School. Only Hofmann, among the major painters and teachers, has had the good sense to stay out of institutions. Even his teachings had become the subject of academicizing, as is of course inevitable with anyone who has a profound effect on the

painting scene, but with him it is much less the result of anything he does than of those who have gone to him ready only for a ready-made aesthetic that they can don.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (9/15/57) ... for any artist as an individual and in the process of being an artist, to conceive of himself as being in, or being a part of, the tradition or current scene falls too easily into "fitting in" or "having a place" in it, and he has already started the rigidifying, academicizing process which can be his downfall as an artist.

It is his function as an individual and as an artist to find not what he is in terms of what he sees in everybody else, but what he hasn't yet found himself to be.

(9/16/57) Yet this is exactly what very, very few painters have a sense of. They do not have the sense of the painting problems being within them. In what is a very immature way, they seem to think that painting is something outside themselves that they must go outside themselves to find and thus achieve.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (3/10/61) In this business of turning the painting, or the drawing, on its top, one side, the other side -- in order to work the "edges" from the most convenient position, I set up more than I at first knew.

It is not so simple a matter as just a technical thing, for every stroke put on has its intimate effect within the finished painting. The painting is in fact, in one way of speaking, the sum of all the strokes that make it up -- from no matter what position they are applied. Every stroke is felt, both as an individual stroke and as a contributing or constituent element of the whole. It is not a matter of a "convenient" position for working. There is, I come to realize, in me a need not only to see the painting from every

position but also to work on it from every position. I know instinctively that the painting does not have four bases, it has only one: the original impulse for the painting is from the viewpoint of a man-standing-on-the-earth oriented one. (At least this is true of my whole post-1945 abstract period.) But it has worried me, both as a matter of logic and philosophy, that a painting, in the process of its working, has sometimes turned itself over. The "King David" (of Elizabeth C.'s is a case in point) after weeks, perhaps, of work (never, that I remember, did one "turn over" that was a quick, spontaneous one) I would realize that it was taking on more meaning from upside down than right side up. ... At one point, Jan Müller remarked that my drawings had a way of turning the observer upside down and then back to right side up. This surprised me, for though I constantly worked on them from both top and bottom, it never had occurred to me that (or rather, how integrally and completely) my processes came to be impressed on the drawing. Of course, we were constantly together when working then, both of us at Hofmann's class, and he was seeing them and registering them, no doubt, from both positions as I worked on them. But the fact remained that he was fully responsive to their quality of having something of a double orientation as well as the basic single one.

Sensing and evaluating them both ways was a very helpful thing, I knew, for I could discover new qualities in them. But I also knew that whatever new quality I discovered upside down had also to be brought into it from right side up, and re-oriented to this position.

I believe it was when I started the ovoid forms (particularly La Rivere's painting) that I began to have so much trouble from working sideways. There was such a fundamental difference sideways from upside down. I must have worked and reworked and reworked that painting for months trying to understand what was happening, for I somehow expected it to be only a simple and easily calculable difference from the upside

down position. I stumbled through the problem somehow (I never understood exactly how), and the painting was, as it turned out, a sort of milestone and high point of that period.

Gradually, since that time (1955-1956) I've come to understand more about it. Our eyes, horizontally placed in us, yet register things according to our sense of upright physical balance.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/18/61) ... the simultaneity of the Cubists, of the Neo-Plasticists -- in fact, of all great painting -- takes place within a framework of further other occurrences which go to make up the aesthetically expressive totality; it is there not as a thing in itself, it is only a means; it is nothing unless it is an integral part of an over-all "feeling-concept" (an awkward phrase, perhaps, but it will have to do for the moment) -- unless it is there to carry the message of something humanly felt, and felt about human experience, and felt with, you might say, an aesthetic poignance... a keenness, an intensity of "point"; a particular quality that lifts it out of the realm of being about something, that is: pointing to it, as in illustration, of being just a sign, a signal; and takes it into the realm of symbolism, of symbolizing, in appropriate forms -- and form, the significance of human experience. It is not enough that a painting induces us to recall certain sensations, certain feelings felt in the middle of experience; it must take us in with it to the heart and core of experience.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (10/30/62) It is fantastic to me the way the shapes must swing violently to left or right, up and down, in the process of finding the shape and its place on the canvas. Being

in one position or "state of balance", I cannot make what, in the end, [will] turn out to be a minor shift this way or that and get it right. If it seems to swing towards the left, or be a little "heavy" in that direction, I have to swing it extremely to the right first, before I can swing it back into a more consequent position. It's like setting something which exists like a pendulum, but reacts violently as with a strong spring which then gives down only gradually. The shape swings from left to right, first violently then from right to left so, back to right more easily, and as I come toward conclusion, then only minuscule movements are necessary.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/1/62) One tries to arrange or order one's processes, the things one does (as in painting even) so that you don't have to go through the trouble and the pain of being aware. Aware, that is, in the intimate, real way of being with what you are doing with every fiber of your being.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/1/62) If one could only realize how brief a moment the freshness of an intuition lasts in the entire temporal process of achieving it in the painting! You get a fresh inspiration, go to work on it, and the first thing you know (if you know it!) it is gone and you're working out of stale habit, and the inspiration (as you think it will) doesn't appear in the painting.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/2/62) The amazing thing about Hofmann is that he was ahead of Pollock in being liberated from the unnecessarily logical (see Red Trickle, 1939) and, not satisfied

with being just spontaneously and monumentally intuitive, brought that fresh spontaneousness into a true integration with the also basic human need for the rational and logical, and as his paintings continually reveal, achieves a higher and more complete and intense human expression therewith, one of greater breadth and scope and profundity than almost anyone else painting today.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/12/62) The volume of a "shape" gathers itself together and exerts its greatest force, influence, at the edges. Until I could put it this way, I could never get hold enough of the feel of what happened as between what was inside and what was at the edge. The sense of the picture must be able to play freely inside and outside the shape through the edge. This I knew, and felt perfectly and I knew that the part of the edge here affected, or better, determined that part there. But I could not determine just how the whole volume of the shape (in relation to the total picture plane, of course) was related to the edge. The edge was determined by the volume, yes, I could see. Well, it's as though there was a churning of activity within the shape volume that eventuates in the edge.

I suppose I was much more aware of the necessary vitality of the whole picture plane than I could ever be of its parts, even when "finding" perfectly the painting. Now I see, I feel, or I know more how this operates.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/13/62) Hans, talking last night about the rational vs. intuitive in one in the process of painting. He insists on the simultaneous presence of each in the moment (as, of course, I certainly do, and expanded at some length on my version of the way this operates).

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/14/62) I can never do a particular part (an articulation) of a painting until I so completely have the "feel" of it that it "does itself" so that (as Hans put it last night) I "chust know" that's the way it has to be. Then it becomes, to me, "natural" or "right" and I'm on my way. It's a wonderfully felicitous thing, after working so, and going through several kinds of hell over a period of years with these current paintings, to have this happen finally with first one articulation and then another. It's like having the pieces (and they were pieces, bits and pieces) all falling in place! In a puzzle where nothing seemed to fit anything else!

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/14/62) [Harold Rosenberg]² is correct in pointing up the dedication of Hans Hofmann to art, and also his lack of concern with politics. But there is no point in insisting that he was holding to a pre-World War I viewpoint twenty years later and characterizing it as embodying the arrogance of an art involved exclusively with its own discoveries. Why is single-minded devotion to one's field "arrogance"? ...

His claim in the last paragraph ... that none of the "negations" of contemporary life entered Hofmann's realm of art is something I think Hans would vigorously deny. He would say, rather, that everything in one's own life enters and helps form one's art. He is not unmoved by "discord, purgation, despair, etc." I should say rather that he has been profoundly moved by all such effective moods and "outer" social impacts, but they never

² Referring to Harold Rosenberg's article "Hans Hofmann's 'Life' Class", Portfolio and Arts News Annual, v. 6 (Autumn 1962): 16-31, 110-15.

overwhelmed him in the exercise of his art. They have been incorporated, have come into it, as his paintings certainly show.

... [Rosenberg's] use of the phrase "sequestered by time" seems entirely serious in its use, which to me means that Harold thinks the school was sequestered in time, which is a great error. What he points out later in the same paragraph would show that Hofmann (believing art to be timeless) aimed at releasing in the art student whatever of art values he was capable of developing himself. The response of the young artist to the school, which was very great, hardly indicates that the school was sequestered in time; it was, instead, apparently, very much of its time.

I think it hardly possible to speak of the school's "sytematization of the entire new pictorial approach." It was so little a systematization that everyone had his own interpretation of what Hofmann was teaching, and often students unable to get a systematic and orderly conception of what he was teaching would give up and leave. His continued use of certain phrases like "push and pull", etc., hardly comprised a "system."

[Rosenberg] speaks as though Hofmann never mentioned anyone before Cézanne; this is a gross error.

... "Being given the most possibilities proved the equivalent of being given too many" -- ridiculous! It is the problem of every art student to find "styles" or a style most congenial to him to work with, or in, and the development of every artist's style goes through various stages.

To say, "of the real originators from whom the new American abstract art was to spring, not one attended the Hofmann school", implies a little bit that the school should have produced them, if it was really anything good and if Hofmann was an "originator" himself. This whole passage puts Hofmann down, and for what reason I can't see. It's of no significance in the sense that he implies it is. It is also ridiculous to state that the

school's "lack of impact on the developing talents of those years" (Which years, incidentally? The school operated from 1934 to 1958, I think), "is proof that no ideas, not even the best, can produce a new art if it is free of the adulterations of time, place, and situation." This is a gravely inadequate determinative viewpoint. Such a viewpoint never gives rise to an evaluation of human affairs that carries any significance. It is too rigid, dogmatic, or with apologies to Harold, too "systematized." ...

[Rosenberg's] evaluation of the role of the school in the American scene is inadequate because 1) he has a quite narrow and rather parochial view or knowledge of the scene and 2) he did not ever know enough about the school, and apparently made inadequate efforts to inform himself, so that he never arrived at a well-rounded basic understanding of it.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/13/62) Much talk with Hans last night about Harold and the article, among other things. (Hans was in a wonderfully relaxed and communicative mood. I got in only a few words all evening, until twelve o'clock. The rest of the time it was Hans and me, more Hans than me. [Miz] made a wonderful Wiener Schnitzel, broccoli, pureed potatoes and an apple pie; marvelous, I had two pieces.)

Hans has such a humanly objective attitude toward both [Clement Greenberg] and Harold [Rosenberg] as critics of his work and his school.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/15/64) ... a memory of a conversation I had with Hans much earlier ('52/'53 possibly). I told him how I kept trying to figure out just how I did the things that were successful in painting, but that it was utterly useless, that there was no way to know how

you did this or that, that it defied analysis in logical terms. He of course agreed; though I do not remember his words, they were such that gave the thought more point and heart than I had been able to produce.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (ca. 1950) It is for the artist of today to achieve, through whatever means, what he can. My argument is that there are new means in abstractions -- means which are of our time and which tremendously widen the artist's horizon, opening up a whole new world of possibilities -- not, however, instead of the older means, but in addition to them, which is to say that I do not believe abstract painting to be the only way of painting today. The older, representational way of painting is, of course, just as valid as it ever was. The test of the means is in the product, and as long as even one person finds a way to beauty through representational means, those means are to not only not be overlooked but are to be cultivated. But even those who use the more traditional means can not escape the influence of the newer, abstract means which reinforce and revitalize the old while the new, having grown out of the old, continues, on its part, to exist beside it, not only affecting it but being affected by it.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (ca. November, December 1950) Plasticity. There are two ways that I distinguish in which movement takes place: an easy, sometimes sliding -- a silent -- movement which seems to depend on a transparent relationship between adjacent areas; and what Hofmann calls "staccato" movement, in which it jumps; the movement transfers itself from one area to (usually) a distant or at least removed one, not in a jerk, but yet so that the eye, while impelled to move toward the next point, feels the distance across which it

has been had. This second movement is the result of the power in the relationships.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (ca. November, December 1950) In painting there is a certain, apparently unknowable "logic" which is only sensed -- it seemingly can't be known -- which leads the painter. It goes against his conscious logic at times; at other, right along with it. It has a compulsion about it (when one attends to it, so that it can rise up inside you -- and out of you). Moreover, it appears to come in different levels: there are times when you can almost mark it by degrees, for it organizes itself according to this part of the picture, that part; this part in relation to that part, and to the various other parts (single and in groupings) to the whole.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/11/50) In comparing Michelangelo's painting with Raphael's there is as it were a "wind" which blows in both; but in Michelangelo's it is drier, greater, fuller. It is everywhere at once, and the structure of the forms that it blows through and around, of the robes and cloths that it fills with such pervasive force has come from the same source as the wind itself. They and the wind become one so that the whole structure of the painting has a mighty unity. With Raphael, there is often the force of the wind too, but it is more partial, even fitful at times. It never fills the paintings like a wind blowing into a filling and expanding balloon as in Michelangelo, but it swirls through this part of the picture, and [an] answering gust swirls through that.

You can also express it musically. Raphael's is a more broken chorus within this group and then that carries and develops the song so that you are aware of the flight of the song as it passes from one part of the chorus to the other. With Michelangelo,

though, it is a mighty chorus with a constant shifting -- a mysterious movement -- of the music. ...

This "wind blows through other painters' work, too -- notably Rubens of course, where it is the great swirling power of a whirlwind that seems to have moved across and up and through the surface of the painting with such swift force that you are left to observe only the swirling eddies in its wake surging powerfully. You can only reconstruct the course of the storm which has already blown through it.

After seeing Michelangelo and Rubens, Botticelli seems static and still; but in reality there is also the "wind" in his work. There is an imagined wind, or perhaps you are only told about it, rather than actually feeling it, gentle and rather proper, in the Primavera and the Birth of Venus. He felt its urgent force in him, but the robes and flowers and the softly curling tresses were all too precious for him really to unleash a true wind on them. Instead he lets blow a steady little breeze -- he really manufactures it. But sometimes he lets the wind be itself. Then it blows, nervously, a little uncomfortably, a disturbing wind that brings with it a note of despair.

Then there is the other way of painting. Instead of opening up the canvas -- or the wall -- to the force of the wind, the painter builds the force into a structure, apparently static, steady, perhaps resting four-square on the earth, but the force is in the members of the structure, with their tensions so balanced and moving so surely from one part to the other that we are not at first aware of them. As in architecture, when those tensions can be so balanced that the building, although belonging to the earth, seems hardly to need it, so in painting the forces can be so interlocked and balanced that the painting can exist alone -- unsupported by any reference to the earth -- purely a spatial thing (in which the forms no longer define the space but become the space). The greatest painting necessarily takes on both these qualities.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/11/50) Tintoretto is a case within himself. It's almost as though he had been born without the usual earth-based orientation of balance, but had been able to start his life, like one of his saints or mythological personages, suspended or moving on some powerful diagonal axis in the air. ... His various gods and religious figures, even when apparently earth-oriented, stand, sit or recline at a powerful, whirling diagonal angle which allows them to float... (Nor is "floats" quite the right word, at least, it seems to me to be not quite specific enough in its connotation to express the qualities both of rising and weight which his figures possess, nor the living, hovering quality; they hover with a vitality and living quality -- with even the warmth of a continuing breath from some giant being.) These vital, diagonal axes did not spring fully developed and complete in their expression with Tintoretto, of course. First with Giorgione and then Titian, constant and gently tilting axes gave a just lively enough, a just gentle enough moving support to their softening and melting color. Still earlier, [Giovanni] Bellini had translated out of his early Gothic quality a living, tilting quality of gesture, at first stiff, but so alive with its almost brittle color. His color softened and so did his movement, but it was Giorgione and then Titian who changed the color from that of enamel to that of organic, living substance and shifted the movement more from the stiff, set gesture to the flowing, pervasive movement. ... But there was some more powerful urge in Tintoretto. A gentle tilting with him became only the beginning of a stronger, more forceful movement. It was the pathway to a tremendous and powerfully charged space in which he could set up, through an infinity of poles, currents which flow and leap everywhere.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (No date, early statement) If I am asked to make a statement of principles which I follow in painting or to say what I believe about painting in the way that Barnett Newman talked about his belief at "The Club", I will have to disappoint, for it seems to me that painting is a process which painters have of necessity to follow, and the course of that process is so determined (it almost seems to have a determination of its own) by factors which do not depend -- or depend very little -- on the verbal-mental process which gives rise to our theories that it seems wiser not to talk about what you try to do in your pictures.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (No date, early statement) We know things about our painting which to a certain extent can be put in words which take on meaning. The real meaning, however, is being revealed in the paintings because all of the artist's generative force is being, or should be, properly focussed into paint. He does not know beforehand what the painting is like. No matter what powers of pre-visualization and technical facility he has, he can never take into account all of the exigencies which occur in the process of painting. What is there constantly perhaps is an urge and a feeling -- or rather a complex of urges and feelings. He cannot formulate those urges and feelings properly in words. They are not word urges or word feelings. They have to do with paint on canvas. He can catch-on to and control to a limited extent those urges and feelings and give them word-meaning, and as a matter of fact he can hardly escape doing it to some extent, for the artist is of course a talking as well as a painting animal.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (No date, early statement) In the field of language, there is not yet, at least in wide enough circulation, a clear new idiom for theoretical aesthetic discussion. The result is (since the power of a word formulation is still very great, even for an artist -- and especially for an artist groping in a new painting idiom) that the artist uses words to make his formulation, words which, in a mechanistic sense, seem to mean a certain thing, but used in conjunction with the new painting idiom become very vague, then his formulation of course loses its form and becomes meaningless. The artist, however, is apt to believe this quasi-formulation. It is however meaningless in reference to his painting, and then gets in the way of the painting, distracting him from his originally clearer images of what he wants to do in paint.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (Advice undated, perhaps 1950) Don't be chained to what has been done and to what others (teachers, etc.) tell you you can do. They don't know any more than you do what you can do; and what has been done is certainly not evidently all that can be done. You are something that never was before. It's only by going wherever you can go that you begin to find what-all you can do. You do not consciously search out these unknown and mysterious paths, but as you go along, if and when you are in a state of high awareness, the paths appear to you.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (Advice undated, perhaps 1950) When you've expanded your canvas as far as it will go, it's still not enough. You have to reach out into the space beyond the canvas and gather in more space (and sometimes more and more) in order to go on with the painting

-- to bring to it all that will bring it into complete being -- all that will fill it.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (Advice undated, perhaps 1950) You must get used to your painting's having certain minor faults which you have to sustain in the painting (for they hold the germ of some virtue that you want) while you work on other faults which are either greater or more at the core of your central idea. If you succumb to them (those minor faults) and worry with them, they can block you far too long and slow up your work terribly. I frequently find it impossible to go into a certain part of the canvas in order to advance the whole picture, no matter how badly that particular part needs to be brought into the general accord, until, at a certain point, I am sufficiently irritated by it -- with an immediate background of some unknown, unconscious satisfactions with other parts (and the whole) which makes its development the logical next movement -- so that I can begin working in it with ease and confidence. It's strange how, until this moment is reached, it's almost physically impossible to touch it; repeated tries fail of themselves -- the brush turns this or that way which you don't intend: you cannot go through the physical process of covering the area.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/11/50) A dark can be so deep that its counter-thrust outward can balance the most brilliant color.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/11/50) Your goal can never be wholly within the range of that which you are conscious of seeing and knowing. It is in your intuitive -- preceding -- sometimes leaping

ahead like your shadow. It cannot be just a marker down the road apiece, of which you say, "I'll go that far next." People expect things to be that clear in their possibilities; but that is far from the actual truth. Our intuitions reach out ahead of us into the vague and the unformed of both dim and vivid sensations -- tentative feelings which seem to rise out of such seemingly stable worldly facts. They almost seem themselves to form it to seize on what can only be potentialities and convert them, somehow, into beginnings, for as the consciousness catches up with the intuition, the organic -- the inner logic of the new idea seems already to be formed. It is then the task -- and sometimes, usually in fact -- the difficult, the trying, the inner tortuous task of the consciousness to take hold of the form of the new conception. It first touches it, then loses contact. It must probe and search and seek until that first pin-point contact can become more like that of a tentacle which, moving over a surface, can explore it and seek to determine the external form, and at the same time through some fluid which penetrates, seeks to the heart of the matter.

The shape of a broken eggshell, the smell of a damp place, the sight of a rag in the gutter, the feel of the touch of some surface, the sound of someone saying a single word, a word itself and alone, what you tasted when you licked your lips a certain day at a certain place -- It's not just that these feelings have become single facts in your existence -- there's not a one which exists alone, there's some strange and inexpressible set of relationships. They are tied together in such an intertwining maze of knots and loopings over and under that not even the greatest patience could ever trace their directions. It is out of this dim and vague, this confused and almost chaotic world that our intuitions of new concepts grow. By-passing our conscious thinking, so to speak, they reach out into a still dimmer world.

It is only when the consciousness has caught up with the intuition, when it has given an almost material form to those which were certainly almost wholly immaterial,

when it has brought it into the light, that the new conception is a conception. Our particular goals are the new conception: our goals are not places to be reached, they are ideas to be brought to birth.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/23/50) [Hofmann] spoke of the industrial age coming to him through his father's having bought a bicycle. It was a tall one, and his father had an accident on it, falling off and breaking a leg, but the bicycle aroused his interest in industrial products and inventions. Also he spoke of the construction of bridges, of the floods of the rivers (the warm air from Africa blowing over the Alps and melting snow and ice in great quantities) when the bridges would all be swept away. Such disasters (I think he said he was twelve) would have an impressive effect on him, the excitement, the frenzied sandbagging of the bridge supports (they never built the approaches long enough to prevent the flood's sweeping around them) and the rebuilding again with great heavy stones.

He also spoke, when I mentioned travelling in Italy, of the way young men would go over the country "with only their feet" -- no money and nothing except what they could carry on their backs. Then he spoke of (I think it was) his mother's people, who were wealthy vine growers and merchants, and whose houses had at the entrance the large room where was always set out a big loaf of butter and bread and whoever came was to cut off (with a fast gesture of the left hand holding the loaf and the right cutting toward him) a piece of bread, put on a liberal spread of butter, and to help himself to the "second" wine in the 'big' jar which was also always there. So young people going through the country could always find themselves food in that way and also use the small room provided with the bed always made up. "So clean, more clean than what's clean

today." Those young people would be travelling through the country learning their trades -- apparently working here to learn this, there to learn that.

He mentioned the lighting of the day. There had been in use pieces of wood -- sort of candles, and to use kerosene was a "beeg" thing. I had been impressed by the fragile mantels which made such a big difference in the quality of the light.

When I mentioned reading Norton's Church Buildings in The Middle Ages, he was interested and sketched through the book, coming across a passage which interested him in which the granting of indulgences for church building contributions was mentioned. He chuckled over this and commented that, as today with regard to advertizing, people then had such faith in the church that they would give to it hard-earned money, for which they got nothing, "absolutely nothing", in return. When I remarked that it was the lack of security, now as then, that [led] people to such blind faith, he said, yes, that we were even more insecure today, that there was no such thing as "security"; that when he was young, they tried to sell him insurance which would bring him 5000 marks when he was 42 or 45. When he came to that age, though, he said, that many marks was not even worth one American cent. He said the only "security" one could have lay within oneself. Life goes on in spite of the greatest disasters, and to participate in that life, to keep healthy and active in mind so that you can adjust to changing situations, is the only way to be secure.

We talked about sight (vision) and he took great delight in having Miz and me hold our fingers straight in front of our noses and then looking first with one eye closed, then the other, to see how different the sight was in each eye independent of the other. The brain, he said, had "all the time" to coordinate these and when the focus is wrong, it puts such a strain on the brain's coordinating powers. He said it's like a two motored plane. With one engine out, it's different and difficult to fly straight. Also, that to have

improper hearing, such as he has, also is a terrible strain on the brain, that you hear only fragments of conversation. Your mind has to assemble and review those fragments and build a whole meaning out of them. That way, he said laughing, you often make "terrible" mistakes! He said his hearing aids only really helped him when the sounds are already selected as at the theater or for music, that otherwise there's too much of a roar, or confusion.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/24/50) [Hofmann] spoke of his patron, who had supplied his income for ten years in Paris, who was an elderly Jewish man (he had started his fortune in herring) and who took all of Hofmann's output -- sending it, apparently, to a gallery in Berlin.

[Hofmann] and Miz were in Corsica in the summer of 1914 and from there they went back to Munich because of the illness of his sister, who died then the next year. He was then without funds, his sister was ill, and his mother had a small pension, so it was then that he started his school, a thing he had never before considered doing. It was almost at once a success, and he attributes this success to his own sincerity and high aim. He spoke of the difficulty of teaching at first, how he struggled to find the way, but he feels that it was this long and sincere struggle which made it possible to have the success as a teacher that he has since had. His patron, who either had to have, or preferred, very simple fare when eating, did not like to appear to be stingy, so when he would go out to dine, he liked to have someone else along who would have at the same time a sumptuous meal, and Mr. Hofmann was that person.

The war broke out after he had returned to Munich, and he lost everything that he had in his studio in Paris. He said his output was small then, for he worked very slowly. Miz said he destroyed much. He said he "wanted too much". When I said I worked so

slowly probably because I wanted too much, he said, "There are internal laws which you have to follow; you absolutely have to follow them, whatever they dictate to you," amplifying that if you can only work slowly it is from an internal necessity which is right.

He had tuberculosis, he said, without knowing it until he was cured (after he got back to Munich) and feels sure that he was cured by the great quantity of pollen in the air in Corsica and the diet there heavy with oranges -- so many that some days he would have almost nothing else. He spoke of the fragrance there, so many flowers, and when the Maquis was all in bloom, as well as fruit trees, flowers, etc., the scent carried, so the people of Marseille say, to their city. He described the action of the pollen on his lungs like an application of sulfa powder to a wound.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (2/18/56) Meaning does not lie so much in definition or identification but in what they can imply. It is a communion, not a communication. We communicate with each other for more practical needs than those for which we have communion.

Communication is today typified by the telephone and radio and television. Communion is better carried on by the artist. His vision is a forming.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (2/18/56) I'm afraid that most contemporary painting -- and words about it -- seeks to impress rather than express.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (3/23/56) The different aspects of the face, the bottle, etc., given in simultaneity in Cubism are not basically necessary in painting but reflect Cubism's dependent tie to

material objectivity. It is a kind of literalness, but one which, of course, is aesthetically overcome in their work. In a painting, there is no reason why the different aspects can not be represented in a single contour. Its different aspects, like the way one senses as one senses an object (and an abstract-"geometrical" figure in a painting, when painted, becomes an object) from many different points of view, are fused (simultaneously as a kind of challenge to the spirit, because where else is presented to us so directly and specifically and all at once, in terms that we understand as a congeries of moments in time?), so to speak, in one aspect. You can say that this is a totality of aspects, but it is only a metaphorical way of speaking, because, in the object in the painting, there is only singularity, and the multiplicity of aspects is implied. It is also a metaphor.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (3/23/56) This fusion of multiple aspects is, of course, necessary also in the presentation of various individual aspects in simultaneity, for the final oneness and wholeness that a painting must possess to be a work of art is itself a simultaneousness.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (3/29/56) Compositionally, the subject of a painting introduces into it certain psychological qualities which can enhance -- or destroy -- the totality.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/2/56) If it is properly a painting -- a work of art -- it first engages your attention as a whole, but that whole has an insistency in demanding (which not only engages but continues to demand) your attention which leads then to a further exploration.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/2/56) I think the first thing one is aware of in a painting is the feeling-quality that runs throughout it. This is its expressive quality; it is emotion, caught and made fact on the canvas. It is present in every little fragment of the whole. It is an emotional consistency, so to speak, which may seem an anomaly, because it is the nature and particular character of emotion to have a shifting and unstable quality, but nonetheless there is a consistency of feeling expressed in a painting. ... it is a play of various -- and varying emotions, but they are playing in a way that is balanced so that they "add up to" something which has an explicit quality in that it is there and you can recognize it.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/7/56) Every painting must show you that you don't know how to paint.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/10/56) Bonnard's way of tacking the canvas on the wall when he worked -- however much the wallpaper might clash with what he was doing -- points up the way a painting must almost literally achieve its own objectivity so that it takes its place in the world of objects alongside any object which circumstances may ever place beside it. It must so firmly be itself that any surrounding cannot impinge on its essential character so as to nullify any part or aspect of it. ... similarities between a painting and nature, whether intentionally or unintentionally mimetic, have to be overcome, that is, the spiritual identity (its individual substance) of the painting as an aesthetic object must be made so clear that there can never be any doubt about it. A painting must withstand any trial of "theory" -- for it is a fact. It is as a fact of visual experience that it must survive.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/11/56) Each impulse has but a moment of life and must be reborn in the long-range vision, or in a new vision consistent with all that is already expressed on the canvas, and consistent also with that which you reach for but do not yet grasp.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/12/56) There are two basic facts of our existence -- we conceive and we act. We do these whether we will or no. When we do not control them through an active understanding and conscious intention, they do themselves in a manner that is hardly to our advantage.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/12/56) Everyone recognizes and speaks of the great gulf that exists today between the artist and public. Perhaps most often the fault is laid to the artist, and where it is not so spoken, certainly there lurks somewhere in even most artists' consciousness a sort of guilt feeling that they are not "communicating" with the "public". That there is comparatively little communication is certainly true. ... But that today's difficulty is solely today's artists' fault is a ridiculous thing to assume. His achievements are too evident to be derogated just because most cannot see what those achievements are. Why should the fault be laid to the artist? Because of the false idea that has seized the American consciousness that humanity en masse is more truly human than the humanity of any single individual.

It would seem in simple logic that the hope of the future lies at least no more in the artist's "going to" the public than it lies in the public's "coming to" the artist. This is

not to cast the artist in the role of prophet, but to say that -- as a human -- he has accomplished a human art. He did it not mysteriously, to reach into heights that only he could reach, but because he was humanly led, or impelled to those heights. But the very human vision to which he gives expression is accessible as such to every human (and not, incidentally, in his "publicness" but in his private individualness -- in the core of himself.)

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/12/56) A work of art is an aesthetic object -- that is to say, it is a presentation, an objective, factive material form of what may be no more than an ideal of wholeness and completeness of the way things are through their interrelationships, which are many, yet of a oneness and reveal the unified pattern of the universe. It exemplifies, or perhaps embodies the most deeply lying elements of experience -- experience in the broadest sense, not just the fact of nature, but what it is, because we know nature only through the fact that it is a part of our human experience, which is to say, we know it in the act of our being able to know and to feel.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/14/56) The "third dimension" in painting is not, as most believe, an illusion. It is not a dimension in the metrical sense; it is more like our conception of Space-Time as a fourth dimension -- it is that extra thing added to the tangible (what can palpably be shown) -- in a painting, the two dimensions of the canvas, which helps to account for the three dimensional operational quality.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/18/56) A painting is plastic when it is so presented that the sense of the dynamism of that with which experience deals is revealed. Plasticity results when various moments of realization are simultaneously presented. It brings the beholder to an encompassing recognition of the different aspects of a truth or an aesthetic fact at once. This means that the artist has organized all that he deals with into an aesthetic whole through coming to an understanding of the way one moment (conceptual group) is related to another, one local thing is related to another.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/18/56) A painting's plastic realization is not its content. Its content is more nearly that toward which plasticity is aimed. We cannot grasp any fact, aesthetic or otherwise (and a painting is a fact) unless there is a "whatness", a "howness" about it. The "whatness" is the content, the plasticity, its "howness." ... An aesthetic fact is aesthetic only when there is no break in the continuity of our attention towards a completeness and unity of end. There is a harmony, so to speak, between the what and the how of what is presented, but there is no reason to claim pre-eminence for either the what or the how.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/19/56) You must be willing to produce -- to create, what you cannot recognize.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/20/56) The form throws some light on the meaning -- but the meaning is, in the end, ambiguous, a mystery. It is something we know, and yet don't know; something we

feel and yet it just escapes us.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (4/24/56) There is nothing which is, of necessity, wrong with measuring in painting, but:

a) there is a powerful danger of the rigidity of outlook with which we view what we have measured,

b) there is a very great danger from the rigidity which numbered measure breeds. Of course this is the same effect which any other way of defining breeds; we cannot do without it, we cannot depend on it. Our processes must have something of the same duality as our painting -- a hovering quality -- a suspension of the energy between definition and non-definition.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/2/56) When a system or a convention of color is set up, no matter how inclusive and elastic it seems, there is, then, the limitation of its being fundamentally a system, and in addition, of its being someone else's. By the time that system has been brought to the point of mechanical reproduction, with painted color plates, etc., it is still further limited by mechanical processes, and whatever spirit or inspiration it might have had in its originator is made still more dim and tenuous. It's like experiencing art only through printed color plates and reproductions; they are, spiritually, at such second hand or third or fourth, that, like a tale retold by a succession of people, the originator would never recognize what comes out at the other end.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/8/56) You can't tell how you are going to achieve what you want, so you can only call up all the forces and ways of achieving what is possible, and even apparently impossible, in your capacity -- and see if you can achieve it.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/9/56) In the midst of working, one must be content with the fact that what we think we have done is not what we have actually done.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/22/56) It seems to me that, from the standpoint of the practicing, creative painter and of a painter who is certainly not insensitive to the other, broader issues within which painting finds its framework, Hofmann has raised the fundamental question for the painter ... "How is painting what it is so that it is a distinguishable entity within the general framework of the aesthetic mode?" ... He simply says, "Painting is at least this; it is this whatever else it also is." I have never heard him say or even imply what the content of painting is or ought to be, nor have I ever heard (or 'read') him say that a painting is form without content. On the other hand, the only thing I have been able to conclude from all my experience with him is that there are certain things about how to go about painting that he feels he has discovered to have a validity, these he can in at least a way pass on and this is his teaching.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/26/56) Painting sometimes is like driving a car with a very stiff and hard-to-turn steering wheel that acts in the most refractory and perverse manner. You turn to the

right, and just as you think it is properly responding, you find yourself really headed for the left side of the road.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (9/21/56) The trouble with perspective is its exaggeration and one-pointness of focus. This works all right for anyone who can include (encompass) all of the infinite multiple-facetedness of existence in a singular viewpoint. This spiritual expression of nature is framed by the infinite complexity of things; each aspect of that complexity is apprehended as a single viewpoint, but those viewpoints are legion. The singleness -- the simplicity is more nearly a longing of the spirit than it is the singleness of all things.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/26/56) A painting has for me several "planes of existence." These seem to range between the absolute, concrete and real (literal) flatness of the canvas and the roundness of literal three-dimensional space. They are not, of course, "planes" -- they are states of being suggested by one's apprehensions of space according to the abstract concepts which range from that of absolute flatness to absolute roundness, neither one of which, in our reference, is absolute, but is used by our consciousness as a gauge or measure. At one end of this scale you require, so to speak, a microscope, at the other, a telescope.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/6/56) ... analytical cubism remained rooted in the Renaissance perspectival theory. With "synthetic" cubism, however, and with Mondrian, we get a wholly new conception of the way space exists for us. Here it was accentuated that two planes in a

painting could, in any (perspectively) measurable way exist on the canvas side by side (as though in a single plane) and yet imply, at the same time, another conception of space, where more than one space existed in the canvas, and all the spaces so existing were coexistent, whatever standpoint one looked at them from; if looked at volumetrically (perspectively) or from light as color, or light as dark and light, or however, they were all there together and at once without interfering with each other, but sustaining each other.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/15/56) Hofmann's way of contradicting your language -- Me, regarding an unfinished black and white painting: "It's not black and white enough!" -- meaning that the black and white did not function, each in its own way, but of course with the other, to produce the higher plastic effect. Hofmann's reply: "To me it's too much black and white!" -- meaning that they were each still only black and white and they had not merged together in their common plastic purpose.

Since he has created the language we all use, it is impossible to get the best of him in such an argument, as he simply reveals it before your very eyes (or ears!) and is way off ahead of you while you stew around, trying to equate what he has just said with what you're used to his saying. He enjoys this play enormously. It's also his way of getting back at (or surviving!) his students' parroting him and thereby thinking themselves to be inhabiting the same realm he does in these respects when he knows damn well they don't, and have no substantial basis in their understanding for using his language.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (1/4/57) A teacher from Europe who would have brought over the rather rigid and parochial standards of the French painting tradition could never have won the response

from American students that Hofmann has; he would never have sensed the essential (perhaps rugged?) quality and full potentialities of what his students were doing because their work would have seemed only gauche and inept to him. But Hofmann, with the insistently individualistic expression that is such a vital part of expressionism, was temperamentally prepared for what he found here, could recognize, encourage and cultivate it. His own ability to go so absolutely in his own way is so powerfully expressed in his own painting and teaching that it was learned, caught and reflected in what his students did. This courageous insistence on being only yourself, and wholly of yourself alone and in whatever way you know is really yours is the thing which sets contemporary American painting apart from European.

Thus one must wonder in just what way the effect he was having did operate. Up to the time that the post-war "blossoming" of "abstract expressionism", he had certainly been increasingly affecting the whole scene. There was no painter, before the time when Hofmann was already widely known and effective, who practiced the "rugged" (it might be called) way of so expressionistically using paint. Gorky, who had been having a large influence, had stayed almost slavishly in the French tradition and only for a brief period before he died bent it around to incorporate something of what Kandinsky had to offer. De Kooning, with his Germanic temperament, seems also to have stayed close to the French "ordered" tradition, and still longer than Gorky, but finally (and long after Hofmann had so impressed the expressionistic mode on everyone's consciousness) broke out in what was a very expressionistic style indeed. Pollock had doubtlessly long been aware of and subject to the influence of Hofmann through his wife and many friends. He had never developed the courage and instinct to be so radically himself until all that influence had had time to operate over a period of several years at least. There is no doubt that he had a very individual quality all along, but it had been reflective of others --

Tamayo, for instance.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (No date, ca. spring 1957) Painting is not a language, as is so often stated wrongly -- even when it is said most broadly. It is a process which performs functions which language can never perform. Language is too priorly formed to do what painting can do, for it is only painting that can bring into expression those deepest-lying, ever-changing and shifting aspects of our living process which are more nearly images than anything else. Words can only hint -- and only indirectly so -- at this part of us.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (No date, ca. spring 1957) All the confusion that exists today about painting as communication seems to me to be the result of an almost universal tendency to conceive communication as the transfer of a thing (like a communicable germ, perhaps) from one person to another. But if, in our scientifically oriented world, we can best find a metaphor in the scientific mode, perhaps the way a work of art operates can best be described as a kind of broadcasting station from which human impulses emanate into the atmosphere which other humans inhabit: where and when these impulses reach, and are registered in the nature of other humans, appears to depend on the two ends of the process -- the power and quality or character of the projected impulses and the adaptive -- as well as selective -- sensitiveness of the recipient.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (No date, ca. spring 1957) A work of art becomes -- and is great, not according to the statistical evidence of a large number of people who are immediately receptive to it;

nor does it depend on its appreciation (being picked up) only by some limited coterie of especially sensitive and preciously adjusted receivers who can tell the rest where to "tune in". It depends on the scope and power of the true human expressiveness in the impulses that have gone into its making. One can only say that there is a point where these impulses are expressively sufficient -- are evocative of an analogous response on the part of people, and if it is thus a true work of art, it creates, so to speak, its own field of receptivity and, with time, more and more people will pick it up.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (No date, ca. spring 1957) ... art is the result of our search for self-realization which is reflected in expression, and the effort to express is not primarily with the aim so much of communication, that it is of projecting something from inside me to the outside and then to the inside of someone else, as it is to express what I am, feel and have inside myself. The artist's aim is not communication but expression. The communication is almost incidental, so to speak. This does not mean that what is achieved in communication is of an unimportance equal to the rarity of its occurrence. It is actually of the highest importance, because we only have happiness when it is occurring.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (No date, ca. spring 1957) ... nature has not arranged itself in such an ordered way that all we have to do is choose a path that will take us to the thing we want. We not only don't know beforehand what we want -- we haven't any but the slightest inkling of what a path looks like. The path and the destination are equally obscure, and it is only because our urge focuses itself on first the one and then the other (or perhaps, concurrently) that we make any headway at all.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (11/12/59) One doesn't show people a certain thing or quality in a painting, one creates a situation where they are led to see its possibility.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (9/18/64) Generally speaking, a very difficult thing is keeping concentrated on painting the totality. The edge -- the "definition" is so demanding that one slips into the error of concentrating on it. But (as Hofmann always said!) every square millimeter has to be just as "painted" as the edge (What I remember him saying was that every square millimeter of the canvas must be "alive" and if its property is alive, it's all as alive as the edge.) And it must be painted with the whole final attention paid to the totality.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (5/9/65) A trouble: I want to get everything done at once. Once I've "connected" doing a certain part or aspect of a painting or drawing, I want to -- rather compulsively, I think, because I'm always having to fight it -- I want to get everything I can think of doing about that part done then, while I'm at it, I will press that part on and on -- beyond (too far beyond) the rest of the painting so that I'll lose perspective on the whole until I've backed up and brought enough of the painting up to that point. It's not that this is not the way to get it all done -- you "leap frog" in your progress, of course, but it's the pressing on with almost finish details when they will so largely be lost in the necessary revision that follows.

It is impatience -- Hofmann once said: "I see I'll have to learn patience from you," but he couldn't know that the patience, the evidence of patience in my work, didn't

indicate all the wasted patience that was then too -- patience that hadn't been to the point of the painting or drawing.

It's also evidence of "wanting too much." You have to want more than you're getting, of course, but it has to be brought to some kind of control proper to achieving.

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Stout, Myron. Journals 1950-1966.

MS- (12/25/66) ... it's perhaps strange that I didn't fall into abstract expressionism. There was the powerful influence of Hofmann himself; there was de Kooning and Gorky and the San Francisco show that impressed me so, later Pollock, etc. But I could no more truly work in such a manner then than I could in 1929-36, and it was Mondrian who "got" me. Except, of course, that [his term] "equivalence" was too equivalent for me. It didn't allow for dislocations and aberrancies which had for me to be a part of it. I could achieve an equivalence and was very happy with it -- and about it, but there really had to be something else said. I had too little -- or perhaps none -- of the philosophical calm that would be required to fit that mold. So I was always trying to fit as much "over-balancing" as I could into an equivalent balance.