

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

KANDINSKY, KLEE, FELIM EGAN: THE INFLUENCE OF MUSIC
IN THEIR LIVES AND WORK.

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND
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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

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Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Felim Egan for his invaluable help in the completion of this work.

I would also like to thank my mother Myra Keogh who typed this dissertation and who says herself she learned a lot.

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INTRODUCTION

During the course of time the various arts have responded to the same sociocultural conditions and each art is related to the others in the pattern of cultural history. Music and visual art are two such art forms which have been fused together in various ways. This dissertation is primarily concerned with the connection between these two art forms as seen in the work of Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Felim Egan.

Although the work of these three artists differs in style, the ideology behind it is similar at times.

Kandinsky and Klee lived at the same time and their paths crossed many times. Egan is a contemporary Irish artist who has obvious musical connotations in his work and is influenced by Kandinsky and Klee whose work he admired.

It is interesting to view these three artists in the light of their theme and the way in which each individual dealt with it.

WASSILY KANDINSKYChapter I.

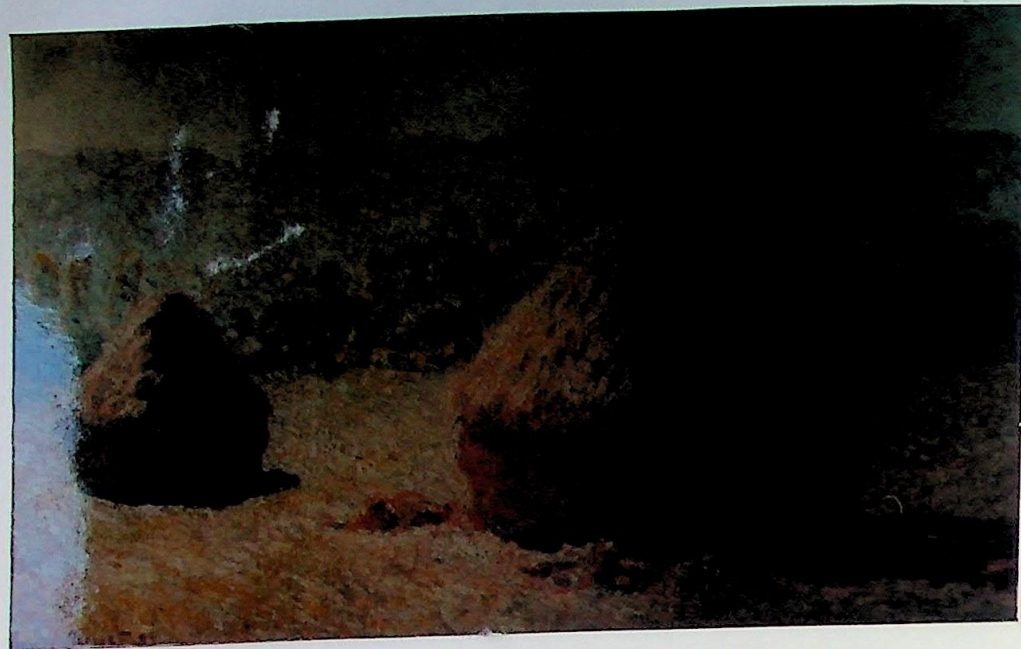
Wassily Kandinsky was born on December 5th, 1866 in Moscow. As a child he loved to paint and took drawing lessons. He continued to paint as a hobby even after he entered the University of Moscow to study law and political economy. He longed to be a painter even at an early age. When he was in Vologda at the age of 23 (1889) preparing a report on provincial laws and customs he was very impressed by folk art and with the intensity of colour he saw in the faces of the peasants. This enlightened his vision in contrast to the grey vastness of his native country. As he worked in a large printing firm in Moscow he came into contact with art. His environment at this time was amongst working people.

The turning point in his life came, when at the age of thirty he was offered a professorship at the University of P rpat Estonia. In refusing it, he made a decision to leave this career and go to Munich to study painting. Munich at this time was regarded as the artistic capital of Germany, even Europe. This was a big move for him because when he was younger it has appeared to him that art was an unallowable extravagance for a Russian.

An Exhibition held in Moscow of the Impressionists had a great influence on him, in particular Manet's "Haystacks", the subject of which he could not immediatley identify. It was this non-objectivity that facinated him and it was to have even greater influence on him later on in his career.

In Munich he studied for two years and was then admitted to the Royal Academy where he studied under Franz Can Stuck. Here he studied the organic side of drawing. As this instruction

/did not



Haystacks. by Monet.

did not satisfy him fully he opened his own art school, which was closed two years later when Kandinsky undertook a four year series of travels to France, Italy, Tunisia, Belgium and Holland. As president of the Phalanx group in Munich he met Gabriel Muntz. The year that Kandinsky had arrived in Munich the "Jugend" periodical was formed by George Hirth. It was primarily to do with decoration used in architecture but eventually influenced painting and sculpture. The "Jugendstil" was to do with the arts and crafts movement and Kandinsky influenced by began to work in woodcut.

His travels lasted from 1904 - 1908 and with Hunter exhibited at the Salon d'Antoine and in numerous cities during this period. He established a considerable reputation.

Up to this point two main influences determined his work. They were Monet's "Haystacks" and also Wagner's "Lohengrin". He saw a deep connection between music and art. In listening to Wagner, he felt that it portrayed the Moscow he knew.

"The violins, the deep base tones and most especially the wind instruments embodied for me then the whole impact of the hour of dusk. I saw all my colours in my mind's eye. Wild, almost insane lines drew themselves before me. It became entirely clear to me that art in general is much more powerful than I had realized and that on the other hand painting can develop just as much power as music possesses".

After his return to Germany he spent most of his time in Munich and in nearby Murnau. In Munich there was a search for a new kind of art, the artist sought complete freedom to create from inside himself. The artists aimed at direct expression. They wanted to create an idea or a feeling through the language of art and let the colour and shapes speak for themselves. He, like many

/ other artists

other artists was trying to get away from naturalism for he believed that it killed the spirit of the artist and of the art. He wanted to dispatch with the "soul-less, materialistic" ways of the 19th century and strive towards the spirit of the 20th century. He used a method of dominating representationalism to show his rejection of materialistic values.

The "Jugendstil" artists discarded the traditional forms and made new ones. There was a growing tendency to conceive line colour and form as independent entities. They became involved with symbolism. The "Jugendstil's" regard for formal elements of design exerted a crucial influence on Kandinsky. The "Jugendstil" was in fact a link between the decorative arts and Kandinsky's breakthrough to abstraction. He became involved with a number of "Jugendstil" artists, who were involved with aspects of symbolism, particularly with the visual ideas of Art Nouveau. He remembers himself studying the Russian symbolist Borissov-Mussalov, and learning to look for the first time in Vologda at a painting "not only from the outside, to enter into it, to move around in it, and to mingle with its life."

The decisive moment when his spirit matured came twenty years later in 1906 when he experienced the revolt of the Fauves and went to Paris. He stayed for a year and sensed the freedom that is possible in painting.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, myths, legends and folklore were considered important as a possible approach for the reconstruction of society. Ivanov, a Russian symbolist emphasized these as an important aid for the artist in reaching the people. He saw the symbolist movement as an attempt to uncover cosmic knowledge and urged artists to draw symbols from mythology. Kandinsky echoed some of Ivanov's ideas in his book "Concerning the Spiritual in Art", which was a theoretical treatise, in which he established the philosophical basis for non-objective painting.

/It was then



Cover for the Blue Rider. 1912. Kandinsky.

It was then he came into contact with expressionism which was an important development in Kandinsky's work, primarily for the manner and the extent which he came to terms with it. He went beyond its particular demands for a psychological content for the distortion of the images in painting as a perspective trauma of the image itself for a content and the controversy that was an end in itself. The graphic requirements didn't interest him but he did become interested in the search for a symbolic significance as a phenomenon, in its mysterious course as a potential image which, by expressing itself, rids itself of contingent facts through the dimensions of memory in the origin of process of graphic rhythm.

"The expressionists' colour theory defines every value in relation to black, to darkness. This is where it mainly derives from Impressionism and defines every value in its relationship to white to white".

It was in 1910 that he met Franz Marc and with him founded the Blue Rider in 1911. It was published in 1912 as was his treatise "Concerning the Spiritual in Art".

Kandinsky believed that art was not to communicate images of the external world but of the inner character. This view was also held by Franz Marc. He followed the doctrine of expressionism insofar as, what mattered in art was not the imitation of nature but the expression of feelings through colour, line and form. Kandinsky posed the question to himself whether art could be made more pure by doing away with all subject matter and relying exclusively on the effects of tones and shapes. The example of music, which gets on so well without the crutch of words had often suggested to artists and critics the dream of a pure visual music. He developed colour and line to suit his own needs. He had criticised his own early works (landscapes) in which he says the colours were flat and weak and weren't alive. He wanted to achieve rhythmic, melodic, harmonic



First Abstract Watercolour. (1910). Kandinsky.

energy of music. By 1908 he found he was able to do this. He used strong rhythms to produce complex harmonies and discord. Melody itself, had more to do with line and this did not have as strong an emphasis as did colour and form. "Blue Mountain" is an example of his work from this time. Before Kandinsky produced purely abstract work he used figurative themes and abstracted them. One of these is the leaping horseman.

However Kandinsky was the first to produce a purely abstract painting. He followed his own direction and freed himself from influences like French painting. He had to satisfy his own inner needs which he wrote about again and again. In his book "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" he wrote -

"The work of art consists of two elements, the inner and the outer. The inner element, taken by itself is the emotion in the soul of the artist. This emotion is capable of calling forth what is essentially a corresponding emotion in the soul of the observer.

As long as the soul is joined to the body, it can as a rule only receive vibrations via the medium of feelings. Feelings are therefore a bridge from the non-material to the material (in the case of the artist) and from the material to the non-material (in the case of the observer).

Emotions - feelings - the work of art - feelings - emotions".

This is Kandinsky's idea of how the artist observes and feels about his world, adapts it and communicates it to others for them to observe.

It is the inner element that is the content of the work. To express himself the artist chooses forms which are sympathetic to his own inner needs, "his inner impulses must find suitable external forms".

The work of art is an inevitable, inseparable joining together of the internal and external elements of the content and the form.

The choice of form is determined by internal necessity. The work of art

is subordinated

is subordinated to the law of construction. Individual parts may have life but only by virtue of the whole. As regards painting, there are an infinite number of individual parts which may be divided into two parts - linear form and painterly form. In compositional painting Kandinsky outlines three periods - origin (the practical desire to fix the transitory corporeal element), development (the gradual departure from this practical goal and the gradual predominance of the spiritual element), and the goal (the attainment of a high level of pure art, and in a realm of painterly-spiritual essences (subjects). He says in his writings that at this time there was a tendency in painting whether consciously or unconsciously to replace subject matter by construction, and that this was the first step that leads to pure art.

The aspiration of all art towards the condition of music was a notion subscribed to by many. Many years passed before Kandinsky finally proved that the formal elements of the painters art could be employed to create "abstract" visual compositions on principles analagous to those of music. Now painting itself would embody the attributes of that most un-material of the arts - melodic line, harmony, counterpoint, discord, rhythm and so on - these would have their counterparts in the infinite possible combinations, variations and relationships of line, form and colour available to the painter.

Kandinsky describes three events that contributed decisively to the formation of his non-objective painting; seeing one of Manet's paintings - "Haystacks" in moscow 1895; his visit as an official ethnographer to the remote Northern province of Vologda in 1889; but it was the experience of listening to Wagner's opera "Lohengrin" that revealed to him the supreme incarnation and interpretation of this vision through music - "I could see all my colours as they came to life before my eyes".

Kandinsky drew freely upon musical terminology to convey in

/words the essence

words the essence of the complex emotional experiences which in his paintings are expressed by purely visual means. At the same time he never confused the fundamental distinction between the two media, however much he believed that their aims should be identical, i.e. the spiritual illumination of man. The use of musical analogies had already gained a foothold in the terminology of the visual arts. When Kandinsky used the word "Klang" (sound) it was as a metaphor to describe the reverberations within its total consciousness produced by the impact upon it of the outer world. His "Panel Number Three" is one of a series of non-objective paintings in which he used a complex rhythmic flow of line and colour that seems to move from the bottom to the top with energized movement and dramatically contrasting colours. The viewer's eye constantly moves along the line from colour to colour in much the same manner as the ear absorbs the line and tonal colouring of much of the 20th century music by composers such as Schoenberg and Webern.

During the critical phase in the gestation of "abstract" painting between 1909-1911 Kandinsky produced four scenarios for stage compositions that would incorporate sound, colour and physical movement. There was no theme of a programmatic nature and no particular medium would predominate over the rest. The ensemble of diverse media would make an overwhelming impression upon all the senses simultaneously. "The Yellow Sound" is the only one of these stage compositions to be eventually performed sixty-three years later in an adaptation directed by Harris and Ros Barron for Zone, theatre of the Visual, at the Solomon Guggenheim Museum's Auditorium. Music for the Zone production, consisting of recorded electronic sound with intermittent "live" obbligatos and solos in a jazz idiom for saxophone is by Gerald Shapiro. The score is an ambitious attempt to convey both the "thunderous clash of many worlds" and man's undaunted search for a harmonious role within the cosmos.

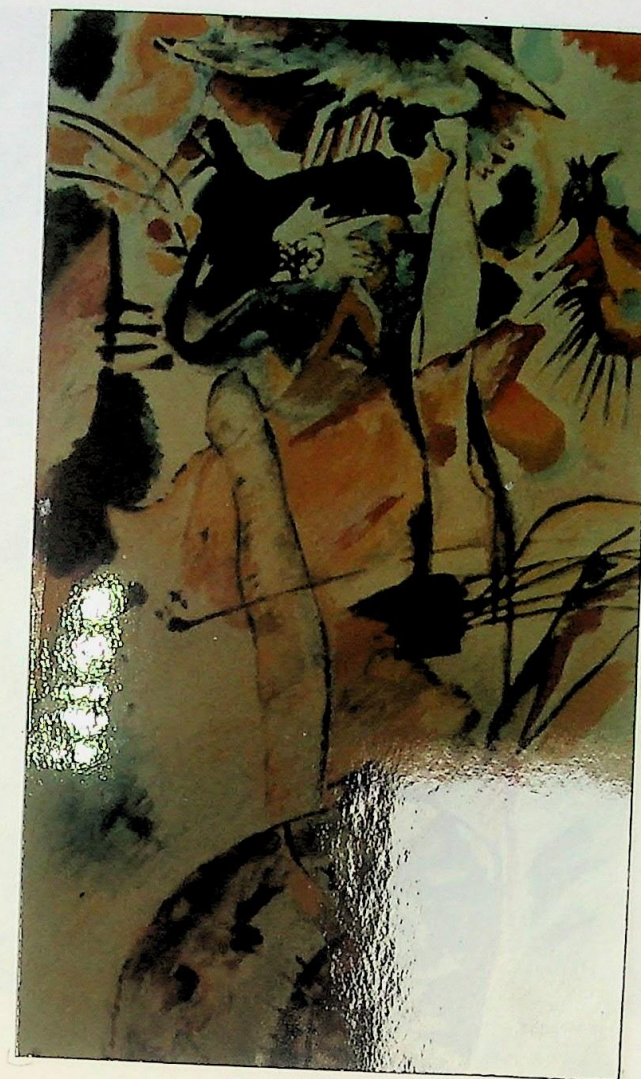
In Kandinsky's series of poems and woodcuts "Klänge" 1913,

/he uses

he uses words as much for their musical and visual qualities as for the startling images evoked by their unexpected conjunctions. Without access to one of the rare copies of the Blaue Reiter, in which the script of the "Yellow Sound" was published, it is impossible to know how closely the original stage directions are followed but it can be said, that Kandinsky's spirit is not wholly drowned in the cauldron of multimedia effects. The interplay of sound, light and movement in "The Yellow Sound" creates a sensory and emotional ⁰continuum echoing to the cosmic sounds which for Kandinsky symbolized the contact and imperative of man's spiritual fulfillment. For him the only true purpose of art was to see with the inward eye and to render those ethereal sounds into visual symbols of ever increasing clarity and precision.

In the 20th century the eyes of the artist have been liberated to vision, freed from imitation and the pretense of a perspective make-believe of a faked third-dimension to a visionary reality. The non-objective painter is a practical educator - his paintings gradually elevate the observer, through pleasurable realization of aesthetic refinement to harmony containing order. Non-objective painting helps to free the human soul from materialistic contemplation and bring joy through the perfection of esthetic enlightenment. Therefore we can see Kandinsky's painting as expressions of infinity.

Objective painting contacts earthly matter only, it cannot cause spiritual evolution the way non-objective painting can. Kandinsky links us to a higher world through his paintings, his message of non-objective painting is the message of eternity.



Panel Number Three. 1914. Kandinsky.



Animated Stability. (1937). Kandinsky.



Accompanied centre. 1937. Kandinsky.



Small Dream in Red. 1925. Kandinsky.

Footnotes. I.

1. Kandinsky's Autobiography

edited by Hill Von Rebay.

published by: Solomon Guggenheim

New York, 1945.

2. Introduction essay in the catalogue for the exhibition
of the Graphic Art of German Expressionism.
(March/April 1970) by G.C. Argan.3. Concerning the Spiritual in Art,
by W. Kandinsky.

PAUL KLEEChapter II

Paul Klee was born at Munchenbuchsee near Bern. He was the son of a music teacher and took violin lessons from the age of seven. At the age of ten he saw his first opera - Il Trovatore. He seriously considered a career in music but decided instead to study art. At the age of nineteen he moved to Munich and entered the studio of Erwin Knirr. Two years later he joined Franz Van Stuck's class at the Academy. Even though Kandinsky was studying here also the two men did not meet. While at the Academy he studied anatomy and art history. The same year he left the Academy and went to Italy where he visited Milan, Genoa, Leghorn Pisa and Rome. He was impressed by Leonardo during this trip. He then returned to Bern where he stayed for four years until 1906. He read widely and drew regularly during this time, habits which he continued for the rest of his life. He also worked on painting and etching. It was between 1903 - 5 that he produced his first ten etchings.

He was very interested in the theatre and opera and played a great deal of music himself. He was even a member of the Bern municipal orchestra.

During a trip to Munich he visited the Alte Pinakothek where he became acquainted with the work of William Blake and Goya.

Blake, 1757-1827, did frescoes and engravings. He wrote and produced his own poems, engraving the illustrations himself.

His early work was neoclassical, but verse and philosophy required a more visionary quality and he turned to mannerism later on.

He abandoned logical arrangement in space and developed a purely

subjective use of colour, light and form to give substance.

Klee's work was still almost exclusively confined to the graphic media as he felt a need to resolve the problems of line before dealing with the complexity of colour. Like Kandinsky he was influenced by the "Jugendstil". There was a more active environment in Munich for him and indeed he was stimulated by the work of Cezanne, Van Gogh and the Fauves.

He exhibited six etchings at the Sezession in Munich in 1906 and that same year married Lily Stumpf who was a pianist. She gave music lessons to support them. Over fifty of his works were included in a exhibition organized by Berne Museum in 1910 which travelled to Basel, Zurich and Winterthur. His first one-man exhibition was held at the Thannhauser Gallery in Munich in 1912 which was the year he met Kandinsky and also Machke, Marc and Jawlensky. Klee was thrity three years and Kandinsky was forty eight. He participated in the second "Blue Rider" exhibition also that year. Although he was never an official member of the group, Klee shared many of their concerns, including the art of children.

In 1913 Klee began to concern himself with colour. A seventeen day trip to Tunisia with Mache inspired a number of the important water-colours Klee created during the next several years. Between 1916 and 1918 he served in the army and mainly did drawings during this perios. By 1920 Klee's work was selling regularly. Walter Grapius founded the Bauhaus in 1919. In November of the following year he invited Klee to become a professor there. The teaching experience was important to Klee. He appreciated the dialogue with the students and this helped him refind his own ideas on art. He followed the Bauhaus from Weimer to Deasau. By 1931 philosophical differences had divided the Bauhaus and due to these problems Klee accepted a part-time teaching position at the Academy of Fine Arts in Dusseldorf.

/He resigned

He resigned in 1933 sickened by the Nazi Government and returned to Switzerland where he stayed for the rest of his life.

Klee's art moves in the pure realm of the pictorial. He once said that for the artist dialogue with nature was an indispensable condition. He devoted himself to it more than any of his contemporaries -

"For the artist communication with nature remains the most essential condition. The artist is human; himself nature, part of the nature within the natural space".

This was written in 1923 by Klee and was the Leitmotif of a creative life that derived almost equal inspiration from painting and from music. Paul Klee fused both of these creative impulses into a new entity. His devotion to nature was not in the traditional sense copying and interpreting but a dialogue which requires voices and sounds, not flowers and trees. His forms are inspired by observation of shape and cyclic change. However their appearances only matter insofar as it symbolizes an inner actuality that receives meaning from its relationship to the cosmos.

The function of external features in Klee's work are used as beacons, painting the way to a spiritual reality. Nature as found in Klee's oeuvre is sound, often barely audible. Klee's artistic genius was directed towards the whole universe, and was therefore able to exploit the abundance of this world. Nature found representation in his art in all forms, man, animal and plant, earth or air, organic or inorganic matter, real or inconceivable beings, natural or artificial objects. His work contains the modern and the archaic, what is long since dead or dying join with the living, with dreams, hallucinations and fantasies. There are many examples of the rational and

/irrational, ...

irrational, the real and the surreal and it is this which lends his art its astounding richness.

His art was philosophic. He depicted in his painting nature's most miraculous workings. He saw growth in everything. He did not always love nature's end-forms but rather the secret forces which produced them, nature as a creative force not as something created. To him everything visible was relative because he saw it as being related to that invisible principle which he felt he was close to. Klee shows forms whether natural or 'abstract' in their growth and decay. He paints them transparently and thereby makes them transcendent, revealing some higher meaning. His work springs from poetry, music, imagination and above all from artistic language which possesses its own laws, its own technical demands and stylistic ideals, ever changing in the rich and enriching four decades of his art.

The symbolic Expressionists and the Cubists during the first decade of the 20th century had already questioned the validity of Academic Naturalism. Their painting had looked below the surface with the analytical eye of psychology, the multi-layered figures of Kirchner and Kokoschka, the simultaneous views of Braque and Picasso were analytical statements, resting statically on the canvas. Klee's figures and forms are not only transparent, but they exist in a magnetic field of cross currents - lines, forms, splotches, arrows, colour waves. As if it were a symphonic composition the main motif moves from variation to variation in its relationship to other objects on the canvas. Klee had a communication with nature which he confessed as being the essence of his work. He was an interpreter of the life of modern man and he found a haven of liberality in Switzerland and later in Munich where he could pursue his quest for a means of relating the past, partly from folk memory, partly from history's record and reconciling it with the

/present and

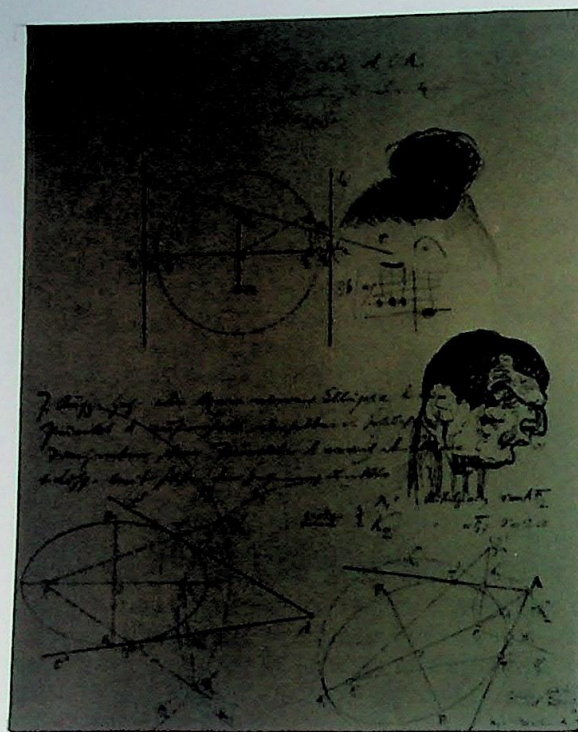
present and with the mysterious inner life possessed by objects and things which we regard as mechanical or soulless. Above all he gave priority to a spiritual content in life - a series of influences from many sources, inherited, acquired, discovered or thrust upon one, which penetrated his consciousness and gave a new force to his artistic productions.

Klee's work was recognised before his death in 1940. Exhibition and publications have constantly increased in number. He will be remembered like Cezanne and Picasso as a great painter. But he was more than a painter. His "communication with nature" produced much more than the transfiguration of the perceived form. It produced a philosophy that rested on empathy with the created world, accepting everything that is with equal love and humanity. He spoke of his own work as "devotion to small things", and saw them in relation to the vast universe. This was his revolution. Everything was of equal importance as symbols of creation. He loved the natural event; therefore he knew its meaning in the universal scheme. And with the instinct of the true lover he had to comprehend what he loved. He investigated until the significance of the phenomenon was beyond doubt. As a teacher at the Bauhaus he chose for himself the task of pointing out new ways of studying the signs of nature -

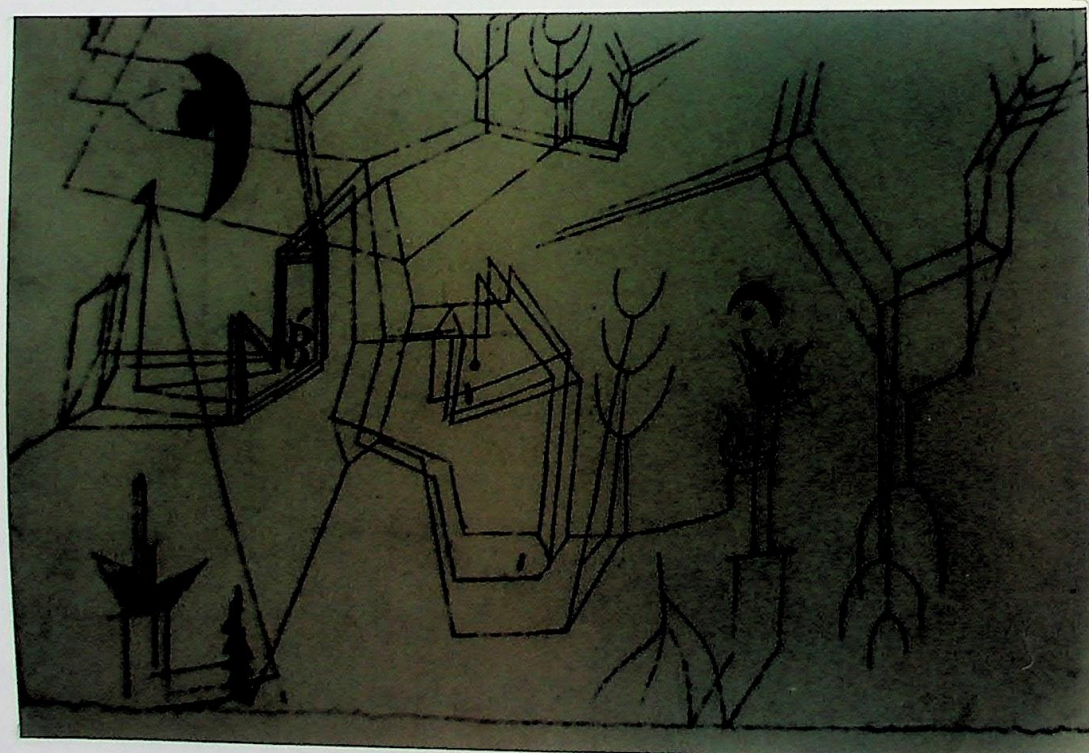
"By contemplating the optical-physical appearance, the ego arrives at intuitive conclusions about the inner substance".

In his "pedagogical sketchbook" Klee talks about line and structure. Line, being the beacon that guided him through his adventures in seeing the dot extended into a graphic curve, cannot come to rest on the last page of a sketchbook; it urges to go on further explorations in space and in spirit. He talks about line and its characteristics in depth.

/There are



Geometric Drawing of Caricature of Beethoven. 1898. Klee.



Drawing with Fermata. 1918. Klee.

There are endless phenomena all around us on which to aim Klee's ideas. The 'line on a walk' can produce new rhythmic curves. Any surface offers itself for definition through line-connected points. Klee's examples of co-ordinated linear motion can be supplemented by the vertical extension of bird flight, the horizontal motion of the tides, the circular rhythm of the tree rings.

One of the most prominent and long-lived musical images in Klee's work is the fermata. The fermat written

is a musical symbol for sustain or a sustained pause. It indicates that the note, chord or rest over which it appears should be extended beyond its actual musical time value at the discretion of the performer or conductor. Klee introduced this symbol to his art in 1898 at the age of eighteen as a student, and doodled a caricature of Beethoven in his geometry book. He last employed the image in 1940 the year of his death.

In the course of these years Klee turned out scores of pictures which contain fermatas, either in their standard musical forms or in close variations of his own device. The fermata has two basic functions. It often appears at the end of a piece to re-inforce a cadence, but it ^{also} appears in developmental passages of compositions over unresolved chords. The psychological/emotive dualism implied by it was probably a major source of its appeal to Klee. He sought continually in his art to express duality "not as such, but in its unity (complementary oneness)".

In his role as teacher especially he looked for symbols which might help to synthesize the concepts of "movement and counter movement rest and unrest as the alternative elements in the painters procedure".

As an accomplished musician, Klee was sensitive to the special

/qualities



Southern Gardens. 1936. Klee.

qualities and beauties not notational symbols, symbols enriched not only by his personal associations but also by the diverse historical associations arising from four centuries of application by various composers. In this eye-like quality, lay the most practical, formal value of the fermata for Klee, for it promised a multi-purpose image, primitive and childlike in its simplicity, economical and sophisticated in its broad universal import. It could be said that Klee's return to the fermata, in his maturity may have been linked to his friendship with Kandinsky. In Kandinsky's "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" he discussed what he called "melodic composition" and refers to certain compositional qualities which "form, for example, a kind of conclusion, to which I give the musical name 'fermata'."

"Drawing with Fermata" represents a major landmark in the evolution of Klee's drawing technique and also in the use of his fermata. The line has become truly melodic. In this highly musical composition, lines closely parallel and imitate as in a fugue.

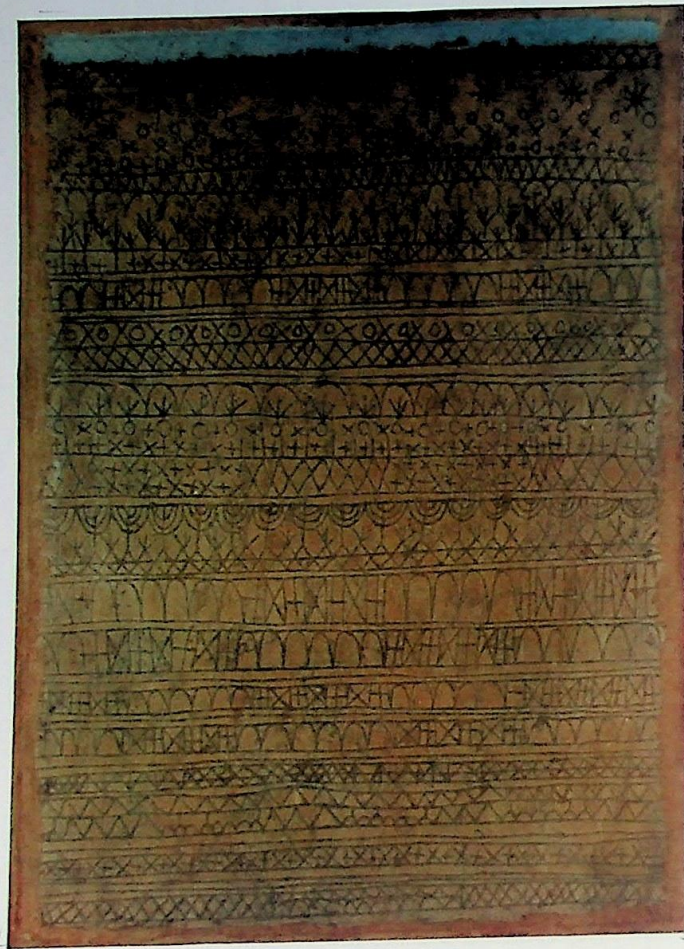
In another sense the parallel lines suggest the staff lines of a score and the two fermatas serve as accents or condescendences of form, halting points for the eye to counter the speed of linear motion. The accented "B" is a kind of punning reinforcement of the fermata idea as are the accented marks scattered about the drawing. Since this work is also meant to be an abstract landscape in the manner of Kandinsky's "Improvisations" the fermatas here also serve as sun or moon symbols. Another fermata related element in this drawing is the ball-and-line pendulum near the centre. The pendulum weight dot which is obviously to be linked with the fermata dots was perhaps meant to serve as a punctuation mark for an internal cadence within the composition. The swing of the pendulum describes the arc of the fermata. The pendulum

image operates here as the principle or beat of the composition.

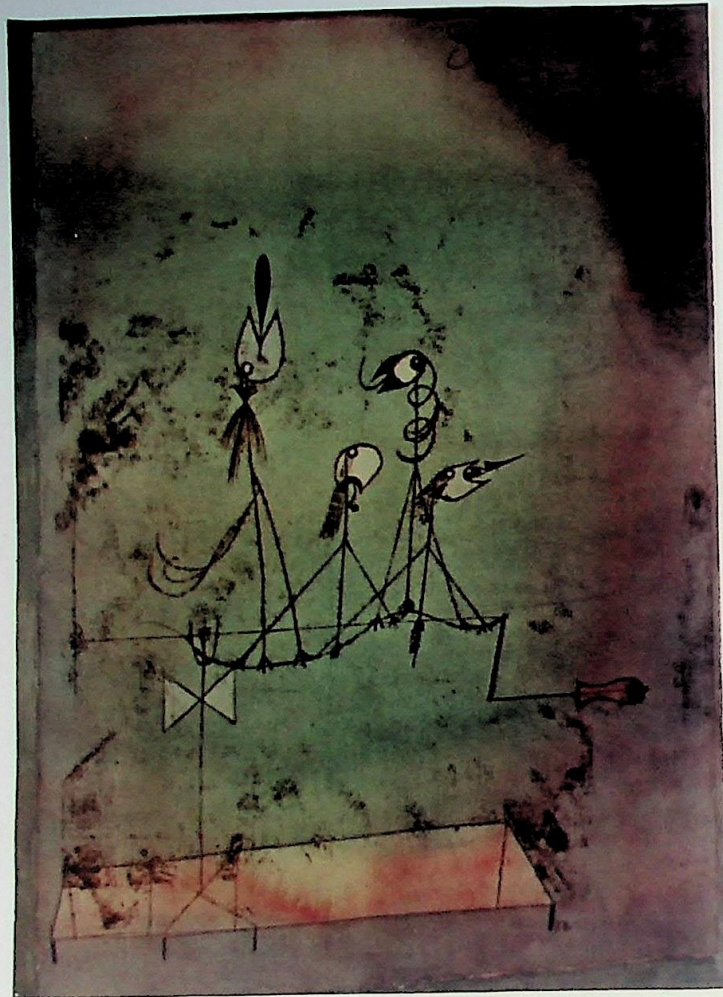
Sometimes, this musical symbol appears in Klee's work as the dominant feature of the piece as in "Southern Gardens" (1936), where we can see a Mediterranean landscape with red and green tree signs. The fermata curve may be a pale moon here. In

"Pastoral Rhythms" one fermata on its own is not dominant but is repeated many times to cause fast movement in linear motion across the canvas. The lines give a musical notation impression. The fermatas here serve as an activating energy as in music where the fermata can act to counter the musical flow.

Paul Klee's application of the fermata spanned four decades of his art. Within this range the meaning of the symbol varies considerably, yet remains substantively consistent. It marks beginnings and endings, tense struggle and resolution, life and death. It was an image of intimately personal meaning for Klee, bound up with his childhood feelings and experiences his love for music and his appreciation for musical humour.

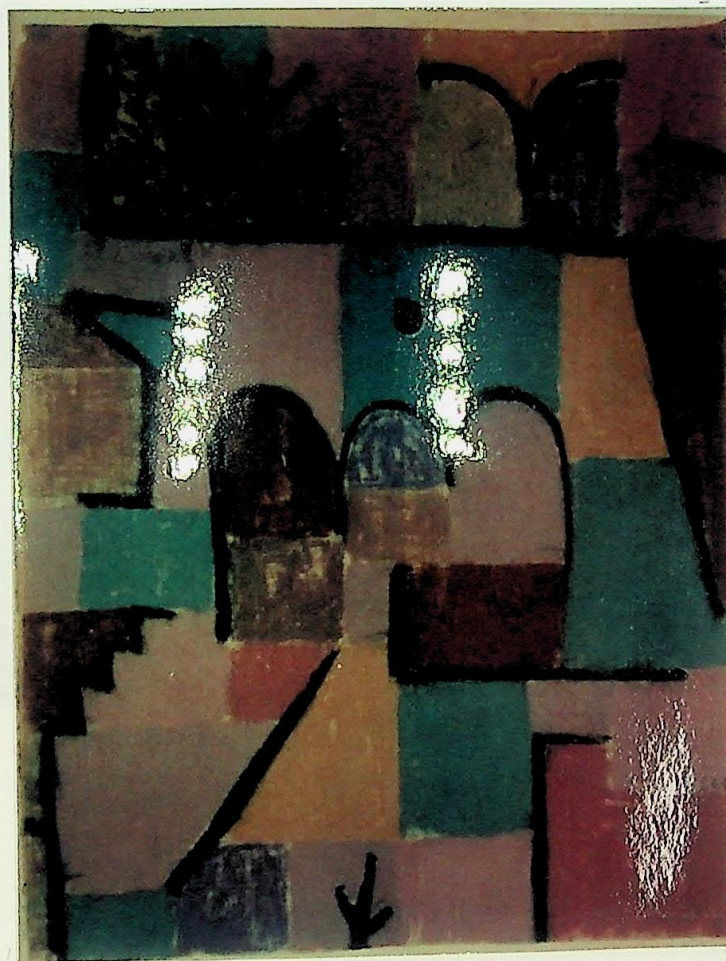


Pastoral (Rhythms). 1927. Klee.



Twittering Machine. 1922. Klee.

Besides the obvious symbolic methods of Klee he uses other devices to suggest sound to us. In his "Twittering Machine" he amuses us with the subject of symbolic birds operated by a mechanical device as a satire on the mechanical world. By the same devices he suggests the experience of sound, such as loudness by the exclamation point coming from the beak of one of the birds. The sensation of piercing shrillness is suggested by one of the twitterers with an arrow through through its beak. Gunther Schuller (1925 composed a multi media work in "The seven studies on themes of Paul Klee", in 1959. This is a musical translation of the "musical" elements in some of Klee's paintings. The "Twittering Machine" was among the paintings Schuller chose. He mad the music "twitter" by use of mechanical application of the twelve tonw technique. Schuller seems to realize the aural experience of the sounds of the symbolic mechanical birds that Klee expressed visually.



Oriental Garden. 1937. Klee



Embrace. 1939. Klee .

Footnotes Chapter II.

1. Alle Pinakother: Museum of Modern Art, Munich.
2. Paths in the study of nature.
Paul Klee Yearbook of the Bauhaus. Weimer. 1919- 1923.
3. Paul Klee. Pedagogical sketchbook
4. The Diaries of Paul Klee. ed. Felix Klee (Berkeley, 1964).
5. Ibid.

The Connection of Sound and Vision.

The marriage of sound and visual art goes back to the 19th Century. Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) was especially taken with the idea of heightening the emotional impact of music through the addition of colour and sound and in the Prometheus Symphony he called for the simultaneous projection of coloured lights to correspond to different chords, similar to the way Kandinsky tried to suggest the feeling of music through colour and form in his book of poems and woodcuts. Kluge (1912).

The futurists took a different approach appropriating noise and even smells in the aggressive musical events. The Dadaists had a constant circus of noise actions. Kurt Schwitters one of the most internationally influenced members contributed new ideas about the nature of art. In America during the 50s. some of the critical language surrounding abstract expressionism encouraged the viewer to regard art-making as theater and performance. The 60s. saw a proliferation of multidisciplinary activities. Dancers and musicians were ultimately involved in music and sound-producing activities. Electronic music developed and thrived during this period.

There have been recent exhibitions in America which were concerned with sound's role in Art during the 20th century. One such exhibition was "Soundings" held at the Neuberger Museum and had as its premise the presentation of most of the multifarious aspects of sound's role. It is notable that Kandinsky is represented in the historical section of this exhibition with his painting "Fugue" (1914) - a painting which seems to express the tense and unified characteristics of a piece of music transferred on to canvas. If this exhibition was a mirror

of art in the 20th Century as it relates to sound, a specific development can be seen in the field. Kandinsky portrayed definite pieces of music, colours were clearly defined with bordering lines. It was in effect a true reflection sought to be portrayed by the painter.

As music itself became more abstract so too did its visual portrayal become blurred. The concrete elements visible disappeared as artists sought to portray the spirit of sound rather than a physical manifestation of a definite piece of music. "Scores and notations" an exhibition organised by Peter Frank holds a piece called "Igor Stravinsky: Symphony in Three Movements (from the first movement)" which is a large oil-on-fibreglass painting by Jack Ox in which Stravinsky's devices are translated into visual equivalents drawn from photographs of buildings. Also in this exhibition Alison Knowles' piece "Three Sons (1978)" consists of three scrolls, each over eight feet long. Her "notations" consist of long looping images of recording tape and string. Both works use large size in an upscaled attempt to bring visual and aural meanings into contact. In the works on paper section there is a certain fusing together of music and drawing, for example "Musicwords" by Jackson MacLaur. It is a musical drawing where he uses notation to create a certain movement towards the centre of the page.

With the disappearance of standard notation that annexation to the works on paper category is invited. "Musical Manuscripts" at the Drawing Centre and "Scores and Notations" both included works in idiosyncratic notational systems by the veteran experimenters Morton Feldman and John Cage. Earle Brown was represented by a score from 1950 and another from 1978.

His progress has been from spare geometric notation to a loosened-up painterly kind. John Cage is a notable figure in the world of contemporary music, and added greatly to the

fusing together of art and music. As a major figure in both music and art he reacted against serialising and sought to introduce isolated sounds as having inherent merit. To this he also added the notion that the silence could be as equally expressive as the sound which envelopes it. Cage offers the strongest crossover point between music and art and many of his experiments verify this view, a case in point being "Cages Train".

Bologna-Porretta terme, Bologna - Ravenna and Ravenna-Rimini were the three itineraries of John Cage's prepared train. Cage organized this train in conjunction with Tito Gotti. They were trying to break with traditional ways of listening to music and its multiple levels of interpretation. This was the main motif together with the wish to use the territory as both object and subject in this exciting festival-trip concert. In a letter Gotti wrote to Cage, he said

"I could not join you in Paris in order to speak to you about a project that would interest your artistic presence We would like to have a performance in a special train on the railroad in the area around Bologna. We want to create a relationship among a musical event, a people and a territory, meaning both the territory seen by the traveller of the train and the territory inhabited by the people of the places where the train will stop". John Cage wrote back with the following proposals, that the "happening" have "three excursions in a prepared train, variations on a theme by Tito by John Cage and that the three movements be listed .. each with its own date, timetable, destination and stops en route in such a way as to suggest a musical work. This example of Cage's work took place from June 26th - 28th, 1978.

Work coming out of the late 60s and 70s. began to supply previously nonverbal work, with texts or captions.

/Aspects

Aspects of dance, music and art became self-revelatory, analytic and even psychoanalytical under the influence of the Women's Movement and the general cultured interest in self analysis. The feeling that the stoic modalities of minimalism had led to the repression of important impulses drew artists away from the hermetic in favour of the theatrical. Vito Acconci was one of the first of these artists to construct elaborate sound environments and in "Soundings" he was represented by documentation and tapes from three projects. "Where are we now" (Who are we anyway?), "Other voices for a Second sight," and the "People Mobile". These projects range in auditory texture from a late night radio talk show to a complex mixture of sounds, speech and chanting. The emphasis in both the catalogue and within the exhibits was on the visual expression of sound - sound treated in terms of objects rather than duration. Laurie Anderson's "Untillea" (1977) is an exception, largely because of its jukebox presentation. Since 1977 Anderson's choice of jukebox format for this piece has come to seem less of a device and more a simple statement of fact. Her latest single "O Superman" actually does appear on some commercial jukeboxes equipped to handle extended play of 45 seconds. The borders between music and visual art are thoroughly blurred by this strand of Anderson's work. In her "Video Double Rock" (1977) a photo of a rocking chair on a television screen appears above a song, standardly notated. The double-line of the swooping, up-and-down melody is a musical celebration of a means Anderson found to match the chairs rocking with a T.V. image of the same motion.

It is appropriate at this point to introduce the work of a contemporary Irish Artist - Felim Egan - whose work reflects the obvious influence of music.

FELIM EGAN

Felim Egan was born in Strabane, Northern Ireland in 1952. He studied at the Ulster Polytechnic, Belfast and later at Portsmouth Polytechnic (1972/75) and also did post-graduate studies at the Slade School of Fine Art, London (1975/77).

While he was in England, Egan did a lot of analytical work. He studied the elements within painting, and researched into the development of ideas. Like in the work of Paul Klee "he broke down nature into elements and simple laws and developed ideas from that, and used them in his painting. Egan has and shows an interest in inner structures. His work is mainly concerned with line, sometimes made of Neon lights, and the organization of these lines on the canvas, showing a clear sense of order. His line is based on the development of the megalithic spiral and the structure has an analogy with music.

Egan uses the spiral because of its Irish connotations and also because he feels it has great strength as a symbol. Indeed Egan's use of this symbol brings across its strength to its fullest advantage. The spirals in Egan's work create their own sense of rhythm apart from the overall rhythmic atmosphere.

The structure of Irish music is of particular interest to Egan, not only as an artist but also as a player. The freedom of Irish music appeals to Egan. It is the type of music where the final interpretation depends on the musician's own individuality. It also depends on the instrument involved, each having its own decorative limitations.

This feeling



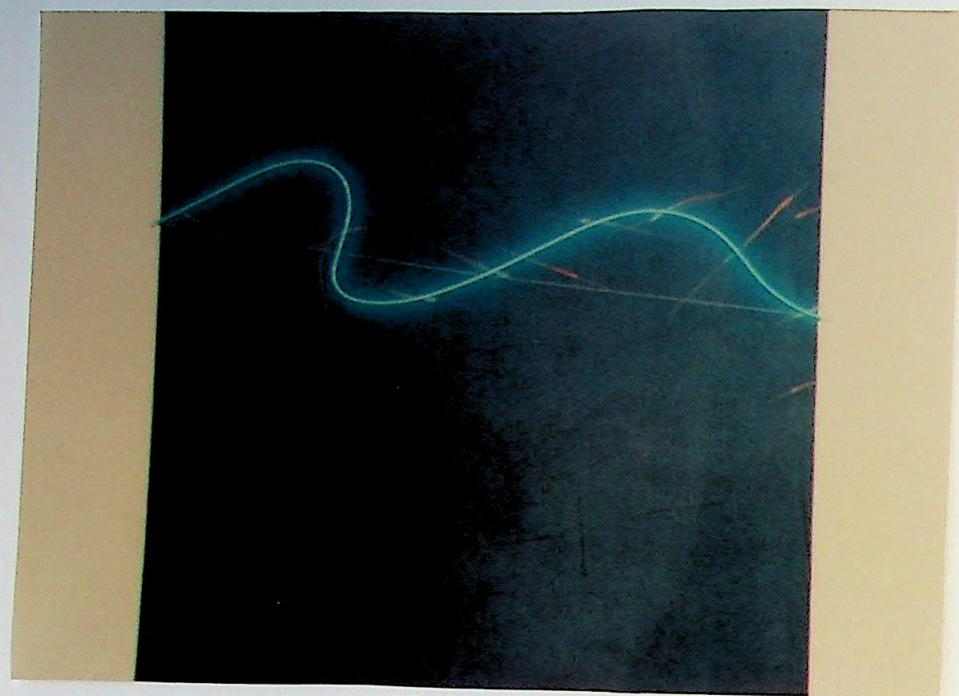
Installation British School at Rome. 1980.

Egan.

This feeling is appealing in contrast to the rigidity of orchestral classical music where the only creative person involved is the conductor. He has an appreciation for contemporary music but has closer associations with Irish traditional music because he plays it and understands its structure better.

Egan is trying to capture an overall feeling and atmosphere of music through linear means. He is not trying to translate a specific piece of music into visual terms, but his paintings do have an obvious musical aspect. The whole idea of having musical connotations in visual arts is a rather vague one. There is really no direct way of translating music into vision, or other art forms either as they all possess their own qualities. A poem can be sensuous in its own way, so can a painting but the two cannot be totally similar in feeling as it is different senses that have to react to them. Egan has his own quite unique way of bringing across a feeling of music. His canvases are sparse, each line is carefully chosen and placed specifically on the canvas. He does not overwork them, which makes every mark of equal importance. In "Line Composition Blue" 1979 this can be clearly seen. The lines are of different tonal value and seem to float in harmony giving a rhythmic pattern and an atmosphere of tranquility. The same lines seem to recur again and again. Very similar spirals can be seen in the centre of this canvas as are in "Installation" (British School at Rome) 1980. Yet even though the size and the thickness of the lines are completely different they seem to say the same thing.

The idea of tone is something which we think of in relation to Egan's paintings. Colour is something of which he is very conscious. Although colour is not the most dominant



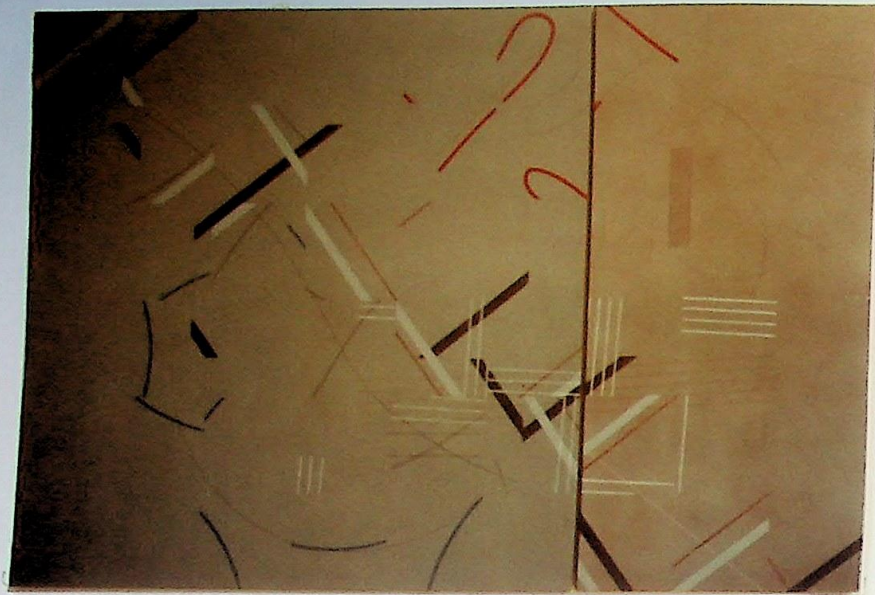
Score. 1981. Egan.

feature, his awareness of it is obvious. He has experimented with colour even though he seems to stick to a certain repertoire of colours. Egan manages to use and control his colour to its best effect. The strong blue in "Score" 1981 is quite a powerful colour yet it does not distract us from the composition of lines and the magical feeling of the neon line. Egan co-ordinates the subject and colour with the utmost suitability.

A dominant feature in Egan's work is the fact that there is no particular part of the canvas more important than another. The viewer's eye is led all around the canvas following the rhythm and movement of an overall feeling.

Just as contemporary musicians like Anderson, Steve Reich and Philip Glass are experimental so too is Egan. He experiments with different media to capture a certain atmosphere. One such experiment is the use of neon tubing. There is a vast difference between drawing a line in one thickness and drawing the same line in another thickness. Egan's use of neon is another method of making a line and is quite effective so far. In "Score" (1981) the neon line is very strong but could not exist without the harmony of lines around it, and it gives the feeling of an ongoing movement. In a sense this line has a time value, another factor of which Egan is very aware, both in music and in art. Even though the lines are of equal importance to each other the space between them also holds importance just like a sound and then a pause. It is often the silence which gives the sound its character. Cyril Barrett has written of Egan's work - "the stated in relation to the unstated, a visual rhythmic pattern, the dynamic sign with a pause, the hiatus, the visual silence,

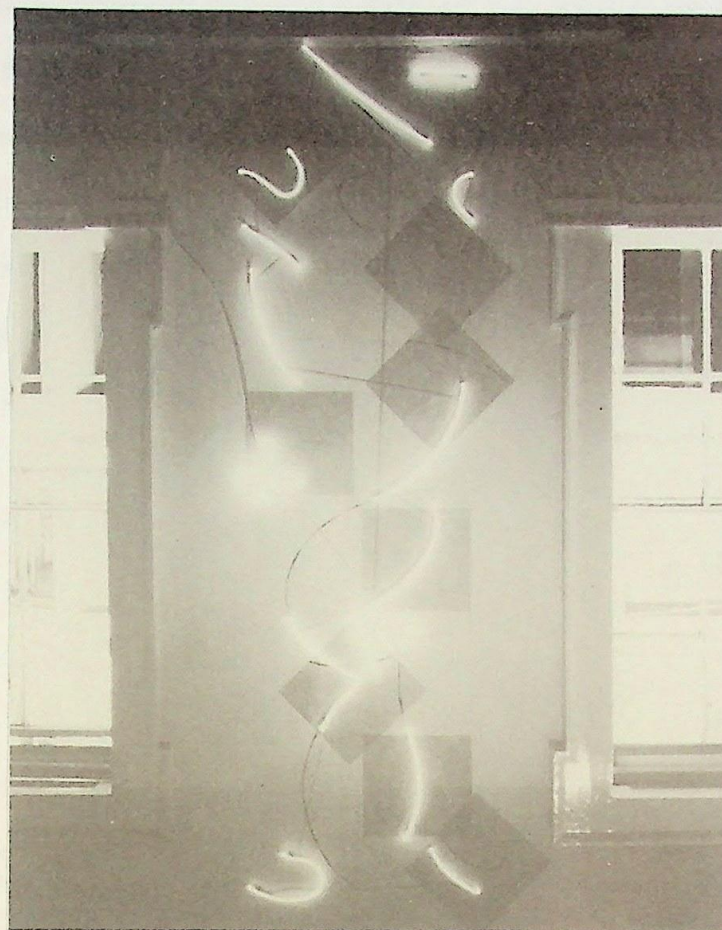
/engaging



Parallel I. Egan.
1980.

engaging the mind.

There is no firm or concrete musical symbols in Egan's work apart from the notion of the stave which occurs in "Parallel 1 and 11 9 1980). These examples are however exceptions to the general Egan style as it must be stressed that this artist relies on his medium to translate to the observer the musical references hidden in his work.



Installation with Neon. 1981. Egan.

CONCLUSION

In an effort to express the image mankind has of its existence many different forms of art have been called upon to aid this end, from the rough but nonetheless aesthetic creations found in the caves of neolithic man to the intellectual music created during the 19th and 20th centuries. Inevitably, individual cultures and personalities have chosen their own method of expressing their thoughts, some chose literature and poetry, others painting and sculpture and others still elected to invoke music and drama to give vent to their images of this world. However, despite this clear historical separation of these art forms, their fusion is a healthy and valid development. Logically it will add to the scope of what may be projected from the artists final creation.

It is notable that the artists discussed in this paper were also musicians and their musical knowledge is ardent not only in the obvious musical connotations in their paintings but also in the fact that their intimacy with the movement and motifs, tone and tempo of music itself is animated in a physical form on their canvases.

Kandinsky and Klee were contemporaries whose lives overlapped. Together they explored the theme of the representation of music in painting and the common elements of both which could be successfully shown by means of painting only. Despite this mutuality of thought their styles remain individual. Nonetheless their similar understanding of the relationship between music and painting is evident in their works. This feeling for music coupled with an awareness of its elements is evident today in the work of Felim Egan. However different his influences and background may have been his work reflects that self same understanding which Kandinsky and Klee achieved.

The importance of music lies not in its notes or melodies; its relevance lies in the reaction it evokes in an individual. It is understandable therefore that one is not supposed to hear music by looking at a musical painting. What one might achieve by examining such a work could be an emotional or intellectual stimulus similar to that which could be inspired on listening to and endeavouring to understand a piece of music. On canvas the response-related function of music and of painting may be combined to produce a deeper and more lasting consciousness on which the mind may ponder than that which might have been achieved had the subject been dealt with in isolation by either of these two art forms.

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