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THE CULTURE OF REPRESENTATION

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## C O N T R A D I C T I O N S

When I set out to write this thesis I had originally intended on a thesis which was highly critical of the practice of contemporary conceptualism and more importantly the apparent about face turn of many of the older more established conceptual artists, to painting as a means of expression.

"Contemporary art is no longer seen as an elitist pursuit, remote from the interests and concerns of the public at large..... Works of art are not only objects for visual delectation and assessment, but are repositories for ideas that reverberate in the larger context of our culture." (All V11 For word)

"The contradiction of concerned art is that it remained in many ways, modernist, though critical of modernism formalism and its idealist agenda, the concerns of conceptualism were about how art acquires its meaning". (3BP.P53)

Having taken both of these quotes I had intended to expand on the ideas contained within therein thus it followed that if Conceptual art has been the most contemporary form of artistic expression for the last twenty five years. The contradiction of conceptualism reflected not only a contradiction in the larger context of our culture but that they had failed to redefine the role for art. It therefore followed that what had been happening over the last twenty five years, the debates of representation about image making, and image, about the entanglement between the avant guard , etc., seemed to have been wiped out by a return

to painting. This for me represented a regression into the establishment, adopting the very institution and form which they challenged in the first place. The more I read I realised that the Western artistic impulses have not expressed themselves in a truly intact style since the renaissance. Modern art which can be traced back to the age of enlightenment has not been untroubled, entirely undivided against itself, but rather what we have inherited is a tradition of critical representation, a tradition, artists of the last twenty five years have been concerned to represent and to recover. It is the critical aspect of the tradition of modern art or rather, to recover that tradition as a tradition of critical representation. This enterprise involves the destabilisation of those generics which have become fixed within both artistic and art historical discourses. This in turn implies the admission or introjection of the signs of dependence and irregularity into self constituting and immaculate forms of modern culture. It is the question or production of modern culture, in what forms or device a critical account of modernity may be realised or embodied or enacted? This reflected the very essence of modernism which, they hope to revitalise. Modern, post modern culture is in fact not in decline, but rather what we are witnessing is the rebirth of the very ideals which constitute modernism.

It is the specific image of art , "high modernism", tied to the vision of progress of high culture and mass culture which is being exercised. By its very nature, what we are witnessing, is

the progression of advancement of an idea or spirit of modernism. As soon as any artist begins to rewrite or define their work, things are again in flux and as long as they are in flux we are no longer dealing with work in the sense intended, but with the building blocks of a work in progress. This is the point where probably because of awareness of unresolved problems and unresolved difficulties they decide on an entirely new approach or definition. They are the points at which the river seeks out a new river bed. The momentum of social change in the modern world has altered not only the nature of art, the psychological drives and motivations of those who shape it, but also our own, to the point where we find ourselves without rules or compass in evaluating all these changes. To form a better understanding of modern practice of art, we must look through that form of representation of the culture of art which is identified with modernism. By understanding the present we can have a clear view of ourselves in the larger context of a historical and philosophical artistic practice.

Art as involvement and especially that which hopes to lead to a re-valuation of society itself, its nature and essence, has always had political and ethical as well as aesthetic connotations, manifesting at different degrees of engagement. This involvement has appeared as critiques of aesthetics, representation and an artful criticism of life, a confrontative critical art as a reaction to a critique of academic aesthetics as well as a criticism of itself through a series of alternative proposals. What I hope to outline in the following pages is the heritage

and political thought, from a tradition of representation that constitutes and represents the contemporary thought. Our heritage influences contemporary practices.

"This book is written for those who can appreciate its spirits. This is a spirit different from that of the main current of European and American civilisation of which we are all part. The latter spirit represses itself through progress, through the construction of forms that are ever larger and ever more complicated. The other (first mentioned spirit) is a striving for clarity and perspicuity in whatever structure. The second spirit attempts to understand the world from periphery in its multi-faced appearance, the first, in its centre or essence. So the second spirit strings together one formation with another, ascending, as it were from step to step even higher, while the other remains where it is, always attempting to comprehend the same thing." Ludwig Wittgenstein. Ref. A15 Introduction.

#### PROGRESS AND AUTONOMY IN ART A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Historically the concept of the avant guard was not limited to art, but also referred to political radicalism as well. This gathered ground in the decades following the French Revolution and colonial expansion. In 1902 Napoleon's "cultural loot" was displayed in the Grande Gallerie of the Louvre. With colonial

expansion mushrooming, France, England and Germany were to follow. Marvels of science and technology were displayed alongside art exhibits. This was to be viewed as a sign system whose ideological implications were interpreted as evidence of the new globalism and its virtues of free trade, division of labour, increased communication and competitive impulses. This could also be seen as a cultural upset with a search for its origins, assimilating the aesthetics of difference as a return to the childhood of civilisation and found in it the rest of the world the early stages of its own development. There were others who saw a role in this society quite differently. The role for ambitious artists was quite different. In 1825 Henry, de Saint Simons "Opinions, litteraries, philosophiques et industrielles" ascribed the vanguard role of the artist in the construction of the ideal state and new golden age of the future, also binding the avant guard inextricably to the idea of progress, in industrial and technological civilisation. In Saint Simons messianic scheme, art, science and industry were to generate and guarantee the progress of the emerging technical, industrial bourgeois world. The world of the city and the masses, capital and culture. Speaking broadly of life of the masses; narrowly of older modes of artistic expression. Saint Simons avantgarde artists would lead the masses into a golden age of bourgeois prosperity.

In the 19th century, the rebellious artists, were primarily concerned with art for arts sake, rather than arts for life sake. but a minority, Goya, Gericault, Daymier, Courbet, also



referred to contemporary political and social issues and even suffered when they translated these views into action. Gericaults "Raft of the Medusa" 1818-1819 caused a political scandal. Daumier was imprisoned for his caricatures of the bourgeois King. Courbet was held responsible for the destruction of the Vendome Column, ending in his flight to exile. By their direct confrontation with the authorities they expanded the arena of action from art to life. During the 19th century there was an increasingly categorical separation of art from reality. The autonomy of art, which had once freed art from the Church and State now started to push artists to the margins of society. By the late 19th century the avant guard insistence on cultural revolt clashed with the bourgeois need for cultural legitimisation who by now had fully established its domination of the State and industry, science and culture. The avant guard was far from where Saint Simons had envisioned.

The avant guard saw that it must close the gap to reintegrate art into a life praxis. As opposed to "Institution Art, a term for the institutional framework in which art was produced, distributed and received in bourgeois society. This frame work which came to rest on Kants, aesthetic of the necessary autonomy of art. When Kants "humanists" applies his aesthetic judgment to the work of art, the art object itself becomes the stimulus of aesthetic response and it is representative of the sensibility of the artist. The very expression of the artist reflects the human essence to which it plays host. This insistence on the autonomy of the art work, was used on an obsessive hostility to mass

culture. This separated art from every day life , distancing it from political, economic and social concerns, the idea that the art work should be a thing "object" in itself, non referential, ultimately keeping it from partaking in the vitality of modern life. This form of expression forced art to become pure style, stylised, self sufficient, remaining a secret system of a higher signifiers. But what consciousness was the key to it? It signified no inner or outer reality, merely suggesting significance. Its consciousness was that of making art, the superior but unspecified significance of art as such .

In the hands of the Bourgeois, art was presented as a threat, the threat of becoming a tool of the working class. This notion that culture is a potentially explosive force and a threat to advanced society has a history as long as capitalism itself. It was Lenin who institutionalised the notion of avant guard to his party. Neither Marks or Engles ever attributed major importance to culture in the working class struggle. It was Lenin who declared the avant guard to be the "Cog" and "Screw" of one great social democratic mechanism set. It was to be an instrument in the political vanguard of the people. Later in the century this would be the undoing of the avant guard movement in Russia, with the adoption of social realism, as the doctrine of the peoples revolution.

## THE AVANT GARDE AND MODERNISM

"Artists, let us at last overturn the walls erected between the arts by our reformed trading so that we may all become builders once more".

Groupius, Taut and Bhenne, 1918 ref. 7B P15

"The old is geared towards the individual, the new towards the universal" de Stijl' 1918 7B P.51

These statements are reflective of the very idea is that constituted the avant garde practice, the avant guard who sought to break the tradition which vested on Kants aesthetic and more importantly the necessary autonomy of all artistic creativity. They wanted to transform artistic practice, from its isolation into reality. From the start the avant guard was largely content orientated, concerned with bringing arts consciousness as a social institution to the centre and thus breaking its autonomy. They wanted to build a relationship between a high art and mass culture and this is what distinguished them from modernism. The modernist sought to affirm the relative autonomy of the cultural space against the values of the market place, the avant guard sought to undermine the aesthetic autonomy and to bring culture back into a social economic practice, in order to translate such values into social custom thus revaluating modernism.

"It was the desire to intervene directly in society that lead them to utilise systems of distribution and communication.

In all phases of human activity the tendency of the masses has been invariably towards ultra conservatism. Progress has been accomplished only by reason of the fanatical enthusiasm of the revolutionist whose extreme teaching has saved the masses from utter ihurtin..... what is today accepted as conservative was yesterday denounced as revolutionary. It follows that it is to the extremist that mankind largely its progression. Alfred Streglitz American Dadists." Ref. A1.

The more reactionary of these groups is Dada. Dada made a radical break with the autonomous and organic work of art and its aesthetic notions (p35) Marcel Duchamps, ready <sup><</sup>mades, reflect this notion of non aesthetic, anti art. Illustrated best is this notion of ready mades. He transformed mass produced objects into works of art, by merely choosing them as works of art. The readymades essentially negated the idea of art as the product of a special sensibility, with the invasion of the very fabric of the art object by technology. The technology of mass produced goods. This technology "imagination" can also be seen in the production of collages, assemblagre, montage, and photomontage. The avant guard wanted to liberate technology from its instrumental aspects by undermining the bourgeois notions of technology as progress and art as natural and autonomous.

With the rise of fascism in Germany and the obvious implications of social realisms in the Soviet Union, the avant guard became isolated. With the outbreak of World War 11 and the rural devastation of Europe America became the centre of culture activity. "Dada has worn a double faced mask; It has been buffoonery and a requiem Mass." Ref. A1 P. 21. "New York Dada has been considered buffoonery and the American Rebellion of the 60's its Requiem Mass. In the words of Alfred Sterics "I am told that once upon a time there was man named Dioganes looking for a honest man.... I too am on a search, maybe more difficult. I happen to be looking for an inteligent Amreican"<sup>(p36)</sup> Alfred Stieglitz 1964. four years before his death ref. A1 P.12.

#### Modernist Culture in Post War Europe

The events that led to New York's cultural supremacy and the destruction of cultural life in Europe as a result of Nazi devastation are no coincidence. The emergence of very strong artists like Newman and Pollack<sup>(p37)</sup> and Mar Rothko, and the continuing attempts of the New York market to do what any market in a capitalist economy tries to do - replace imports with its own goods and produce exports and the fact that by 1945 American business hardly had to try to dominate trade since all potential competitors had either been defeated or worn down by the war effort were all part of this coincidence. American business and Government did go all out to create captive markets, partly, it must be said, out of humanitarian impulses to rebuild Europe, but in such a way that European business would become dependent

on trans atlantic connection. In the cultural field the best example is to be found in the movie business. Here large amounts of economic aid were tied to agreements. The Governments of Europe would limit the number of nationally made movies that could be shown but would impose no such limits on Hollywood. This dealt a near mortal blow to the movie industries of Britain, France and Germany. More Importantly, it ensured that a new generation of Europeans would grow up surrounded by images of American Culture and would feel estranged from the images of their own. The implications of this propaganda victory extended to the promotion of art. The State Department and later the United States Information Service made contemporary art a direct part of anti-communist propaganda in those years, the radical work of the American artists was more than tokens in a cynical game of cultural domination. The came to symbolise the value of Americas products.

What followed World War 2 enabled by the traumas of totalitarianism and by the systematic falsehoods of righteous nationalism was the political culture of cold war. A drama of mis-representation of values in which the idea of high modernism flourished. It was in the interests of both Societies, American and Soviet Union that totalitarianism and individual freedom should be represented as the mutually exclusive basis of a single political choice (totalitarianism was not a description which either applied to itself). In the Western culture of cold war, modernism in art was firmly associated with the affirmation of liberal humanism and with the wilful and triumphant expression of



individual free spirits. The culture of individuals. Modern art became directly related to the idea of individual freedom. The history of modern art becomes the history of modern freedom. This idea would seem to be conditional upon the language itself.

The idea that art ought to be innocent of didactic and literary content to be truly expressive, confuses the way in which art may be maintained against other kinds of signifying stuff. The Association of modernist art with a political virtue was one which existed prior to World War 2, one which the dominant bourgeois culture had used, but one which was mobilised again. Clement Greenburg like many other of his generation "recast" as it were the history of modernist culture. The thought behind their work was an attempt to save an dignity of the art work from the totalitarian pressures of fascist mass spectacles and socialist realism. At the time the project was culturally and politically valid but with cold war politics this historical autonomy came to represent a totalitarian culture itself.

"Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appeals to man borne out by the history of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both. That of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made to wrest the tradition away from the conformist that is about to overpower it." Walter Benjamin. 1940 Ref. HN P1.



## CONCEPTULISM AND CONTENT

It was not modernism per se but a particular form of idea of modernism and the political and artistic implications that had become by now hard to contend with. The modernism utopian ideals to rebuild Europe had collapsed with a utopian fervour into myth. Under the effects of this mythical inversion utterance becomes for the right reason. Culture becomes nature and by implication also the ideological and historical become nature. A myth whose collective representations could be read in the anonymous utterance of mass culture from the consumer groups. "Myth is a type of speech. It is a mode of signification. a form" R.Barthes Ref. 9A P.165.

This form denied modernism of its social vision, it became a cultural of power and representation. What was at stake in the powerful formula of the culture of art which would identify with modernism was the relationship between art how it was interpreted and the artistic practice defined in the ways in which art is conceived and which reflects the definitions and terms in which their culture is best represented.

It was against this background in which conceptualism was to emerge. "I would say..... that most conceptual art had fairly deep roots in a tradition. whose main characters opposed the protocol modernist tradition associated with Barr, Greenberg, Fried et al". Michael Baldwin , Art and Language Ref. 25B P.20. What conceptual art constituted was the emergence of a unified

front of separate practices, which merged to form a competitive example to the rigid formalism of the official art of the 50's and 60's. In this rigid formalist, especially Greenberg's a Neo Kantian account, the high art object was either a painting or a sculpture. Painting being something contained within its parameter, both the physical surface framed and the signifying characteristics (content). Sculpture was contained within the space of the spectators static gaze (De-adequately informed sensitive spectator). Both its meaning being constituted by the spectators reactive emotions, determined by the gaze "Esthetics judgments are given and continued in the immediate experience of art. They coincide with it, they are not arrived at afterwards through reflection or thought. Aesthetic judgments are also involuntary, you can no more choose whether or not to like a work of art than you can choose to have sugar taste sweet or lemon sour". Clement Greenberg. A2 P.37. This has direct implications for determining what constitutes a work of art beyond critical practice. This has many implications in determining what constitutes a work of art and critiques practice. "Criticism that shares the basic primus of modernist painting ..... finds itself compelled to create a role in its development closely akin to or potentially of some less importance than that of new paintings themselves."

Clemens Greenberg Ref. 10A P.36.

The work of art becomes purely on an aesthetic object and the artists and craftsman, the artistic practice becomes merely the subject of critical discourse and by implication totally dependent upon it. The ideological meaning of the art work is

located in its old ability purely as a visual phenomenon. The modernist myth of the painterly signified with the presence of the creative individual supposedly represented in the hand crafted gesture of the self referential autonomous art object.

For the artists that determined the "conceptual" art practice, Greenberg's, four sided autonomous totality was empty of anything except the painting. It could be not simply a matter to re-invent, replace with a new form of "high" art, but as Wittgenstein puts it "The philosopher treats a question like an illness. One of the main causes of philosophical sickness - a one sided diet; feeding ones thinking with only one kind of example". Ludwig Wittgenstein Ref. A14 P.22. To quote Joseph Kosuth one of Wittgenstein's most eager pupils "Definition of conceptual art would be that it is an inquiry into the foundations of the concept of art as it has come to mean. Art is the definition of Art" Joseph Kosuth 27B P.63.

The only way to amend art would be to amend the laws that define art itself which were laid down by the definition of art closure, which is also reflective of the society it exists within. Art reflects the frame of life, organisation, structure and the space it existed in. "Art can be political. When I realise this I must ask myself if art is necessarily political (though not necessarily about politics) - is it not necessary to make ones politics explicit. Ignoring this issue only means that ones art drifts into one. J. Kosuth.

Art on language were the most all embracing and consolidated of the conceptual collates - maintaining the concerns of conceptualism in its most expansive aspect."

In our view artists groups are set up by collections of individuals with a will to change the tendency of art and art history". Art & Language P.12 A.10. The conviction which characterised art and language was that the inquiry itself had to become the work thus showing the process by which the work comes to have meaning, specifically how it functions in the terms of this meaning. They chose text rather than paintings. This process illustrated the fact that representation is produced through convention. What is described by Wittgenstein as "the meaning in the use". By the suppression of un-reflected content the process which secures the construction of this allegorical discourse, the forms of closure (sufficient aesthetic judgment) are prised open. The space of the beholding is occupied with questions, paraphrases which take the place of experience with reading. While the material (text) reflects the very tendencies plus mechanisms which constitute it as an artistic experience. (See illustration p39 and p38.).

Implicit in reading aesthetic practice to language is an avowal that creativity, self expression and subject are not constituted within the individual psychic but are constructed with a fluid inter change of cultural codes, realised in specific codes. By showing how one negotiates meaning with the system of personal and cultural relations that constitute the subject, what becomes

important is, rather than the images originality, the viewing subject recognition and understanding of the images relation to others within culture. It is at this interface that the production of meaning begins. The recognition that the image like the word belongs not to the individual but to language and therefore have no definable origin - not original. Their identity lies in the possibility of their repetition. "It was to produce work capable of suppressing not simply voices of modernist orthodoxy, insofar as they had some contingent and non cognitive ascendancy, but also the beholder from which this voice issued in the suppression in our work of un-reflected content. The text and the discursive activity to which it attests removes all but vestigial memory of work what used to be called the beholders share - a share from which issued the voice of the authoritarian consumer/critic." Michael Baldwin Art & Language 23 and 25 B.

By recognising that art exists and it continues with society the autonomy of art as defined by high modernism become a contradiction in terms. By opening art up to the influence of other theoretical thought it becomes possible to forgo the rigid structure of closure. Thus making it possible to re-define the role of art.

### TAKING RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy has always had a strong influence on the theoretical activities, but none so evident as in contemporary conceptual thought. The conceptual artist's approach in the mid 60's to the construction of meaning was demonstrated by their combinations of analytic philosophy, Wittgenstein in particular and later in the early 70's to more sociological examinations of culture as their focus turned to the context with which these meanings operate. From Walter Benjamin and Saussure and Roland Barthes to most importantly the post structuralists, particularly the work of Jacques Derrida. Since its introduction the work of Jacques Derrida has traced wide and diverse parts of influence, from critics to painters and other political and social theorists. They have all found indispensable support for their reflection and practice in Derrida's writing. The post structuralists provided the conceptualists with the necessary foundations, through a highly developed conceptual framework, with which to challenge the very heritage of Western thought inherent in modernism. This is the practice which concepts and ideals have become what is known as post modernism.

To understand fully the relationship between post structuralism and post modernism (conceptualism) we must understand the notion of "expression" and its relation to the "adequately sensitive, adequately informed spectator" in a modernism. The concept of expression has been at the centre of modern art, a concept of

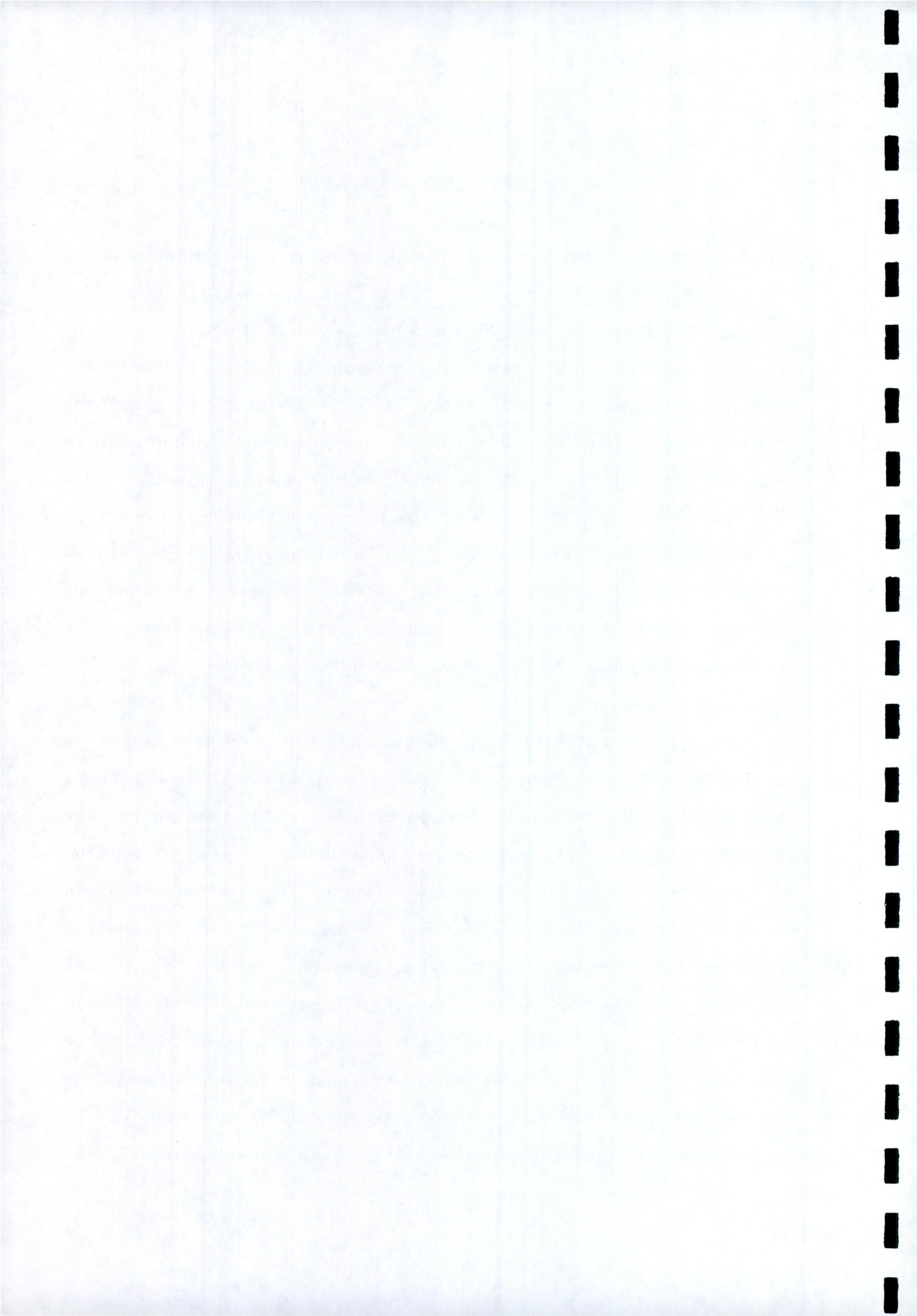
expression which is central to modern life. Expressions are what we read in the body or the face or hear in the voice. It can also be a image or word. In high modern art the concept has been taken up literally, none more evident than in the mimic representation of the human voice "essence, soul". Through the organisation of the surface, established pictorially through the painters touch, the whole composition must carry this expression. Translated this means that the surface becomes the site where we look for evidence of expression of our bodies. The painters being " laid out before us as the autonomous expression of mans essence. This is what Derrida terms the philosophy of "intuition and presence." The assumption of boundaries on the ontology of (Science of Being) presence. The presence of the beholder of the painter is revealed in one logos or sign. The artist is directly expressing his emotions to the spectator through the forms of the work. The implications of this ideological complicity in culture is as I have stated, amount to an authoritarian intention. What I propose to do is to outline of Derridas arguments, thus highlighting the similarities and areas, "space", in which both conceptualists and postulists work in relation to both of their heritages.

### WRITING AND DIFFERENCE

"But if no one can escape this necessity, and if no one is therefore responsible for giving into it, however little he may do so, this does not mean that all the ways of giving into one of equal pertinence. The quality and fecundity of a discourse are perhaps measured by the critical rigour with which this relates to the history of metaphysics and to inherited concepts of a crucial relationship to the language of the social sciences and a critical responsibility of the discourse itself. It is question of explicitly and systematically posing the problem of the status of a discourse which borrows from a heritage the resources necessary for the de-construction of that heritage itself. A problem of economy and strategy." Jacques A.3 P.289.

Derrida situates himself in relation to this heritage which he feels cannot represent, account for philosophical thought, through the privilege of the voice as a medium of meaning (closer to the physical interior) and the consequent dismissal of writing (as a second removed) as a derisive inessential medium which can only mirror speech but remaining less than speech. Derrida believes that there are different ways of giving into this necessity, "the necessity to have recourse to previous histories", "necessary for the de-construction of their heritage". De-construction marks a distancing from a necessity to inherit this "heritage". The (space) by this distancing is a question of assuming responsibility. This is where Derridas





situates his discourse. Recognising the necessity for critical thought and take responsibility for this heritage.

In Grammatology (1967) Derrida analyses the philosophical tradition which the structuralists both inherit and continued concerning the systematic treatment of signification and language. On the first page he substitutes the word "logocentrisms" for the word metaphysics to highlight that which has always determined the metaphysical systems of thought. Their dependence on a "logos" or "speech".

In the classically determined structure, metaphysics, the sign represents an absence. The absence of a presence. In order for the sign to represent this absence of presence, it must be conceivable on the basis of that presence which it defers. Thus the sign acts when the presences cannot be presented. We signal, signify, through the sign. Presence "perceived through signs. This is what Derrida terms "logocentrism" - that which refers all questions of meaning of representation to a singular founding presence, logos of being, being nothing before the logos and outside it. Derrida insists that linguistics remains metaphysical as long as it retains the distinction between "signified and signifier", grounded in a "pure intelligibility" absolute presence (being) tied to an absolute (logos) sign - that is not influenced by outside signs or symbols, always present to itself through the unity of a signifier and signified which is produced in the absolute presence. Derrida calls this the philosophy of intuition and presence. The assumption of boundaries on the ontology (science of being) of presence. "In

order to describe trace, in order to read the traces of "unconscious" traces, the language of presence and absence, the metaphysical discourse of phenomenology is inadequate". Jacques D  
Ref.A3 P .

Note: Unlike English, French has not developed two verbs from the ..... but has maintained the senses of both to differ and to differe. Unlike English, in French no noun formed from this verb carries the sense of deferment or detachment, Derrida bounds together difference on deferral and thus refers to a configuration of spacial and temporal difference. Thus the words means to defer and to differ in time.

The trace, every sign contains a "trace" of signs other than itself which leads on to a process of endless referral, differance. See note. This absolute "being" functions to reduce any differance in,presence. The absolute logo, signs acts as a purifier, Through the movement of differance every signifier can also become a signified and by implication there can be no presence which is not constituted by differance.

"Signs can be effaced in the classical manner in a philosophy of intuition and presence. Such a philosophy and effaced sign by making them derivitate it annuls reproduction and representation by making signs a modification that happens to a simple presence. Because it is just such a philosophy which is in fact the philosophy and history of the West - which has so constituted and established the very concept of sign, the sign is, from its origins and to the core of its essence marked by this will to

derivation or effacement. Consequently, to restore the original and non derivative character or signs in opposition to classical metaphysics is by an apparent paradox at the same time to efface a concept of signs whose whole history and meaning belong to the adventure of metaphysics of presence." Ref.83 P.11 1967.

By wiping out and "effacing" these signs through differance Derrida shows that there can be no predetermined meaning in language, no one can master fully language or the meaning formulated by it. That with our recourse to signs our "being in presence" is never complete." It is the presence/absence of trace which carries in itself the problems of the letter and the spirit of the body and soul." Thus it follows that being in "presence" is never complete and therefore cannot confirm anything. The "presence" of being is supplemented by the knowledge perceived and that which is deferred in the mind of "presence". "Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, the other concept." P63. It therefore follows that the metaphysical presence can have no recourse to one single logos, or sign or signs, no single sounding origin.

#### POST MODERNISM & POST STRUCTURALISM

We can see the relationship between those institutions challenged by conceptualism - art and language - post structuralists writings and the complexity of their relationship but it is the space opened up by the movement of differance within which these institutions come to stand in or on, which enable them to

challenge these institutions. With the exorcism of the "Metaphysics of presence" so to was the limited sense of being and the production of representation (presence) and its use as a domination of represented forms. The authorial voice of arts moral authority has been eroded. To the post modern mind everything is empty at the centre./ There is no originality or discovering only the fragments of existing codes. The post modern elevates comment above creation as the central defining experience.

Back in the days of high modernism David Smith declared that "nobody understands art but the artist, because nobody is as interested in art, its pursuits, its making as the artists". This is a prime example of the dynamic of an idea and how it can change through the lived experience. In 1979 Greenberg defined modernism as a rigorous struggle to maintain aesthetic quality on the level of great art of the past in the face of "powerful counter culture under industrialism." The "post modern business" Greenberg concluded was simply a retreat from modernism lofty standards " a way, above all to justify oneself in preferring less demanding art without being called reactionary or retarded". Ref. 813 P.7. This here is another example of the dynamics of an idea and how it can change from lived experience. This "charge" from the "lofty" heights of "high modernism" reflects the depth and the misunderstanding of modernism values and ideas/true/truth.

Post modernism is not a post mortem of modernism but rather a chance to revitalise and interject the idea of art for lifes sake

rather than life for art sake. What post modernism does represent is a post mortem of the idealistic and unrealistic ideals of high modernism. On this level post modernism would seem to me "never having to say your sorry.

"The work of literature is all about extualsed (and post-modernism is all about emancipating cultural-facts form their imperial contexts and reprogramming them as one very much pleases) may be seen as a means of generating not merely an entirely new work of literature but one in which a critique of the original is embedded."\*

It was through the introduction of material processes, series, systems and ideas, in place of art based on self expression, and a concern for context and a return to a more critical practices, that opened conceptualism up to the fields of signification and systems of representation. These were the issues which radical post modernism practice was to extend into a rigorous examination of the issues of representation and ideological constructs within their social and cultural sphere. "Conceptualism is tied to the notion of post modernism, and a denial of the modern is to deny the history and heritage of encouraging speculation about the ground upon which the continuity and discontinuity can be traced throughout the art of the modern." ..... Walter Benjamin 1936.

Note: Referring to bourgeois Borgesse Jeu de Sport re-writing of Don Quixote in 1969 in his own language).

### ART AND LANGUAGE TURN TO PAINTING

Fable, story, short story with moral, to invent tell fables about, legendary. Narrative, able to be carried out by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures and the ordered mixture of all these substances. Narrative is present in myth, in legend, fable, history and painting. Organisation of events into configurational systems, a mode of historical explanation and a normative intervention. The event is not what happens, the event is that which is narrated. The event is action organised by the culturally situated meanings. They can be invested in aorta-facts and relations that have a story telling capacity of their own, "The making and narrating of history as two sides of the same process" (P.14). This implies an imaginary dimension to the production of specific performances as historicised and has historicising practices. In order to recognise allegory in contemporary manifestations we must understand how it functions in a contemporary space. Art and language are concerned with the mechanisms of painting. Situated in the space between active and passive reading. "The reader is already at fault before the law, which comes before", thus someone who reads is at a certain stage of performance. Positions by this double bind. That performance is always, in one way or another to be compared to the act of reading a dictionary entry for reader. Before one can receive the order of the concept one has already been given an example of it. Thus it follows that the reader reads before the law that he or she comes

after. Neither the singularity of an act nor the generality of a concept or reading of meaning can be thought of absolutely prior to the other, as a cause of condition, or rather both are at once conditions of the other inter dependent and supportive of this concept of reading. It is in this context that the making and narrating of history can be thought of as two sides of the same process. Thus it follows it implies an imaginary dimension to the production of specific performances (in this case artistic) as historicised and historicising practices. By the nature of art and languages work and the process deployed by them allegory is a necessary if not by the nature of the work itself imminent. For example allegory occurs whenever one text is doubled by another, the Old Testament becomes allegorical when it is read as a pre-figuration of the New Testament. It therefore follows that by reproducing the mechanisms which constitute the power of description inherent in the process of reading of high modernist painting that they become allegories of the new work which is created on their concept of reading, the beholders share.

It was the examination of reader and reading in the series index 002 Bxal that led art and language to later reconstruct the artist studio (space) as an allegory of modernisms high allegories, in the examinations of the role of the artist as author and initiator of modern representation/culture. The assumptions underlying this work were one of reading and interpreting. The index representing the place where meanings could be made and un-made defined by the very nature of the title itself an index of possibilities. In this sense it transported





the idea, the very space in which the artist creates and determines meaning into the space of the index itself. You are presented with a list of connected expressions, a change of expression, related to chains of entries. What these represented was the complex series set of relationships within this structure which could go back and forth between an infinite number of real or imaginary pairs, people. The possibilities were endless as endless as the possibility of different readers, viewers and by implication their ability to create an infinite number of possibilities. Thus the idea of author, artist as an instigator of expression of meaning was re-defined. Thus the intentional character of art representation was not expression, was not in an object or craft but rather with some shared or sharable conditions of possibilities thus the work of art was constituted not by its origin but its destination. It also follows that the authoritarian legitimisation of the artists right to the private (space) in which to define the meaning of a work of art is challenged.

The possibility of understanding as a recountable form of enlightenment was ruled out by the process which constituted the work index 002 Bxal (p40) Thus the allegory of the artists studio space is refused its necessary legitimisation. The paintings index, "The studio at 3 Wesley Place in the Dark " art and language illustrate the allegorical relationship directly. Using as their original text Courbettes "The Artist Studio" "The world coming needs to be painted" Courbettes. 11A P.152. When we see Courbettes use of the symbols of a political and intellectual

history which were incorporated as consistent signifying features of some whole decorative scheme the allegorical intention becomes apparent. But in a modern context this allegorical painting turns in on itself, the very features and symbols and what they represent destroy the picture in a modern context, by the simple fact of representing the artists relationship to outside elements which determine and constitute his practice, thus the work was a failure by the very nature of the cultural dominance of high modernisms pure signifier, human essence, at the time. The paintings in index Studio at Wesley Place<sup>(p. 42)</sup> are concerned with this narrative. They create the new text by illustrative components of these paintings as ironic modern allegories of the components in Courbettes painting. By the narrative which these components themselves were designed to construct they de-constructed to allegorical intention the role of the painterly essence by showing their function in the creation of the meaning of the paintings, the components themselves illustrating works which are and language themselves had consigned to the studio dust-bin. By showing how these works which were complete failures for art and language functioned in the construction of both the art of work itself and the scene depicted in the paintings (the artist studio) they thus illustrated the necessary component elements for the construction of modern expression.

Modernist theory is hostage to an assemblage of hierarchy of genres. According to academic convention, the status and potential of genres was assessed in relation to their respective capacity to sustain moral and allegorical meanings. A.10 P. 167.

"The theorization of abstract art thus invokes a legacy which is not so much a legacy of allegorical themes as a legacy of allegorising mechanisms and tendencies. It also invokes a legacy of readings and of possible ways to read."

#### GENRES

In Hostages XXXVI<sup>(p.43)</sup> they apply the same principle of rigorous examination of the material process and the (beholders share) and the means of representation in the genres of landscape painting. Its original iconoclastic thrust was used by the avant garde in the late 19th century as a means of separating itself from academic taste, soon becoming an embarrassment because of its later association with the middle class bourgeois taste. In the context in which art and language approach these works is that of a bourgeois taste. They had to systematically clear landscape paintings of those features which might provide a viewing for a certain kind of taste, sensibility. What the genres represents to art and language is a scape goat for the phobias of the culturally elevated pre-determined aesthetic judgment.

The viewer is confronted with a series of ambiguous paradoxical and contradictory elements. Co-existing on in the surface of the painting, inter-acting and generating meaning from this. The paintings consist of four basic elements or four types of surface, which through specific processes cause inter-action. Selected areas of each painting have been treated with very thick paint. We are presented with a depiction of a landscape scene which has cropped thus obscuring any complete view of the picture. Each painting contains or rather is completed by a band of colour which runs down either the left or right side of each picture. Each band is a different colour and a different width. There are also examples of distorted typography which when constructed S/U/R/F, short for surface. Lastly there is a pane of glass which is fixed to the surface of each painting by screws. It is marginally smaller than the painting itself. In screwing down the glass the areas of thick paint are compress, and spread out unevenly across the painted surface. What this represents is the organisation/representation of difference surfaces contained within the constituted confines of landscape painting.

What the inter-action of these elements represent are the varying relationships of genres of painting and ways of viewing these genres in relation to each other. The bands of colour can be seen to represent different styles of painting. Literally the compressed paint blurs the distinction between the two different styles of painting, literally blurring them into each other,

which illustrates their relationship and the inter-changeability of concepts of representation within different styles. The glass acts as another element in the process of pushing these almost opposite genres together. Thus it implies the question what would the painting be without the glass, without art and languages role in disrupting these means of separation and delegation of meaning.

These elements de-construct and impede traditional forms of viewing not only in association with the genres of landscape painting but its relationship to the well informed pre-determined aesthetic judgment which is determined by its spacing and position to other "higher" genres of painting. As in all of art and languages projects and most recent paintings the works meaning is always situated in relation to directing attention to some aspect of the culture of modern art. Inherent in their work is the process by which the viewer must unravel or more to the point continue the process of reflection of meaning and its situation in relationship to the concept of modern art. Thus the work of art is truly in a life praxis for it exists through its inter-action with the viewer and is thus created. This is what constitutes an art practice - one in which there can be no pre-determined, pre-ordained concept of moral authoritarian vice. The real meaning of the work is situated in its possibility to re-determine its relationship to the heritage of its past thus re-defining and opening up those terms of "closure" which restrict the true reflection of meaning and what constitutes meaning.

## C O N C L U S I O N

Post modern culture does not just represent a mere change in sensibility but reflects much deeper implications for the organisation and the distribution of culture. Through deconstruction or rather difference the cultural codes which defined the very core of our culture have been shown to be the codes of misrepresentation and falsehood. As with the past the consciousness of the future is to be rooted in technology. Contemporary artistic and other theoretical disciplines are only now absorbing the full impact of post structuralist thoughts. By definition of the term post structuralism no new structure is proposed. Instead an awareness of the depth of structuralist influence. Art and language like many other contemporary artists have only just begun the de-construction of a heritage that precedes culture as we have come to recognise it today. What post structuralism has made possible by creating a space from this heritage is the possible understanding of the complex relationships which function in our concept of being.

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## *List of Illustrations*

*Fountain* (R. Mutt 1917)  
Marcel Duchamp - Ready made - urinal

*Spiritual America* 1923 (Photograph)  
Alfred Stieglitz

Jackson Pollock (*Number 31* 1950) 1950  
Oil and enamel painting, canvas 268 x 518 cm collection.  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

*Art and language*  
100 % Abstract 1968, Acrylic on canvas, 44 x 68 cm  
Art and Language Collection

*Art and Language*  
*Guaranteed Painting* 1967 - 1968, Liguitex on canvas with photostat, two parts each 92 x 92 cm  
Bruno, Rischo, Fberge Collection

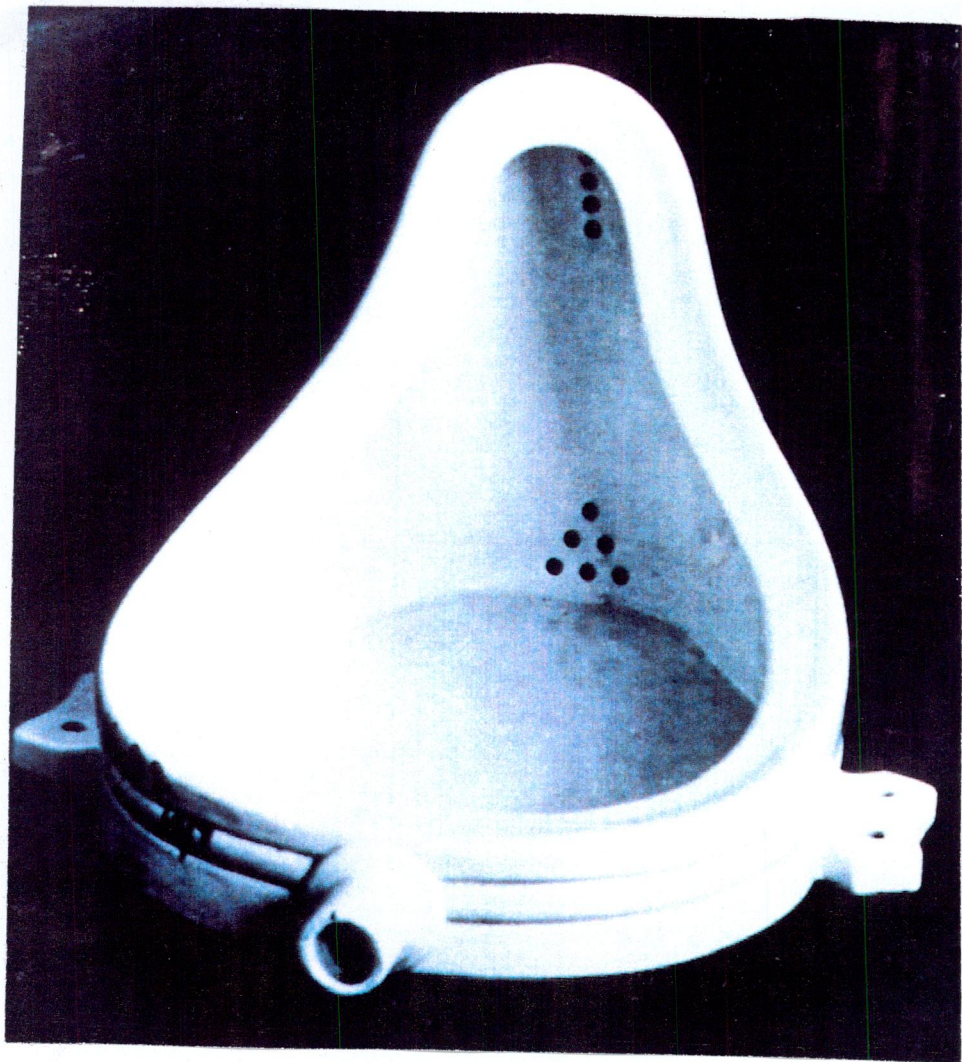
*Art and Language, Instructions for Index 002 BXAL*  
1973 Printed Card, 84 x 51 cm

*Courbet*  
*The Artists Studio*, 1855  
Oil on canvas 357 x 598 cm, CM Musée Orasy, Paris

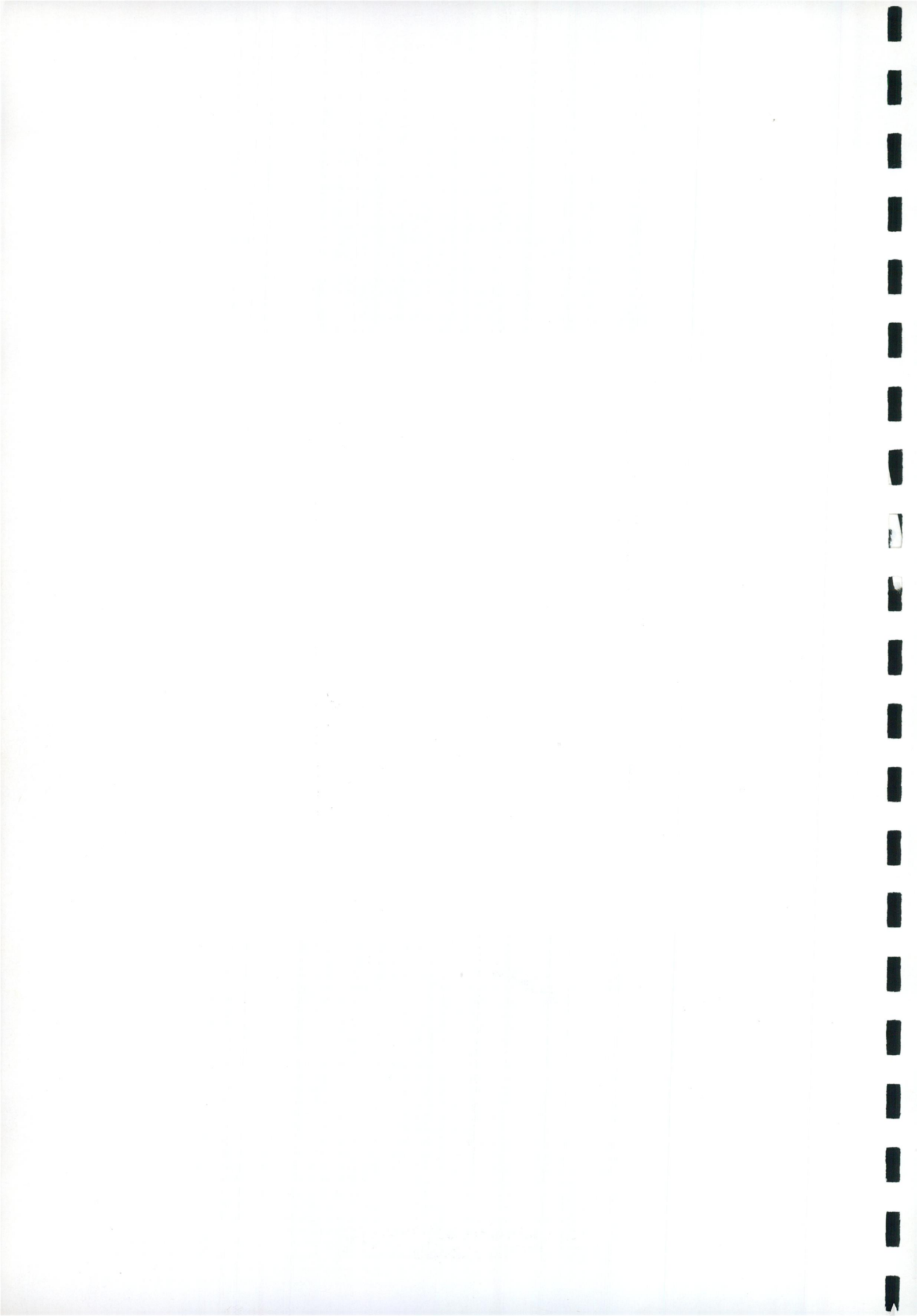
*Art and Language*  
*Index, The Studio at Wesley Place, Painted by Mouth (II)* 1982  
Ink on paper mounted on canvas 345 x 727 cm

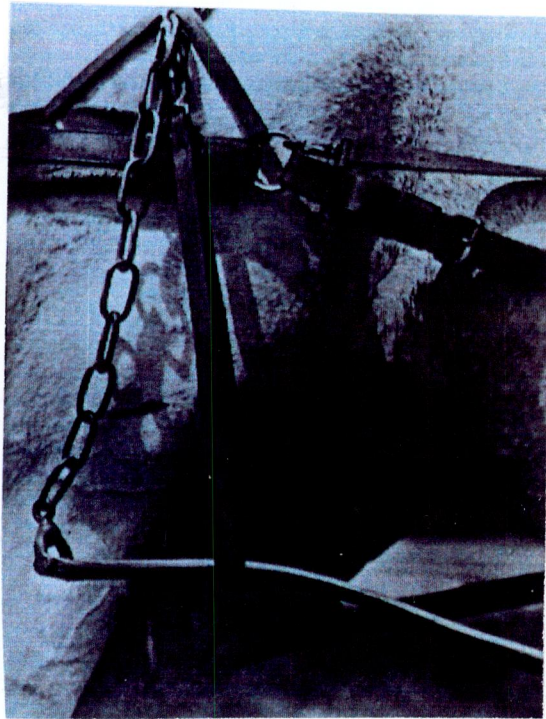
*Art and Language*  
*Study for Hostage 40*, 1990, 51.25 x 35.5 cm Oils on canvas, stencil and glass  
*Hostage XL*, 1990 72.5 x 48 cm



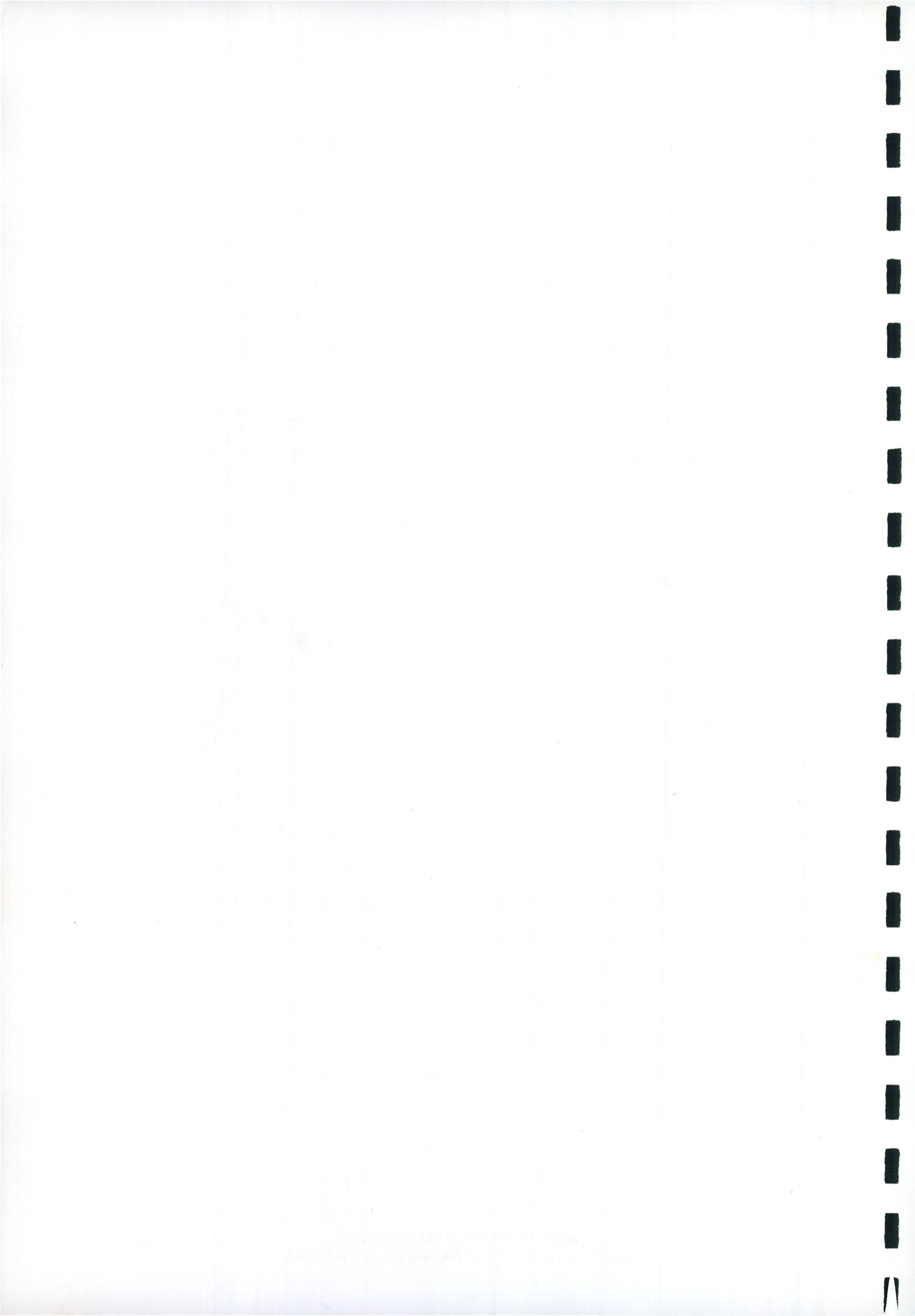


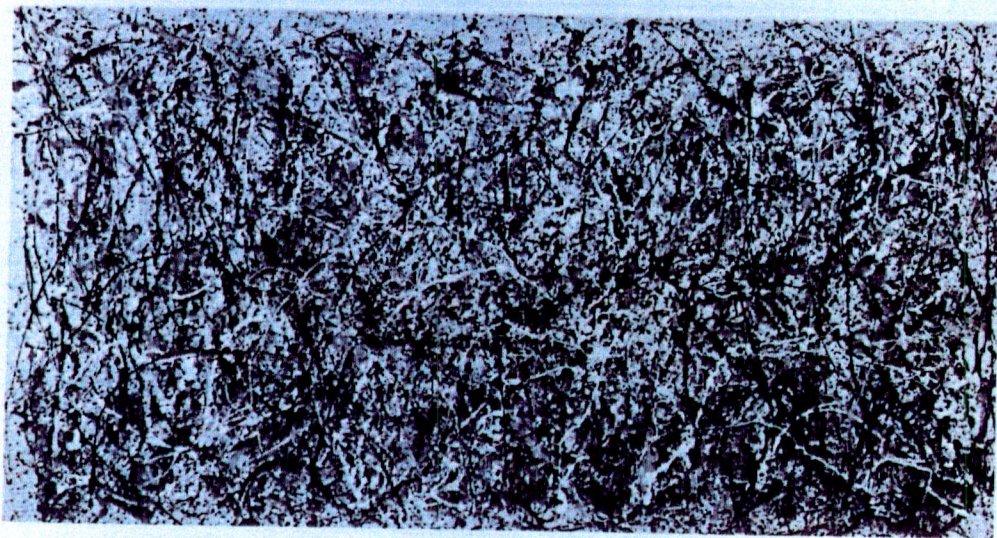
*Fountain (R. Mutt 1917)*  
*Marcel Duchamp - Ready made - urinal*



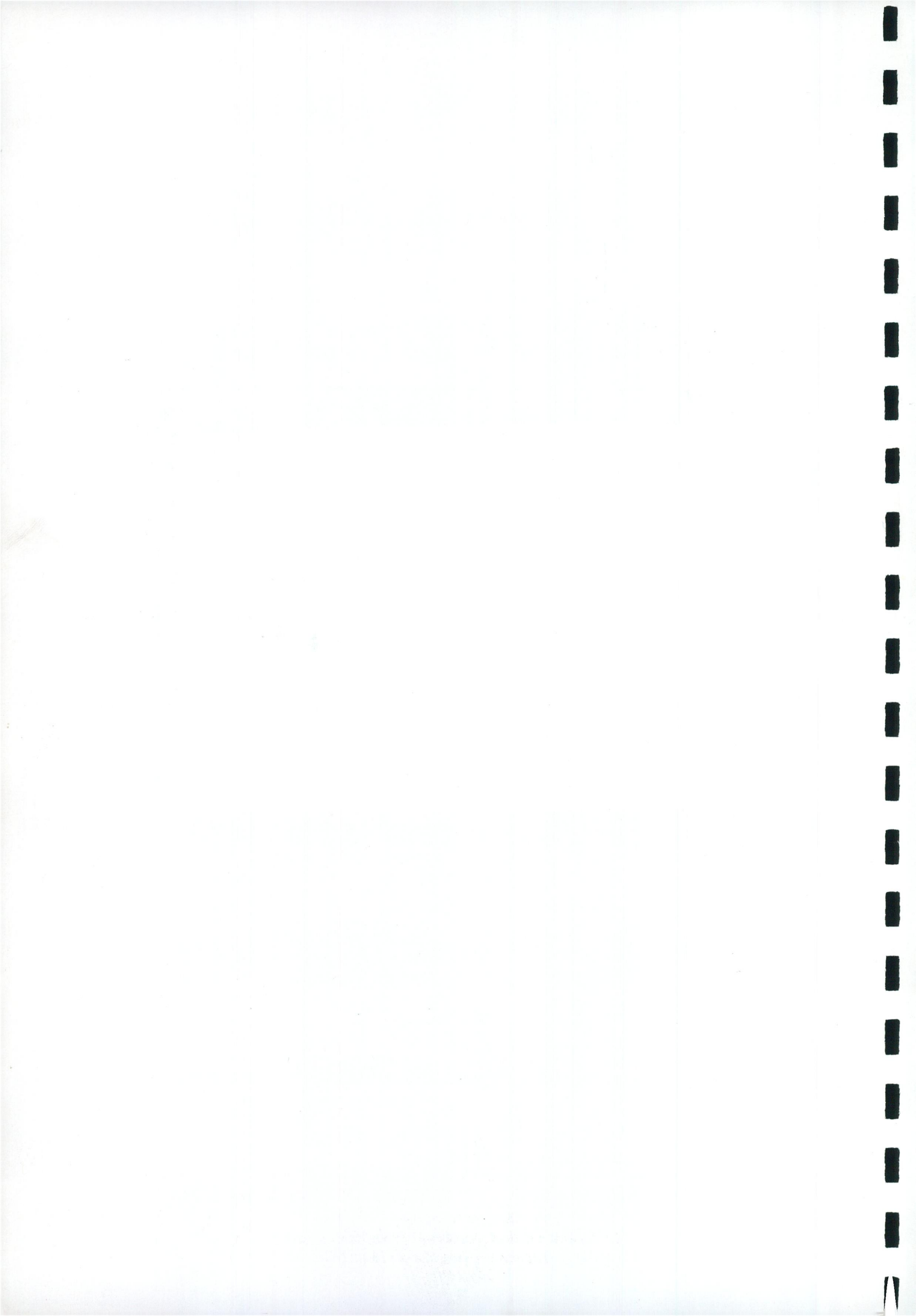


*Spiritual America 1923 (Photograph)*  
*Alfred Stieglitz*

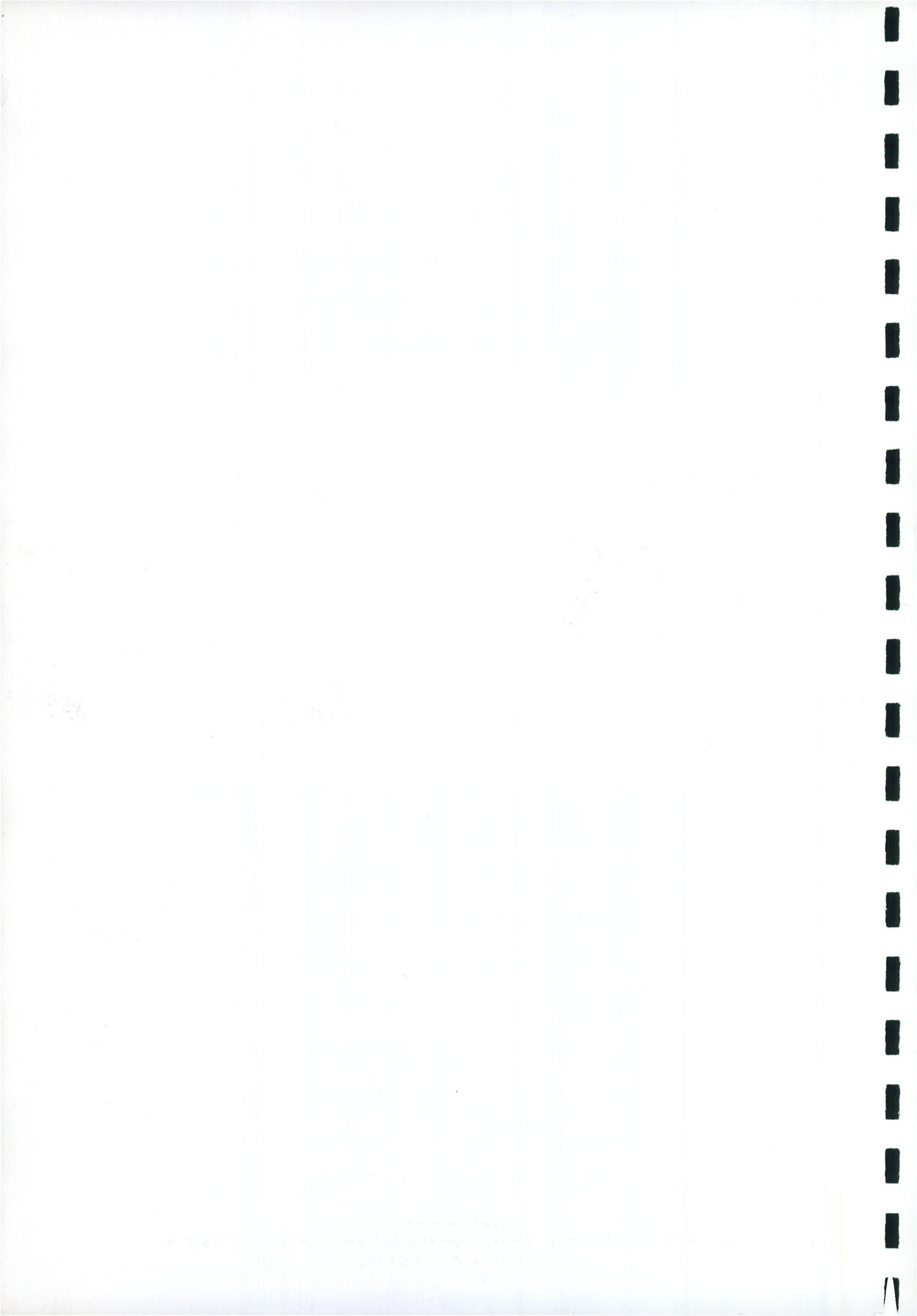




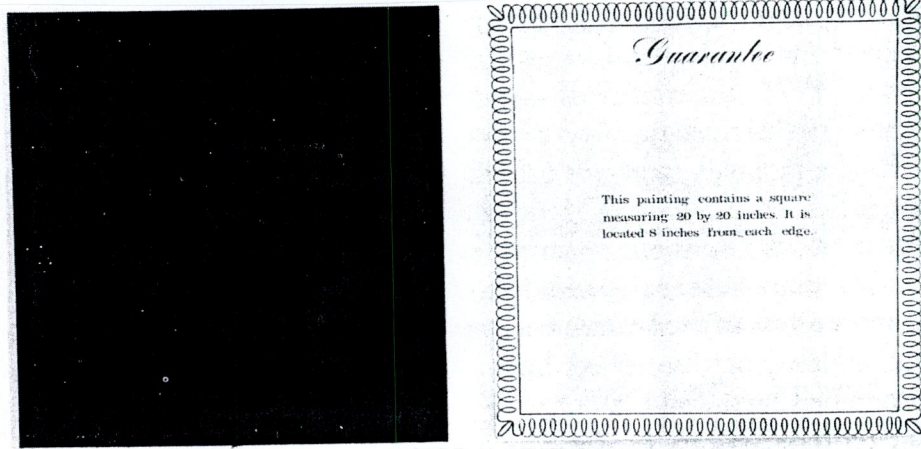
*Jackson Pollock (Number 31 1950) 1950  
Oil and enamel painting, canvas 268 x 518 cm collection.*



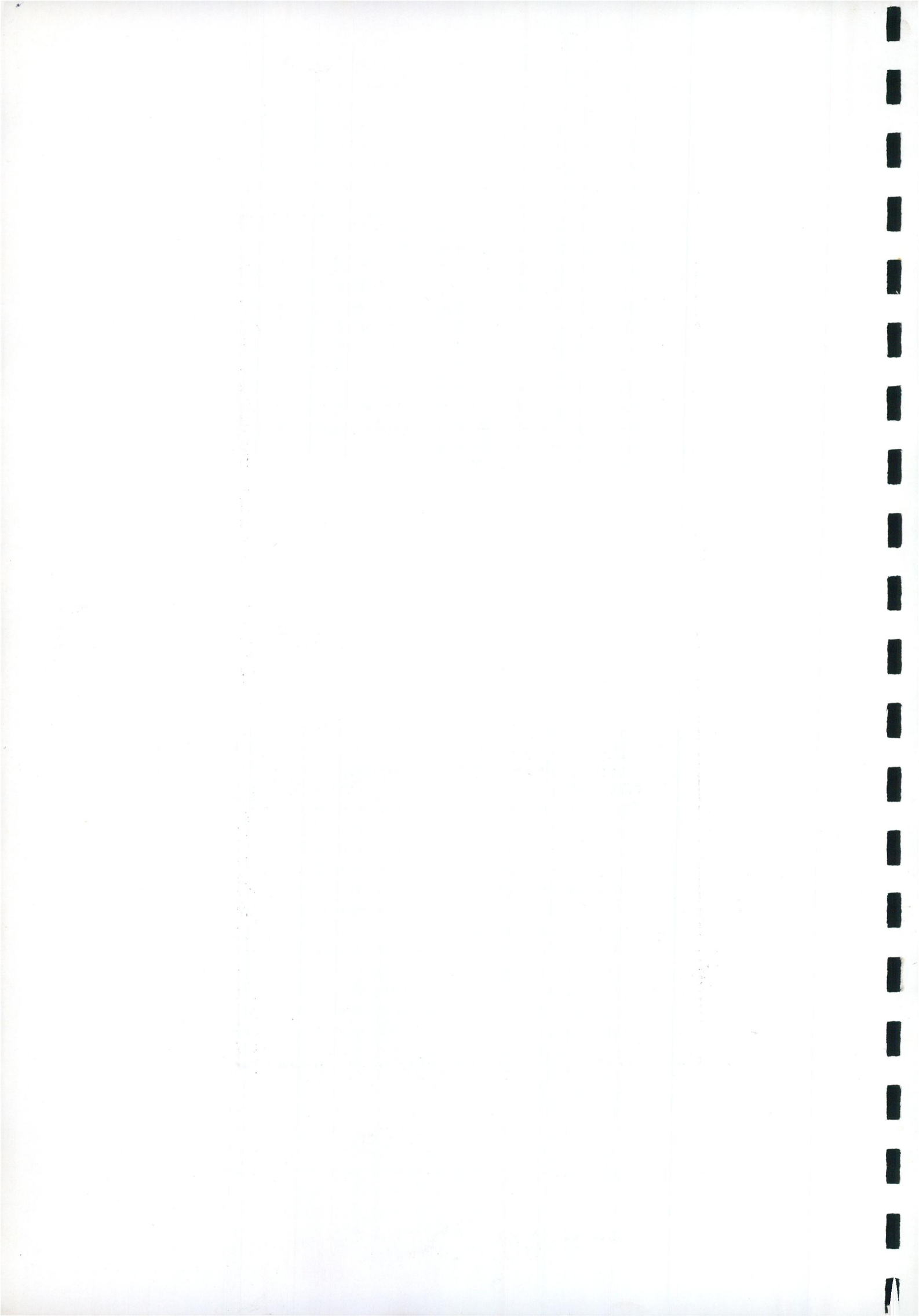
<b>COPPER BRONZE POWDER</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>ACRYLIC RESIN</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>AROMATIC HYDROCARBONS</b>	<b>81%</b>







*Art and Language*  
*Guaranteed Painting 1967 - 1968, Ligitex on canvas with photostat, two parts each 92 x 92 cm*  
*Bruno, Rischo, Fberge Collection*



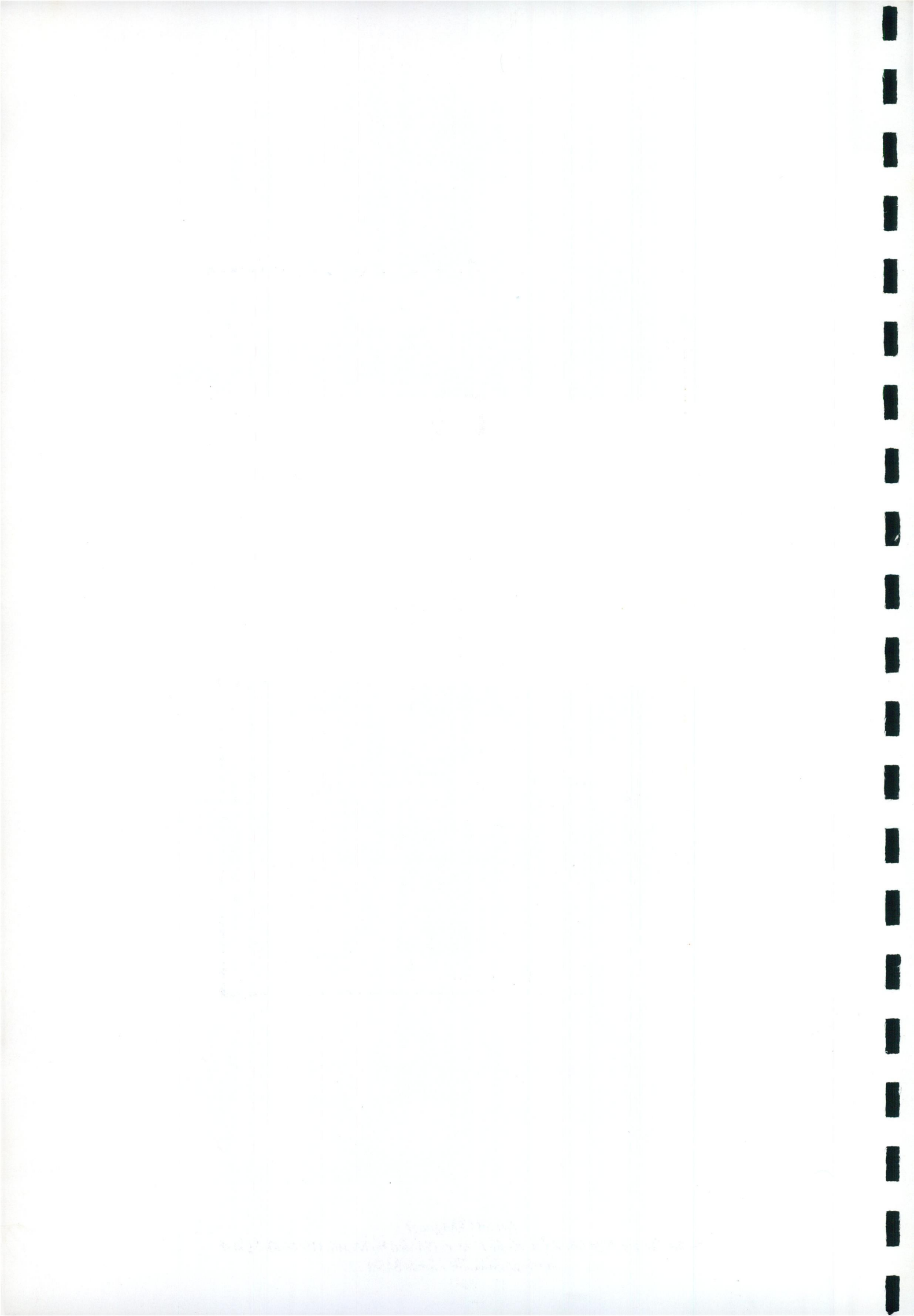


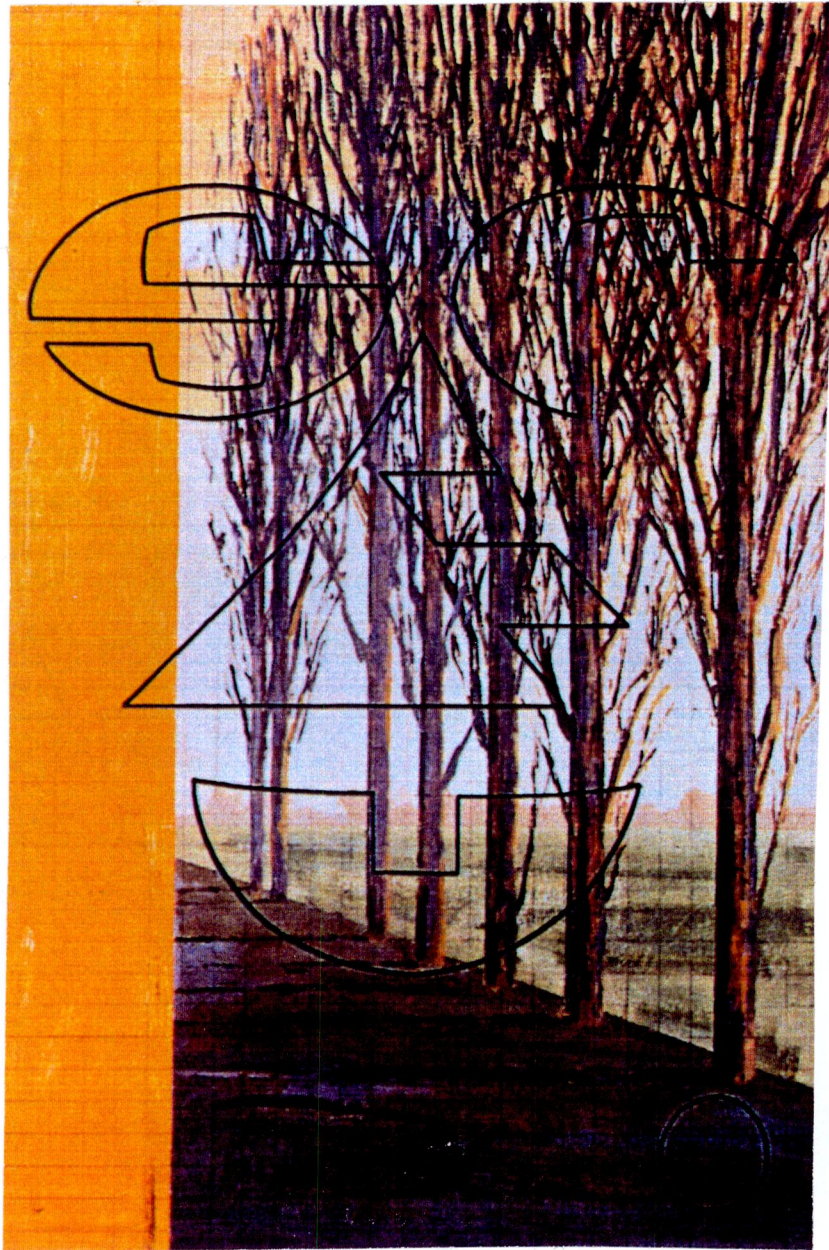


*Courbet*  
*The Artists Studio, 1855*  
*Oil on canvas 357 x 598 cm, CM Musée Orsay, Paris*  
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*Art and Language*  
*Index, The Studio at Wesley Place, Painted by Mouth (II) 1982*  
*Ink on paper mounted on canvas 345 x 727 cm*





*Art and Language*  
*Study for Hostage 40, 1990, 51.25 x 35.5 cm Oils on canvas, stencil and glass*  
*Hostage XL, 1990 72.5 x 48 cm*

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